



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Mú Nuad

National identity construction
and the popular ballad in
nineteenth century Ireland.

by

James Derek Barter

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND
MAYNOOTH

Supervisor of research:
Professor R. V. Comerford

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Introduction

Eudox: But if that country of Ireland whence you lately came be so goodly and commodious a soil as you report, I wonder that no course is taken for the turning thereof to good uses, and reducing that savage nation to better government and civility.¹

All things has Felix changed, he changed his name,
Yea, in himself he is no more the same,
Scorning to spend the days where he was reared,
To drag out life among the vulgar herd
Or trudge his way through bogs in bracks and brogues,
He changed his creed and joined the Saxon rogues
By whom his sires were robbed; he laid aside
The arms they bore for centuries with pride,
The Ship the Salmon and the famed Red Hand,
And blushed when called O'Neill in his own Land!
Poor paltry skulker from thy noble race
"Infelix Felix," weep for thy disgrace.²

This dissertation sets out to analyse the discourses surrounding the construction of a nationalist sense of Irish identity through the medium of popular culture specifically song lyrics throughout the nineteenth century. The English language song-texts that this work is based on provide evidence of the process of Anglicisation which, some would have it, began with the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in the twelfth century,³ or at least since it became English colonial policy to force them to retain a distinction upon the gradually assimilating English population with the statutes of Kilkenny 1366, the first of a number of such laws proclaimed intermittently over the

¹ *A view of the present state of Ireland by Edmund Spencer*, ed. W. L. Renwick (Oxford, 1970 [1596]), p. 1.

² Lines written in the 17th Century on Felim O'Neill of Tyrone who anglicised his name "Felix Neele", in *Ryan's Irish Humorous Songster. No 1* Compiled by "Ticknock" (Dublin, Ryan and Co. 49 Middle Abbey St. n.d.).

³ A. J. Bliss, 'The emergence of modern English dialects in Ireland' in Diarmaid Ó Muirthe ed. *The English language in Ireland* (Dublin, 1977), p. 7; T. G. Fraser, 'British Culture in Ireland', in Brian Lalor ed. *Encyclopaedia of Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), p. 124.

subsequent centuries aimed at halting a drift towards Gaelicisation.⁴ By the nineteenth century⁵ however, and particularly in the post famine period with the sharp decline in the use of the Irish language, anglicisation was a trend that was felt to be fast becoming irreversible and with its progression, some perceived, went any legitimate claim for recognition of nationhood either as an independent territory or as an autonomous region of the United Kingdom.⁶ However, these song-texts also provide other evidence, evidence regarding the social, economic, political, sexual, and religious life that was deemed worthy of comment by, in the main, anonymous witnesses who have left shreds of information which suggest that the lives of the Irish masses were often more varied and engrossing and displayed moments of agency and resistance (in unexpected ways) than many orthodox historiographies would allow. I reproduce these texts as my main primary source and place them within an historical framework based upon readings of primary and secondary sources in order to try ground them in their proper context.

Song-texts of all types are a much underused source for the study of history and in this sense I agree with John Hand (died 1903), the poet and contributor to the *Nation*⁷, when he wrote in 1873 : Irish street ballads have, as if by a miracle, escaped the dissection of the essayist and reviewer. . . and yet there are few subjects richer in material, or from which a more abundant harvest might be gleaned.⁸ This sentiment was echoed by Colin Neilands over one hundred years later when he wrote that ‘very little work had been undertaken on Irish broadsides compared with the broadside ballad tradition in England . . .’⁹ Despite some work having being carried out on broadside

⁴J. C. Beckett, *The Anglo-Irish tradition* (London, 1976), p. 23; Douglas Hyde, *Literary history of Ireland, from the earliest times to the present day* (London, 1901), pp 608–11 ; H. J. Monck Mason, *The Life of William Bedell, D.D., Lord Bishop of Kilmore* (London, 1843), p. 113.

⁵Oliver MacDonagh, ‘The Irish famine emigration to the United States’, in D. Fleming and B. Bailyn (eds), *Perspectives in American history* vol 10 (Mass., 1976), p. 376.

⁶D. Hyde, ‘The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland.’ in C Gavan Duffy, George Sigerson and Douglas Hyde (eds), *The revival of Irish literature* (London, 1894), p. 119.

⁷Thomas Wall, ‘Hand’s Irish street ballads’, in Breandan Breathnach (ed.), *Ceol, a Journal of Irish Music*, iii - no. 2 (8 vols, Dublin, 1967), pp 34-7.

⁸John Hand, ‘Irish street ballads’, in John Denvir, *Monthly Irish Library* No. 16 April 1903 (London, 1903), p. 1. first published in *Denvir’s Penny Irish Library* No. 26 (Liverpool, 1873).

⁹Colin Watson Neilands, ‘Irish broadside ballads in their social and historical contexts’ (Ph.D. thesis, Queen’s University of Belfast, 1986), pp 1-8.

and street song texts in recent years I believe that the opinion voiced by Hand and Neilands still holds true, to the extent of culling historical insight from them. My primary concern with these sources is in understanding their importance in allowing for an interpretation of the processes of identity construction and in the following work I hope to address this oversight to show that the changes which Irish society underwent throughout the nineteenth century were reflected in the output of these, largely, invisible witnesses.¹⁰ I also wish to show how the content, form and production of the songs was overtaken by nationalist and, to a lesser extent for the purposes of this work, unionist ideologues¹¹ in their efforts to control the discourse of identity construction for their own benefit.¹²

The work is divided into three interlinked parts in which themes, motifs and concepts re-emerge at certain points to illustrate and support the analysis of the historical information reflected in the song-texts that form the main body of the dissertation. Part one looks at theoretical approaches to the problematic of national identity formation and how Irish cultural nationalists such as Thomas Davis, Douglas Hyde and D. P. Moran sought to infuse the idea of Irishness in the former case and Gaelic identity in the latter two in the population of the island at large. The life, career and influence of Thomas Moore in relation to the representation of Irishness that grew out of his *Melodies* is then considered and compared to the deliberate identity building project undertaken by Thomas Davis. The second part uses the songs of the street to illustrate how varied were the concerns of the singers and by extension their audience (as one folk-singer, Oscar Brand has put it the audience becomes the performer's first censor because a working singer needs to tailor his/her set in order to make a living¹³)

¹⁰On authorship of works in the 'folk' repertoire see Sally K. Sommers Smith, 'Interpretations and Translations of Irish traditional music' in Maria Tymoczko and Colin Ireland (eds), *Language and tradition in Ireland : continuities and displacements* (Boston, 2003), p. 104., footnote 4. Henceforth *Language and Tradition in Ireland*

¹¹K. Theodore Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society in Ireland 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984), p. 424 ; Maura Cronin, 'Popular memory and identity : street ballads in north munster in the nineteenth century', in Liam Irwin (ed.), *Explorations centenary essays Mary Immaculate College Limerick 1898-1998* (Limerick, 1998), pp 142-3 henceforth *Popular memory and identity*; Hand, pp 21-2.

¹²On identity forming discourses and music see Peter Wade, *Music, race and nation* (Chicago, 2000), pp 1-5.

¹³Oscar Brand, *The ballad mongers, the rise of the modern folk song* (New York, 1962), pp 172-3.

and how they paid scant regard to the ‘national question’ in the struggle to maintain their existence both physically and spiritually. The third part traces the development of this idea of Irishness and its counterpart Irish Unionism by focussing on the momentous events of the century from the Act of Union to the defeat of the second Home Rule bill in the House of Lords in 1893.¹⁴ This section looks at song-texts which commented upon these events and how political debate was carried on through the use of propaganda from the broadsides published at the time of the union pamphlet wars¹⁵ to the politicisation of the masses in the ‘lace curtain ballads’¹⁶ of Young Ireland and the contributors of the weekly newspaper the *Union*, established in 1887.

The idea for this work comes from a well known phrase of Douglas Hyde’s which, when I came across it initially, stirred something in my imagination that related to a problem which had puzzled me since childhood. The phrase was the title of a lecture Hyde had given on 25 November 1892 to the National Literary Society in Dublin which he later published as ‘On the necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland.’ It struck me that this was a curious phrase and one that needed some thought in order to come to terms with its content. Mulling over it a number of questions sprang to mind. The first was what did Hyde mean by ‘de-Anglicising’ ; and why did the Irish people need this thing to be done to them? Later I began to ask who where these Irish people that Hyde spoke of and did they want to be de-Anglicised anyway? Personally I had never felt myself to be anything but Irish, although I was willing to consider that this certainty might be born out of the same kind of ignorance as that of the Co. Mayo peasant boy responding to Hyde’s question uttered *as Gaelige* asking if he, ‘spoke no Irish?’ replied in English, ‘And isn’t it Irish I’m spaking?...that’s how I ever spoke it’.¹⁷ This unconscious versus conscious, or perhaps rather, passive versus active, sense of Irishness is what this thesis is about. In essence what all the questions boiled down to related to the problem of identity and identity formation and specifically as these related

¹⁴P. S. O’Hegarty, *History of Ireland under the Union 1801-1922* (London, 1952); James Loughlin, *Gladstone, Home Rule and the Ulster Question 1882-93* (Dublin, 1986), pp 251-83; Grenfell Morton, *Home Rule and the Irish Question* (London, 1980), pp 45-7.

¹⁵W. J. McCormack, *The pamphlet debate on the union between Great Britain and Ireland 1797-1800* (Dublin, 1996).

¹⁶Hoppen, p. 248.

to the subject of the construction¹⁸ of a nationalist sense of Irish identity which began to take shape in the nineteenth century. As I got further into the research I came to see that for Irish nationalism this process of de-anglicisation was a real one, in fact as we will see, there were some nationalists like D. P. Moran who believed that without a Gaelic Irish culture there was really no point in Irish political independence. The problem reminded me of that which was enunciated by Massimo d'Azeglio (1798-1866) the prime minister of Piedmont (1849-52) when, at the first meeting of the parliament of the newly united Italian kingdom he stated 'Italy is made, now we must make Italians.'¹⁹ Of course the Irish and Italian experiences and contexts were quite different and both were beset by historical circumstances which were unique unto themselves ; however, d'Azeglio's quote tells of a time when a Europe of nation states was not the foregone conclusion which it later appeared to be, not least because of the lack of interest on the part of the peasant and working class masses, the very stuff from which the nation was to be made, but whose central concerns were either economic or social,²⁰ and in the Irish case sectarian to a certain degree. This was a fact of which nineteenth century Irish nationalist elites became aware whenever reforming legislation from Westminster threatened to cut the legs from under them by holding out the prospect of justice and good government.²¹ However, popular perception, even in the minds of some of those engaged in the discipline of history, presents the Irish people as a *fait accompli* and any thought of the construction of a sense of identity is, to a great extent, ignored. This is a point that the historian and sociologist John Hutchinson alludes to in an essay on Irish Nationalism and the revisionist debate in which he outlines part of the thesis upon which I want to elaborate, 'These [revisionist transformations] represent a shift from perspectives that... *regarded the Irish nation and nationalism as given and therefore*

¹⁷Hyde, pp 137-8.

¹⁸Peter Burke, *What is cultural history?* (Cambridge, 2004), pp 74-99.

¹⁹E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780, programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 44; Roger Absalom, *Italy since 1800: a nation in the balance* (London, 1995), pp 44-5.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 12.

²¹Paul Bew, *Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-82* (New Jersey, 1979), pp 185-94.

available to 'objective' description...'.²² The assumption seems to be that Ireland as an island comes fully equipped with a people whose sense of who they are is almost completely defined by their place of birth; which in turn is bolstered by the idea that, as we are surrounded by water, we are all in the same boat and therefore naturally we should all pull together. It is both the simplistic idea of all being 'on the one road,' as the song goes (which all nationalism tries to promote and thrives on) and the assumption about the *naturalness* of nationalism that this thesis sets out to explore through an examination of how this discourse developed through the popular art form of street ballad and its rival the officially sanctioned counterpart i.e. the songs of propaganda contained in both nationalist and unionist publications. As part of this historical revisionist debate, seeing construction and heterogeneity where some would see 'primordialness, unity and continuity'²³, I would agree wholeheartedly with Foster when he states:

If there is one single unalloyed good that has come out of the overdone debates about historical revisionism, it is the notion of the historian as a subversive. We should be seeking out the *interactions, paradoxes and subcultures . . .* to rearrange the pieces in more surprising patterns. A new history could show that varieties of Irishness can be complementary rather than competing.²⁴

The analogy of the boat is useful in teasing out the problem of nationalist identity formation; everything is fine as long as we are all pulling in the same direction but how do any of us know what direction we are going in and for what purpose? In chapter 1 we will see that a nation, as another Italian, Giuseppe Mazzini, said, needs a purpose and this is the task that nationalist elites set about determining. Legitimation of the cause or purpose is almost invariably found in some utopian past when the fabled nation was great and the task nationalists and in particular cultural nationalists set themselves is to recapture this glory for present and future generations.²⁵ Therefore for the nation to become a reality what is needed is some person, group, or groups, to take

²²John Hutchinson, 'Irish Nationalism' in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *The making of modern Irish history; revisionism and the revisionist controversy* (London, 1996), p. 101. Emphasis added.

²³Ibid., p. 103. Hutchinson acknowledges this contribution to the debate made by E. J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

²⁴R. F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch, Connections in Irish and English History* (London, 1993), p. 35. Emphasis added

²⁵Anthony D. Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations* (Oxford, 1986), pp 191-200.

control of what I call, after Michel Foucault, the ‘discourse’ of identity. Foucault defined discourses as ‘practices that systematically construct the objects of which they speak’²⁶ a phenomenon of which I think there is no better example than that of the nation; out of a morass of self-interest, local interest and dis-interest there comes a project which is ultimately ideal in the sense that it is envisioned, yet completely real by becoming a social fact.

In a discussion I had with the late Frank Harte (1933-2005) during National Heritage Week 2004 regarding a comment he made about ballads being a wonderful primary source for historians and his disappointment at the fact that more historians did not make use of them we came to a point as to how best they might be understood. As a collector and singer Frank had the opinion that, ‘Those in power write the history while those who suffer write the songs’. This reminded me of the maxim that Thomas Davis and many of the contributors to the *Nation* quoted from the Scottish patriot Andrew Fletcher of Saultoun (1653-1716),²⁷ ‘[G]ive me the making of the ballads and let who will make the laws.’ Frank was quite happy with the comparison. When I suggested that Thomas Davis did both, i.e. wrote history (literally and metaphorically) and songs, and not only that but he encouraged the suppression of the type of songs that Frank spent his life collecting, these being the songs of the working class urban poor, then it occurred to me that for artists like Frank the ideal of the music is preferred while for the historian the wider context is what is most important. Therefore I intend to use the street ballads and songs of propaganda as cultural artifacts located within their own context as primary source material to allow some of Foster’s ‘interactions, paradoxes and subcultures’ to emerge.

Research and analysis in the area of nineteenth century Irish music over the last number of years has spawned some interesting publications. G. D. Zimmerman’s seminal *Songs of Irish rebellion* (Geneva, 1966) is a work of great scholarship for English language songs. Zimmerman’s songs are mostly concerned with the political

²⁶Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of knowledge* (Paris, 1969), quoted in Burke, p. 76.

²⁷H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography from the earliest times to the year 2000* (Oxford, 2004), xx, pp 85-92, henceforth *ODNB*

dimension of Irish life but he includes songs that address social and religious matters. He also provides a contextual framework for the songs he publishes and addresses both their style and content as making serious historical contributions and commentaries on historical events as these were interpreted by the song writers. Rionach uí Ógáin, *Immortal Dan: Daniel O'Connell in Irish folk tradition* (Dublin, 1995), as the title suggests, deals comprehensively with the person and career of the most charismatic figure in Irish politics and British politics in the nineteenth century from the perspective of popular literature with a large section devoted to O'Connell in ballad and song. Terry Moylan, *The age of revolution in the Irish song tradition, 1776-1815* (Dublin, 2000) is a useful and enjoyable compendium of military and political songs dealing with the period which stretched from the American Declaration of Independence, through the turbulence of the French Revolution, and ending with the final defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. This volume contains both contemporary and recent compositions ; Hugh Shields, *Narrative singing in Ireland* (Dublin, 1993) is a work of immense importance for the discipline of musicology in its treatment of the development of narrative singing and literary styles of this art form. Other works dedicated to an appreciation of the traditions surrounding Irish music and the conditions for its survival and indeed growth include Maria McCarthy's *Passing it on* (Cork, 1999), a history of music education in Ireland and the excellent reference work *The Companion to Irish traditional music* (Cork, 1999) edited by the musician and ethnomusicologist Fintan Vallely. In the area of art music Harry White's *The keeper's recital* (Cork, 1998) asks some interesting questions regarding the division between the ethnic and art music worlds in Ireland moving into the area and building upon J. J. Ryan's PhD dissertation for NUI Maynooth 'Nationalism and music in Ireland'(1991). Richard Pine has also produced an interesting essay on the foundations of the Royal Irish Academy of Music²⁸ ; while R. V. Comerford's chapter 'Music, song and dance' in his book *Ireland* (London, 2003) gives a wide ranging overview of these aspects of the arts and debunks some of the myths surrounding Ireland's supposed musical uniqueness from the Bronze age up to recent times. Maura Cronin's various essays²⁹ on English language song and

²⁸Richard Pine, 'Introduction' in Richard Pine and Charles Acton (eds), *To talent alone; the Royal Irish Academy of Music 1848 - 1998* (Dublin, 1998). Henceforth *To talent alone*

²⁹ Maura Cronin (nee Murphy), 'The ballad singer and the role of the seditious ballad in Nineteenth-

their place in popular culture are almost unique in their treatment of the role of the political ballad and its purveyors in the nineteenth century and their use of the ballads as a valuable historical source. The above mentioned Colin W. Neilands' unpublished dissertation for Queen's University 'Irish broadside Ballads in their social and historical contexts' is a work of great merit and of no little interest for this study. This is just a small sample of the work now being conducted in the area of Irish music and the history of music. However, some of these works give credence to the assumption that all kinds of music in Ireland in the nineteenth century are intractably bound, to their benefit or detriment, to the nationalist agenda. I would agree that this might have been the goal of cultural nationalism, but I suggest it was far from being one hundred percent successful. I do not completely reject this thesis but I think that it is reductionist as it fails to appreciate the complexities of both the processes of identity formation and the culture of the masses.

Contemporary collectors of Irish music such as George Petrie (1790-1866), Patrick Weston Joyce (1827-1914), John Davis White (1820-1893) etc., drew no such distinction between the 'art' and 'ethnic' repertoires, but they often had a set agenda when choosing which songs to include in their works and some, like Petrie, deliberately excluded English language street songs for both personal and political reasons. The introduction to Petrie's *Ancient Music of Ireland* (Dublin, 1855) implies that collecting was not carried out purely for its own sake but was part of a wider enterprise:

A passionate lover of music from my childhood, and of melody especially – that divine essence without which music is but a soulless body – the indulgence of this passion has been, indeed, one of the great, if not the greatest, sources of happiness of my life. Coupled with a never-fading love for nature, and its consequent attendant, an *appreciation of the good and beautiful*, it has refreshed and reinvigorated my spirits when depressed by the fatigues of mental labour. . . . The desire to preserve what I deemed so worthy of preservation, and so honourable to the character of my country, was my sole object and my sole stimulus in this, to me, exciting and delightful pursuit. . . . I cannot but confess, I could not suppress a misgiving, that, let a work of this nature possess whatever amount of interest or value it may, there no longer existed amongst my countrymen such sufficient

Century Ireland : Dublin Castle's View', in Alan Gailey (ed.), *Ulster Folklife* 25 (Newry, 1979), pp.79-102 ; 'Popular memory and identity, pp 125-43 ; 'Memory, story and balladry : 1798 and its place in popular memory in pre-Famine Ireland', in Lawrence Geary (ed.), *Rebellion and remembrance in modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2001).

amount of a racy feeling of nationality, and cultivation of mind – qualities so honourable to the Scottish character – as would secure for it the steady support necessary for its success. . . . In short, I could not but fear that I might be vainly labouring to cultivate mental fruit which, however indigenous to the soil, was yet of too refined and delicate a flavour to be relished, or appreciated, by a people who had been from adversities, long accustomed only to the use of food of a coarser and more exciting nature.³⁰

The censoriousness of collectors will be dealt with more fully in chapter 3 but at this point it is enough to say that Petrie overcame his apprehension to carry out his research, to the degree that he found that there was a sufficient ‘racy feeling of nationality’, (words which resonate with the *Nation’s* motto ‘To create and foster Public opinion in Ireland– to make it racy of the soil’,) to publish the collection. From the above passage we can see that there is little or no room for the sordid, cheap and ugly in Petrie’s world, and street ballads, associated with the urban and thus invariably English, are almost always equated with such sentiments in the writings of nineteenth century nationalists like Davis, Hyde etc. This squeamishness as regards English language street ballads and their content appears to have been widespread. Frank O’Connor in his appreciation of the 1960 edition says of Colm O’Lochlainn’s *Irish Street Ballads*:

Mr. O Lochlainn’s main advantage over P. W. Joyce, whose collections he so rightly praises, is that O Lochlainn loves the words while Joyce hated them. Often these were coarse – or so Joyce thought – and when he had to print the first lines of *The Lowlands of Holland*, he printed them with italics to show where he was composing independently –

The first night I was married, *a happy, happy bride*,
The captain of the Highlandmen he came to my *lover’s* side

I leave it to the reader to work out for himself what indecency the folksingers of Limerick sang instead of the italicized words. What matters is that like all Irishmen of the period Joyce was self-conscious about the Hyman Kaplan English spoken by his immediate ancestors in the middle of the nineteenth century.³¹

³⁰*The Petrie collection of the ancient music of Ireland* (Dublin, 1855), pp vii-xi. (Emphasis added.)

³¹Colm O Lochlainn, *Irish Street Ballads* (Dublin, 1960), pp iii-iv. The most frequent first line that I could find for this song is ‘The first night I was married, as I lay on my new marriage bed, The Captain of the Highlanders came to my side and said . . .

But even O’Lochlainn admitted in the introduction to the first edition of his *Irish Street Ballads* (1939), a collection that had covered many of the popular love songs, rebel songs, comic and music hall songs etc., that ‘[O]ccasionally I have altered an obvious corrupt line and in one or two places a ribald . . . verse has been omitted’.³²

Bowdlerisation and censorship will be examined more fully in chapter 3 entitled ‘On the imponderabilia of actual life’. This question of the place of English language street songs in Irish culture is of great importance not only for their content but for their symbolic value as signifiers of a constructed ‘other’ from the point of view of Irish nationalism. Pine hits the nail on the head when he observes that ‘[J]ust as in politics, so in cultural matters, Irish identity had to be established as different from English before it could be true to itself. Even though the *transitus* has produced painful episodes, for example in the continuing discovery of what constitutes ‘Irish’ music’.³³ This ‘continuing discovery’ and the need to create cultural boundaries was to have a negative effect as far as English language street songs were concerned. This is a point that is acknowledged in the following piece by Thomas Crofton Croker (1798-1854):

And here it may be proper to reply to a question which has been asked, In what particulars Irish and English song [street songs] differ? Ritson³⁴ states, that “The distinction between Scottish and English songs, it is conceived, arises, not from the language in which they are written, for that may be common to both; but, from the country to which they respectively belong, and of which their authors are natives. This discrimination”, continues Ritson, “does not so necessarily or properly apply to Ireland, great part of which was colonised from this kingdom ; and the descendants of the settlers (the only civilised and cultivated inhabitants) have consequently been, ever since, looked upon as English ; the native Irish being, to this day, a very different people. Every one has heard of the English pale.”³⁵

Ritson obviously made the distinction between the Irish and English language traditions but among an increasingly anglo-phone population it was necessary for this distinction to be built upon by nineteenth century music and song collectors like Petrie who subsequently found objections to including certain songs which did not tally with

³²Colm O Lochlainn, *Irish street ballads* (1939) p. ix.

³³ Pine and Acton, *To talent alone* p. 9.

³⁴Joseph Ritson (1752-1803) *English Antiquary*, *ODNB*, xlvii, pp 33-5.

³⁵Thomas Crofton Croker, *Popular songs of Ireland* (London, 1839).

their Victorian sensibilities.³⁶

Some description and definition of ballads and the difficulties associated with them as regards dating and publishing is required before I begin my analysis. My first problem was locating the primary source material needed to conduct my analysis. Rob Scribner, summed up the difficulty encountered by the historian regarding accessing popular literature or art as it is by its very nature disposable.³⁷ Broadside ballads are in this same category, being bought in the street for a half penny a ballad, these were very often pasted up on the walls of houses, shops, workshops, inns, taverns, and public houses and as the latest one dealing with some new topic was published they were pasted over earlier songs. As often as not many were just thrown in the gutter or swept away with the rubbish.³⁸ Their scarcity is also attributed, by Neilands,³⁹ to the poor quality of the ‘whitey-brown paper’ upon which they were printed and about which William Allingham writing in 1852 said:

They are, of course, printed on gray paper with coarse type, headed with most incompatible woodcuts, and filled with instances of every kind of typographical error; from mis-stopping and mis-spelling to omissions of words lines, and half-stanzas; so that, while intended for the perusal of the humblest, they often require (as I once heard a girl complain) “a very good scholar to make thim (sic) out.”⁴⁰

So the songs that survive are the ones that someone took an interest in and collected. Leslie Shepard gives a comprehensive description of the types broadsheet and broadside and the content that one could expect to find in them. He distinguishes between the broadside and the broadsheet. The broadside is described as being printed on only one side of the paper, i.e. the side facing out or recto. This allows the entire text to be read when the broadside is posted up on a board in the same way as a political

³⁶On the social composition of the audience for broadside ballads see W. H. A. Williams, ‘The broadside ballad as vernacular culture’, in Hugh Shields, Seóirse Bodley and Breandán Breathnach (eds), *Éigse Cheol Tíre Irish Folk Music Studies*, vol 3 (Dublin, 1976-18), p. 55 ; for Petrie’s personal preferences see Tom Munnely, review of David Cooper, (ed.), ‘The George Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland’, in *Journal of Music in Ireland*, vol. 3. No. 2 Jan/Feb. 2003 p. 15.

³⁷Rob Scribner, *For the sake of simple folk : popular propaganda for the German reformation* (Cambridge, 1981).

³⁸Fintan Vallely (ed.), *The companion to Irish traditional music* (Cork, 1999), p. 43.

³⁹Neilands., pp 23-4.

⁴⁰William Allingham, ‘Irish Ballad Singers and Irish Street Ballads’, in Charles Dickens (ed.), *Household*

tract, or wanted poster, handbill, advertisement and proclamation etc. are designed.⁴¹ Ballads in this thesis which conform to this style can be found in the Early Printed Books Library of Trinity College Dublin pamphlets Call # S ee 55.⁴² A broadsheet, on the other hand, has printing on both sides of the single sheet paper whether this be folio, quarto, octavo or whatever size.⁴³ Shepard suggests, and I agree, that for general purposes it is often convenient to refer to printed broadside ballads, whether these are printed on both sides or just the one as balladsheets. The most frequent type of ballad sheet that I have come across is the ballad slip. These conform to an almost universal style, with a wood cut at the head of the slip often this will have little or nothing to do with the text below. Beneath this comes the title, the air, and the author, next comes the text and in some instances, but not all, the printer's name and address. Ballad slips can vary in size between 20 and 35 cm in length and are, on average, approximately 10 cm in width which roughly corresponds with the width of a newspaper column. It may take this format due to the close linkages between newspapers and the ballad during the early years of printing on a large scale.⁴⁴ Again as Shepard says:

Some of the early forms of popular newspaper were simply single printed sheets; while these gave topical items in prose the broadside ballads would give news in verse. It is difficult to draw a hard and fast line between a newspaper and a ballad when early balladsheets told topical news in song. . .⁴⁵

Neilands states that the ballad slips take this shape for economy sake and that they were, 'usually printed in groups of sixteen different ballads on sheets of paper roughly 22 inches by 14 inches, which were then cut into slips ready to be sold. . .'⁴⁶ The ballad slip was then usually sold containing a single ballad to maximise profit for the printer and hawker. Ballads which recounted murder or scandal were very popular and they served a similar function as that which newspapers fulfilled and according to Shepard 'probably had as much accuracy in reporting'.⁴⁷ Maura Cronin has also

Words No. 94. (London, 1852), 10 Jan.

⁴¹Leslie Shepard, *The broadside ballad: a study in origins and meanings* (Pennsylvania, 1978), pp 24-5.

⁴²McCormack, *The pamphlet debate on the union*

⁴³Charles Evans, *American Bibliography: chronological dictionary* (Chicago, 1903), quoted in Neilands p. 21.

⁴⁴Williams, p. 53.

⁴⁵Shepard, p. 24.

⁴⁶Neilands, p 24.

⁴⁷Shepard., p. 25.

described the street ballad as a combination of, 'Top Ten' and 'news bulletin,' stressing that 'the news transmission aspect was vital' and that the ballad could:

...fulfil for the poor the function of the local newspaper whose price and limited distribution network put it outside the reach of the rural lower classes. The broadside bridged this information gap by reporting on significant events and public meetings...'⁴⁸

However, I think that the street ballads could do more than just impart news and for this study the ballads are chosen not only for their political or sectarian content and their ability to disseminate current or recent events but also for their ability to impart knowledge of a much longer duration. The transmission of cultural values and practices can be gleaned by an analysis of the song-texts and by this I mean to correct, however slightly, the imbalance created in the historiography of the street ballads by the over-emphasis on nationalist political subjects in order to gain some insight into the collective conscious of Irish society in the nineteenth century. It would be unrealistic in this endeavour to exclude ballads dealing with the religious and political aspects of Irish life but I have tried to offset these by the inclusion of songs which deal with economic matters as well as songs which speak about marriage, work, drink, and relations between the sexes. I would be wary of putting too much weight on the ballads contained in the Outrage Papers National archives alone as giving an accurate 'Top Ten' because, as Cronin points out, they are there for a reason i.e. these are in some way upsetting to the authorities or concerned citizens. Therefore ballads which have no political or sectarian content, such as those in chapter 3, are not on the chart. To illustrate this point all we need to do is consider the following passage by William Allingham in which he writes of a fair day he spent in an unspecified Irish market town and describes the content of a ballad book which he bought:

Let us buy one [book]... ; and then go home, and look over a certain sheaf of our own gathering, of publications in the same humble, but not all unimportant, department of literature... Nearly one-half of the whole number owe their inspiration to Cupid – a personage not unfrequently mentioned therein by name, and conducting about eighty per cent. of his followers to the happiest conclusion.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Maura Cronin, 'Popular memory and identity' pp 130-1.

⁴⁹William Allingham, 'Irish ballad singers and Irish street ballads', p. 363.

If the majority of the ballads appear as individual slips, there are others which saw the broadside sheet folded a number of times in order to make small pamphlets which could be gathered together to make cheap books or ‘chapbooks’. Zimmerman describes these as ‘a single sheet folded twice so as to form a small booklet of eight pages, with an average size of five or six inches by three or four. A wood cut and a list of contents are on the front page.’ These Zimmerman calls *garlands*, ‘to distinguish them from song books of other types not meant to be sold by pedlars only . . . containing two to six songs’.⁵⁰ Although Shepard concludes that it is ‘[W]here these chapbooks are mostly concerned with the subject of love they are subsequently called ‘garlands’.⁵¹ The NLI has a good collection of such chapbooks and garlands dating from the eighteenth century onwards.

Dating is problematic in the investigation of the ballads. Many of the balladsheets and ballad slips which survive give no indication of place of publication, name of printer, or date of publication. Where this information is available I have included it at the beginning of the ballad text for ease of use, instead of trying to replicate the original schema of the ballad as outlined above (p. 13). Zimmermann states that the earliest broadsheets were ‘imported into the English-speaking eastern towns of Ireland, probably in the seventeenth [century]’.⁵² Hugh Shields has found evidence of their importation into Ireland in an edict from Dublin Castle dated 1593.⁵³ Bronson attests in relation to dating in the Child ballads that ‘[A]s with the ballad-texts . . . there is no dependable evidence, either internal or external for their *ultimate* age.’⁵⁴ It is possible by an internal examination of the content to at least make an attempt to date a ballad by referring to an event, or individual within the text e.g. O’Connell’s release from prison in ballad number 69 *The Repeal of the Union or the Liberation of Mr. O’Connell* can thus be dated post 7 September 1844 (see below

⁵⁰Zimmermann, pp 23-4.

⁵¹Shepard, p. 28.

⁵²Zimmermann, p. 21.

⁵³Quoted in Vallely p. 44.

⁵⁴Bertrand H. Bronson, *The traditional tunes of the Child ballads* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1959), pp xx. Emphasis added, henceforth, Bronson, *The Child Ballads*

chapter 5, pp254-5) but due to reproduction over the years it is almost impossible to give the date with any more accuracy and the appearance of some of these songs in twentieth century publications only proves their popularity and mythopoeic worth.

At this point some definition of the types of song texts we are dealing with is appropriate. The street ballads as Maura Cronin describes them are:

The descendants of a very ancient genre of popular poetry whose rhythm may have been geared to accompany dancing, ballads were generally built on four to eight line stanzas with alternate lines rhyming. This stylistic simplicity was matched by a thematic simplicity. Usually based on a single incident and underdeveloped characters, the focus was on narrative rather than analysis, so that all was black and white – spotless heroes, base villains – and no attempt was made to progress beyond the majority value system of the community from which the balladeer sprang.⁵⁵

Neilands gives a list of definitions which concur to a greater or lesser extent with Cronin's view. These range from that of H. C. Sargent and G. L. Kettredge, who define the ballad thus:

A ballad is . . . a short narrative poem, adapted for singing, simple in plot and metrical structure, divided into stanzas, and characterised by complete impersonality so far as the author or singer is concerned.⁵⁶

to this more complete definition by MacEdward Leach:

A ballad is a story. Of the four elements common to all narrative– action, character, setting and theme – the ballad emphasises the first. Setting is casual; theme is often implied; characters are usually types and even when more individual are underdeveloped but action carries the interest. The action is usually highly dramatic, often startling and all the more impressive because it is unrelieved. The ballad practices rigid economy in relating the action ; incidents antecedent to the climax are often omitted, as are explanatory and motivating details. The action is usually of a plot sort and the plot is often reduced to the moment of climax; that is, of the unstable situation and the resolution which constitutes the plot, the ballads often concentrates on the resolution leaving the listener to supply details and antecedent material.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Maura Cronin., 'Popular memory and identity' p. 126.

⁵⁶H. C. Sargent and G. L. Kettredge, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1904), p. xi quoted in Neilands, p 16.

⁵⁷MacEdward Leach, 'Ballad', in ed. MacEdward Leach, *The standard dictionary of folklore, mythology*

To this Tristram Coffin adds:

. . . ballads are individually composed, and are most often fed down to the folk from a somewhat more highly educated stratum of society. . . .⁵⁸

Neilands disagrees with the idea that the broadside ballads might be ‘fed down to the folk’ unless Coffin was speaking about the ballad-tales which the Harvard professor of Rhetoric and Oratory F. J. Child (1825-96) collected in his anthologies *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Boston, 1857-61). Thus he distinguishes between the popular ballads and those ‘traditional ballads’ of the ‘higher classes’.⁵⁹ As far as Irish street ballads were concerned the nineteenth century poet and songwriter John Hand says that:

The Irish street ballad proper was on every conceivable subject – embraced love, politics, religion, war, shipwreck, in fact took in the whole range of creation. . . . Indeed it was no uncommon thing for a countryman, on being asked to sing, to inquire on what subject, the company would wish him to oblige – whether they would have a love, or love-and-murder, a “rale ould Irish ; (meaning a national), a controversial [religious], or a sea song. We have often heard the question asked in this way, when the minstrel would take his cue from the majority, and treat them to what they liked best.⁶⁰

However, even Hand’s catalogue appears rather limited and Neiland corrects his earlier pique at the thought that street songs might be ‘fed down’ to the masses when he suggests that: The ballads on these broadsides were of various origins – some were written specifically for that medium, others came from the oral song tradition and others from the theatre and music – hall . . . So when talking of broadsides, ballad simply becomes a synonym for song.⁶¹

This magpie like approach to their art by the hawkers of the street-songs is well accounted for in the following passage from 1865 which shows just how prone street singers were to infidelity as far as staying true to the one nationalist muse was

and legend (New York 1949), p. 106, quoted in Neilands p. 17.

⁵⁸Tristram P. Coffin, ‘Mary Hamilton and the Anglo-American Ballad as Art Form’ in MacEdward Leach and T. P. Coffin (eds) *The critics and the ballad* (Illinois, 1961) quoted in Neilands., p. 17.

⁵⁹Neilands., pp 18-9 ; 35-6.

⁶⁰Hand, ‘Irish street ballads’ (2nd ed. 1903) p. 10.

⁶¹Neilands, pp 35-6.

concerned:

Street songs are in themselves of a peculiar nature . . . they may first appear in an opera, and then at once be heard at a street corner; or they may slide down from drawing room to concert-hall, and then on to the streets. Or again, they may be written specially for the streets, as are all the long ditties and ballads, which are sold at so much a yard, and which relate the exploits of Turpin, and Jack Sheppard in England, or of Freny [sic] the robber in Ireland. . . Or street songs may be national or party songs, as they often are in Ireland, where, before the Emancipation Act, the dominant faction, which never had much poetry in its composition, galled the sensitive and unhappy people by such songs as “Boyne Water” and “Protestant Boys;” and where the people, who are at heart poetical, sang rebel songs in return, of much greater merit in a literary point of view, and where “The Croppy Boy” and such ballads kept alive the spirit of enmity. The street song writers of Ireland commenced with no less a name than that sweet, childlike, loving Oliver Goldsmith. . . But Goldsmith was not the only illustrious Irishman who wrote street songs. Tom Moore was equally popular. Curran wrote some, and Cullanan, Davis, Denis F. MacCarthy, Ferguson, and others since . . . Sometimes the songs of the street are “nigger,” or Ethiopian, and a company of “blacks” got up for the nonce perform. I saw some at Charing Cross last week, not genuine “sables,” however, but they seemed doing a good trade . . . I am not old enough to remember the great street popularity of “Cherry Ripe,” but I have a vivid recollection of “Jim Crow” “Yankee Doodle,” etc., as street songs.⁶²

It goes without saying where the above contributor’s political sympathies lay, but he does show that the scope of the street singer was broad and was not confined to the political ballads which because of their supposed relevance to the identity forming cause have received most of the scholars’ attention. Although the writer is obviously writing about London in 1865 he alludes to being present in Dublin between 1846-8 and evidence of the spread of Blackface is contained in newspaper articles and advertisements which promoted various tours of ‘Ethiopian’ minstrels from the 1840s⁶³ onwards and which culminated with Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924) complaining

⁶²Anon., ‘Street Songs and their Singers’, in *St. James Magazine*, vol., 13 (London, 1865), pp 190-5.

⁶³The earliest reference I have found regarding Blackface is *Saunders’s Newsletter* 3 Mar. 1840 which writes ‘the Annual Ball for the Relief of the Sick and Indigent Room-keepers at the Rotundo. called ‘the Scratchibowwow family’ ; they circulated a ludicrous bill of their performance, and were uncommonly well dressed, they consisted of four Niggers, dressed in New York fashion playing each a different instrument – namely, fiddle, flute, tambourine, and triangle’ ; the *Warder* 7 Mar. carries the same review almost word for word but includes that one of the Scratchibowwow’s was Mr. Brophy the dentist. *Thoms Directory* 1838 Patrick Brophy State Dentist. 64 Dawson St.); *Freeman’s Journal*, 6 July 1849, reviews a performance of the Blackface dancer Boz’s Juba.

in 1889 that:

it is a sad fact that the Christy Minstrel songs are driving the superb Irish folk-music out of sight and out of mind. In the neighbourhood of the towns, the 'darkie' invasion has been fearfully successful. It is now only in the harvest-field, and in remote districts where the melodies sacred to burnt cork are still an unknown luxury, that the genuine rig of the Irish style is preserved . . .⁶⁴

Thus from this short survey of the contemporary literature we can see that popular street songs, or as they are more commonly called broadside ballads, because of the medium of their production, might be confined by the printing process as to length and number of verses they contained⁶⁵ also covered a wide range of styles and subject-matter. Stanford raises another very important issue, this being the cleavage between the rural and the urban. I would not make any hard and fast distinction between the music of the peasants and that of the urban lower classes who were the target audience of the song pedlars because reification into hermetically sealed cultural blocs stifles imaginative investigation. William Allingham does make such a separation when he writes of that chap book he bought in some country town on fair or market day:

Here is our bundle – some ten dozen of the ordinary street ballads of Ireland; comprising, we have reason to think, specimens of almost every sort at present in vogue in the rural districts ; that is to say, all Ireland, except two or three of the largest towns with their immediate neighbourhoods, which have local and *towny* ballads of their own.⁶⁶

However, one of the songs that Allingham quotes is *The Irish emigrant's address to his Irish landlord* which is sung to the air of *Oh ! Susanna don't you cry for me* and which he says he purchased 'from two women, singing it loud and shrill . . . they appeared to have plenty of eager customers, and more attentive listeners'.⁶⁷

Sommers Smith also notes that there was some appropriation of European musical styles by Irish 'traditional' musicians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which was eagerly adopted by their audiences.⁶⁸ I am not suggesting that there was no

⁶⁴C. V. Stanford, lecture to the Board of Education 1889 quoted by Michael Murphy, 'Race, nation and empire : in the Irish music of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford', in R. Pine, ed., *Music in Ireland 1848-1998* (Cork, 1998), p. 52.

⁶⁵Neilands, pp 31-9.

⁶⁶William Allingham, 'Irish ballad singers and Irish street ballads' p. 363.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Sommers Smith in Tymoczko and Ireland (eds), *Language and tradition in Ireland* . . . pp 105-6.

division *vis-a-vis* the rural and the urban or that English language and Blackface songs were not predominantly the product of an urban culture, but I believe that Allingham's evidence regarding the performance and reception of this type of song gives impetus to my thesis which argues towards a more amorphous and porous Irish culture in the mid-nineteenth century than the one to which we have been heretofore treated. Cronin provides a good description of how this process of ballad dispersal could have taken place and traces the movements of a number of ballad mongers who came to the attention of Dublin castle.⁶⁹ Neilands gives an excellent critique of Zimmermann's question 'what is an Irish Ballad?'⁷⁰ and deconstructs the ten point list of criteria that Zimmermann has come up with to try to define this elusive object. However, for our purposes there is only one point that is salient and this is the one entitled 'Language'. Neilands contends, and I agree with him that '[T]he broadside came to Ireland from England⁷¹ and so from the first was associated with the English language . . . as the nineteenth century progressed, fewer and fewer people in Ireland, except in the remoter rural areas, spoke Irish as their first tongue and many could not understand it at all.'⁷² It is this aspect of the street songs that I will explore further as Irish nationalism sought to impose a sense of cultural distinctiveness and homogeneity upon an largely regionalist population that was in the process of transition as far as language was concerned. It was the place of honour accorded to harp music collected by Bunting and the work of the romantic antiquarians following in the footsteps of their European counterparts which led to the identification of the peasant fiddle and pipe music eulogised by Davis⁷³ and which he came to identify with the *volk* thus establishing the airs associated with this 'class' as the definitive category of Irish music and creating a division between this 'traditional' music as sacred while the anglo-Irish or urban music, street-song as well as art music existed on the level of the profane.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Murphy, 'The ballad singer and the role of the seditious ballad in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', pp 79-102.

⁷⁰G. D. Zimmermann, 'What is an Irish Ballad', in *Irish Folk Music Studies*, No. 3 (Dublin 1976-81), pp. 5-17.

⁷¹Neilands, p.46; Zimmermann, p. 21; Velally p. 44.

⁷²Neilands, pp 46-7.

⁷³ *Thomas Davis Prose Writings*, ed. T. W. Rolleston (London, c1890), pp 188-9.

⁷⁴D. M. Newman, 'Epilogue : paradigms and stories' in Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman, and Daniel. M. Neuman (eds.), *Ethnomusicology and modern music history* (Urbana, 1993), p. 269.

The ballad collections that this thesis is built upon, analysing subjects as diverse as love and marriage, domestic economy, religious controversy etc. are quite scattered and fragmented and are located in a number of different libraries, in various formats. Where it was possible, I consulted the ballads in hard-copy at first hand; where this was not possible I consulted secondary sources and the Broadside Ballads Database of the Bodleian Library, in Oxford University. This database has proved extremely useful as it contains scanned images of over 25, 000 separate items out of an estimated 30,000 ballads which the library has in various collections. This indexed catalogue contains two types of records; firstly there is the sheet record which describes the physical object; printing, illustration, and any damage or other added elements such as manuscript notes. Secondly is the ballad record which describes the text of the songs printed on the sheets; title, first line, subjects, authors and performers if named.⁷⁵ Examples of these balladsheets can be seen in appendix A. For my purposes the Bodleian's Harding collection, Firth collection and Johnson collection have been the most useful from which I estimate that I have culled around 300 ballads out of a total of 719 texts which can be accessed merely by entering Ireland into the database search engine.⁷⁶ However, many of these same ballads I have been able to locate in either hard-copy or in some, admittedly rare, cases as audio versions. The White collection in the Early Printed Books Library of Trinity College Dublin is extremely useful. This is a three volume collection brought together by John Davis White (1820-1893) of Cashel which contains 887 songs, many of which comment on the military and military campaigns ranging from Napoleon to the Crimea to the Sepoy rebellion. It is particularly useful for songs concerned with the mundane realities of everyday life and of religious controversy, themes which are explored in chapters 4 and 5. Again the Early Printed Books Library provided material in the form of satirical and political ballads which appeared during the debates which raged at the time of the Union. These are scattered throughout the Lecky, Crofton and miscellaneous collections, but W. J. McCormack's work allows access to this valuable source.⁷⁷ Dublin City Public Library, Pearse st. holds the Gilbert collection of Irish printed ballad sheets in the Dublin and

⁷⁵<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ballads/> [9 September 2005]

⁷⁶<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ballads/> [9 September 2005]

⁷⁷W. J. McCormack, *The pamphlet debate on the union between Great Britain and Ireland* . . .

Irish Collections which contains several hundred ballads with the Dublin printers Nugent, Brereton, Birmingham well represented and which cover a wide variety of interests ranging from religious controversy and social reforms to fashion and new technologies. As Maura Cronin has indicated the Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers, Outrage Reports (CSORP) in the National Archives contains a number of ballads which were sent to Dublin Castle from the regions because of their perceived inflammatory or seditious content. The Irish Traditional music archive has a comprehensive library of secondary sources and a particularly useful audio library where versions of a number of the ballads which survived from the relevant period can be accessed thanks to the work of Alan Lomax and Peter Kennedy for the BBC in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, the song books, garlands, pamphlets, newspapers and periodicals and private papers with hand-copied song manuscripts which are held in the National Library of Ireland proved to be an invaluable source. Duplication between, as well as within, the different collections often occurs and there are frequently song-texts which are almost identical save for some minor changes, in place-names, or characters or song titles; the number of titles which deal with religious controversy spring to mind e.g. *Mary's conversion*, being similar in content to *A dialogue between a Protestant gentleman and a member of the Roman Catholic Church*, which in turn is to a great extent *The lovers' discussion*. Where this has happened I have tried to take note and give the location of similar text without reproducing them. Details regarding the whereabouts and provenance of the ballads precede the text and take the following format: title, printer, place of publication and date (where available), collection and shelfmark/call number e.g. *The blighted flower*, Printer : Sharp, J (London) c1845, Harding B 11 (2343).

The following work then, begins with a discussion of the current theoretical understanding of the concepts of nationalism and identity construction. Essential to the idea of the nation is the idea of solidarity or discreteness that can only come from being able to define oneself and to recognise one's individuality. As Thomas Davis said, 'the first step to nationality is the open and deliberate recognition of it by the people

themselves'.⁷⁸ It is this awakening to self-consciousness that comes under examination in the first chapter. Chapter 1 therefore is a literature review which also provides an assessment of the concept of nationalism as it is currently understood by historians and social scientists, concentrating on the work of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and A. D. Smith. As I have already said I contend that in the nineteenth century the people that we have come to know now as the Irish and the culture that we know consider as Irish were to a certain extent unformed; of course the people and the cultures associated with them existed, but in an era of justification for self-determination on the grounds of nationality, neither had been reified to the point that their claims for international recognition were taken seriously. Chapter 1 also contains a brief outline of the gradual rise of Irish music and song to a place of prestige in the stock of cultural nationalism as this was initially envisioned by Davis. It then looks at how Douglas Hyde approached the same topic in his quest towards de-Anglicisation which culminated in the first Feis Ceoil in 1897. This chapter seeks to provide the historical context for the growth of the idea of the nation and nationalism; some of the problems that nineteenth century Irish cultural nationalists encountered in the pursuit of their goals particularly with the decline in the Irish language and how this led to the apotheosis of Irish music and ballads in the hierarchy of attributes cultural nationalists cherished and the consequential reaction to English popular song.

Chapter 2 looks at the influence of two towering figures of Irish music, Thomas Moore and Thomas Davis. Any discussion of music and song in Ireland in the nineteenth century must include some acknowledgement of the influence of Thomas Moore and it might not be too much of an exaggeration to suggest that Moore was the U2 of his day. According to W. H. A. Williams Moore was the leading contributor to song collections published in the United States between 1825 and 1850 and his *Melodies* are credited by Charles Hamm as being an important factor in establishing the music publishing business in the U. S.⁷⁹ This chapter is an exploration of the

⁷⁸Rolleston, *Thomas Davis prose writings*, p. 283.

⁷⁹W. H. A. Williams, *'Twas only an Irishman's dream: the image of Ireland and the Irish in American popular song lyrics, 1800-1920* (Urbana, 1996), p. 29.

importance of Moore in the creation of a sense of Irish identity and how through *Moore's Melodies* Irish music or at least a version of it came to represent Irish culture to the wider world. Although much of the research for the section on Moore in this chapter was carried out before Ronan Kelly's *Bard of Erin* was published, Kelly's work supports the main argument which constructs Moore as a complex individual at the crossroads of Irish identity formation. The legacy of Thomas Davis is then considered and his contributions to developing a sense of national self-consciousness through the pages of both the *Nation* and the *Spirit of the Nation* are examined. Davis was at odds with Moore regarding the sentiment that ought to communicate the story of Ireland as he saw it and instead of the romantic language espoused by the latter, Davis was convinced that a ballad history of Ireland recounting her glorious and proud past was one sure way to establish a sense of confidence needed to become recognised as a distinct nation with the right to follow its own destiny.

Chapter three brings us into an examination of the ballads and song texts proper. This chapter tries to answer some of the criticism that Thomas Davis aimed at the popular street songs. Although the political discourse of nineteenth century Ireland was a major factor in the development of the state, I would suggest that the impact that it had on people's lives is out of proportion to the level that people accorded it due to the concentration of the historiography of Ireland in this area. Guy Beiner's study of oral history and social memory surrounding the oral traditions associated with the landing of the French expeditionary force in 1798 in *Remembering the year of the French* throws a particular and welcoming light on the relevance of popular song-texts as reliable historiographical sources.⁸⁰ Oral history has become more acceptable to serious documentary based professional historians and the song texts whether these are the output of one scribe or are the structured recordings of a wider popular folk discourse attached to certain people or events can be seen to fall between both stools of documentary/oral evidence. Beiner's work is relevant to the whole thesis but is of particular significance to chapter 3. This chapter is a social history which focuses on those aspects of life, such as matrimonial relationships, work, sex, drink, love, loss etc.

⁸⁰ Guy Beiner, *Remembering the year of the French* (Wisconsin, 2007).

which have been seen, for too long, by historians as incidental to the serious work of their discipline. It reveals another hidden Ireland very different to the one presented by Corkery. J. J. Lee's *The modernisation of Irish society 1848-1918*⁸¹ provides information for marriage practices and the custom of the dowry and David Lloyd's *Anomalous states*⁸² is used to show how nationalist ideologues took control of the ballad maker's art in an attempt to dictate public discourse. There is a universal quality in the songs-texts used which speak of the conditions that prevail in every society thus in the minutiae of life the performance of identity is played out and here also it provided contested interpretations of representation, and a heteroglossia, in Bakhtinian sense, which might at times conflict with or at least disrupt the nationalist narrative.⁸³ These voices were anathema to the homogenising tendencies of the nation builders. The raucous nature of social gatherings among the lower classes has been well documented in numerous sources none better than the plethora of ballads which deal with occasions for celebration⁸⁴ but perhaps the greatest difference between the middle class nationalists and the people at whom these songs were aimed was the lack of any pretence towards respectability on the part of the people who inhabit and sung these type of songs much to the dismay of Davis.⁸⁵

The nineteenth century saw a pro-active attempt on the part of various protestant congregations to convert *en masse* the Roman Catholic population of Ireland; chapter 5 assesses the reflection of what became known as the second reformation through song texts. Marcus Tanner's *Ireland's Holy Wars* provides a broad sweep of the relations between the confessional groups on the island but it is Desmond Bowen's *The Protestant crusade in Ireland, 1800-70* which is the main secondary source for this chapter. For

⁸¹J. J. Lee, *The modernisation of Irish society 1848-1918* (Dublin, 1973).

⁸²David Lloyd, *Anomalous states, Irish writing and the post colonial movement* (Dublin, 1993).

⁸³M. M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination* (Austin, 1981), pp 270-1.

⁸⁴Séamas Ó Maitiú, *The humours of Donnybrook, Dublin's famous fair and its suppression* (Dublin, 1995).

⁸⁵*Nation*, 21 Dec. 1844.

many other British subjects the Irish in the nineteenth century were still as Spenser had found them, 'being altogether stubborn and untamed'.⁸⁶ A programme for their elevation to the ranks of the sober, mannerly, and God-fearing was undertaken by institutions and individuals attached to the Protestant churches in Ireland and by various waves of English evangelicals from the late eighteenth century onwards. This provoked a reaction from the Catholic hierarchy and the sectarian debates which ensued generated much newspaper commentary and many street ballads. Most revealing are the ballads which admonish converts from Catholicism who had the name *Souper* derisively applied to them. There appears to be a historical imbalance regarding the form which partisan commentary took. The historical record shows quite a number of street ballads on the side of the Roman Catholics, perhaps merely reflecting their numerical superiority. On the Protestant side, although there are some ballads which attack the clergy and the rites and rituals of the Catholic church, their weapon of choice in the propaganda war is contained in the pages of ultra-protestant periodicals, such as the *Watchman* (1826-8 & 1836-9), suggesting a more literate population as would be expected for a religion which promotes the Bible as the final arbiter and ultimate source of authority. Neilands in his treatment of two Belfast ballad printers, 'Mayne' a Roman Catholic and 'Nicholson' a Protestant, states that, although both published some sectarian songs they also produce ballads which did not tally with their own religious beliefs thus portraying them as hard nosed businessmen who would not let personal principles stand in the way of profit.⁸⁷ Reform of the populace at large was the desire of many activists on all sides, but how to go about achieving it was a matter of dispute. For the evangelicals it centred around the refutation of the trappings of Rome which merely provided a cover for folk superstition⁸⁸; for the Roman Catholic episcopate and scholars it was to be achieved through the new devotion to Roman orthodoxy which accompanied Paul Cullen's appointment as archbishop of Armagh 1850⁸⁹; and for some like Lord John Russell perhaps a less rigid adherence to religious ritual would do the trick as he held out the prospect that by granting them Emancipation 'the Catholics

⁸⁶Renwick, p. 4.

⁸⁷Neilands pp 85-9.

⁸⁸J. G. MacWalter, *Irish reformation movement* (1852), pp 163-6.

⁸⁹D. H. Akenson, *Small differences, Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants 1815-1922* (Dublin, 1988), p.

would become Protestants – at least . . . less Catholic, and therefore more English'.⁹⁰ We can take from this statement that if the English could be defined however loosely by their Protestantism then one did not have to stretch too far to conflate Irishness with Catholicism as was the wont of the Catholic bishops.

The major political events which occurred at the tail end of the eighteenth and in the first half of the nineteenth century are explored in chapter 6. The hope on the part of the British establishment to create a compliant population through political assimilation in the Act of Union is not as far fetched as it might now appear. Its enactment however, provides one of those strange quirks of history wherein those who were disappointed with the outcome before agreement was even reached, eventually came to see it as a mainspring of their being ; while those to whom it appeared to offer most became disaffected as its promise went unfulfilled.⁹¹ While both parties bemoaned the loss to Ireland's economy and prestige in the early decades of the century the Act of Union became the focal point of resentment for the Catholics⁹² and eventual emancipation, followed hot on its heels by the tithe war, became a source of insecurity for the Protestant people of Ireland.⁹³ The ballads in this and the following chapter reflect the development of this tension as appeals to Irishmen of every creed and hue to thwart the passage of the Act morphed into the division between native Gael and settler Gall which in turn became a large part of the actual sense of Irish identity against the wishes of the early nation builders. This hardening along sectarian and political lines can be detected in the songs that follow O'Connell's, almost messianic, career, which refer to mass Catholic mobilisation and Repeal agitation when read in the context of the songs of the previous chapter on proselytising. The other great socio-political event of the first half of the decade i.e. the Famine is considered from the point of one of its most

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⁹⁰*Times*, 16 June 1826. p. 4.

⁹¹Sir Jonah Barrington, *The rise and fall of the Irish Nation* (Dublin, 1843), pp 459-575 ; *The autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan*, ed. W. H. Drummond (Shannon 1972 [Dublin, 1840]), pp 340-50.

⁹²Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800 : conflict and conformity* (London, 1995), p. 14.

⁹³D. J. Keenan, *The Catholic Church in nineteenth century Ireland : a sociological study* (Dublin, 1983), pp 30-1.

lasting consequences, this being emigration.⁹⁴

Chapter 7 looks at how Irish nationalists were constructed as the ‘Other’ in the songs of the Unionist and Loyalist population and how they attempted to counter the popular propaganda that the nationalists disseminated as part of the discourse surrounding their own identity. The majority of the material for this chapter is taken from the *Union* newspaper which published many songs aimed at undermining Gladstone’s policy of ‘justice for Ireland’ and refused to see Ireland as a special case or region within the British isles. We begin to get the emergence of a very definite sense of Ulster unionist identity based upon a reading of British history which validates a separate ethnic community.⁹⁵ Reaction to Home Rule and in particular the Fenian threat saw the Irish become racialised in song just as the periodicals *Punch* and *Judy* etc., portrayed them visually.⁹⁶ Appeals to the *Shamrock, Rose and Thistle* present a wish for British identity but advanced nationalism towards the end of the century erected misunderstanding where people like Moran most wanted to establish their own opinion of Irishness. The purpose of the work is to analyse song-text content in order to elicit historical information as to the construction of a sense of Irish identity.

⁹⁴David Fitzpatrick, *Irish emigration 1801-1912* (Dublin, 1984), pp 28-30.

⁹⁵James Loughlin, *Ulster unionism and British national identity since 1885* (London, 1995).

⁹⁶L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels : the Irishman in Victorian caricature*(Washington, 1997).

Chapter 1

The difference that makes the difference.

When...two nations understand one another there is from that moment on only one nation. International misunderstanding is one of the marks of nationhood.

D. P. Moran¹

It is curious that there exist (that is in the mouths of the people) so few war songs and patriotic chants, and that very little hatred of the Sassanach is displayed in them. The very name of the colour green is not understood as having any political significance, and an Irishman who knew no English would not understand what was meant, if informed that the Green had triumphed over the Red.

Douglas Hyde²

Both of the above epigraphs deal directly with the subject of this chapter, which is the construction or recognition of a fundamental difference between people that lies at the heart of the nationalist project. The second quote which pays regard to the attitude of the people of Connacht towards Irish nationalism was written by Douglas Hyde in the 1890s. In it he candidly concedes that their lives and concerns did not revolve around the issue of Home Rule, legislative independence and the other issues that preoccupied nationalist ideologues. Yet this absence of anti-English sentiment to many Irish people born in the twentieth century would seem somewhat incongruent with their own sense of national identity. The earliest memory I have regarding this aspect of my own identity was that I had an irrational dislike of England and the English even though some of my family lived in England. There was something about them, they just weren't right, not the same as us. Like most of my age mates and peers as a child I would draw pictures of castles or forts and the biggest always had a huge tri-colour on it : green, white and gold - not orange for some reason, although it looked orange on the flag on the GPO, but almost everybody said that it was gold. The Irish castle was always bigger than the inevitable English castle which had a pathetically small Union Jack and was out gunned by the Irish too. I think that what I felt then is

¹D. P. Moran *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland* (Dublin, 1905), p.94.

²Douglas Hyde, *Language, lore and lyrics : essays and lectures*, edited by Breandán Ó Conaire (Dublin, 1986), p.69.

still the best description of what is meant by the identity politics of nationalism, in very childish and simple terms I had experienced my own sense of national identity in relation to an ‘Other.’ I found definition in opposition to something else. Without realising, it at the age of four or five, I was undergoing my identity formation in a Saussurian structuralist sense.³ I felt that I was Irish because I was not English. I was being socialised by a generation who had also been socialised within an anti-English *milieu*. When I thought about it, even as a child, I knew that the language we spoke was the same as the English ; popular television was made up mainly of shows from Britain and American ; popular music was an English interpretation of an American idiom with the Beatles and the Rolling Stones leading the British invasion of rock and roll around the world ; and in the field of sports many Irish people supported English soccer teams just as they do today. Tellingly, when a Polish friend who was visiting recently asked in company, ‘who won the league?’ and we all answered automatically ‘Manchester United.’ He replied, ‘No’. Who are the Irish league champions?’ the failure of Hyde’s and more particularly Moran’s project came into focus for me. I was living proof of Hyde’s conundrum:

why should we wish to make Ireland more Celtic than it is– why should we de-Anglicise it at all? I answer because the Irish race is at present in a most anomalous position, imitating England and yet apparently hating it.⁴

So this question of identity, then, was something which had troubled not only me but, when I looked into it, had troubled many Irish nationalists from, at least, the era of Young Ireland when agitation for some kind of recognition of nationhood and legislative independence was being formulated and tested. This in turn threw up a very important question for this dissertation: what do we mean when we speak of identity? This is the focus of this first chapter entitled ‘The difference that makes the difference’. In it identity formation is considered as a process, however, not only is it to be considered as a process but also as a performance played out upon fields of social discourses.⁵ It is towards this reading of identity formulation rather than any essentialist interpretation of inherent characteristics that this thesis leans. In any performance the

³F. de Saussure, *Course in general linguistics*, translated Wade Baskin (Glasgow, 1974), p. 120.

⁴D. Hyde, ‘The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland’, in C Gavan Duffy, George Sigerson and Douglas Hyde, *The Revival of Irish Literature* (London, 1894), p. 121

⁵Judith Butler, *Excitable speech, a politics of the performative* (New York, 1997).

player moves through a series of moods or attitudes responding to external social and environmental stimuli, initiating action, resting, experiencing themes and motifs, monotony, repetition, moments of crescendo and denouement. The performer of identity is not only the actor, but also the author, the muse and the audience. The cultural geographer Kevin Hetherington, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and the anthropologists Victor Turner and Arnold Van Gennep, among others, in his study of identity formation within new social movements, attaches great value to the idea of performance within utopian spaces. 'It is within these spaces', Hetherington suggests, 'that marginal identities become expressive identities through the creation or appropriation of a symbolic discourse of authenticity. . .'.⁶ This question of 'authenticity' is central to a study of the project of cultural nationalism in looking for the reasons why some literary and art forms were co-opted to the movement and others were rejected out of hand. As Joep Leerssen states:

[T]he definition of a *group* of individuals is performed by applying certain possible common criteria *whilst disregarding others*. In this sense, a group identity (and this applies to a 'national' one) is reached by virtue of the agreement to disregard those criteria that exist *within* the group.⁷

In this study I hope to explore some of these 'disregarded criteria' as a way of better understanding the processes at work during the construction and representation of a homogenous identity for the heterodox, regionalised and localised catholic majority population and the equally complex Protestant and Unionist population of Ireland in the nineteenth century through the medium of popular song. If, as Hetherington suggests, 'Identities... are forms of ordering... [of] ways of making sense of who one sees oneself to be and how one relates to others, both within a shared identification and with those outside',⁸ then the period and the medium of street songs and ballads provide the means for an examination of a historical contest for the affections and loyalties of the population in question outside of the of the normal confines of the political arena.

F. S. L. Lyons has written:

⁶K. Hetherington *Expressions of identity, space, performance, politics* (London, 1998).

⁷Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fior-Ghael, studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the Nineteenth Century* (Cork, 1996), p. 22. Emphasis and parenthesis in the original.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 138.

... my thesis is that in Ireland culture-or rather, the diversity of cultures- has been a force which has worked against the evolution of a homogeneous society and in doing so has been an agent of anarchy rather than of unity. By anarchy I do not mean simply the collapse of law and order, frequent as this has been in one part or other of Ireland over the centuries. I mean rather that the co-existence of several cultures, related yet distinct, has made it difficult, if not impossible, for Irishmen to have a coherent view of themselves in relation to each other and to the outside world.⁹

This is a statement with which I agree almost totally up to the point of coherency in Irish people's view of themselves and others. It could be argued that the Irish are all too coherent on this matter (at least in relation to their fellow inhabitants on the island) but rather I would argue that inconsistency and incoherence are in fact the abiding characteristics of individual and group identity and are the motive force in the dialectic of history.¹⁰ I conceive of identity as multilayered and context driven and the evolution of two nationalist (Irish nationalist and British nationalist) cultures in Ireland since at least the 1870s is the outcome of discourses which reified culture for political purposes to the point where Irish nationalism was advancing in the imagination of the Roman Catholic majority towards an unspecified goal. These complex multi-layered and contextual aspects of group identity has been given the title 'ambiguous identities' by the sociologists Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein.¹¹ These identities compete with each other over the dominance of a 'label' at different times, and the headings accredited to them by Wallerstein are those of 'race', nationality and ethnicity.¹² The concepts of race and ethnicity as social constructs play a great role in forming ideas of who certain groups are and how they came to be as they are in popular consciousness.¹³ Although race has been described as a biological category of limited scientific use for the social sciences,¹⁴ in the nineteenth century it was the pre-eminent category of distinction bolstered, in the latter half of the century, by the mis-application of

⁹F. S. L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979), p. 2.

¹⁰Kathryn Woodward (ed.), *Identity and Difference* (Sage, 1997), pp 8-13.

¹¹Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein *Race, nation, class, ambiguous identities* (London, 1991).

¹²Ibid., pp 71-85.

¹³Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and race making identities in a changing world* (London, 1998), pp 15-34.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 21

Darwinian evolutionary theory.¹⁵ In this view of things the Irish race was a branch of the Celtic race, a category of increasing interest for scholars and politicians of the nineteenth century, and this carried with it both positive and negative connotations (I will review some of the negative aspects in the final chapter.) Matthew Arnold was quick to point out the benefits that would accrue to the British character from the combination of the material Saxon and the spiritual Celt when the latter was accorded its proper place within the Indo-European cultural and linguistic family.¹⁶ Positive sentiments regarding the combination of racial characteristics were considered by Thomas Davis in his vision of the Irish nation:

Such nationality as merits a good man's help, and awakens a true man's ambition – such nationality as could stand against internal faction and foreign intrigue – such nationality as would make the Irish heart happy and the Irish name illustrious, is becoming understood. It must contain and represent the races of Ireland. It must not be Celtic it must not be Saxon– it must be Irish. The Brehon law and the maxims of Westminster, the cloudy and lightening genius of the Gael, the placid strength of the Sassanach, the marshalling insight of the Norman– a literature which shall exhibit in combination the passions and idioms of all, and which shall equally express our mind in its romantic, its religious, its forensic, and its practical tendencies– finally a native government which shall know and rule by the might and right of all these are the components of such a nationality.¹⁷

Here we can see Leerssen's act of 'disregarding certain criteria' for identity construction being adopted by an individual who ranks among the most influential of nineteenth century Ireland's nation builders and myth makers. However, Davis's idealism failed to taken into account another element of identity construction which had yet to be given as much import as the more obvious but ultimately less binding criterion of race, and this was ethnicity.¹⁸

Ethnicity has overtaken race in the modern discourse of national distinctiveness. The German sociologist Max Weber has defined ethnic groups as

¹⁵Luis L. Snyder, 'The idea of racialism : its meaning and history', in Ellis Cashmore and James Jennings (eds.), *Racism: essential readings* (London, 2001), p. 92

¹⁶Matthew Arnold, *On the study of Celtic literature* (London, 1891).

¹⁷T. W. Rolleston (ed.), *Davis's Prose Writings* (London, nd), p. 193 ; Richard Davis, *Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin, 1987), pp 241-2.

¹⁸E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780, programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 106.

‘those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration.’¹⁹ Richard A. Schermerhorn has built upon Weber’s definition, describing the phenomenon as being made up of ‘a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood.’²⁰ These theories establish the social basis of ethnic group identity through the reliance upon ‘subjective belief’ rather than any ‘objective’ concrete or innate characteristic of separation.²¹ Thus a historical narrative develops through both individual authorship and folk assumptions which create the environment for discourses of identity to be carried on. The value of history and myth in this social construction can not be overestimated, as Tudor has shown:

The term ‘myth’...does not, of course, mean fantasy or complete fiction. It means rather ‘an interpretation of what the myth maker believes (rightly or wrongly) to be hard fact’. Thus a given account can be identified as a myth ‘not by the amount of truth it contains, but by the fact that it is *believed* to be true . . . and it is generally accepted as true if it explains the experience of those to whom it is addressed and justifies the practical purposes they have in mind’²² . . . myth encompasses the total world-view of the group, and in so doing makes no distinction between past, present or future.

Davis attempted to replace myth with a national history obliterating ethnic difference thus delivering a self conscious nation; Hyde raised myth and ‘tradition’ to the level of collective memory ‘Tradition is to the nation what memory is to the individual. It contains the record of a nation’s experience. It is the foundation of a nation’s wisdom.’²³ So tradition, or perhaps more accurately culture (by this I mean customs, beliefs, values and social practices such as rituals and ceremonies) formed a central plank in the construction of the nation as far as establishing this idea in the minds of the population at large came to know it. As Michael Pickering says:

Cultural experience generates our identity to the extent that it creates an appearance of similarity among those who more or less share it, who seem to

¹⁹Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (eds.), Max Weber, *Economy and society* (Berkeley : 1968), p. 389.

²⁰R. A. Schermerhorn, *Comparative ethnic relations : a framework for theory and research* (Chicago, 1978), p. 12.

²¹Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and race...*, pp 15-20.

²²H. Tudor, *Political myth* (London, 1972), pp 17 & 138. quoted in James Loughlin, *Ulster unionism and British national identity Since 1885* (London, 1995), p. 1.

²³Douglas Hyde, *Douglas Hyde Pamphlets* (Dublin, 1918), p. 2443.

belong to it and feel at home within it. Culture is in this way the experience of belonging.²⁴

This ‘experience of belonging’, is most easily understood through the categories of race and ethnicity. These are two sides of a triangle of group identification which is completed by the political concept of nationality. The debate surrounding the origins and provenance of nations and nationalism, as this is carried out in the academy, can be divided into two ideological camps who are sometimes termed ‘primordialists’ and ‘modernists’. Primordialists regard the nation as real and based upon the historical fact of the existence of self-aware distinct cultural or religious units, which can be traced back through time into the earliest records of history. Modernists present the nation as a construct, due largely to the influence of the processes of modernisation, industrialisation and the rise of capitalist economies. Anthony D. Smith defends the primordial concept of the nation which he thus defines : [A] nation is a named community of history and culture, possessing a unified territory, economy, mass education system and common legal rights.²⁵ Adrian Hastings also argues the primordialist position at least in tracing the origins of nations to the medieval rather than the modern period, in which ethnicities (groups of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language) may develop into a nation although he does admit that: A nation is a far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity. Formed from one or more ethnicities, and normally identified by a literature of its own, it possesses or claims the right to political identity and autonomy as a people, together with the control of a specific territory . . .²⁶

However, he subsequently weakens this position stating that ‘[I]n practice nationalism is strong only in particularist terms, deriving from the belief that one’s own *ethnic or national* tradition is especially valuable and needs to be defended at almost any cost . . .’.²⁷ By conflating the concepts of ethnic and nation he nullifies the importance of self-consciousness, an element in the construction of the nation which I believe is essential. As John Hutchinson said when writing about cultural traits as

²⁴Michael Pickering, *Stereotyping the politics of representation* (New York, 2001), p 80.

²⁵Anthony D. Smith, ‘The origins of nations’, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 12, 3 (July,1989), pp 340-67.

²⁶Adrian Hastings, *The construction of nationhood, ethnicity, religion,, and nationalism* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 3.

²⁷Ibid., p. 4. emphasis added.

indicators of national identity, ‘it is *awareness* of having a common culture of origins that constitutes nationality’.²⁸ Therefore, without totally rejecting the primordialist argument I prefer to adopt the modernist approach in my treatment of the formation of a sense of Irish identity during the nineteenth century. Two of the most oft quoted thinkers in the area of nationalism over the last half a century are Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, both of whom agree about the relatively recent emergence of nationalism. Gellner’s theory of nationalism first encountered in *Thought and change* (1965) and further refined in *Nations and nationalism* (1983) proposes that it is a modern phenomenon brought about by the twin processes of modernisation and industrialisation. It is an overwhelmingly functionalist theory suggesting that in order to fulfil the needs of industrialisation some societies embarked on a project of popularising distinct aspects of history and local cultures and formulating these into a coherent system, a high culture which, where successful, becomes the basis for eventual nation formation.²⁹ His central thesis is that in industrial societies a high level of education is necessary, a literate population being required to enable individuals to substitute for one another, for training purposes and for replacement within the workforce.³⁰ In the modern period it has come to be recognised and accepted that where there is a cultural, ethnic, religious or racial difference between the ruling class and the mass of the people conditions are ripe for nationalist sentiment to develop.³¹ Some critics of Gellner have focussed on what is termed his reductionist model of nationalism with his over reliance upon functionalism and the inordinate place, within his theory, given to education as the driving force for nationalism.³² However, when he argues:[T]he importance of the “national” differentiation, of what are in effect cultural definitions of group membership, hinges on the fact that development requires, above all, education, that it is in effect education which confers real citizenship, and that education must be in some medium, some culture, some “language”,³³ his case must be seen as having some merit. Later Gellner argues even more forcefully:

The employability, dignity, security and self-respect of individuals, typically and for the majority of men, now hinges on their *education*; and the limits of the

²⁸John Hutchinson, *Modern nationalism* (London, 1994), 11. emphasis in original.

²⁹Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), p.124.

³⁰Ibid., pp 35-8.

³¹Ibid., p. 1.

³²John A. Hall (ed.), *State of the nation, Ernest Gellner and the theory of nationalism* (Cambridge, 1998).

³³Ernest Gellner, *Thought and change* (London, 1965), p. 172

culture within which they were educated are also the limits of the world within which they can, morally and professionally, breathe. A man's education is by far his most precious investment, and in effect confers his identity on him. Modern man is not loyal to a monarch or a land or a faith, whatever he may say, but to a culture.³⁴

I think that education in such instances should not be confined to purely formal schooling but should be considered as part of the wider process of socialisation. Once Gellner introduces the idea of the 'limits of the culture' he crosses into the realm of Bourdieu's *habitus* or the, so called, structuring structures, which predispose one into taking certain courses of action or employing certain strategies taken from an inventory of past experiences to which the individual as a member of overlapping social groups, class, gender, religion etc, may have recourse.³⁵ The marriage of language and culture at first seems to pose a problem in the Irish case as the language of nationalism for most of the nineteenth century was the language which the population had been systematically educated in, this being 'English' i.e. the language for Irish nationalists of the occupier/alien power. Even Thomas Davis's axiom 'Educate that you may be free' was expressed in English. A seismic shift was taking place within the Gaelic speaking community with many parents actively discouraging their children from being Irish speaking monolinguals, Hyde, the staunch defender of the Irish language, admitted that such an ideal was impractical,³⁶ but it is the speed and depth of the decline of the language which is surprising. The national school system founded in 1831 carried out its work in English. Anecdotal evidence of children being punished by parents and teachers and the widespread use of the tally stick in schools for the speaking of the Irish language was carried out to condition the subsequent generation into speaking English. Sir William Wilde also recorded instances in which parents spoke to their children in Irish, only to be answered in English.³⁷ It was not until the 1870s and 1880s that the Irish language was considered of central importance to the expression of an Irish identity and then by language enthusiasts and academics and not by the overall

³⁴Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, p. 36.

³⁵Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, 1993 [1972]), pp 72-8.

³⁶Douglas Hyde, 'A plea for the Irish language', in the *Dublin University Review* June 1886.

³⁷Sir William Wilde, *Irish popular superstitions* (Dublin, 1972 [1852]), pp 27-8. For the use of the tally stick see, *Correspondence between the Irish Executive and Commissioners of National Education in Ireland with respect to teaching of Irish in Irish national schools, 1884*, p. 671 H.C. 1884 (81) lxi, 10-1.

population, who lagged behind the intellectual movement, as is only to be expected. As Charles Townshend mused:

It is curious, to say the least, that the modernisation process was distinguished by a Roman Catholic religious revival and the apotheosis of small scale peasant farming, together with the attempted revival of a dead language. Such administrative embodiments of modernisation as appeared in Ireland tended in fact to be condemned by nationalists as ‘Anglicisation’.³⁸

Language then, would appear to pose a problem for Gellner’s thesis. However, one of his critics offers a solution to this Gordian knot without hacking all of Gellner’s thoughts to pieces, as Ronald Findlay put it : For Gellner there could be no such thing as an ‘old industrial country’. For Gellner, nationalism was ‘exclusively’ an ‘ideology of delayed industrialisation’ . . . associated with a movement against an alien ruling elite.³⁹ This idea of the ‘ideology of delayed industrialisation’ would seem to bolster the argument put forward by John Hutchinson mentioned above, who has given some critical insights on the subject of nationalism. Hutchinson draws a clear distinction between political and cultural nationalism and argues that these types are often conflated by commentators, wrongly. In the main Hutchinson argues that nationalism is a transient phenomenon, bound to fade with modernisation. And he also holds that nationalism is a regressive response to modernisation⁴⁰. However, it is Hutchinson’s blocked mobility theory with its emphasis on the role of a bourgeois intelligentsia in promoting the idea of the nation as a path to political power,⁴¹ which is most relevant and would seem to reinforce Gellner’s argument when applied to his theory of delayed industrialisation, as Brendan O’Leary has done:

Gellner sought to address the problem that nations or ‘culture units’ tended to be smaller than ‘agrarian religious civilisations (Christendom and Islam) even though these wider civilisations could have furnished a shared language or culture. His answer was that ‘nationalism is a phenomenon connected not so

³⁸ Charles Townshend, review article, ‘Modernization and nationalism : Perspectives in Recent Irish History’ *Journal of the Historical Association*, vol, 66 (1981 London), p. 236.

³⁹Ronald Findlay, ‘Notes on the political economy of nationalism’, in Albert Breton, Gianluigi Galeotti, Pierre Salmon and Ronald Wintrobe (eds), *Nationalism and Rationality* (Cambridge, 1995), p 149.

⁴⁰J. Hutchinson, ‘Moral innovators and the politics of regeneration: the distinctive role of cultural nationalists in nation–building’, in A.D. Smith (ed.), *Ethnicity and nationalism* (New York, 1992), pp 101-17.

⁴¹John Hutchinson, *The dynamics of cultural nationalism, the Gaelic revival and the creation of the Irish nation state* (London, 1987), pp 1-7.

much with industrialisation or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion.

The uneven impact of successive waves of industrialisation and modernisation generate sharp stratifications between peoples that are not hallowed by custom, that are not easily politically regulated, but that are remediable through ‘national’ secession. Intelligentsias that experience blocked mobility, and who share cultural traits with proletarians experiencing multiple humiliations in urban environments, and discriminations in labour markets, provide the personnel for nationalist movements. They seek to establish their own nation-states if they presently have no feasible prospect of being fairly treated or assimilated – which Gellner seemed to treat as the same thing. These new nation-states will be modern, or at least they will be structured as such, even if in ideological self-deception the intelligentsia romantically believe themselves to be restoring their old nation. They will talk like *narodniks* but they will act like westernisers.⁴²

It is worth pondering for a moment the phrase ‘no feasible prospect of being fairly treated or assimilated’ because as we shall see in chapters 4 and 5 it reverberates through the history of nineteenth century Ireland like a thunderclap, with every action on the part of British governments being greeted as either concession or slight, a victory or defeat by the two main ethnic/religious groups at least since Union without Emancipation came about in 1801.

Benedict Anderson, like Gellner and Hutchinson, stresses the importance of literacy and culture for the spread of the idea of the nation or what he terms the imagined community. The nation according to Anderson is:

imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion . . . [it] is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.⁴³

Unlike most commentators who see Europe, from the late eighteenth onwards, as the epicentre of nationalist development Anderson suggests that the Americas are the real cradle of this phenomenon. Creole functionaries working for the European powers

⁴²Brendan O’Leary: ‘Ernest Gellner’s diagnoses of nationalism: a critical over-view, or, what is living and what is dead in Ernest Gellner’s philosophy of nationalism?’ in J. A. Hall (ed.), *The state of the Nation...* p. 43.

⁴³Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London, 1983), pp 6-7. Emphasis in the original.

of Spain, Portugal, even England are Anderson's equivalent of Hutchinson's bourgeois intelligentsia.⁴⁴ This coincidence in fact, makes a strong case for the type of nationalism that emerged in Ireland in the eighteenth and into the late nineteenth centuries as language, which many consider the predominant badge of cultural/national identity, was of little or no consequence in the rise of nationalism in Central and South America. In Brazil, for instance, Portuguese was the language of the creole nationalists ; in Mexico it was Spanish, etc. When looked at in this way the language question within Irish nationalism, which seems to pose a problem for Gellner's theory, does not seem so ineluctable. The crucial point is that a change occurred in the mentality of those whose loyalty to the mother country came under stress as their political interests were increasingly informed by whatever situation prevailed in their immediate surroundings. This localism inevitably diverged from the politics of a universal monarchy or burgeoning empire whose metropolis was some distance away. A good example of such a divergence of interest can be glimpsed in the actions of the men who formed the Irish volunteers and the Irish Parliament of 1782. These men considered themselves the embodiment of the Irish nation, yet their threatened revolt and the parliament to which it gave birth were predicated upon ideas relating to the rights of Englishmen and they rehearsed arguments as to how they ought to be taxed and represented as Englishmen and not colonists which stretched back to William Molyneux (1656-98) and Jonathan Swift (1667-1745). This strain of Irish nationalism is explained by George Boyce in his work *Nationalism in Ireland*.⁴⁵ For Anderson it was the endeavours of cultural nationalist innovators such as novelists, poets, and journalists coupled with the rise of capitalism and advances in print technologies which went a long way to create the sense of community or nation in the imagination of large diffuse populations. Therefore we can see that education, a disaffected intellectual class, and local culture are the three most important ingredients needed to create the right mixture for nationalism to thrive.

As the opening quote from D. P. Moran makes clear, the project that Irish nationalists and in particular Irish cultural nationalists were engaged in was, in a very

⁴⁴Ibid., pp 47-65.

⁴⁵D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (3rd ed., London, 1995), pp 123-53.

real sense, one of construction, of building a wall of difference or, to use his term, misunderstanding, in order to bolster their claim for some form of recognition as a distinct nation. What was at stake was the legitimisation of that claim in the eyes of the international community and therefore a representation of a coherent, palpable sense of national uniqueness was prerequisite for its fulfilment. Hence the process of identity construction became the focus of attention. Central to the process of identity construction and self consciousness is the imperative of dual recognition. In Hegel's essay *Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness*, the binary relationship of self and other become the motif for the understanding of the concept of identity. Hegel states:

Self-consciousness is primarily simple being-by-itself, self-identity by exclusion of every other from itself. It takes its essential nature and absolute object to be Ego; and in this immediacy, in this bare fact of its self-existence, it is individual. That which for it is the other stands as unessential object, as object with the impress and character of negation. But the other is also a self-consciousness; *an individual makes its appearance in antithesis to an individual.*⁴⁶

Even more emphatically in an essay on the self by the sociologist George Herbert Mead the dialectical nature of identity is reiterated.⁴⁷ For Mead the self is slowly revealed through social interaction and is realised through an inner conversation between the objectified self and the subjective perception by the self of experiencing the self from the point of view of other individuals or the 'generalised other'.⁴⁸ The self is fully realised by assuming the roles that the individual has thrust upon it from the outside world of experience but which are constantly re-negotiated to a greater or lesser degree by interpreting the actions, reactions, and responses to these dynamics and organising them into social attitudes by and for the self.⁴⁹ The ability of the individual to objectify itself originates through language or 'universally significant symbols' which provide a means for the communication of meaning⁵⁰. I would argue that the notion of the self should, in this instance, be conflated with the idea of the ethnic group⁵¹ and nation as designating a single unitary whole, one being separated from all

⁴⁶C. J. Friedrich (ed.), *The philosophy of Hegel* (New York, 1953), pp 399-411. (Emphasis added).

⁴⁷G. H. Mead, *Mind, self, and society: from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. (Chicago, 1967 [1934]).

⁴⁸Ibid., pp 154-6.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp 146-7.

⁵¹Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race*, p. 20.

other beings, while keeping in mind that this self-nation has relevance only for those who think in these terms. As Leerssen stated ‘[T]he identification of a group as a nation. . . can be regarded as an act of *separation*: a separation from all those who do not share that nation’s defining criteria.’⁵² Terms such as anti-Irish Irishman, *shoneen* or West Briton were applied to those who did not actively ‘share that nation’s defining criteria.’ It has been the propagation of this idea i.e. the nation’s discreteness, as the natural order rather than a historical construct that has been the achievement of romantic cultural nationalists.⁵³ Such a reading of the concept of the self as Mead’s, which corresponds with that of Herder towards that of the nation through the centrality of language, allows us to confront the two main problems as perceived by Irish cultural nationalists in the second half of the nineteenth century i.e. the loss of the Irish language as the rallying point for Irish identity; and as a consequence the gradual morphing of an Irish identity into a British one, or what David Lloyd calls ‘hybridisation’.⁵⁴ In order to tackle the first of these problems groups of intellectuals and educators formed organisations such as the Society for the Preservation of the Irish language and the Gaelic League to try to reverse the decline of the Irish language.⁵⁵ To combat the second, individuals such as D.P. Moran (and he, perhaps more than any other player engaged in the de-Anglicisation debate or at least the one that vocalised the issue in the most uncompromising manner), realised that the raising of a national-consciousness was the most important (I would suggest ‘political’) act that needed to be carried out.⁵⁶ It was not enough to be Irish one had to *be* Irish. As the Polish historian Maurycy Mochnaki put it while speaking of the Polish people ‘It is not enough for us to exist; we have to *know* we exist’.⁵⁷ This fact was so pressing that it must take precedence over the overtly political constant of Irish nationalism this being the winning of legislative independence. Moran outlined this position in *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*,

⁵²Leerssen, *Mere Irish*...p 19.

⁵³Hutchinson ; Gellner ; Hobsbawm and Ranger.

⁵⁴ David Lloyd, *Anomalous States, Irish writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin, 1993), p. 93.

⁵⁵D. Daly. *The Young Douglas Hyde: the dawn of the Irish Revolution and Renaissance 1874-1893* (Dublin, 1974)

⁵⁶D. P. Moran, *The philosophy of Irish Ireland* (Dublin, 1905).

⁵⁷Maurycy Mochnacki, *On Polish literature in the nineteenth century* (Warsaw, 1830) quoted in Michael Murphy, ‘Moniuszko and Musical Nationalism in Poland’, in Harry White and Michael Murphy (eds) *Musical constructions of nationalism: essays on the history and ideology of European musical culture 1800-1945* (Cork, 2001), p. 163.

‘...Politics is not Nationality...the nineteenth century has been for Ireland mostly a century of humbug.’⁵⁸ Moran said this as a consequence of the founding of the Gaelic League which had begun to stir a sense of cultural consciousness. His criticism of the nineteenth century is a criticism of the politicisation of Irish nationality which had a soporific effect on Gaelic culture and lulled Irish catholic society, the natural repository of Gaelic glory, into taking the wrong direction. As an astute observer and commentator Moran did not criticise the English for their actions or for who they are but, emphatically upbraided the Irish for submitting to English ways and misdirecting their energies away from self-criticism into displacement. The remedy, Moran believed, was at hand in the shape of the Gaelic League and the general Gaelic revival which broke with the discredited false promises of political nationalism in favour of a less tangible but ultimately more real national consciousness. Moran’s exclusive idea of the nation as Gaelic was an echo of O’Connell’s Catholic nation, as such it undid or perhaps realised the futility of Young Ireland’s aspiration for an - all encompassing sense of Irish identity in which ‘manhood, union and nationality would replace submission, hatred, and provincialism’.⁵⁹ Moran was uncompromising in his belief that it was the ‘Gael that must be the element that absorbs’⁶⁰, and division along ethnic lines was to be no obstacle.

Awakening the national-consciousness was essential in Hegelian terms for the self-recognition of the Irish catholic people in antithesis *to* the ‘other’ but just as importantly and borne out by historical reality for recognition *by* the ‘other’. In light of President Wilson’s Fourteen Point peace plan to help bring the Great War to an end, a war fought, rhetorically at least, to ensure the protection of the right for ‘self-determination’ for small nations, the work of the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, and of the Irish literary movement, Ireland as a separate entity almost seemed a given proposition. However, this was not always the case. The necessity to be seen as a separate self-contained nation had become obvious to Irish nationalists

⁵⁸D.P. Moran, *The philosophy of Irish Ireland*, p. 98.

⁵⁹Duffy, *Spirit of the Nation*, preface to the first edition.

⁶⁰Patrick Maume, *D. P. Moran* (Dublin, 1995), p. 3.

since Mazzini's snub to the Young Irelanders regarding their exclusion from the People's International League which he established in 1847:

Nationalities appeared to us to have been traced long ago by the finger of Providence on the map of Europe. Special interests, special aptitudes, and, before all, special functions, a special mission to fulfil, a special work to be done in the cause of the advancement of humanity towards which we all feel responsible, seemed to us to be the true infallible characteristic of Nationalities. . . We do not want to enter on a discussion of details; but we may candidly state that, having applied these leading views to the Irish question, it did not appear to us that the characteristics of what is, in political-philosophy, termed a Nationality, were prominent, &c. . . You do not point out some high special function to discharge, some important individual tendency likely to prove highly beneficial to mankind.⁶¹

Mazzini's argument was that 'the Irish did not plead for any distinct principle of life or system of legislation, derived from native peculiarities, and contrasting radically with English wants and wishes.'⁶² Britain's generosity in harbouring Mazzini when he was the *bete noir* for most of the regimes in continental Europe must be taken into account (although he did not shy away from criticising the British government's treatment of the Irish catholic majority). Also he may have been too much influenced by O'Connell's on again off again agitation for repeal of the union rather than the more radical calls for sovereign independence from Young Ireland. Whatever the reason the rebuff had a resounding effect on Irish nationalism, as J. J. Ryan observes:

This [rebuff] represented a damning criticism coming, as it did, from a father figure of nationalism, and it was one that pro-separatist Irish commentators had difficulty in refuting. Mazzini's comment implied that Ireland was too much of a one with English civilisation, an observation which served to emphasize the urgency of establishing a distinct culture.⁶³

This project then, which Davis had begun but was unable to complete before his death in 1845 was what later generations of cultural nationalists from Hyde and MacNeill, to Yeats and Lady Gregory and to the Irish Ireland movement and Moran himself, were,

⁶¹Letter from Peter A. Taylor, Mazzini and the Irish Question in *The Union, a Journal Devoted to the Maintenance of the Three Kingdoms of the Union*. 5 Nov. 1887; Nicholas Manseragh, *Ireland in the age of reform and revolution: a commentary on Anglo-Irish relations and on political forces in Ireland 1840-1921*(London, 1940), pp.55-62.

⁶² Bolton King, *Mazzini*, (London, 1902) p.106-7.

⁶³ J. J. Ryan 'Nationalism and music in Ireland', pp 112-113

self-consciously engaged in, i.e. an act of separation, of defining cultural borders and tracing outlines of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Where difference did not exist, it had to be invented.⁶⁴ Where native peculiarities, as Mazzini called them, were lacking they had to be fashioned from a fabric of tradition, usually woven with threads of rural authenticity, and patterned against templates first brought to light by Johann Gottfried Herder.

Herder's (1744-1803) name which is so commonly invoked with the concept of nationalism as to be almost a synonym, has left his most important contribution on the subject of 'identity' in his seminal work *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Treaties on the Origin of Language, 1772). Here Herder argues that what most explicitly makes humans unique among all living creatures is our capacity for language. Herder argued for the social origin of language and thought: Each nation, he said, 'speaks in the manner it thinks and thinks in the manner it speaks... We cannot think without words'.⁶⁵ Herder determined that the soul of the community or the national genius was to be found within the monoglot community. Hence, language and as the carrier of culture, culture too, developed as the environment taught, or perhaps rather, forced people to learn how to survive and succeed in, at the very least, an efficient manner. As Herder stated, 'Climate, water and air, food and drink, they all affect language...'.⁶⁶ Thus the objective real world experienced through the senses, was internalised, reflected upon and ordered in the minds of the individual and when given expression entered into the social realm, where it combined to order the reality of the group. Language or words were loaded with emotional meaning and were not mere signifiers of an object or idea. A nation's genius was rooted in the land; it was passed on through myth and history; naturalised as tradition and in some cases codified into law. Thereby it perpetually recreated an ontology conceived in and expressed in a specific language.⁶⁷ Herder's critique of the relationship between the German language and the German people is illustrative of this point:

⁶⁴Hobsbawm and Ranger.

⁶⁵ F. M. Barnard, *Herder's social and political thought, from Enlightenment to nationalism* (Oxford, 1965), p. 56.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p 57.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

Germany has only one interest: the life and wellbeing of the whole; not the sectional interests of the princes or the Estates, not the interest of this or that class. All these divisions only give rise to oppressive restrictions. We Germans still do not understand the importance of a national language. The bulk of our people still think of it as something that only concerns the grammarian. To consider it as the *organ of social activity and co-operation*, as the bond of social classes and a means for their integration: this is something of which most of us have only the remotest notion.⁶⁸

This passage indicates how far Herder's philosophy of national identity and consciousness was advanced. For although an individual might speak some form of a language, German for instance, there were many other pegs upon which he or she could hang this peculiar cloak of identity, family, kin, village, town or burgh. Each of these points represented simultaneous possibilities for self identity. The individual can be imagined as the focal point of an expanding spiral, at this point idiolect, dialect, and regional variations,⁶⁹ governed unsuspectingly by context (domains⁷⁰ and registers⁷¹) would seem to conspire against Herder's use of language as the determining factor for national identification. However, as we have seen Herder realised the real significance of language was its instrumental role in conducting social relations. What Herder proposes in this passage (under the influence of the dominant cultural view that 'diversity [was] the fundamental characteristic of the universal order'⁷²) is a form of vertical association, beginning with the prince and continuing down through the ranks, right down to the most lowly but highly prized peasant, all connected by the German language, in this case, which is rooted in the soil. This linguistic based identification would replace the horizontal association across the classes, which was particularly prevalent among the aristocracy and the literary classes where the practice of foreign customs and the speaking of foreign languages (almost overwhelmingly French) created an unnatural barrier between the rulers and the ruled.⁷³ This thesis became the cornerstone of the European cultural nationalist movements who could now proceed to

⁶⁸ Ibid., p 58.

⁶⁹W. H. Goodenough, *Culture, language, and society* (California, 1981), pp 19-32.

⁷⁰J. A. Fishman, 'The sociology of language', in P. P. Giglioli (ed.), *Language and social context* (Middlesex, 1975), p. 50.

⁷¹M. A. K. Halliday, Angus McIntosh, and Peter Strevens, 'The Users and Uses of Language', in J. A. Fishman (ed.), *Readings in the sociology of language* (The Hague, 1968), pp 149-56.

⁷²Barnard, *Herder...* p. 58.

⁷³Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (4th ed. Oxford, 1993), pp 52-4.

argue that the most natural form for corporate association was among those with whom one shared a common mother tongue. In Herder's terms this association was spiritual in essence, and language was the embodiment of a *Volk's* soul.⁷⁴

The timing of Herder's essay, highlighting as it did the organic roots of culture and society, his so called 'discovery of the people'⁷⁵ played a significant part in its success and in undermining the Enlightenment drive for universalism. The romantic essence of Herder's ideas i.e. the equality, perhaps even the priority given to feeling over intellect inspired Goethe, and the Grimm brothers, among others in literary theory and the new study of folklore, through focussing on the local.⁷⁶ The example of the French nation and paradoxically reaction to the revolution and the Napoleonic wars⁷⁷ gave Herder's ideas impetus as the educated classes in the Germany, Italy, Norway etc., sought to assemble from the hodgepodge of local cultural traditions national cultures based upon the identity marker of a mother tongue.⁷⁸ This criterion inevitably posed a great difficulty for nationalists in Ireland in the post famine period. Herder had noted in the German case that time or rather the lack of it was a crucial ingredient in forming a German nation, or a *Kulturnation* at least, when he said, "We are now at the furthest edge of the slope, another half a century and it will be too late!"⁷⁹ This observation had resonances for the Irish cultural nationalist movements about which they became, understandably, fixated.

According to Whitely Stokes the population of Irish speakers in Ireland c1799 (twenty seven years after the publication of Herder's essay) was approximately 50 percent of the overall population.⁸⁰ Using the most generous estimates, that of K. H. Connell, who states that the Irish population stood at roughly 4,753,000 in the year 1791,⁸¹ and the *Census of Ireland*, for the year 1821 which estimates a figure of 5,400,000 in 1804, we can cautiously assume that the figure for the year 1799 stood in or

⁷⁴ Barnard, *Herder...* p. 58.

⁷⁵ Karl Gustav Gerold, *Johann Gottfried Herder 1803-1978* (Bonn, 1978), p. 22.

⁷⁶ L. A. Willoughby, *The romantic movement in Germany* (New York, 1966 [1933]), p. 2.

⁷⁷ Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: its meaning and history* (Florida, 1982 [1965]), pp 22-9.

⁷⁸ Hugh Seton-Watson, 'Old and New Nations', in Hutchinson and Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1994), p. 134.

⁷⁹ Gerold, p. 26.

⁸⁰ Brian Ó Cuív, *Irish dialects and Irish speaking districts* (Dublin, 1980), p.19.

⁸¹ K. H. Connell, *The population of Ireland, 1750-1845.*, (Oxford, 1950), pp 24-5.

around the 5,000,000 mark. The figure of 2,500,000 people then, conceding to Stokes, spoke Irish at the turn of the eighteenth century. Garret Fitzgerald estimates that the number of people who spoke Irish immediately prior to the famine made up 26.7 percent of the total population of the country with the majority concentrated in the provinces of Munster, 47.3 percent, and Connacht, 61.2 percent.⁸² Ó Cuív contends that 23 percent spoke Irish as calculated in the 1851 census which gave the total population of Ireland as standing at 6,600,000 people.⁸³ So within a margin of error of 2 percent either side we can say that one quarter of the Irish people or 1,650,000 spoke the Irish language in 1851.⁸⁴ The figure of over one and a half million Irish speakers must be considered a healthy enough base for a language to survive. This being the case, why then was it deemed necessary that the language needed ‘preserving’ only twenty five years after this figure was produced⁸⁵; and how can this headlong rush to the use of English be explained? Behind the obvious answer being the depopulation of the traditional strongholds of the Irish language, the West and South West there lay other more oblique reasons behind the decline of the language in the population that remained in Ireland. To account for this decline Sean de Freine offers the sociologist Neil Smelser’s ‘theory of collective behaviour’ as a possible explanation.⁸⁶ In this theory, behaviour which is engaged in collectively by people is at variance with their traditional way of doing things. ‘It is’, de Freine states:

characterised by panic, hysteria, or utopianism, or by a mixture of these emotions. This behaviour is likely to occur at times of severe cultural strain. It represents an irrational hope of relieving the strain by trying to escape from the limitations of an intolerable reality. Essentially collective behaviour seeks to short-circuit the constraints imposed by the nature of things.⁸⁷

This theory is useful but is mis-applied by de Freine as soon as he creates a distinction between ‘unsophisticated peoples’ such as the Native Americans and ‘more sophisticated societies’⁸⁸; and also by his assumption that the behaviour is ‘irrational’:

⁸²Garret Fitzgerald, *Irish speaking in the Pre-Famine period : a study based on the 1911 census data for people born before 1851 and still alive in 1911* (Royal Irish Academy, 2003), p. 199.

⁸³Ó Cuív, pp 77- 93.

⁸⁴ Sean de Freine, ‘The Dominance of the English Language in the 19th Century’, in D O’Muirithe, *The English language in Ireland Thomas Davis lecture series* (Dublin, 1977), pp 74-78.

⁸⁵ The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was founded in 1876.

⁸⁶ N. Smelser, *Theory of collective behaviour* (London, 1967), quoted in de. Freine p. 82.

⁸⁷ S. de Freine., pp 82-6.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp 82-3.

for those engaged in carrying out this type of behaviour it is unquestionably rational. For pragmatic reasons it made sense, in an increasingly commercial and industrialized world, to speak the language which dictated the Irish economy, or the economies in which the majority of the Irish diaspora found themselves working and living, Hyde accepted this fact.⁸⁹ This argument is supported by Irene Whelan's study of the Protestant evangelical mission and in particular the difficulties the London Hibernian Society encountered in its drive to educate and convert the Irish Roman Catholic population through the medium of the Irish language:

The evidence of practically every commentator who investigated and reported on the state of the Irish language during this period, [1800-20] especially on its use as a medium of instruction, suggests that Irish-speakers were willing to bypass literacy in their native language altogether in their drive for education and economic opportunity. Indeed, so frequently did supporters and opponents [of the missions] alike comment upon this phenomenon that it strongly suggests that the very idea of literacy in the native language was a concept that country people were unable to grasp. For whatever socio-cultural or psychological reasons, reading and writing were with few exceptions seen as skills that could only be acquired through English.⁹⁰

Therefore the adoption of the English language can be considered a wholly rational or utilitarian motivating factor. Alongside this is the crucial point of the lack of available printed material in Irish and the inability of Irish speakers to make use of this material when it did become available.⁹¹ One push factor associated the Irish language with the twin ogres of dereliction and poverty. As Lyons has pointed out:

By the mid-nineteenth century English was already the language of commerce, of politics, and the law. Irish, by contrast, was coming to be regarded as a badge of poverty and of social inferiority. This lesson had begun to be driven home by the Catholic Church at the end of the eighteenth century when, with the foundation of the college and seminary of Maynooth, English became the normal language of the pulpit and of religious instruction.⁹²

The appeal of the English language, on the other hand, was aspirational and anecdotal evidence suggests that the Irish catholic gentry had perceived it thus for at least three

⁸⁹D. Hyde, 'A plea for the Irish language', in *Dublin University Review* June 1886; Tom Paulin, A new look at the language question, p.12.

⁹⁰Irene Whelan, *The bible war in Ireland, the 'Second Reformation' and the polarization of Protestant - Catholic relations, 1800-1840* (Dublin, 2005), p. 99.

⁹¹R. V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), pp 130-33.

⁹²F. S. L. Lyons *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979), p. 9.

centuries.⁹³ The general Victorian urge for respectability merely accelerated the process of abandonment.⁹⁴ These factors were adequately catered for by an assimilating national school educational system,⁹⁵ where up until the year 1878 the Irish language

⁹³ In Hugh MacCurtain's *The elements of the Irish language* (Louvain 1728) 'Preface to the Ingenious and Generous Reader' he sets out, '...to use all my Endeavours and Industry, to publish a more full and correct Grammar of the said language, now in its decay and almost in Darkness, even to the Natives themselves...It is certain, most of our Nobility and Gentry have abandoned it, and disdained to learn or Speake the same these 200 years past...' in D. Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde: the dawn of the Irish revolution and renaissance 1874-1893.*, p. 41.

⁹⁴ R. V. Comerford, Nation, nationalism, and the Irish language in T. E. Hachey and L. J McCaffrey *Perspectives on Irish Nationalism* (Lexington, 1989), pp 20-41.

⁹⁵ On the drive for the assimilation of British and Irish identity in the education system see Maria McCarthy, *Passing it on, the transmission of Music in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1999), pp 56-71.

was given no formal recognition.⁹⁶ For economic and social reasons the language shift from Irish to English were of central importance to an individual's life and therefore his/her identity formation, and as a consequence to national identity. As the sociolinguist Susan Gal has shown a contextual appreciation of the power relations that govern all social interaction gives evidence of the limited choice of linguistic register and by extension, of a language used in any given situation.⁹⁷ Adopting the English language was not, therefore, one of choice but of necessity. The pressure of the modernizing forces of industrialization and emigration to the urban centres of the English speaking world required a degree of competency in the dominant language.⁹⁸ As dependency upon the Anglo-centric economies increased, Ireland's position on the periphery, both temporally and materially, of a historic shift in the mode of production meant that the failure of the Irish language to keep pace with this change and reinvent itself as a literate instead of a predominantly oral means of communication, called its functionality in the economic sphere into question.⁹⁹ Another hurdle that the Irish language had to face was the willingness of the Roman Catholic church and hierarchy to carry out the business of the devotional revolution and the new drive for orthodoxy in English. This occurred ostensibly for two reasons. First because of the links between Protestant proselytisers employing the vernacular in the western regions in the early part of the century as we will see below in chapter 5 ; secondly because of the uncomfortable links between Gaelic culture and folk religion and superstition.¹⁰⁰ Both of these elements meant that there was no mandate or desire on the part of officialdom within the Roman Catholic church to preach the gospel in Irish. It can be seen then, that materially the bread and butter realities of everyday life, and psychologically the

⁹⁶ The first official recognition of the Irish language by a department of government took place in 1878 when The Commissioners of National Schools decided to 'grant Result Fees for proficiency in the Irish language on the same basis as applicable to Greek, Latin and French' This was the result of a Memorial forwarded to the commission by the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language in June 1878, Daly, p. 43.

⁹⁷ Susan Gal, *Language shift, social determinants of linguistic change in bilingual Austria* (New York, 1979).

⁹⁸ This point is amply illustrated in the *Report of W. Scott Coward for the Royal Commission of Inquiry, Primary Education, Ireland 1869* p. 97. 'The Rev. Mr. Lucy, the administrator of one of the mensal parishes in the Roman Catholic diocese of Ross, told me that emigration to America was setting in steadily from his part of the country, and that it was giving a stimulus to education, for the people were getting to know more and more fully the advantages the educated emigrant possesses. They derived this information from correspondence with their friends in that country, and from reading (frequently American) newspapers.

⁹⁹ E. Gellner *Nations and Nationalism* pp 19-38.

¹⁰⁰ Seán O Súilleabháin, *Irish wake amusements* (Cork, 1961), pp 146-166.

irreversible draw of social mobility gnawed at the very foundation of national identity in Herderian terms as he concluded, '[B]y forsaking it [language] a *Volk* destroys its 'self' for language and the national consciousness to which it gives rise are inseparably joined.'¹⁰¹ Davis was aware of this link and looked to Germany for inspiration:

The language which grows up with a people, is conformed to their organs, descriptive of their climate, constitution, and manners, mingled inseparably with their history and their soil, fitted beyond any other language to express their prevalent thoughts in the most natural and efficient way. A people without a language of its own is only half a nation. A nation should guard its language more than its territory—tis a surer barrier, and more important frontier, than fortress or river. How proudly and how nobly had Germany stopped "the incipient creeping" progress of French! And no sooner had she succeeded, than her genius, which had tossed in a hot trance, sprung up fresh and triumphant.¹⁰²

Douglas Hyde, perhaps with Mazzini's criticism in mind, also let it be known that the language and the subject of international recognition were intimately linked when he stated:

When we speak of 'the necessity for de-Anglicising the Irish nation', we mean it, not as a protest against imitating what is best in the English people, for that would be absurd, but rather to show the folly of neglecting what is Irish, and hastening to adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it is English. . . . I wish to show you that in Anglicising ourselves wholesale we have thrown away with a light heart the best claim which we have upon the world's recognition of us as a separate nationality. . .

Statements such as these suggest that the icy fingers of assimilation into a bland sense of British identity was felt by Davis, Hyde and their fellow cultural nationalists. Towards the end of the century the promise that Gaelic League held out was to reassert the 'native peculiarities', in order to halt the absorbing process.¹⁰³ Coterminous with the programme for revitalising the Irish language other markers of authenticity typical of nation builders, such as the publication of the native literary trove¹⁰⁴ and the codification of ancient native sports¹⁰⁵ were to be utilised in demarcating Irish identity. However, chief among these markers was a characteristic

¹⁰¹ Barnard, p. 58.

¹⁰² *Nation* 1 Apr. 1843.

¹⁰³ Seán Ó Tuama, *The Gaelic League idea* (Dublin, 1993 [1972])

¹⁰⁴ W. B. Yeats compilation and translation of the Ulster cycle is the most obvious example of this practice.

¹⁰⁵ Founding of the GAA 1884.

which all nineteenth century cultural nationalists were equally and undeniably proud¹⁰⁶ and this was in the area of music and song.

Davis had very strong opinions regarding what he considered the uniqueness of this aspect of Irish culture and its centrality to a distinctive sense of Irish identity (see below pp 87-8). While on the subject of folk songs in the English language Hyde has this to say: [T]he folk songs in English which have spontaneously sprang up and taken root amongst the peasantry– [are] poor and scanty successors of the noble army of those which they are displacing or have displaced...¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately Hyde was not comparing like with like, the noble army of which he spoke was the bardic poetry of the Gaelic Bards who were part of the elite retinue of the chieftain's household. He cites this example (of which I will expand on in chapter 3) of an autobiographical piece which was composed 'by a man who, when he was young, never spoke English but who in his old age, attempted to tell in English verse how he was robbed of the price of a little black pig he had sold at the fair.'¹⁰⁸

Text : D. Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde : the Dawn of the Irish revolution and renaissance, 1874-1893*; *The little black pig*, excerpt.

I went to the fair like a sporting young buck,
And I met with a dame,
Who belonged to the game,
And up to me came,
To be sure of her luck.
She tipped me a wink,
And we went into drink,
We danced a few reels,
And wan double jig.
But in the phweel round
She slipped her hand down,
And robbed me quite bare of
The price of me pig.¹⁰⁹

Hyde longed for a romantic image of Ireland similar in tone and language to 'the beautiful and pure lyrics of such masters as Moore, Mangan, Davis, and Griffin, as well as the songs from that golden repertoire the *Spirit of the Nation*' instead what he got was more of the 'semi-barbarous productions which are as yet only too prevalent in

¹⁰⁶ Davis, *Prose*, pp 188-9

¹⁰⁷ Daly, p. 112.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.113

the homes and round the hearths of the Irish nation.’¹¹⁰ The fact that this was a popular style, that verses like the ‘*Little black pig*’ stressed what was important and spoke of the concerns of the *menu peuple* and were indeed racy of the soil eluded many nationalist visionaries. What Hyde lamented is the degenerative aspect that he sees in the popular. Gaelic Ireland is idealised, the popular is vulgar, and materialistic, the popular is English. This dichotomy was tailor made to suit the political agenda for a ‘national’ literature that the literary Celtic revivalists pursued. To exploit this dichotomy and promote a similar vision to Hyde’s, Dr. Annie Patterson supported by A. P. Graves (both members of the National Literary Society) proposed in 1894 the founding of a musical and literary festival along the lines of the Welsh Eisteddfod.¹¹¹ Although the proposal gained broad support from the various wings of the cultural nationalist movement a rift occurred between those who envisioned an exclusively native celebration dominated by a concern for the Irish language revival and led by elements from the Gaelic League; and a less dogmatic view which concentrated on an aesthetic basis where excellence, and proficiency in the broader categories of music and literature would apply.¹¹² As a consequence of this split not one but two festivals were inaugurated in May 1897. An tOireachtas which had the backing of the Gaelic League and was revivalist in nature promoted traditional culture and music, innovation was subordinate to purity; the second festival was the Feis Ceoil. The Feis supported as it was by a wide array of Irish literary figures and musicians held out the possibility, in the words of Harry White, ‘of reconciliation between the ethnic repertory and the European aesthetic’.¹¹³ Its remit was according to Dr. Patterson ‘to promote the general cultivation of music in Ireland, with particular reference to Irish music.’¹¹⁴ The use of the word ‘particular’ rather than exclusive is indicative of its openness.

The first Feis was held in Dublin from the 18 to 21 May 1897 and was attended by ‘an ambassador’ from the Gorsedd and the National Eisteddfod and was considered an overwhelming success.¹¹⁵ It was divided into competitions and concerts with a total

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.114.

¹¹¹ Vallely, pp 121-2.

¹¹² H. White, *The keeper’s recital.*, pp 110-113.

¹¹³ Ibid, p 113.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Vallely, p. 121.

¹¹⁵ *Musical Herald* 1 June, 1897.

of 32 competitions held in the Rotunda Buildings and the concerts held each night in Earlsfort Terrace in what is now the National Concert Hall.¹¹⁶ Reports in the *Musical Herald* suggest that art music composed by Irish composers was set high on the agenda, however, traditional or folk music was not neglected and this made up a large part of the competition:

An original contest was the playing of seven pipers and singing by a vocalist of ancient melodies not yet published. These were sung or played into a phonograph, and the awards will be decided after an investigation of the airs. Eighteen airs were heard, and eight are believed to be important.¹¹⁷

The success of the Dublin Feis ensured its continuation but its second year is instructive as to its perception and the perception of Irish culture (in an expansive mode) at this time by a section of Irish/British society within a geographic space which has become known for its antipathy towards the Gaelic tradition. In 1898 the Feis was held in Belfast for the first time and succumbing to the competitive spirit the city did by the account of the *Musical Herald* outdo Dublin's efforts of the year before:

Belfast did exceedingly well last month....The Ulster Hall was crowded when a concert by the prize winners was given, and the performance of Sullivan's *Golden Legend* was another leading event. The reception given by the Lord Mayor was also a great success. A couple of Irish pipers played during the arrival of guests.... When the Feis was inaugurated in Dublin, nearly a thousand performers, including choirs and bands took part, but Belfast has improved upon this standard by the enlisting of 1,500 competitors, and the permanency of the institution seems assured...Our own correspondent writes:— The Feis Ceoil was, on the whole, very successful, the public interest in it continuing to grow till the very end....[the] Feis has been the means of awakening many reminiscences of Irish music, including the great gathering of Irish harpers at Belfast in 1792, which led ultimately to the composition of Moore's Irish melodies, in order that the old tunes might be preserved by having suitable words attached to them.¹¹⁸

The value of the early Feiseanna for Irish traditional music has been questioned particularly over the competitive aspect and the inappropriate settings for the performance of traditional music. Although traditional music did indeed play second fiddle to the high blown Irish compositions which conformed to the more prestigious European art music conventions, this is only to be expected of a project which was so

¹¹⁶ Vallely, pp 121-122.

¹¹⁷ *Musical Herald* 1 June, 1897.

¹¹⁸ *Musical Herald* 1 June. 1898.

heavily influenced and sponsored by the Royal Irish Academy of Music.¹¹⁹ That said however, as a series of events the Feiseanna and especially those held in Belfast provide quite a useful barometer for gauging the mood of tolerance that existed between the various traditions on the island. Consider the possibility of a Lord Mayor of Belfast being piped into an official engagement by a *uilleann* piper from any period beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century until the first decade of the twenty first century. The improbability of this occurring is illustrative of how elemental music, as a marker of culture, is, or can be manufactured to be, to identity construction. The political environment in the *fin-de-siècle* period diminished the likelihood of such accommodation taking place as unionists and nationalists began to pile the cultural sandbags higher and dug in for a long winter of ‘mis-understanding’. The perceived lack of musicality from the Northern part of the country, coincidentally the only part of the island to industrialise to any extent, had been commented upon by various authorities throughout the nineteenth century¹²⁰ and gave credence to a nationalist theory that equated the anglicised version of modernisation with a shift from spirituality to materialism and the losses which this entailed.

The dialogue necessary for identity formation, between national consciousness and international recognition was a conversation that grew in volume as the nineteenth century progressed. To become conscious of difference, as the prime characteristic of differentiation, the language (the element above all others, according to the dominant Herderian doctrine, that encapsulated the genius of a *Volk*) dwindled was the contradiction that had to be overcome by actively engaged cultural nationalists. Throughout the century the accent on national identity was continually shifting as is reflected in the discourses surrounding Irishness. From Davis’s all Ireland Irishness to Moran’s exclusive Irish Ireland; from the realisation of identity, the rousing into consciousness summed up in the tropes of slumber that appear in the ballads of the *Spirit of the Nation*, such as the *West’s Asleep* and *Awake and Lie Dreaming No More*; to the urgency of preservation, revitalisation, indeed resuscitation that was the *raison d’être* for the founding of the Gaelic League the stress on the question of identity was

¹¹⁹ McCarthy, pp 75-6.

¹²⁰ *Appendix to Forty-Third Report of the commissioners of National Education* (1876), p. 72. *Appendix to Sixty-Fifth Report* (1898), p. 146. in McCarthy p. 231.

relocated from Saxon to Shoneen. To create enough space in which to construct the 'other' and as a consequence the 'us' was the order of the day. This sense of a national identity was, as Richard Pine has pointed out in relation to music itself,¹²¹ in constant need of definition and final reification. Zealous nationalists set out to exploit the reputation of Irish music which had developed since at least the harp festivals at the end of the eighteenth century. However, to do this they moved away from the actual 'tradition' of harp, pipe and fiddle¹²² and the peasant folk song repertoire and engaged in a deliberate process of mimesis.

¹²¹Pine, p. 9.

¹²²Fintan Vallely in *Irish Traditional Music* defines traditional music as 'the term used to denote the older dance music and song in Ireland, this distinct from both modern 'folk' music, nineteenth century 'national' and 'popular' music, and early nineteenth-century 'parlour' national songs – although all of these have exerted influences on it.'

Chapter 2

Moore, Davis and Ireland.

The following chapter traces the influence of two of the most important architects of Irish identity in the nineteenth century, Thomas Moore and Thomas Davis. Davis was explicit in his attempts to construct an Irish sense of identity while Moore accepted his role as the Bard of Erin and let his muse guide him without having the fetters of a big idea such as ‘nationhood’ confine his artistic interests. Musical taste and historical trends have seen the works of both men ebb and flow in a changing political tide and while Moore’s works were a favourite source of pleasure and the occasional literary pun to Joyce it probably comes as no surprise, due to his domicile in Britain and his apparent unconcern for the political settlement of Ireland, that his works fell into disrepute among some sections of an increasingly strident nationalist movement. While recently, carried on a wave of patriotic fervour accompanied with a healthy dose of irony no doubt, Davis has been hailed as the author of ‘the world’s favourite song *A Nation Once Again*’ in a BBC on line poll¹ which probably tells more about computer literacy in the Twenty-first century and effective networking rather than to reveal anything about the aesthetic content of the work. Whatever the vicissitudes of history upon their place in popular culture Davis and Moore had much in common, not least, in telling some stories of Ireland in song.

Moore and his musical arranger Sir John Stevenson had the good luck and talent to exploit the store of Irish harp music that had been collected in the late eighteenth century so it is only proper to begin with their sources. The popularity of Irish music as in all artistic endeavours was, and still is of course, open to the dictates of fashion. During the course of the eighteenth century among the fashion conscious owners of the Big Houses and the elites of the cities the desire to assert oneself as being as ‘cultured’ as any within the realm meant that the music of the Irish harpers whilst remaining a staple within the musical diet had now to compete in the presence and with the performances of foreign composers of international

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment> [accessed 26/07/08].

reputation. The oft cited stay of Handel in Dublin and the première of his most famous work *The Messiah* (1742)² was preceded and succeeded by a host of European musicians and singers catering to the tastes of the Dublin *cognoscenti*. White suggests that European or rather Italianate music, although extremely popular, was regarded by many, including Swift, as unsuited to the genius of the Irish nation (for nation read Protestants) by some who preferred instead British ballad opera in the mode of John Gay's (1685-1732) *Beggars Opera* (1728).³ Swift's position is summed up in the following verse on the subject:

I sing of sad discords that happened of late,
Of strange revolutions, but not in the State;
How old England grew fond of tunes of her own,
and her Ballads went up and our Opera down.
Derry down, down, hey derry down.⁴

Comerford attests that many of the airs used in the ballad operas were of Irish origin and that Irish harp music was on the same programme as that of the international composers in many of Dublin's 'fashionable concerts' from the middle of the eighteenth century on.⁵ This being the case, we must ask why Irish music took on such a significant role for national builders from the mid to late eighteenth century? One possible answer is that men such as Sylvester O'Halloran (1728-1807), Charles Vallancey (c1726-1812) and Joseph Cooper Walker (1761-1810)⁶ were concerned with claiming for Ireland its heritage and halting the cultural theft which many believed James MacPherson had begun by usurping the Ossianic legends for Scotland. In this act we can glean the early rumblings of 'cultural nationalism' as a shared 'Gaelic' mythology was cordoned off for the sake of the nation. Walker, Vallancey and Edward Bunting (1773-1843) identified one aspect of Irish culture which they considered as being on the point of extinction this being the 'ancient' (and not

²*DNB*, vol. xxv, 34-5.

³White, *The keeper's recital*, pp 26-8. 'Ballad Opera' consisted of spoken dialogue, satirical sketches, and farce interspersed with music made up of simple popular tunes.

⁴*Old England's garland, or Italian opera's downfall, c. 1730* in P. A. Scholes, *The mirror of music 1844-1944 a century of musical life in Britain as reflected in the pages of the Musical Times* vol 1 (Oxford, 1947).

⁵Comerford, *Ireland*, pp 183-4.

⁶Emma Costello, 'Paradigms of Irish Music History' (M.A. thesis National University of Ireland Maynooth, 1998).

so ancient) music of the Irish harpers. This antiquarian interest led to the organisation of a number of harpers festivals towards the end of the eighteenth century, including the Granard harp 'Ball' in 1781, and the Belfast harp festival of 1792, which was organised with the help of the United Irishmen Henry Joy McCracken, Samuel Neilson and Thomas Russell, and was held to coincide with Bastille day.⁷ The date and content of the event therefore associated native Irish culture with the French Revolution. Boyce and O'Day suggest that Wolfe Tone failed to recognise the importance of this cultural event for Irish politics⁸ as his diary entry for 13 June 1792 records a derisive 'strum, strum and be hanged'⁹ in relation to this event. However, he also penned the following verse in his composition *Muses' retreat* which was sung at the Belfast Banquet on the 14 July:

Verse 2. Her Harp then delighted the nations around,
By its music entranced, their own suff'rings were drown'd ;
In Arts and in Learning the foremost were we,
And Ireland united was happy and free¹⁰

So Tone's attitude appears ambivalent as regards the worth of music for Ireland's cause by privately, in his diary, dismissing it and publicly paying lip service to the one aspect of Irish culture that had consistently been viewed in a positive light in an aesthetic sense since the Anglo-Norman invasion.¹¹ The efforts of various antiquarians to elevate Irish music to a prestigious position helped to inform the patriotic and later the nationalistic discourse which developed through various waves of cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century. Whether Tone's dismissal was sincere or a joking reference to the edict pronounced by Gerald Fitzgerald 11th Earl of Kildare in 1571 to 'execute the Harpers',¹² one can only speculate. I believe it was the timing of the rescue mission of the Harp Festivals in the late eighteenth century, taking place as they did within a milieu of patriotic

⁷Vallely, *The companion to Irish traditional music*, p. 182.

⁸D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds.), *The making of modern Irish history, revisionism and the revisionist controversy* (London, 1997), p. 8.

⁹T. W. Moody, R. B. McDowell, and C. J. Woods (eds.), *The writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone 1763-98* (2 vols, Oxford, 1998), i, 213.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹¹Gerald of Wales, *The history and topography of Ireland* (Harmondsworth, 1982) translated by J. J. O'Meara, p. 103 cited in Comerford, *Ireland*, p. 181.

¹²Vallely, *Companion to Irish traditional music*, p. 140.

fervour, which led Irish music to be inimitably tied to the political consciousness of nationalism. It should be remembered that this was not the objective of men like Bunting who was, after all, merely a recorder at the Belfast festival,¹³ but was the use that their researches was put to by the next generation of nationalist ideologues, people like Thomas Davis who idealised the patriotism of the United Irishmen. What had changed was the recognition of the local. Music within local cultures continued to exist without patronage as that term is commonly understood being, ‘one person or group of people who hold a dominant position of power which allows them to provide support or encouragement to some subaltern individual or group’.¹⁴ More importantly perhaps, it may have survived in the form that it did, due to the absence of interference or influence which must accompany such patronage. It is from this point that Irish music became more than a mere recreational pastime and took on iconic status within an emerging nationalist discourse. When Bunting’s *General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music* was published in 1796 it provided a reference point and permanent record making visible in textual and transportable form a part of Irish culture which had predominantly been performance bound giving immediate pleasure only and in a sense conforming to an aural tradition. This may not have been the first publication of Irish airs. Comerford states that ‘anthologies of popular airs identified as Irish (had begun) to appear in the 1720s’,¹⁵ but it possessed certain merits which earlier publications lacked. These included a stamp of intellectual authority afforded by the historian’s as well as the ethnomusicologist’s favoured methodology i.e. the examination of primary sources in this case the ten harpers who attended the festival, and the subsequent researches that Bunting carried out in the field.¹⁶ Also it was politically patriotically intact. In other words, Bunting’s *Collection* bore the stamp of *authenticity*, an essential ingredient in the cultural nationalist cookbook. The patriotic antiquarians whose romantic notions of authenticity invariably looked away from urban centres to the rural ‘heartlands’ in their attempts to forge a past and an identity for themselves had tapped a rich vein of indigenous

¹³White, pp 36-40.

¹⁴*Oxford English Dictionary* (9th ed., Oxford, 1995).

¹⁵Comerford, p. 183.

¹⁶Thérèse Tessier, *The bard of Erin, a study of Thomas Moore’s Irish Melodies (1808-1834)*, trans. George P. Mutch (University of Salzburg, 1981), p. 3.

art. The pieces rescued brought the culture of the hearth and the hedge into the light of the middle class drawing room as if they were some curious fossil washed up on the shore of civilisation. Moore's intervention, cracked open this curio and found that there was life within. However, Moore's own life was not without controversy and his place in the pantheon of Irish heroes has been called into question as the following obituaries illustrate:

[Moore] outlived love and popularity in Ireland. His genius is appreciated, and his exquisite creations are familiar as household words; but the shadow of English patronage and the stain of his long service to his country's enemies, have blurred his name and fame in the nation's memory, and even his muse does not now hold her wonted place in Irish homes.¹⁷

The latter life of Moore has been much blamed – too harshly blamed. He became the friend of his country's enemies. He worshipped at false shrines – this is the common charge...The judgement is unjust... While standing, as it were, over his open grave we confine ourselves to those sublime achievements of his genius in presence of which the most malignant criticism must be mute. Against their seductive beauty no ear was ever closed. To the thrill they woke no heart was ever insensible. The muse of Ireland was her only indestructible inheritance, and he became its inspired interpreter. The chain upon which his muse had shed a star was already broken. He was truly the EMANCIPATOR.¹⁸

Thomas Moore died in his Wiltshire home, Sloperton Cottage, on 26 February 1852. The above obituaries mark how polarised opinion within the Irish nationalist community was upon the character and work of the man who is still considered the bard of Erin. The first obituary from Gavan Duffy's *Nation* adopts the usual tone of patronising coolness with which that paper cast its eye over his life if not his work. The second, less calculating and more emotive, comes from the apparently unlikely source of the *Republican World*, a New York based newspaper edited by the exiled Young Irelander and founding member of the Fenian Brotherhood in the United States, Michael Doheny. Moore's position as the most successful purveyor of a romantic vision of Ireland, despite criticism

¹⁷*Nation*, 27 Mar. 1852.

¹⁸*Republican World* (New York) cited in the *Freeman's Journal*, 10 Apr. 1852.

from certain quarters of the Irish cultural and political world, went un-assailed internationally and until the flowering of the Celtic revival towards the end of the nineteenth century he remained Ireland's most recognizable and popular literary figure. Through Moore's *Irish Melodies* a hybrid version of Irish 'traditional' music was first brought to the attention of the world. Musically, besides the academic endeavours of the antiquarian collectors of Irish music such as Walker, Vallancey and Bunting the main rival that Moore¹⁹ had for the affections, honours and acclaim of the Irish people was Michael William Balfe.²⁰ Balfe (1808-70) formed part of a triumvirate alongside John Field (1782-1837)²¹ and William Wallace (1814-65)²² who gained international recognition for their exploits within the arena of European art music, with Balfe and Wallace regularly being hailed as the mainstays of English Opera with the elision of their Irish birth appearing to be non-problematic. However, Moore differed from both his antiquarian predecessors and the small coterie of European art music composers by popularising a version of the native music of the country married to English language poetry in the romantic style. Moore's Irishness, worn on his sleeve, meant that he could never be as fully integrated into English society as to have been referred to as an Englishman in the way that Balfe and Wallace were, but he was sufficiently pragmatic to realise that his identity was an asset in selling the *Melodies* as being authentic. Moore and his *Melodies* are a bridge between two ages within Irish identity politics, that of the loyal catholic Old Ireland tradition in which the process of anglicisation was thought of in a utilitarian light; and the later age of Young Ireland where the importance of emphasising a clear and strong Celtic character in the synthesis of Irish identity was deemed necessary in order for the moral claim for legislative independence to be met. The *Melodies* are indicative of the cultural shift that was taking place in Ireland throughout the nineteenth century and as such they provide a link that ties the worlds of Irish folk music, and the more genteel, aspirational drawing-room tradition, to the subject of identity.

¹⁹Although Moore's name is the one that people remember, the *Melodies* would not have found the popularity they did were it not for the musical arrangement of first Sir John Stevenson and later Sir Henry Bishop.

²⁰J. D. Brown, *The biographical dictionary of musicians* (Glasgow, 1886), pp 43-5.

²¹Ibid., p. 245.

²²Ibid., p. 606.

Thomas Moore was born on the 27 May 1779 at No 12 Aungier st, Dublin, to Anastasia and John Moore.²³ Both of his parents were Catholics in a time when conditions for this section of Irish society was slowly improving and John Moore's occupation as a grocer offered a degree of comfort and security beyond the means of the majority, evidenced by the fact that his father maintained a summer residence at either Sandymount or Irishtown, Moore's recollection being hazy upon the details. Moore's birth coincided with the years of heightened political activity which saw the rise of the Irish Volunteers and culminated in Grattan's parliament. An unprecedented and unrivalled sense of fraternity symbolised in the name of the United Irishmen was abroad in Ireland during Moore's formative years and in this atmosphere he absorbed a sense of Irishness that was positively coloured by the Protestant-Ascendancy culture dominant in the city of his birth. However, it was a city full of contradictions in which the tensions caused by the inter-relationships of varying social and sectarian strands gave rise to an unstable sense of self which stressed the Anglo dimension of its identity by claiming to be the second city of the Empire ; while its Anglo-Irish aspect was asserted in the form of legislative independence ; and its Irish character which sought to further its own sense of identity by associating with the radicalising influence of the French Revolution. As is to be expected of a person born at this time and into the middle class in Dublin he was influenced by all three strands of these intertwining identities which may point up why the complex nature of his relationship with the British establishment class became difficult for later nationalist nation builders. Moore's recollections of this period offer some explanation for this apparently unorthodox or unusual identity and subsequently for the two interpretations placed upon him in later life. As he put it:

About this time (1792) the political affairs of Ireland began to assume a most animated or, as to some it appeared, stormy aspect. The cause of the Catholics was becoming every day more national; and in each new step and vicissitude of its course, our whole family, especially my dear mother, took the intensest interest . . . Some of the most violent of those who early took a part in the proceedings of the United Irishmen were among our most intimate friends.... Most of these patriot

²³L. A. G. Strong, *The minstrel boy: a portrait of Tom Moore* (New York, 1937), pp 6-7.

acquaintances of ours . . . were Protestants, the Catholics being still too timorous to come forward openly in their own cause...²⁴

Moore's exposure then at an early age to the politics of the United Irishmen gave him a view of Irish society where a paternal Protestantism sought to remove the obstacles placed before the Catholic population as part of their wider programme for a union of all the people on the island. It was a vision pregnant with possibility but cemented to a particular period and set of circumstances, which Moore, in his absence from Ireland in later life, never fully appreciated. As a boy Moore's attendance at Whyte's Academy in Grafton street served two purposes. First and foremost it provided the necessary educational grounding sought by his mother who had ambitions for her son to become a barrister ; a fortunate happenstance was that, for this socially aware woman, it also brought Moore into contact with the children of the Protestant Ascendancy. As Moore put it 'there were advantages in keeping me...at Whyte's which my mother knew well how to appreciate'.²⁵ Secondly, the theatrical interests of the school proprietor, Samuel Whyte, presented a positive environment for Moore to express his artistic talents in the areas of public speaking, acting and versification. Moore's precociousness in the arts was noted and he is said to have delighted the attendees at the regular soirees that took place in the family home. Moore's stage debut occurred in March 1790, where he recited the epilogue 'A Squeeze to St Paul's ', at a performance of the '*Tragedy of Jane Shore*' given at Lady Borrowes' private theatre in Kildare street.²⁶ Moore also published his first poem *Zelia* in the *Anthologia Hibernica* when he was fourteen years old. However, it was with the thoughts of a career in law (at least in his mother's head) that Moore took advantage of the opportunities that had been extended to Catholics by the 1793 Catholic Relief act, which allowed him to enter Trinity College 2 June 1794 as *Pensionarius* or commoner. Intriguingly he was entered into the College register as belonging to the Protestant religion.²⁷ As a Roman Catholic Moore was still barred from receiving any financial

²⁴*Thomas Moore, Memoirs, journal and correspondence*, ed. Lord John Russell (8 vols, London, 1853-6), i, 18 henceforth, *Memoirs*

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p.11.

²⁷Trinity College Dublin, Entrance book 1794.

rewards for the prizes and honours that might be awarded to him by the college authorities. In his memoirs Moore's comments on his entry to the university is at variance with the historical record:

...it was for a short time deliberated in our family circle whether I ought not to be entered as a Protestant. But such an idea could hold but a brief place in honest minds, and its transit, even for a moment, through the thoughts of my worthy parents, only shows how demoralising must be the tendency of laws which hold forth to their victims such temptations to duplicity.²⁸

Why Moore denies his registration as a Protestant is unclear, it may simply be that due to the passage of time he had forgotten the exact circumstances of his entrance to Trinity, or, as one who had been regaled as a hero of the emancipation cause it no longer tallied with his own image of himself. de Vere White suggests a possible explanation for this sudden conversion to the Protestant faith may have been due to the fact that '[The] Moores would have been in some awe of Trinity, and might have left the business to a friend such as Whyte'.²⁹ There may be some truth in this theory as the records show that all of the entrants from Whyte's academy where the student's religion is recorded are entered as being Protestants. However, I believe that there is another explanation and that Moore's confession reveals a pragmatism in his family's relationship with their religion. Anastasia, by Moore's own account, was a devout catholic, however, his father was a businessman and the possibility to have any financial obstacles removed from his son's career path at the university would obviously have had its appeal. In his *Memoirs* Moore expounds upon this idea by declaring that the '(exclusions) from scholarships, fellowships, and all honours connected with emolument ; and, as with our humble and precarious means, such aids as these were naturally a most tempting consideration.... My mother was a sincere and warm Catholic.... The less sanguine nature and quiet humour of my father led him to view such matters with rather less reverent eyes.'³⁰ And so it would appear that some form of accommodation with Moore's religious identity for a particular purpose might not have

²⁸*Memoirs*, i, 29.

²⁹Terence de Vere White, *Tom Moore, the Irish poet* (London, 1977), p. 8.

³⁰*Memoirs*, i 29; Ronan Kelly, *Bard of Erin, the life of Thomas Moore* (Dublin, 2008) pp 31-2, views the insertion of Moore's religion as Prot. as a clerical error, however the fact that Moore recalled his family toying with the idea in his *Memoirs* years later and its occurrence in the register seems quite a coincidence.

been out of bounds. Thomas, in his early years, seems to have had a fairly lax attitude towards religion which added to the confusion surrounding his denominational status after his death. But the explanation put forth on this matter in 1895 by John Canon O'Hanlon, places the question of his Catholicity into some sort of social context when he pointed out that:

when a boy, his good mother, anxious for everything which regarded his welfare in this world and the next, had selected for his confessor a venerable priest named O'Halloran, who belonged to Townsend street old chapel, and who bore a very high character. That the duty of confession used to be performed by Moore twice each year is acknowledged, until having entered Trinity College, at the early age of fifteen, in a year or two afterwards, he felt the practice, however salutary, to become irksome, and notwithstanding his mother's remonstrance, he discontinued it. In those days, religious observances were not so frequent, and religious organization was not so perfect in the Catholic parishes and churches of Dublin as they have since become, while neglect of the sacraments was but too prevalent among professing Catholics; besides the associations and society, with which the young student was surrounded, were sufficiently distracting and demoralizing to account for an indifference...³¹

O'Hanlon's apologia is understandable from one who was trying to rehabilitate a character that had suffered at the hands of the Young Irelanders, and as the date of the article suggests the new wave of Gaelic revivalists, who were becoming more devout in religious as well as cultural matters. After accounting for the social and environmental impediments that stopped Moore from practising his faith, the former being his success which launched him into the circles of English high society which was overwhelmingly Protestant; and the latter the fact that in the districts of England in which Moore lived there appeared to be a dearth of Roman Catholic churches,³² O'Hanlon resuscitates Moore as a liberator of the Irish Catholic population:

Moore's services were great and far-reaching for his country and religion. Therefore, should every patriotic Irishman cherish his memory, and every true Catholic feel grateful for those bright effective sallies of wit and satire, so untiringly launched against the calumniators of his creed, and so triumphantly speeding the progress of civil and religious liberty.³³

³¹J. Canon O'Hanlon, 'The Catholicity of Thomas Moore' in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 3rd series, xvi (Dublin, 1895), pp 249-58.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

This defence papers over the real and deep divisions which existed between Moore's publicly orthodox religious persona and his private identity when one considers a number of occasions where an anti-clerical if not anti-Catholic sentiment is betrayed. Two letters addressed to Lady Donegal provide evidence for this. The first is a reply to a letter she had sent to Moore on the 30 March 1815 warning him not to associate with dangerous 'Irish Democrats . . .', as she puts it, 'association of their names with yours would grieve me most sincerely . . .'. In Moore's reply he says:

Your letter deserved a much speedier answer, both to thank you for the very kind anxiety you have expressed about me, and to set your heart at rest upon the subject of them. If there is anything in the world that I have been detesting and despising more than another for this long time past, it has been those very Dublin politicians whom you so fear I should associate with. I do not think a good cause was ever ruined by a more bigoted, brawling, and disgusting set of demagogues ; and, though it be the religion of my fathers, I *must* say that much of this vile, vulgar spirit is to be traced to that wretched faith, which is again polluting Europe with Jesuitism and inquisitions, and which of all the humbugs that have stultified mankind is the most narrow-minded and mischievous ; so much for the danger of my joining Messre. O'Connel, [sic] O'Donnel, [sic] etc . . .³⁴

The second letter shows Moore in a more jocular mood but it conveys the same sense of wariness and exasperation with the Catholics of Ireland:

Reprobate as I am, I am sure you will give credit to my prudence and good-taste in declining the grand public dinner that was about to be given me upon my arrival in Dublin. I found there were too many of your favourites, the Catholic orators, at the bottom of the design, – that the fountain of honour was too much of a *holy-water* fount for me to dabble in it with either safety or pleasure ; and, though I should have liked mightily the opportunity of making a treasonable speech or two after dinner, I thought the wisest thing I could do was to decline the honour . . . Alas! alas! it must be confessed that our poor country, altogether, is a most wretched concern ; and as for the Catholics . . . one would heartily wish them all in their own Purgatory, if it were not for their adversaries, whom one wishes *still further*.³⁵

This letter is interesting in that it reveals the complex nature of Moore's sense of what it meant to be Irish. He declined the dinner because it was too Catholic and yet he lamented the missed 'opportunity for making a treasonable speech or two . . .' emphasising

³⁴Letter to Lady Donegal 10 Apr. 1815. *The journal of Thomas Moore*, Wilfred S. Dowden (ed.) Barbara G. Bartholomew and Joy L. Linsley (assoc. eds) (6 vols, London, 1983-91), i, 428.

³⁵Letter to Lady Donegal 3 July 1815 in Dowden, i, 366.

a secular or at least non-denominational attitude to Irish identity similar to the stance taken by the United Irishmen and later the Young Irelanders. Moore's provenance for treasonable statements can be traced back to the satirical *Twopenny Post-bag*, which he published with some precaution under the pseudonym Thomas Brown, the Younger, in 1813. This had been the focus of controversy over the lampooning of his former subscriber and object of the dedication of Moore's version of the *Anacreon* (a translation of the odes of the ancient Greek poet, Anacreon³⁶) George Prince of Wales, due to his apparent abandoning of his stated position on catholic emancipation when he became Regent in 1811. However, Moore's attitude to the religion of his birth is amply summed up in the preface of the last edition of the *Twopenny Post-bag* where the author, which common knowledge held to be Moore, was described as 'an Irishman from a Roman Catholic family' but that this did not necessarily tally with his being a 'Papist'; and also that he had attended Protestant services and paid attention to the sermons preached there in the company of his Protestant wife and children.³⁷ This admission may be said to be the seed of doubt that later grew into the debate surrounding his catholicity and referred to in his obituary carried in the *Republican World*.

Eventually in June 1818 Moore did attend a dinner in Dublin in his honour at which dangerous democrats like Lord Cloncurry, O'Connell, and Richard Lalor Shiel (the last two brought together for this event five years before their formal reconciliation over the veto question) were present. As was noted in the newspaper publications of the day, party considerations were kept deliberately at a minimum, so much so that the *Patriot* had to retract its editorial position after a visit from '[A] number of gentlemen, who were present at the dinner (who) called upon us yesterday to request we would correct our first statement of the matter . . .'.³⁸ The condition of Ireland when it was alluded to was done so in such oblique terms that even that loyal newspaper felt it appropriate to cover the story. The transcript of the evening's proceedings in the *Freeman's Journal* gives a picture of Moore's own sense of Irish identity. From this account, which can be said to exemplify his public

³⁶Comerford, *Ireland*, p. 187.

³⁷de Vere White, pp 97-8.

³⁸*Patriot*, 11 June 1818.

character both previously and subsequently, he seems pragmatically ambiguous. Emotionally he is driven by the concerns of the Irish nation, which is undifferentiated by either class or sect. His concept of the nation is mythopoeic, imagined and ideal, all the requirements for a nationalist visionary. Materially Moore is realistic enough to view his Irishness as a source of income but only in so far as it allowed him to obtain benefit and patronage within the system of British rule. On the night of the dinner Charles Phillips's panegyric the 'Poets election' had set Moore as the greatest lyric poet of the age above and before Byron and Scott. This piece and Moore's own toasting, of, 'The living authors of Great Britain' postulated a nexus which connected him with Byron, Wordsworth and Scott etc., as well as with the Irish authors Shiel, Maturin (who were in attendance) and Lady Morgan (the former Miss Owenson of *The Lay of the Irish Harp* fame) who Moore described as 'the first that mated our sweet Irish strains with poetry worthy of their pathos and their force'.³⁹ and thus Moore, the artist, showed that he was not circumscribed by the boundaries of a particular national identity.

So what was it about *Melodies* that earned Moore the reputation of, as the *Republican World* put it 'truly the EMANCIPATOR'? Out of the 124 songs contained in the ten volumes of the *Melodies* what proportion of them can be said to deal with 'the wrongs of the Emerald Isle'. The subject matter of the *Melodies* cover a wide range of topics: love, loss, death, war, patriotism, loyalty, friendship, longing, celebration, etc., in other words a whole cabinet of universal human sentiments. However, their main appeal is the fact that all of the topics are dealt with in the language of the romantic movement and thus capture something of the spirit of the age and render these sentiments in an appropriate format to an appreciative educated audience. Analysing the *Melodies* by lyrical content requires a degree of elasticity in categorisation. Love songs and patriotic songs make up the bulk of the *Melodies*, with thirty songs clearly coming under the former heading and over forty falling into the latter category. Songs such as, 'The Young May Moon' and 'If thou'lt be mine' are good examples of simple love songs. However, even in these ballads, for Moore the artist, quite apart from the happily married man apparently, the path of true

³⁹*Freeman's Journal*, 10 June 1818.

love rarely runs smooth and many of these ‘love’ songs are frequently sorrowful, loaded with a sense of longing, loss and death, for example, ‘I’d mourn the hopes’ or ‘Loves Young Dream’ –

Oh! the days are gone, when Beauty bright
My heart’s chain wove;
When my dream of life, from morn till night,
Was love, still love. . .⁴⁰

or ‘Whene’er I see those smiling eyes’ which mourns the loss of youth and innocence in a loved one –

While youth, that now like snow appears,
Ere sullied by the dark’ning rain,
When once ’tis touched by sorrow’s tears
Can never shine so bright again.⁴¹

Many of the songs combine a number of different elements and are not straightforward person to person love songs. ‘O’Donohue’s Mistress’ for example is based on a legend that Moore had found in Weld’s *Account of Killarney* and *Derrick’s Letters*, which recounts the tale of a girl who was so taken by the story of the ghost of O’Donohue, a local chieftain, who, it was told, rode across one of the lakes of Killarney on his white horse on the morning of May day that she committed suicide by throwing herself into the lake to become his lover.⁴² By the same token the well known song, ‘She is far from the Land’ fuses the archetypal love and loss formula to a heroic-patriotic recent historical episode, in an idealisation of the posthumous relationship between Robert Emmet and Sarah Curran. In such a way this song crosses over into the patriotic mode. In many of the patriotic songs there is a tone of defiance, ‘Avenging and Bright’ using the legend of Deirdre and the Sons of Usnach, castigates the untrammelled abuse of political power, and ends with the line – ‘Revenge on a tyrant is sweetest of all!’ While, ‘When he who adores thee’ elevates self-sacrifice in the cause of an un-named love –

⁴⁰Thomas Moore, *Irish Melodies, the Illustrated 1846 Edition* (reprint, New York, 2000, of orig. ed., London, 1846), p. 64.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 154.

⁴²Ibid., note 73.

Oh! blest are the lovers and friends who shall live,
The days of thy glory to see;
But the next dearest blessing that Heaven can give
Is the pride of thus dying for thee.⁴³

Mary Helen Thuente gives a good account of the patriotic songs contained in the *Melodies* finding their literary antecedents in the songbooks of the United Irishmen such as *Paddy's Resource*. She makes the case that 'Indeed, individual lines in Moore's songs often celebrated violence, but the historical context of the song generally placed such rebellion and violence safely in the past . . .'⁴⁴ a device which, she suggests, Moore and later the Young Irelanders adopted to protect themselves from prosecution. However, she neglects to mention what is probably the most seditious of all Moore's patriotic songs, 'Drink of this cup ; – you'll find there's a spell in it'. Tessier suggests that this song is 'A drinking song. The contents of the cup are a magic cordial (a reference to potheen),⁴⁵ and it can be seen in this simplistic way as it begins innocuously enough –

Drink of this cup; – you'll find there's a spell in
Its every drop 'gainst the ills of mortality;
Talk of the cordial that sparkled for Helen!
Her cup was a fiction, but this is reality . . .

However, the imagery exudes another sentiment and Moore's intentions are revealed in the next four lines of the same stanza when he speaks of this world and his antidote for its ills is to drink from the cup of which the cordial is more potent than potheen, patriotism –

Would you forget the dark world we are in,
Just taste of the bubble that gleams on the top of it;
But would you rise above earth, till akin
To immortals themselves, you must drain every drop of it . . .

In the next verse Moore uses images of power, of nature, culture and history to suggest a feeling of companionship and by implication of nation –

⁴³Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁴M. H. Thuente, *The Harp Re-strung*, (New York, 1994), pp 179-88.

⁴⁵Thérèse Tessier, *The Bard of Erin, a study of Thomas Moore's Irish Melodies (1808-1834)* Trans. G. P. Mutch (Salzburg, 1981), p. 183.

There having, by Nature's enchantment, been fill'd
With the balm and the bloom of her kindest weather,
This wonderful juice from its core was distill'd
To enliven such hearts as are here brought together . . .

This subtext of togetherness or unity is brought to the fore in Moore's *Memoirs of Captain Rock*,⁴⁶ an apologia of sorts for the culture of agrarian violence which was widespread in rural Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Moore writes ' . . . the only virtue, which the Irish Government has been the means of producing in the people, is a fidelity to each other in their conspiracies against it'.⁴⁷ However, I believe that we can see in the last verse of 'Drink of this cup . . .', which predates *Captain Rock* by some three years, Moore's first attempt at understanding the resort to conspiracy at a time when the Irish countryside was restless and secret societies were burning the midnight oil –

And though, perhaps – but breathe it to no one—
Like liquor the witch brews at midnight so awful,
This philter in secret was first taught to flow on,
Yet 'tis n't less potent for being unlawful.
And ev'n though it taste of the smoke of that flame,
Which in silence extracted its virtue forbidden –
Fill up – there's a fire in some hearts I could name,
Which may work too its charm, though as lawless and hidden...⁴⁸

This outspoken stance would appear to have an unusually high level of risk for Moore given Theunte's argument, however, it is not so incongruous when one realises that the dominant theme which re-occurs throughout the *Melodies* appears to be Moore's concern with the process of ageing and the attendant losses which this entails among which the most important are that of missed opportunity and failure to act. Moore writes of lovers and heroes and for the most part his heroes are Irish patriots, Robert Emmet being his inspiration and his conscience/(nemesis). Many of the people that Moore had grown up with had been members of the United Irishmen, Emmet had been a close personal friend.

⁴⁶ Thomas Moore, *The memoirs of Captain Rock, the celebrated Irish chieftain* (London, 1824).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁴⁸ *Moore's Irish Melodies*, vol., viii (London, 1821).

The *Melodies* can be read as Moore attempting atonement for his inaction or lack of commitment towards the risings of 1798 and 1803 and compensating for this fact by eulogising the actors and elevating them into the realms of the immortals ; while he is simply a scribe, a recorder ; ‘Oh! Blame not the Bard’ being his act of contrition –

. . .He was born for much more, and in happier hours
His soul might have burned with a holier flame . . .
. . .And the lip, which now breaths but the song of desire,
Might have pour’d the full tide of a patriots heart.

Moore’s regret is almost tangible. As he came to the later numbers of the *Melodies* a song like ‘Drink of this cup...’ which appeared in the eight number 1821 (and was written during his extended, prudent stay in Paris between the years 1819-22 when his financial situation in Britain was under investigation- perhaps another reason for its incendiary subtext) can be seen as an attempt to recoup some of the patriotic virtue which Moore must have felt he had squandered when he honestly confessed in the above mentioned ‘Oh! Blame not the bard’-

Unpriz’d are her sons, till they’ve learned to betray...⁴⁹

This line exposes the tension that lies at the heart of Moore’s relationship with the country of his birth, and his country of domicile (apart from his posting to Bermuda, his visit to America and his two year sojourn in France Moore spent approximately fifty years living in England). It epitomizes the unsettled dual nature of his being and of his place in the history of his country as the foremost Irish poet in the English language; as in fact a British poet, a concept which became increasingly difficult to comprehend in words that evoked a spirit of Irish nationalism. Moore’s own commentary on a number of occasions convey this contradiction, the reference to his treasonable credentials in regard to the criticism of his work on the life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald as seen above, is one instance. The other side of the coin can be seen in his letter of dedication to the Marchioness Dowager of Donegal prefixed to the Third Number of the *Melodies* (1810):

It has been accordingly said, that the tendency of this publication is mischievous,

⁴⁹ *Moore’s Irish Melodies*, vol., iii (London, 1810).

and that I have chosen these airs but as a vehicle of dangerous politics . . . To those who identify nationality with treason, and who see, in every effort for Ireland, a system of hostility towards England,— and to those too who, nursed in the gloom of prejudice, are alarmed by the faintest gleam of liberality that threatens to disturb their darkness. . . — to such men I shall not condescend to offer an apology for the too great warmth of any political sentiment which may occur in the course of these pages. But as there are many, among the more wise and tolerant, who, with feeling enough to mourn over the wrongs of their country, and sense enough to perceive all the danger of not redressing them, may yet be of the opinion that allusions, in the least degree inflammatory, should be avoided in a publication of this popular description— I beg of these respected persons to believe, that there is no one who more sincerely deprecates than I do, any appeal to the passions of an ignorant and angry multitude : but that it is not through that gross and inflammable region of society, a work of this nature could ever have been intended to circulate. It looks much higher for its audience and readers, — it is found on the pianofortes of the rich and the educated,— of those who can afford to have their national zeal a little stimulated, without exciting much dread of the excesses into which it may hurry them, and of many whose nerves may be, now and then, alarmed with advantage, as much more is to be gained by their fears than could ever be expected from their justice. . .

Thus Moore pre-empted and by so doing dis-armed the criticism of Davis who wrote thirty four years later that ‘He (Moore) is immeasurably our greatest poet. . . but he has not given songs to the middle and poor classes of Irish.’⁵⁰ It was never Moore’s remit to foster public opinion in Ireland nor to educate the masses. Moore’s target audience was, as he said, ‘the rich and the educated’. Moore presented to this class, whether Irish, British, American or continental European, the Irish race, admittedly undefined for the most part, but leaning toward the side of the Roman Catholics, as heroic and noble. The popularity of the *Irish Melodies* gives credence to the idea that Moore succeeded in humanising a people and a country traduced in English literature and so often portrayed as wild, savage, superstitious, backward, lazy, stupid, disloyal and dangerous. The widespread acceptance of the romantic version of Ireland (Erin) and the Irish by Moore can be seen to support Leerssen’s thesis that:

national characterization is to some significant extent a construct fashioned according to discursive poetics and genre conventions, and that the development of such literary imagery is not just a passive response to real-life situations. . . the

⁵⁰*Nation*, 21 Dec. 1844.

relations between empirical reality and literary representation are (in certain instances) clearly counter-mimetic. Art does not imitate life, but real-life attitudes follow in the footsteps of artistic license and literary models.⁵¹

In the relatively stable decades of the early nineteenth century, when moral force demagogues and constitutionally minded poets held sway in their respected spheres of influence i.e. politics and culture, the apotheosis of the Roman Catholic Irish to full Britishness seemed a possibility. Moore voiced this possibility by including songs of loyalty and a sense of unity. For instance, ‘The Princes day’ dedicated to George IV of which he wrote, upon finding out that Lord Powerscourt had had it sung during the King’s visit to Ireland in 1821: ‘This song is laudatory, for I thought at the time he deserved such ; but upon reading it rather anxiously over, I find nothing in it to be ashamed of.’⁵² Why Moore should be anxious at first and subsequently relieved from shame is due to the sentiment behind the song being sufficiently clouded in a fog of ambiguity and vagueness, with loyalty to rulers who deserved it and the Green standard of Erin being the first in the field to defend such a monarch. This sense of deserved loyalty appears to have been a constant in Moore’s make up. Personal preference such as the Duke of Wellington’s chosen British identity rather than an anglo-Irish one was not allowed to stand in the way of claiming a hero for Ireland as the inclusion of ‘While history’s muse the memorial was keeping’⁵³ in the *Irish Melodies* makes clear. Some songs attempted to bridge the sectarian divide between the various groups on the island ‘Come send round the wine, and leave points of belief’ which contains the following in the second verse:

Shall I ask the brave soldier, who fights by my side
In the cause of mankind, if our creeds agree?
Shall I give up the friend I have valued and tried,
If he kneel not before the same alter with me?
From the heretic girl of my soul should I fly,
To seek somewhere else a more orthodox kiss?
No, perish the hearts, and the laws that try

⁵¹Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fior-Ghael* (Cork, 1996), p. 380.

⁵²*Memoirs*, iii, p. 275.

⁵³ *Moore’s Irish Melodies*, vol., vi. (London, 1815).

Truth, valour, or love, by a standard like this!⁵⁴

Or of remorse that this divide ever existed in, ‘Weep on, weep on, your hour is past’ with lines such as –

. . . Your web of discord wove,
And while your tyrants join’d in hate,
you never join’d in love,
But hearts fell off that ought to twine,
And man profan’d what God had given . . .⁵⁵

These songs of loyalty and rapprochement are counter-balanced by songs like ‘Sail on, sail on, thou fearless bark’, which can be read as a lament and admonishment of the politicians and ‘false-hearted men’ who Moore regarded as disappointing the Catholics of Ireland by scuppering emancipation at various turns, (a theme which he elaborates on in *Captain Rock*) –

Each wave that passes seems to say,
“Though death beneath our smile may be,
“Less cold we are, less false than they,
“Whose smiling wreck’d thy hopes and thee.”⁵⁶

‘As vanquish’d Erin’ is a direct attack upon the triumphalism of the Orange order which Moore saw as the source of continuing division between Irish Protestants and Roman Catholics. In this song which appears in volume nine of the *Melodies* sectarianism is decidedly caused by the Protestants of Ireland –

As vanquish’d Erin wept beside,
The Boyne’s ill-fated river,
She saw where Discord, in the tide,
Had dropp’d his loaded quiver.
“Lie hid,” she cried, “ye venom’d darts,
“Where mortal eye may shun you ;
“Lie hid – the stain of manly hearts,

⁵⁴*Moore’s Irish Melodies*, vol., ii (London, 1808).

⁵⁵*Moore’s Irish Melodies*, vol., iv (London, 1811)

⁵⁶*Moore’s Irish Melodies* vol., viii (London, 1821)

“That bled for me, is on you.”

But vain her wish, her weeping vain,—
As Time too well had taught her—
Each year the Fiend returns again,
And dives into that water ;
And brings, triumphant, from beneath
His shafts of desolation,
And sends them, wing'd with worse than death,
Through all her madd'ning nation.

Alas for her who sits and mourns,
Ev'n now beside that river —
Unwearied still the Fiend returns,
And stored is still his quiver.
“When will this end, ye Powers of Good?”
She weeping asks for ever;
But only hears, from out that flood,
The Demon answer, “Never!”⁵⁷

The annual celebrations by those who claimed descent from the victorious armies of William III over the descendants of the catholic forces of James II becomes the Fiend whose constant picking of the scab of history and memory would not let the wounds of an old war heal. In this Moore admitted openly the reality of the psychological and ethnic fault-lines of identity formation that existed between the sections of the island.

This courage or perhaps simple honesty to recognise the complexity of the various elements which made up Irish society make Moore's relationship with Ireland and the changes that had taken place there since his departure in 1799 the centre of the problematic surrounding the interpretations placed on his character after his death. This can be seen in the following two accounts, the first concerning O'Connell and the second which refers to the mission carried out by the two brothers of Dr. William Griffin of the Political Union of

⁵⁷*Moore's Irish Melodies*, vol., ix (London, 1824).

Limerick (who had sounded out the possibility of Moore standing for parliament for Limerick city) to Sloperon.

As a supplement to the last number of the *Melodies* ⁵⁸ in 1834 Moore included four extra songs one of which ‘The dream of those days’ is a pointed rebuke of O’Connell’s behaviour during and after his victory on the emancipation issue. This was interpreted by O’Connell, correctly, as an attack upon him and the cult of personality which surrounded him. O’Connell had become a metonym for catholic Ireland and it was his apparent political opportunism in this cause which galled Moore. This song and his diary entries⁵⁹ regarding the row which ensued would suggest that Moore was satisfied with the settlement that emancipation had secured for Ireland and that further agitation was not necessary and certainly undesirable if it would lead to a continued deterioration in the relationship between the communities on the island and between Ireland and the British mainland. However, this would be to misjudge Moore as can be seen in a conversation he had with William Griffin’s brothers. Here Moore revealed his philosophy on the constitutional position of Ireland. It was a stance which can only be termed radical and surprising, and one that went further than many of the most ardent nationalists in the first half of the nineteenth century. Moore’s diary entry 8 November 1832 reads:

Was surprised by a visit from two Limerick gentlemen, the brothers of my correspondent in that city, Dr. Griffin.... Asked them to stay to dinner, which they readily agreed to do.... In the course of our conversations, referring to Repeal of the Union, I gave it as my opinion, that whoever took up that question as an object of serious pursuit, must be prepared to look *separation* in the face as an inevitable consequence of it. This startled them, and they most earnestly (and I have no doubt sincerely) disclaimed for themselves, as well as for the great majority of Irishmen, all thought or apprehension of the Repeal leading to such a result. But was [sic] strange short-sightedness! As if a Catholic House of Commons (which they would be sure to have *out* and *out*) would not instantly set about disposing of Church property in the first place, and absentee property in the second ; and as if England would stand quietly by to see the work of spoliation go on : as if (even were *these* elements of strife out of the way) there would not constantly arise questions on trade, foreign treaties, going to war, &c., on which two legislatures like those of England and Ireland would be certain to differ ; and then away would go their slight

⁵⁸ *Moore’s Irish Melodies*, supplement (London, 1834).

⁵⁹ Letter Con. Lyne to Moore 12 July, 1834 in *Memoirs* vii, p. 35.

link of connection to the winds. What was so near happening in 1798, when the Irish Parliament was Protestant, could hardly fail to take place after a repeal, when it would be to all intents and purposes Catholic. To these and other such points which I put to them, they did not know well how to answer. “Still,” I continued, “notwithstanding all this, and with all these (to me) evident consequences staring me in the face, so hopeless appeared the fate of Ireland under English government, whether of Whigs or Tories (the experiment now having been tried by both, and the results of both being the same), that, as the only chance of Ireland’s future resuscitation, I would be almost inclined to run the risk of Repeal, even with separation as its too certain consequence, being convinced that Ireland must go through some violent and convulsive process before the anomalies of her present position can be got rid of; and thinking such riddance well worth the price, however dreadful would be the pain of it...”⁶⁰

Moore’s realism is shocking for the period and his analysis is remarkably accurate illustrating a grasp of detail which was rarely voiced so candidly from the Repeal side. Apart from the economic and political reasons that would make Repeal unworkable, he highlighted, in the same entry Ireland’s strategic importance and the inevitability of her becoming a centre of struggle between England and France, thus making a long term independent Ireland an impossibility. Whether Moore was merely posturing for the sake of his visitors or had partaken of one too many bumpers before parting (*in vino veritas*) he placed the real problems that the English establishment had with O’Connell’s new demand squarely on the table. Moore worked and lived in England for most of his life and his analysis, though keen, was that of an aloof pragmatist or interested spectator but one who when asked to stand up and be counted for Ireland, in a political sense, stood back. This was his greatest sin in the eyes of the new political movement called Young Ireland. The leader of this younger generation of Irish nationalists was an idealist and his vision was to inspire and instil a sense of pride in the Irish people by making them aware of their place among the nations of the earth.

If Moore’s reputation within the pantheon of Irish heroes is problematic then we can consider Thomas Davis to have an unblemished history within the nationalist tradition. As has been pointed out in chapter 1, the three essential characteristics for the development of

⁶⁰*Memoirs*, vi, pp 302-3.

nationalist sentiment to prosper are education, a disaffected intellectual class, and local culture. In nineteenth century Irish history these qualities are no where more manifest than in the person of Thomas Osborne Davis. Davis was born in Mallow Co. Cork on October 14 1814. The son of a Protestant surgeon of the artillery (who died one month before Thomas was born) and Mary Atkins daughter of a minor gentry family from Firville, Co. Cork.⁶¹ When Davis was four years old the family moved to Dublin and Thomas attended Mr. Mungan's "mixed seminary" school where he learned (as he told O'Connell in his last public debate in the Conciliation Hall May 1845) to 'know, and knowing to love, his Catholic fellow countrymen'.⁶² In July 1831 he entered Trinity College Dublin to study law, however, the subjects about which he was most passionate were moral and political philosophy and history, subjects which he read voraciously. This fascination with Irish history meant that Davis was following a path that many of his class and religion had trod before. As we have seen interest in Irish antiquities and history had been growing since the mid-eighteenth century and early explorations into the Irish past were led by a Protestant intellectual elite.⁶³ In an era of heightened Protestant patriotism appeals to a separate Irish identity bolstered the legitimacy of the activity of the Volunteers and the calls for the repeal of the various inhibitions placed on the Irish parliament from Poyning's law to the Declaratory Act of George I. This political dimension should not be allowed to overshadow the genuine intellectual and educational endeavour pursued by the nascent intelligentsia which culminated in the founding of the Royal Irish Academy in 1785.⁶⁴ That said, however, the fortunes of the Academy do appear to have mirrored the prevailing political conditions, and interest in Irish history by the Protestant ascendancy dwindled after 1798 and the Act of Union, if membership and publications are credible indices.⁶⁵

⁶¹ *ODNB*, xiv.

⁶² C.G. Duffy, *Thomas Davis; the memoirs of an Irish patriot* (London, 1890), p. 249.

⁶³ E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism...*, p.104. Hobsbawm suggests that it was a common enough phenomenon for ("foreign") ruling elites to engage in this kind of activity and cites the Finnish Swedes and the Baltic Germans as two groups who showed a similar interest to the Protestant Irish in discovering peasant or folk culture.

⁶⁴ On the subject of the antiquarian versus historical view of the past in the Irish context and the political debate surrounding the question of the origins of the Irish race see Leerssen *Remembrance and Imagination* pp 68- 77

⁶⁵ R.B. McDowell, 'The Main Narrative', in *The Royal Irish Academy: a bicentennial history*, ed. T.F.O'Raifeartaigh, (Dublin 1985), p 22.

Other organisations such as the Gaelic Society of Ireland founded in 1806, and the Ibero-Celtic Society founded in 1818 fared no better and remained in existence for periods of eight and two years respectively.⁶⁶ The resurgence of interest in Irish history and antiquities coincided with, or perhaps one could say was driven by, the administrative revolution and its accompanying efforts at cartographic standardisation by the Board of Ordnance. The Ordnance Survey, set up in Ireland in 1824, assembled a team under the tutelage of Capt. Thomas Larcom (1801-79) which gave impetus to the careers of such luminaries of Irish historical, philological, and archeological research as George Petrie (1790-1866), Eugene O'Curry (1794-1862), James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849) and John O'Donovan (1806-61).⁶⁷ The work of this coterie in the 1830s and 40s paved the way for the more explicitly nationalist turn of Irish Protestant liberals and the burgeoning Roman Catholic intelligentsia which came to prominence with the founding of the *Nation* in 1842. This weekly publication was the product of what was to become the triumvirate of the Young Ireland movement of Charles Gavan Duffy (1816-1903), John Blake Dillon (1814-1866) and, of course Thomas Davis. It was Davis, who, after consultation with his co-founders and his and Dillon's former Trinity College tutor Thomas Clark Wallis (who styled himself Professor of Things in General and Patriotism in particular⁶⁸) determined the nature of the paper. This was to be literary and historical rather than overtly political. This cultural approach in contrast to a political one was attractive for two reasons. Firstly, Wallis had advised that a political publication would inevitably fall under the domination of the most potent force in Irish political life Daniel O'Connell.⁶⁹ In the second instance and as a corollary to the first, Davis's conception of the idea of nationality was inclusive and anti-sectarian. This stance, Davis understood, would be compromised by close association with the rhetorically supremacist Catholic liberalism of O'Connell. Inclusiveness was based on civic rather than sectarian or ethnic criteria; and the consciousness of a separate identity, as the prospectus of the newspaper set out, 'the blessings of a DOMESTIC LEGISLATURE,' which would 'embrace Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter— Milesian and

⁶⁶D. Murray, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and Irish Antiquarian Societies, 1840-80* (Nass, 2000), p. 6.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸J.M. Hone, *Thomas Davis* (Dublin, 1934), p.17.

⁶⁹Ibid., p 71.

Cromwellian– the Irishman of a hundred generations and the stranger who is within our gates.’

Davis had first come to the attention of the political classes with his address to the Trinity College Historical Society in 1840, the very same setting in which Moore along with Robert Emmet cemented their friendship and earned their spurs as debaters of merit forty-two years previously.⁷⁰ At this point Davis had moved significantly on from the position which Hone describes as the ‘typical English liberal’ author of the 1837 essay *Reform of the House of Lords*. This was due, in no small part, to the influence of European romantic liberalism then *en vogue* on the continent. The Trinity address was published posthumously in the *Nation* in 1848 under the title of *The Young Irishman of the Middle Classes*. In it Davis made a plea to his generation of the old Protestant middle class to rise to the challenge of a new situation, which the recently formed national education system and the promised Queen’s colleges afforded to the Catholic majority and the lower classes of all denominations. Upon this vista of change Davis urged the members of the society to take an active part in the leadership of the nation through the proper, honest and skilled use of oratory. Initially he attacked the irrelevancy of the college curriculum. The focus of his criticism was the inefficacy of instruction in the area of ‘natural history– astronomy, mechanics etc,’ subjects, he suggests, that can and are being taught and studied more fully in the ‘Mechanics’ Institutes.’ Subsequently he turned on the inordinate amount of time and prestige given over to the study of the classics and the classical languages as opposed to the socially constructive study of modern history, ‘including that of his (the student’s) own country, whose facts would, if stored in his memory, be of direct use and application’ and of modern languages particularly French and German.⁷¹ Even at this early stage of his career, inspired by the writings of the French historian Theierry, his liberalism was tinged with an historical perspective, out of line with Benthamite, utilitarian, and ahistorical, ‘political economy’. However, study of the various strands of politics and economics which gave rise to that, then currently fashionable discipline, had a part to play in forging an active and useful citizen, this, after all, being the essential thesis of the address. The

⁷⁰ Kelly, *Bard of Erin...*, p. 51.

⁷¹ *Nation*, 22 Jan. 1848.

occasion and audience of the address allowed Davis to outline his objectives which appear to call on the Society to create a historical sociology with as much weight being placed on the sociological aspect as the historical:

But, gentlemen, this is a Historical Society and ample means does it afford for studying history; not as a record of facts, but with that philosophy which first examines these facts as parts of political and social institutions, as manifestations of human nature on great occasions; and having done so, and *not before*, applies them to the circumstances occurring around it, to the institutions and men of its own time.⁷²

In isolation this passage appears internationalist or universalist. It could be read as a pre-nationalist phase of Davis's early liberal thinking, his claims for the importance of the study of history being the overriding concern and this in order to alleviate the sufferings of the present or warn of the dangers of tyranny and vice by the use of historical analogy. However, Davis is quick to disabuse his audience of the idea that universalism is possible at all, and rounds on his fellow members for the neglect of Irish history, by introducing the subject with a feint:

I shall not now reprove your neglect of Irish history. I shall say nothing of it but this, that I never heard of any famous nation which did not honor [sic] the names of its departed great, study the fasti, and the misfortunes—the annals of the land, and cherish the associations of its history and theirs. The national mind should be filled to overflowing with such thoughts . . . the history of a nation is the birth-right of her sons— who strips them of that, 'takes that which not enriches him but makes them poor indeed.'⁷³

Glimpses of an idealistic romanticism become more evident as he denounced the historians' preoccupation and unwarranted dependence on '*book learning*,' and although this is necessary, up to a point, he prefers to call for scientific history based on '*learning of previous experience*, the learning of past emotions and ideas, the learning caught by conversation, invented or dug up by meditation in the closet or in the field'. This type of 'intuitive' history or re-imagining the lived experience, although not a coherent doctrine, presages somewhat Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833-1911) interpretative approach to history rather than corresponding to the more orthodox German school pioneered by von Ranke. It

⁷² *Nation*, 29 Jan. 1848.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

could also be considered as undermining claims of empiricist credibility. However, Davis overcomes this apparent contradiction through the use of analogy and of the faculties of ‘reason, fancy, imagination,’ or the inventive faculties as he calls them. He remained loyal to the idea of the scientific (i.e. the power to elicit specific results by the application and testing of general principles) by accenting interpretation and making this central to the historical process.⁷⁴ This debate surrounding the positivist versus hermeneutic approach still carries on⁷⁵ but for Davis this approach to history provided the opportunity of creating a national feeling through propaganda not by distorting the facts but by interpreting them in such a way and in a language which is meant to appeal to a transcendental spirit, (as his backing for the project of *The Spirit of the Nation* illustrates) or national genius after Herder. After his analysis which determined that the only way towards the improvement of mankind was through civic zeal and that those who shirked this responsibility had, ‘no defence but imbecility,’ he turned his attention and that of his audience to the specific case of Ireland where in his opinion their true interest lay whether they recognised or would admit to this fact or not. It is worth remembering that the Historical Society was made up of five Tory and five Liberal members, the latter half of the address therefore was a direct challenge to their own sense of identity.⁷⁶ In one stark sentence which leaps out of the text he declares ‘You are Irishmen’:

But, gentlemen, you have a country. The people among whom we were born, with whom we live, for whom, if our minds are in health, we have most sympathy, are those over whom we have power— power to make them wise, great, good. Reason points out our native land as the field for our exertions, and tells us that without patriotism a profession of benevolence is the cloak of the selfish man; and does not sentiment confirm the decree of reason? The country of our birth, our education, of our recollections,

⁷⁴ In the salient passage Davis extols: On the very threshold of every art, and science, and subject of thought, men, either from its known uses and applications, form some knowledge of a particular detail of its exterior, or workings, or of the materials used in constructing it ; or from any of all of these ; or from the analogy of some combinations of them, should try to judge of other parts, and their origin ; or, if you will, guess at the whole from any part of it. Analogy is the first law of thought, and therefore we may do thus, naturally and without presumption, ‘worms in the cabinet drawer’ though we be and proceeding as I have described, and testing and correcting our guesses and fancies by learning ; these particular facts, acquired by deliberate study, become mixed with our other information or familiar knowledge, and we arrive always at *characteristic*, if not actual truths, and ultimately acquire that power of general analysis which is the main force of a great mind.

⁷⁵ Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French*, pp 17-23.

⁷⁶Hone, p. 30.

ancestral, personal, national; the country of our loves, our friendships, our hopes; *our* country...⁷⁷

This then was the first time that the vision of Davis the nationalist was aired in the political arena and it contains much of what would be the stock of his later writings: education ; the raising to consciousness of national identity (see below) ; and the formulation of public opinion. The importance of this address can be deduced from the context of its presentation and its publication in pamphlet form for the consumption of a wider public and eventually reaching the masses through the pages of the *Nation*.⁷⁸ Its relevance is in its content i.e. the call to the children of the establishment to recognise their commonality with the cause of the country and to participate in the education of their fellow countrymen at all levels. The dialectic of education and freedom, played out in the pages of the *Nation* juxtaposed the ideas of ‘National feelings, National habits and National government’. Davis, Dillon and Duffy sought to plant the idea of a particular brand of Irishness in the minds of all classes through the eyes of those who could read and the ears of those who could not.⁷⁹ Davis aware of the necessary relational requirement to cement national feeling, predicated the consciousness raising project upon the fostering of an independent mind. In the first issue of the *Nation* this position was made clear:

But no national feeling can co-exist with the mean and mendicant spirit which esteems everything English as greater and better than if it belonged to our own country, and which looks at all the rest of the world through the spectacles of Anglican Prejudice. There is no doubt at all that the chief source of the contempt with which we are treated by England is our own sycophancy. We abandon our self respect, and we are treated with contempt; nothing can be more natural– nothing in fact can be more just. But we must open our eyes and look our domineering neighbour in the face– we must respect him and endeavour to discover what kind of fellow he is . . . We must learn to think sensibly and candidly about him; and we do not doubt that the *Nation* will tend materially to this end.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *Nation*, 29 Jan. 1848.

⁷⁸ Duffy gives the circulation of the *Nation* at 250,000 copies which seems extravagant. However, Hone states that the ‘circulation soon exceeded that of any other Irish paper’, pp 88-9.

⁷⁹ For the dissemination of information among the illiterate see N. O’Ciosain, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland 1750-1850*. (Hampshire, 1997).

⁸⁰ *Nation* 15 Oct. 1842.

This sense of inferiority can be seen as the engine for the cultural movement not just of Davis's time but later protagonists in the de-Anglicising mission. In order to overcome this negative psychological barrier to a mature sense of national identity, history and Gaelic culture became mechanisms for reflection. In Davis's hands the sufferings of the Irish people projected them onto a spiritual plane. This idea is contained in that same speech to the Historical Society where by the use of analogy he equated the destiny of Ireland with that of Christ through his confrontation with Satan in the desert. For Davis as for Hyde afterwards England and English culture and society were considered mean, brutal and materialist. This was the binary opposite to Ireland and her salvation stemmed from her Celtic roots and Gaelic past. In order to achieve her proper place among the nations of the world, it was necessary to recognise this spirituality and eschew all things which tempted the chosen people towards the corrupt. Deification as well as reification of Irish culture was posited against a base English culture.

Now we start to get to the heart of what was to become the de-Anglicisation process, establishing and maintaining a tangible sense of difference between the Irishman and the Englishman. Davis proposed to do it by accessing the spirit of the nation and promoting the glories of the past, through popular media such as poetry, ballads, painting, architecture etc.⁸¹ The idea was to create an Irish culture comparable to that of continental Europe. High cultural achievements were, indeed, wanting in the Irish nation, however, the Irish themselves through their historical experiences and how they expressed these experiences, were the raw material with which to rectify this situation and raise Ireland to the position of a contributor to European civilisation. In effect what Davis was engaged in was a project of mimesis, reproducing on a smaller scale the great artistic movements, and endeavours of the acknowledged superior European civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome, 'When boy-hood's fire was in my blood/I read of ancient freemen/ For Greece and

⁸¹*Prose Writings of Thomas Davis*, ed. T. W. Rolleston, (London, n. d.).

Rome who bravely stood/ Three hundred men and three men'⁸² of the trans-continental Italian inspired renaissance, and of the more recent French and German Enlightenment. This European context is important for two reasons. First as has been shown it provided a template against which Irish civilisation was to be measured ; secondly, it provided the dominant paradigm for thinking about the 'nation' which offered legitimacy to the growing nationalist movements across the continent. This paradigm was contained in Herder's 'cultural sphere axiom'. In Herder's model ethnic homogeneity is an essential requirement for nations to exist based upon a shared cultural heritage. As Thomas Meyer has pointed out 'The premise of strict inter-cultural demarcation postulates that the culture of each people is completely different and separate from the cultures of all other peoples. Such an understanding of culture automatically leads to Herder's assumption that the perception of the Other culture, the culture of the Others, gives rise to 'unfeelingness', 'coldness', 'blindness', even to 'contempt and disgust' in the individual.'⁸³ All of these adjectives apply when we compare Davis's opinion of Irish music to that of England:

No enemy speaks slightingly of Irish music, and no friend need fear to boast of it. It is without rival... Its antique war-tunes, such as those of O'Byrne, O'Donnell, Alestom, and Brian Boru, stream and crash upon the ear like the warriors of a hundred glens meeting: and you are borne with them to battle, and they and you charge and struggle amid cries, and battle axes and stinging arrows. Did ever a wail make a man's marrow quiver, and fill his nostrils with the breath of the grave, like the ululu of the north or the wirrasthru of Munster. Stately are their slow, and recklessly splendid their quick marches, their 'Boyne Water' and 'Sios agus Sios liom,' their 'Michael Hay,' and 'Gallant Tipperary'. The Irish jigs and planxties are not only the best dancing tunes, but the finest quick marches in the world. Some of them would cure a paralytic and make the marble legged prince in the *Arabian Nights* charge like a Fag-an-Bealach boy. The hunter joins in every leap and yelp of the 'Fox Chase' ; the historian hears the moan of the Penal Days in 'Drimindhu,' and sees the embarkation of the Wild Geese in 'Limerick Lamentation' ; and ask the

⁸²Thomas Davis, 'A Nation once again', in C. Gavan Duffy and others, *The Spirit of the Nation, ballads and songs by the writers of the Nation*. (Dublin, 1845), pp.237-9. ⁸³T. Meyer, *Identity Mania Fundamentalism and the Politicization of Cultural Differences*, translated by Madhulika Reddy and Prof. Lew Hinchman (London, 2001 [1997]), pp 102-3.

lover if his breath do not come and go with ‘Savourneen Deelish’ and ‘Lough Sheelin.’⁸⁴

England’s songs are among the worst in the world. Haynes Bayley’s ormolu melodies are among the best things she has; these are adequate to tell the sick sentiment of the West end; but what songs has she to tell her deeds: and her passions? Humour the English have not, so they naturally borrow the gay songs of Ireland and Scotland: where these fail they versify the slang of London thieves and rural poachers, and think they have humourous songs.⁸⁵

Musically what Davis sought to create was a tradition of Irish music and song which would emulate and rival the library of ballad poetry of Scotland and France.⁸⁶ As Robert Burns (1759-1796) had done for the Scots and Pierre-Jean de Béranger (1780-1857) for the French, so Davis attempted to fabricate from the remnants of Gaelic culture an English language repertoire of Irish expression.⁸⁷ Moore had begun the work, although in Davis’s opinion Moore was ‘too delicate and subtle’ for the middle and lower classes.⁸⁸ Unlike Moore, Davis’s over-riding intention in his musical endeavours, as in all his nation building pursuits was to educate and not merely to entertain. In his essay *A ballad history of Ireland* he lays bare his motives:

Of course the first object of the work we project will be to make Irish history familiar to the minds, pleasant to the ears, dear to the passions, and powerful over the taste and conduct of the Irish people in times to come. Mere events could be put into a prose history. Exact dates, subtle plots, minute connexions and motives, rarely appear in Ballads, and for these ends the worst prose history is superior to the best ballad series; but these are not the highest ends of history. To hallow or accurse the scenes of glory and honor, or of shame and sorrow; to give to the imagination the arms, and homes, and senates, and battles of other days; to rouse, and soften, and strengthen, and enlarge us with the passions of great periods; to lead us into love of self-denial, of justice, of beauty, of valour, of generous life and proud death; and to set up in our souls the memory of great men, who shall then be as models and judges of our actions—these are the highest duties of history, and these are best taught by a Ballad History.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ *Thomas Davis Prose Writings*, ed. T. W. Rolleston, pp 188-9.

⁸⁵ *The Nation* 21 Dec. 1844.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Rolleston, p. 201.

Continuing this tack of a ballad history and the educative aspect Davis lays out the skills that are necessary for the historian and the ballad maker in order to achieve the desired end product:

to write an Irish historical ballad, one should know the events to which he would describe, and know them not merely from an isolated study of his subject, but from old familiarity, which shall have associated them with his tastes and passions and connected them with other parts of history.... Many of these things he will get in books. He should shun compilations, and take up original journals, letters, state paper, statutes, and contemporary fictions and narratives as much as possible⁹⁰

We can see here Davis strike a balance between the empirical training required of the historian and the interpretive skills needed to tell a good story which could have the potential to reach a wide audience. However there is another element besides craft and skill necessary to create a successful ballad and Davis makes clear just what this is when he states: What we have heretofore advised relates to the structure, truth, and colouring of ballads; but there is something more needed to raise a ballad above the beautiful— it must have Force.⁹¹ In a letter to Davis, J. S. O’Callaghan describing his desire to write a ‘historico-political form of a national hymn and march connected with a leading circumstance of their historic glory and valour’ which gives us an insight into the thinking of those involved in the musical aspect of the Young Ireland/ *Nation* project:

instead of things like ‘St Patrick’s Day’ and ‘Garryowen’. Very good no doubt as specimens of careless or vulgar folly, but conveying no dignity, no loftiness, no recollection of any of the great things of the past to the public mind.— For myself partial as I am and always have been to my country and everything connected with it I’ve ever been of the opinion, that any right feeling person on hearing ‘God save the king’ and ‘Rule Britannia’ played by the bands of our nation and such national tunes as the aforesaid Irish ones, by those of the other might, without knowing anything of the history of the two countries, to feel, that those whose tunes were ‘God save the king’ and ‘Rule Britannia’ ought to command those whose tunes were ‘Patrick’s Day’ and ‘Garryowen’. It is time, at all events, that we should have at least some attempt at a musico-military production, calculated to convey ideas to the Irish also dated with a period when they were a nation and proved themselves worthy of being so by giving those who thought to subdue them, a d ___ d good

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 205.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 207.

licking— those so licked being the very lads whose countrymen placed four of their kings on the throne of Ireland.⁹²

This strident militarism was lacking from Moore's enterprise although he and Stevenson showed that it was possible by adapting the raw material through a process of gentrification to extract from the music of the harpers a native quality and give it universal appeal. However, universalism was of little concern to Davis in his mission to forge an Irish nation out of a divided population. Davis encouraged Charles Gavan Duffy to compile the *Spirit of the Nation* a collection of songs and ballad poetry over a quarter of which were composed by Davis himself the rest contributed by the management and readers of the *Nation*.⁹³ In this collection he saw the perfect antidote to the 'cabbage and artificial flowers called Harps and Shamrocks and Minstrels, now unhappily current'.⁹⁴ However, although the intention of Davis may have been to forge a sense of unity for a divided population the militarism and the warlike nature of many of the songs that appeared in the *Spirit of the Nation* merely drove the wedge between native and newcomer deeper. His attempts to redress this can be seen in 'Celts and Saxons' and 'Orange and Green will carry the day' or the use of tunes associated with the Orange party such as using the air of 'Boyne Water' for 'Native Swords' or 'the Protestant Boys' for 'Orange and Green...'⁹⁵ These efforts fell on deaf ears at best and at worse must have seemed to the Loyalist or Orange party as a kind of cultural appropriation. Nevertheless, as a propaganda project, the *Spirit of the Nation* was a runaway success, with the first edition, containing 55 poems and 12 epigrams and costing 6d published on 15 May 1843, almost completely sold out by the end of July.⁹⁶ By September that same year a second edition had gone into print while a second collection Part ii of *The Spirit of the Nation* was published in November. Both parts were combined and published in 1845 with some alterations, the epigrams were guillotined and some of the original poems had been replaced with new material, this became the

⁹² Davis Papers NLI Ms 2644, P 367 (nd), emphasis in the original.

⁹³C. Gavan Duffy and Others, 2nd edition *The Spirit of the Nation, Ballads and Songs by the writers of the Nation* (Dublin, 1846).

⁹⁴ *Nation* 21 Dec. 1844.

⁹⁵ Richard Davis, *Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin, 1987), pp 220-3.

⁹⁶ John Kelly, 'Introduction' in C. G. Duffy (ed), *Spirit of the Nation* (facsimile ed. Washington D.C. 1998).

standard volume which went on to sixty print runs by the end of the century.⁹⁷ Besides the commercial success and popularity of the venture the content was much praised and not only from the expected sources, with the Tory government's mouthpiece the *Morning Post* hailing the 'poetic force' of 'verses fit to stir the heart of men'⁹⁸ and the conservative Isaac Butt quoting lines to an Anti-Repeal meeting in June of 1843 (below p. 265).

Davis's poems in both the *Nation* and the *Spirit of the Nation* and his determination to construct a ballad history show how intense his feeling was for the educative aspect of music and song. A song could not be based on a shaky foundation and many of the contributors to the *Nation* saw their efforts rejected with the advice that the author should carry out further research into his/her chosen topic. Another reason that a song might be rejected was due to the sentiment that it sought to convey and this was Davis's main complaint against the other giant of Irish music in the nineteenth century, Thomas Moore.

Moore and Davis's contribution in the process of Irish identity construction are enormous. Moore's *Melodies* were sung by King Frederick William IV of Prussia who sang 'Love's young dream' with Balfe and told the composer that, 'so great was his admiration of the poetry adapted by the charming poet, Tom Moore, to the Irish melodies, that he could repeat several of the most popular ones, which he did, including "Believe me, if all these endearing young charms," "I'd mourn the hopes that leave me," and "Farewell, but whenever you welcome the hour."⁹⁹ But they were not confined to the courts of Europe. Moore's appeal was widespread and he found an audience as far afield as Poland, where according to Charles Gavan Duffy Moore's *Melodies*, 'supplied the Poles with their most popular revolutionary songs . . .'¹⁰⁰ ; and the American west where his songs formed part of the American vaudeville repertoire.¹⁰¹ Davis, on the other hand, confined himself to establishing the grounds for Ireland to be taken seriously as a nation upon the international

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Kelly's 'Introduction'.

⁹⁹ H. J. St Leger, *Reminiscences of Balfe* (London, 1871), p. 38.

¹⁰⁰ C. Gavan Duffy, 'Thomas Moore' (1842), in *The Field Day anthology of Irish writing*, Seamus Deane ed. (3 vols, Derry, 1991), i, 1251.

¹⁰¹ Eric Lott, *Love and theft, blackface minstrelsy and the American working class* (Oxford, 1993), p. 95.

stage. To do this he had two problems to overcome, one to establish a palpable sense of difference between Irish and British/English culture and two to convince a section of the population who were adamantly opposed to separation or differentiation from Britain at any level that they should identify with a mistrusted and misguided enemy. Difference for Davis existed in the Herderian sense and in this analysis it exists between cultures not within them. This was inevitably a problem for Davis and we have seen how he tried to overcome this by insisting that the various ethnic and confessional groups upon the island of Ireland sink their individual histories into one over-arching Irish one. In this he failed but his attempt provided his legacy for his intellectual progeny, this being the assertion of an Irish mind and an Irish nation different from and therefore ultimately independent of England.

Moore's popularity, as he realised himself, has been confined to his *Irish Melodies*, but in this work he painted a romanticised picture of Irish history and the Irish people whereby he publicised a cause which before had found little support in the drawing rooms of England. Middle-class society in Britain consumed this version of Ireland. While in Ireland men like archbishop McHale of Tuam took on the task of translating the *Melodies* into Irish, a process described by Eugene O'Cavanagh (who had written to Moore asking for his support in undertaking a translation while McHale's work was in progress) as enabling 'the melodies as airs (to) *become* Irish...' ¹⁰² This perhaps is the crux of Moore's later dilemma, by the time of his death in 1852 concerns in Ireland within the political and cultural arena, at least for the nationalist elite, had shifted from a pragmatic acceptance of the gradual process of anglicisation as a tool for moral and economic regeneration, advanced by the likes of Moore and O'Connell, towards the re-Gaelicisation of Irish society for ideological reasons. Gaelic culture increasingly came to be seen as, at least as suitable, a vehicle for raising the human spirit and intellect as Anglo-Saxon culture. Moore was accused, in the pages of the *Dublin Monthly Magazine*, the publication, coincidentally, in which Davis and Duffy wrote articles under the banner of 'the Native Music of Ireland', of

¹⁰²Letter from Eugene O'Cavanagh, 14 Oct. 1841. Emphasis added.

being befuddled by the ‘foggy bigotry of West Britainism,’ which for too long had ‘(hovered) over the inhabitants of our eastern coast.’¹⁰³ If, as the magazine’s contributors alleged, he showed a lack of concern with Gaelic culture, ‘Ah, Tommy Tommy !...you know nothing of the language of the Irish’¹⁰⁴ this was an unconscious attribute of his youthful environment and his residence in England. McHale accorded to Moore the status of the saviour of Irish music by his redeeming of the music from ‘the coarse and barbarous pedantry of ignorant English songsters.’¹⁰⁵ The archbishop wrote ‘To MOORE our native music shall ever be indebted, for clothing it in a manner befitting its dignity and lineage’ and as a consequence of this of, ‘doing a service to the taste and morality of the people.’¹⁰⁶ But it was McHale’s intention that his translation of these national treasures, now polished and refined, were to be placed back into the hands of the peasants that Bunting and the other antiquarians had been collecting them from. As one contributor to the *Irish Quarterly Review* in 1852 put it: this music was vulgar, it was known only to the peasant, and those strains... where heard only as the country girl milked her cows, or when the poor villagers had gathered at a merry making. Rough, uncouth words were sung to the tunes, but the melody was there, in all its richest tones, and required but the master-hand, to wed it to immortal verse.¹⁰⁷ Moore provided that ‘master-hand’, McHale among others sought to make it accessible to the people with whom it had originated. Davis, on the other hand sought not to return to Ireland something which it already owned, but to invent a new canon of Irish songs. The *Spirit of the Nation* was an undeniable success, yet it still could not stem the tide of vulgarity among the peasantry which was usually associated with English and the mean and low concerns of the urban poor. As Davis observed despairingly: the popular ballads and songs are the faded finery of the West End, the foul parodies of St. Giles, the drunken rigmarole of the black Helots– or as they are touchingly classed in the streets ‘sentimental, comic, and nigger songs.’¹⁰⁸ And so it is towards these concerns that the next chapter now turns.

¹⁰³ *Dublin Monthly Magazine*, April, 1842, p.33

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, Jan. 1842, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, April, p.34.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, pp 34-5.

¹⁰⁷ *Irish Quarterly Review*, vol., ii, (Dublin) 1852. pp 412-3.

¹⁰⁸ Rolleston, p. 227.

Chapter 3

The imponderabilia of actual life.

the poor, who are limited, and therefore, in some sort barbarised to English alone, have only the coarsest ballads, wherein an occasional thought of frolic or wrath, or misery, are utterly unable to redeem the mass of threadbare jests, ribaldry, mock sentiment from the heathen mythology, low thoughts, and barbarous misuse of the metres and rhymes of the language.¹

The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski when working in the Trobriand islands in the early decades of the twentieth century proposed that the methodology of the anthropologist allowed for the gaining of a unique and more fully developed understanding of the society and culture under examination. The total immersion, Malinowski explained, of the social scientist into the culture of a subject society brought into light what he termed the ‘imponderabilia of actual life’.² Insight was gained by participant observation and interviews with informants which enabled the student to experience the minutiae of regional, local and familial relations whereby social structure and political acts on both the macro and micro level were revealed.³ Malinowski’s functionalism suggests that an individual’s social action can be explained, not by its immediate or apparent performance, but ‘by the function [it] serves for the wider social group’.⁴ The functionalist approach proposes that a proper interpretation of this accumulated information can reveal the totality of a social system and its culture, and has come in for much criticism as the discipline of anthropology has developed. However, his phrase ‘the imponderabilia of actual life’ has a validity and resonance that should be exploited by social scientists, and I include historians who are engaged in the study of history from below in this category. If the anthropologists’ attempt to come to terms with quotidian mundanities of a present day society is a hard task to achieve, then

¹*Nation*, 21 Dec. 1844.

²B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London, 1922), p. 24.

³*Ibid.*, pp 1-25.

⁴John Holmwood, ‘Functionalism and its critics’, in Austin Harrington (ed.), *Modern social theory* (Oxford, 2005), pp 87-109.

how much more difficult is it for the historian of the nineteenth century to whom the subject society is no longer available to be observed, and who therefore must attempt to reconstruct that society through documentary evidence ? This chapter attempts to do just that, to cast a little light on the concerns, interests, and foibles of Irish society in the nineteenth century that has not previously been explored to this extent through the medium of popular song ; the arena, as Davis described it in the opening quotation, where those ‘occasional thought[s] of frolic or wrath, or misery . . . of threadbare jests, ribaldry, mock sentiment . . . [and] low thoughts . . .’⁵ were indulged.

The attempt to reconstruct past culture through the discipline of history is not without precedent⁶ or difficulty. As Johan Huizinga has put it ‘[T]he details of cultural history belong to the realm of morals, customs, folklore, antiquities, and easily degenerate into curios,⁷ yet it is with these details and general themes that cultural historians, folklorists and anthropologists etc., have been occupied for varying lengths of time depending on the discipline’s specific historical developments as well as the whims, interests and, as likely, the career prospects within each of the disciplines. However, it is the branch of anthropology termed ethnomusicology that the ground work for the type of historical reconstruction that inspires this work has most fully been explored. Of particular relevance is the analysis of song texts which have come in for a degree of consideration. As the anthropologist A. P. Merriam suggests, ‘One of the most obvious sources for the understanding of human behaviour . . . is the song text.’⁸ He goes on: [T]exts, of course, are language behaviour rather than music sound, but they are an integral part of music and there is clear-cut evidence that the language used in connection with music differs from that of ordinary discourse.⁹ Merriam offers two uses that the study of song text can be put to. The first, outlined above, is a rather narrow reading where the form of the song text is noted as a special type of language, as a speech pattern wedded to musical notation wherein the sounds of the human voice and

⁵*Nation*, 21 Dec. 1844.

⁶For a comprehensive survey of cultural historians and their work see Peter Burke, *What is cultural history ?* (Cambridge, 2004).

⁷Johan Huizinga, *Men and ideas, history, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance* (Princeton University Press, 1959), pp 27-8.

⁸A. P. Merriam, *The anthropology of music* (Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp 187-9.

⁹*Ibid.*

the components of those sounds, words, vowels, consonants, diphthongs, are either elongated or shortened and deliberately mispronounced in order to convey a particular mood or communicate a message complementary with the music that accompanies it.¹⁰ We will observe a little of this in the following chapter, but because my sources are documentary rather than oral and the object of this study is to examine the process of Irish identity construction in the nineteenth century and not a linguistic analysis of song text form¹¹, it is his second use, that of song text content, that is most relevant in this case. On the topic of song text content Merriam says:

There is little doubt that song texts present an extremely fruitful potential for the understanding of deep-lying values and sanctions, as well as problems, of a given group of people....Song texts are used in a great variety of ways....Best, for example, comments on the teaching of 'historical incidents, traditions, myths...so as to familiarize children with the names of characters, incidents, etc.' among the Maori¹²...Outstanding examples of how texts are used for teaching and as a vehicle of legend and mythology are found in numerous sources on Polynesia.¹³

Totally unconnected to the work of Merriam and Best, but recognising a similar function of song text, in the transfer of historical knowledge and communal memory between the generations is David Lloyd's study of popular literature in Ireland. Lloyd makes reference to the specific Irish case of the ballad of 'Father Murphy' the insurrectionist of 1798, when he states, '...such ballads as 'Father Murphy' in their very descriptions of combat conceivably acted to preserve and transmit not merely the historical memory of insurrections but also the repertoire of means to resist, the tactical knowledge of how and where to conduct armed struggle'.¹⁴ This being so, we can see how this aspect of song text content i.e. its usefulness in recording and communicating an historical message whilst imparting practical information for social behaviour makes it fertile ground for an historical analysis. However, for the conscious nation builder popular song texts are something of a double edged sword and the information that may

¹⁰On the unity of music and lyric for the ballad tradition to exist as a living form see Bronson, . . . *the Child ballads* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1959), pp ix-xix.

¹¹On the relationship between music and language see Derek B. Scott (ed.), *Music, culture and society : changes in perspective* (Oxford, 2000), pp 21-56.

¹²Eldson Best, *The Maori, memoirs of the Polynesian society* (Wellington, 1924), ii, p. 143.

¹³Merriam, p. 225. cites the work of W. W. Gill *Myths and songs from the south Pacific* (London, 1876) and Richard Taylor, *Te ika a maui: New Zealand and its inhabitants* (London, 1870), p. 225.

¹⁴David Lloyd, *Anomalous States, Irish writing and the post-colonial moment* (Dublin, 1993), pp 88- 115.

be contained and conveyed in the song text is not compelled to be as ideologically correct as the one that Lloyd outlines above. For that reason they may reveal an ethos that official cultural nationalists would have wished to see obliterated. Lloyd raises an interesting point in relation to this ambiguity that lies at the heart of popular literature and highlights the particular problems that this widespread art form posed for the cultural nationalist project by not conforming to the homogenising ideal.¹⁵ He uses the Bakhtinian term ‘heteroglossia’ to represent the contest of many voices which are part of the reality of the complex everyday world, the chatter of inconsequence which must be subsumed by the unifying ‘one’ voice of cultural nationalism, for the nationalist agenda to be achieved.¹⁶ The suppression of contesting voices or inappropriate material can be seen, for instance, in the account of the eminent nineteenth century scholar and collector of Irish peasant music George Petrie (1790-1866). Petrie’s credentials as a nation builder for his publication, *The Ancient Music of Ireland*, have been noted ; Donal O’Sullivan said of him: Petrie combined knowledge and enthusiasm in full measure, and on this book he should be rated as great a nation-builder in the cultural sphere as was O’Connell in the sphere of politics.¹⁷ This accolade as a nation builder might have been rejected by Petrie himself as his political leanings, when they surfaced, appear to have been loyalist¹⁸ or those which would not be too far removed from the Irish patriots of the eighteenth century Protestant volunteers¹⁹ ; however, in reality he can be seen as an individual whose concerns were geared more towards intellectual pursuits rather than being bogged down in the grubby antics of politics. This artistic and intellectual bent along with his bourgeois up-bringing was his down-fall as far as being a collector of the music of the lower orders was concerned. As Tom Munnely has pointed out ‘His [Petrie’s] distaste for many Irish, and practically all English texts is universally evident in these volumes. . .’²⁰ The heart-achingly beautiful ‘*An Casadeach Bán*’ is, Petrie writes, ‘. . .of such a nature as will not allow even a specimen of it to be

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Lloyd, pp 89- 96 ; Michael Holquist (ed.), *The dialogic imagination, four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. (Texas, 1981).

¹⁷Donal O’Sullivan, *Irish folk music song and dance* (Cork, 1952), p. 18.

¹⁸William Stokes, *The life and labours in art and archaeology of George Petrie*(London, 1868), pp 396-7.

¹⁹David Cooper (ed.), *The Petrie collection of the ancient music of Ireland*(Cork,2002), p. 1.

²⁰Tom Munnely, review of David Cooper, (ed.), ‘The George Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland’ in *Journal of Music in Ireland*, vol. 3. No. 2 Jan/Feb. 2003 p. 15.

translated'.²¹ As regards another popular song called *Blow the candle out* which one can find recordings of into the twentieth century,²² Petrie writes:

I have been unable to ascertain the original, or any other old Irish name, to the following air, [*Blow the candle out*] though Mr. Curry acquaints me that, in his youth, he had heard more than one Irish song sung to it, but which he has now forgotten. I have therefore been obliged to apply to it the name of a very objectionable street ballad to which it was unhappily united, and which appears to have had a very extensive popularity in the Munster counties during the latter half of the last century, and is still not wholly forgotten.²³

Petrie's squeamish attitude towards the more robust songs of the people was not unusual, Francis James Child the American ballad collector of the latter part of the nineteenth century was constantly riven with doubt as to the worth of including such pieces in his great work; however, he felt compelled in order to be true to the project of compiling and categorising distinctive ballad types to overcome his annoyance at ballads he deemed '*essentially vulgar*' and to which he admitted he had 'scarcely patience or stomach to read'.²⁴ In the song texts that follow I hope to reverse this elision from Ireland's cultural record in order to uncover the continuity of a society which by and large has been written out of the history of nineteenth century Ireland in favour of the *fait accompli* Irish nation narrative and its adherent petrified sense of identity. If, as I suggest, the adoption of the grand narrative of a nation's struggle to take its place among the nations of the earth was the spectacular achievement of a bourgeois blocked intelligentsia composed of journalists, poets, editors etc., in other words, the managers of the media, determined to contrive one voice and therefore re-configure the organic process of historical development in terms beneficial to themselves, then we must look elsewhere for the voices of the deviants, deviant that is to the criteria of the inventors of tradition. And so it is to the songs of the lower orders that we must look to find this thread of universality and timelessness, the songs of the fornicating, fighting, drinking, labouring classes.

²¹David Cooper, (ed.), *The George Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland*(Cork, 2002) p. 60.

²²Jimmy Gilhane, *Blow the candle out on Songs of seduction, folk songs of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales* (Rounder Records, 2000[Alan Lomax and Peter Kennedy, 1955]).

²³George Petrie (ed.), *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (Dublin,1855), p. 63. A woman named Betty Skillin is attributed with having taught the song to one of Petrie's connections possibly Eugene O' Curry some 40 years prior to the date of publishing.

²⁴Bronson..., *the Child Ballads* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1959), pp xvi.

In every human society there exists a series of life changing symbolic ceremonies which anthropologists call, 'rites of passage'.²⁵ Although these may be culturally specific, they are universally applicable markers of a change of social status for the individual within the community. Van Gennep lists them as falling into three major phases, separation, transition and incorporation.²⁶ Not only are these markers for the changes of life culturally specific but they are gender (to use this problematic term in its most commonly understood form) specific also, denoting the proper social roles for men and women in whatever society of which they are members. It is at the intersection where both genders meet that we find a great deal of the evidence needed to construct an alternative history of Irish identity. Attitudes to sex, love and marriage, proper and inappropriate conduct between the sexes can be deduced from a close reading of the song-texts that were sold in broadsheet, song-books and garlands which make up the collections of ballads that have survived from the nineteenth century. The most common type of ballads dealing with these topics are songs of love and marriage. Many of the Irish love songs conform to a plot line wherein boy meets girl, boy marries girl and they live happily ever after. Popular in the nineteenth century also were politically inspired variants of the trajectory where boy meets girl, boy dies in his struggle to free Erin and girl lives in longing ever after (Moore's *She is far from the Land* being the exemplar of this form, while Sarah Curran, Robert Emmett's apparent true love, managed to console herself by marrying Capt. R. H. Sturgeon of the Royal Staff Corps. and to have died of consumption in England 5 May 1808²⁷). In another variation boy emigrates and girl waits despondently for her sweetheart's return. I have yet to come across a ballad where the roles were reversed regardless of the fact that many single Irish women emigrated.²⁸ These are not the songs that concern us here as invariably they present a picture of poetic love which, when not written by members of the nationalist cultural elite, offered a narrative that was in harmony with the aims of the nation builders and thus they reveal little of the conditions that might help us to elicit an alternative sense of being. However, there is a range of songs, many of which are more

²⁵ Arnold Van Gennep, *The rites of passage*, translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago, 1960 [1908]).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

²⁷ Kit Ó Céirín and Cyril Ó Céirín, *Women of Ireland a biographic dictionary* (Galway, 1996), p. 54.

²⁸ Ann Rossiter, 'Aspects of Irish women's emigration experience' in Sean Hutton and P. Stewart (eds), *Ireland's histories* (London, 1991), p. 225.

‘racy of the soil’ than anything that appeared in the idealist *Nation* newspaper or its offspring the *Spirit of the Nation* and which highlight the fraught nature of marital, familial and sexual relationships. These songs speak of relationships wherein love has little to do with marriage and the sacred union is entered into for some practical reason usually for money. As such they bring into focus questions relating to sexual desire, power relations inside the institution of marriage, social roles, the acquisition of material wealth, promiscuity and infidelity ; questions which would otherwise, in a society that was becoming increasingly dominated by religious orthodoxy, social probity, and nationalist propaganda, have been left unvoiced. The following are examples of the type of songs where the imponderabilia of actual life become the focus of attention.

1

Text: *The Gay Young Bachelor*, White, vol.iii. f. 73; *The Lad that is Fond of the Lasses*, White, vol. ii f. 99.

Verse: 1 I am an airy young fellow, that now leads a comical life,
 My mind it will never be easy, until I am tied to a wife,
 Those seven long years I am courting, and sporting my cash like a man,
 And I oftentimes paid the whole reckoning, but for such things I don’t care a
 damn.

Chorus : With my wattle my pipe and tobacco, I walk out as clean
 as I can,
 And if I am fond of the girls, that’s no bad sign for a man,

2 How glad I do be every Sunday, when I know I am in for some fun,
 I will go up the road for the meet her, for she has my own poor heart won,
 It’s often I’m sporting and joking, with Kitty, Nancy and Nell,
 I can never love any young girl but Moll, and she knows it right well,

3 The people are very bad minded, the moment I turn my back,
 Some calls me a senseless young fellow, and others an old silly crack,
 I don’t care a fig what they call me, if Molly be constant and true,
 I think it no crime to be courting, it’s a thing that the whole world
 should do.

4 My best friend he oftentimes told me, it was no use to persevere,
 The news that he oftentimes brought me, Drove me quite into despair,
 I gave no ear to his language, but stuck to the girl all thro’
 For indeed he was highly mistaken, for my Molly is faithful
 and true.

5 The curse of the crows on you Cupid, it seems you can do what you
 please,

For I own you have knocked me quite stupid – why don't you give me some ease.

I'll never forget all I suffered, the dark dreary night I did roam,
When ever she would send me a message, no other would keep me at home.

6 I'll never forget what I suffered, in the year of our Lord thirty eight,
For my mother my poor heart was bleeding, I thought that I'd never get free,
It was all for the sake of poor Mary, I bear such a tormenting pain,
but I'll do the best for the future, I'll never be so bad again,

7 My people are continually at me, they are red devils for scold,
But in order to shun their wild fury, with silence sure I steal to bed,
And still the fond thoughts of my jewel, continually runs in my head.

8 Now Molly astore if you love me prepare, and let us get the knot tied.
For certainly I am in a hurry, to stretch myself down by your side.
And if that you wish to stop longer, my dear you can take your own time,
for I'll wait until you are ready, if you take your oath you'll be mine.

9 Last summer I was in a hobble, to work on the quay I was bound,
In order to see lovely Molly, I took the hell of a round,
However as Cupid has willed it, with pleasure I did rove along,
Myself and my Molly got married, and that puts an end to my song.

I take this song as a starting point for exploring the nature and motivations for entering into marriage. The text of *The gay young batchelor* is innocent enough although it contains some elements as its other title, *The lad that is fond of the lasses*, which would not sit easily within a society which promoted the twin virtues of chastity and monogamy²⁹. Line two in verse eight 'For certainly I am in a hurry / to stretch myself down by your side' speaks with a passionate urgency and honesty of sexual longing that respectable Victorian nationalists could not contemplate, at least, publicly. There are however, honourable qualities within the text, the overall tone of romantic love where both partners remain true to each other and the final verse ending in marriage brings the plot line to a close which would have been acceptable to a nineteenth century improving mind of any political hue. The second text is less idealistic but highlights one of the fundamental reasons and universal themes for marriage - the exchange of wealth in the form of a dowry for assumed protection of a

²⁹K. H. Connell, *Irish peasant society* (Dublin, 1996), pp 51- 87.

female by the successful applicant.

2

Text: *Mrs Kitty Mooney's Fortune*, White, vol. ii. f.174; *Kitty Mooney's Portion*,
Harding B 26 (315).

- Verse: 1 My name is Dick Mooney I'm very near dying,
One daughter I have that's in want of a man,
Her fortune to mention without any lying,
I'll get her a husband as soon as I can,
I have a house and a garden a snug little farm,
Three cows that from Kerry my Grandfather sent,
An old riding mare – she is blind I declare
She'll be 50 years on the last day of Lent.
- 2 I've a sow and 9 bonniens that's thick with the measles,
And sheep half a dozen that's black with the mange,
A cow-house and barn besides a large stable,
A pigsty and hen-house that's all in a range ;
I've nine geese and a gander like any commander,
that rules all our flock in the great farm yard,
With Daniel the puckawn like great Alexander,
He rears like a Highlander marching on guard.
- 3 And now for to mention her dresses of fashion,
that cost me in money many a pound,
Six gowns of fine muslin with three rows of flounces,
Her equals is not in this country all round,
she has a dunstable bonnet besides a new beaver,
With ribbons and feathers both red white and green,
A second hand spencer to dress her out cleaver,
with shoes boots and sandals that's fit for a Queen.
- 4 Her squeezers of fashion I pray don't be laughing,
with plates of strong whalebone her stomach to press,
Laced up in the middle as tight as a fiddle,
A little black apron the pride of her dress,
Now 50 bright guineas I give in the bargain,
So young men be courting as fast as you can,
Her beauty to mention is not worth a farthing,
But I'll do my best like a true honest man.
- 5 She's short of five feet by a couple of inches,
there's no barrel churn her body would hold,
Her legs like two milestones of shafts of a tuck mill,
Her beautiful skin is the colour of Gold,
Her eyes like two sovereigns shining like fire,
You'd think every moment the strings they'd crack,
There's fourteen years dirt on her neck I'm no liar,
And a nose on her face like a west india black.

- 6 Her hand and her arms without any form,
 this beautiful damsel so mild and discreet,
 while belts and broad buckles her waist does adorn,
 And bog mould in plenty is stuck on her feet,
 Her elegant carriage would charm a Lover,
 Her breath like the scent of a soap-boiler's pan,
 Had Venus her charms she might go a courting
 But never I'm sure would she get a young man.
- 7 And now to conclude and to finish my ditty,
 If any young hero with courage so bold,
 would venture to wed with the charming Miss Kitty,
 He must get the fortune that I have now told,
 He may get a damsel possessed of more beauty,
 And one that is cleaner he'll easily find,
 But where is the money, the stock and the farm,
 For boys that's the object of this present time.

The coarse language and unflattering imagery that is used would not readily be acceptable to nationalist sensibilities which held Irish woman not only as a symbol of the nation but the fount of all things good and holy and whose beauty was beyond compare.³⁰ The overall effect is comic, the state of the stock and the farm are as unpromising as the appearance of Mrs (Miss) Mooney herself, but the sentiment is well grounded in the efforts of those whose major concern was the welfare of their family and estate.³¹ The profound pragmatism that the song encapsulates in the last two lines, 'But where is the money, the stock and the farm/ For boys that's the object of this present time' suggests that romantic love, at least with one's spouse, was a luxury that only the aristocracy could afford, and this class itself was especially calculating in arranging marriage for material reasons.³² This reading agrees in general terms with the assertion of J. J. Lee regarding marriage practices in Ireland in the generations just preceding and subsequently in the aftermath of the famine when he states, 'even small farmers generally insisted on a dowry from the daughter-in-law.'³³ Allingham's contemporary opinion emphasises this basic human longing for security within the

³⁰Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland, the literature of the modern nation* (London, 1996), p. 294.

³¹S. J. Connolly, 'Marriage in pre-famine Ireland', in Art Cosgrove (ed.), *Marriage in Ireland* (Dublin, 1985), pp 78-98; Jenny Beale, *Women in Ireland* (London, 1986), pp 24-6.

³²Jack Goody, *The development of the family and marriage in Europe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp 240-61; Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'The role of women in Ireland under the new English order', in Margaret MacCurtain and Donncha Ó Corráin (eds.), *Women in Irish society the historical dimension* (Dublin, 1978), pp 26-7.

³³Joseph Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish society 1848-1918* (Dublin, 1973), p.4.

lover's relationship when he speaks of the contents of the chap book he described in his piece for *Household Words* (1852):

Nearly one-half of the whole number owe their inspiration to Cupid – a personage not unfrequently mentioned therein by name, and conducting about eighty per cent. of his followers to the happiest conclusion. In this class of songs, two things are observable, as truly reflecting the character of the people: first, lawful wedlock is uniformly the aim and end: second, elopements are very usual, and are considered not in the least objectionable. Parents are habitually described as the natural enemies of true lovers; and, as such, it is held not only allowable, but highly praiseworthy, to revile, deceive, and even directly to rob them. Yet the romantic or love-in-a-cottage principle which prevails among the Romeos and Juliets of polite fiction has no parallel here, for care is always taken to provide one or other of the amorous couple with “ample means,” and oftentimes the exact amount of the dowry is impressively mentioned.³⁴

Verses 1 and 2 of *Miss Kitty Mooney's fortune* illustrate Allingham's point on the amount of the dowry on offer and in the following song the same subject is uppermost in the couple's concern; also if the resort to coarse language in the previous song would make it unsuitable for improving nationalist opinion the scatological nature of *Peter and Peggy* would definitely concentrate the puritanical mind of collectors like Petrie and censorious nation builders such as Hyde and Moran.

3

Text : *Peter and Peggy*, printer: Bebbington, J. O. (Manchester) Date 1858-61. Harding B 11 (3334).

Verse: 1 A couple from the Emerald Isle, once lived in Manchester a while,
A married couple tack'd together, in Dublin by a buckle beggar,³⁵
His name was Peter and her name was Peggy,
and they lived next door to Jemmy Legger ;
It was from him I caught this tale when quaffing o'er a pot of ale.

2 Once they had a gallows row, how it began I can't tell now,
Peggy said she would be parted, for truth she was nigh broken hearted,
But first she'd have the things she brought him,
Likewise the furniture she bought him.
There's the table and the three legg'd chair, belongs to me that now stands
there,

³⁴Allingham, p. 363.

³⁵Connolly says that the term 'couple-beggar' was applied to 'a suspended or irregular clergyman who performed marriages on request for a fee' and was a common resort of eloping couples, in Cosgrove (ed.) *Marriage in Ireland*, p. 85.

- 3 Besides the chamber pot, and spoons and other things about the rooms,
All these I'll have before I go, and that I'll quickly let you know,
Then to the devil you may rale and all your dirty breed beside,
For sure no mortal can endure um, but troth I'll find a way to cure him.
- 4 Peter listened with surprise, until his blood begins to rise,
Peggy, says he, 'tis very clear, there's not a thing belongs you here,
the very stool you now squat on, belong to me, likewise the bottom,
that squats upon it, flesh and bone, by jennies ash 'tis not your own !
Besides the tatters on your back. Now Peggy there's a nut to crack.
- 5 This was the end of the contention, while Peggy thought of an invention ;
Faith she swore the next time that he met her, She'd be an over match for Peter.
Then straight to bed she did repair, and a dirty trick committed there,
Which I need not here explain, you all may guess 'twill be the same,
- 6 When Peter came home and undress'd – while care and sorrow, filled his
breast,
And when he turn'd the clothes, a mortal smell assail'd his nose,
Och murder, Peggy, says he, is this the way you're sarvin me ?
Arrah get up and clean your b–m, or by the god of war, I'll drum
upon your hide a nate tattoo, That all the days you live you'll rue.
- 7 Peggy ne'er spoke, but turn'd her head,
And unto Peter archly said, the words you spoke I've not forgot um,
You own my goods, likewise my bottom, Now when it was mine I kept it clean,
And now its your's you must do the same.

It is perhaps no wonder given the characterisation of the Irish couple in *Peter and Peggy* that this song is to be found in the Bodleian Harding ballad collection at Oxford rather than in any collection I could find in Irish libraries or archives. Peter and Peggy's relationship appears to be typical of the English perception of that which existed among the Irish emigrant labouring classes in Britain which was satirised in the pages of *Punch* and which the Irish feminist Francis Power Cobbe summed up in the term 'wife torture' which she determined occurred with greater frequency among this class of people than among any other.³⁶ But the essential point for us is the song's content regarding the property included in the dowry and the legal status of the wife, being the property of the husband, has universal resonance. In that sense it is useless in constructing any semblance of cultural difference, (except in the negative) as was

³⁶Elizabeth Steiner-Scott, 'To bounce a boot off her now and then...: Domestic violence in post - famine Ireland', in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd (eds), *Women and Irish history* (Dublin, 1997), pp 127-8.

required by the standards set by Mazzini for the Irish. It is this idea of *utility* in the name of the cause which overrides all other impulses in addressing the art of the lower classes and confines it to the cultural dustbin. Therefore we can begin to glean what was important in lives so discarded by the great and good, by rifling through the rubbish and the remnants of those whose cultural expressions were unfortunate enough to be useless.³⁷ Some of the motivational factors surrounding practice of the dowry i.e. the alliance and consolidation of wealth, land, and property, are considered by Lee in the following passage where can be seen the economic and sociological forces which brought about drastic changes in marriage practices in Ireland in the post-famine period:

As the rungs on the social ladder widened, as the cottier disappeared and the average size of farm increased, it became increasingly difficult to marry a little above or a little beneath oneself. The range of social choice for bidders in the marriage market narrowed. Mixed marriages, between farmers and labourers, were considered unnatural. Farmers' children preferred celibacy to labourers. The increasing longevity of parents reinforced the drift towards late marriage . . . Sons, more patient in waiting for a farm than daughters for a man, became relatively older than their brides. This widening age gap meant that a larger number of wives became, in due course, widows. Wives and widows, projected their frustrated capacity for affection onto their sons, and contemplated with dread the prospect of a 'rival' daughter-in-law who might supplant them in their sons affections. . .³⁸

Evidence from the Poor Inquiry(1835)³⁹ taken in County Clare before the famine gives support to Lee's argument by putting flesh on the bones of his economic framework: 'a farmer's son will wait till he gets a fortune, or till he settles his sisters; but with the labourer an acquaintance begun the night before at a wake or a dance is sometimes consolidated the next morning into matrimony'.⁴⁰ Within the framework of Lee's assessment, older men marry younger women and so leave widows behind and he

37. Beiner, Guy, *Remembering the Year of the French, Irish folk history and social memory* (Wisconsin, 2007), pp 5-14.

³⁸Lee, pp 4-5.

³⁹ *First report of commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland 1835*, H.C. (369) xxxii. [on line <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.jproxy.nuim.ie> accessed 19 July, 2008]

⁴⁰ *First report of commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland 1835*, Appendix A p.417 H.C. (369) xxxii, 433 [on line <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.jproxy.nuim.ie/> accessed 19 Jul. 08]

I asked her to dance – she did not deny –
I vowed that I loved – ‘twas all in my eye...

3 I met with a widow, she had cash galore,
Plenty of money, free houses and store,
I did embrace her, her temper to try,
And vowed that I loved her – ‘twas all in my eye...

4 For to gain her affection, it was my intent,
In two or three wishes I gained her consent ;
We went to the church the long knot to tie,
thinks I to myself– sure ‘tis all in my eye...

5 The clergyman join’d us for better, for worse,
She married me, and I married her purse ;
When I got the cash I soon let it fly,
To let money rust, sure ‘tis all in my eye,...

6 I sported her cash – she took it to heart,
But death was so kind, he soon did us part ;
she was laid in the ground, which caused me to sigh,
I wept with her friends – ‘twas all in my eye...

7 So here is a part and a sketch of my life,
A handsome young bachelor wanting a wife,
In the course of six days, as you may rely,
I mourned for my spouse – ‘twas all in my eye...

The following song is even less coy about the attractions that the older woman held for the younger man.

5

Text : *The Old Hag and her Money* in James N. Healy, *Old Irish Street Ballads* vol., iv, *No Place like Home* (Cork, 1969).

Verse: 1 You lads of the City give ear to my ditty,
A few simple verse I’m going to lay down,
How I was seduced for to marry a widow,
I’m sure she had more the £10,000,
The very first night I laid my side down by her,
Her bones were as sharp as the edge of a saw,
Her skin was as cold as the snow on the mountain,
And not a whole tooth in her old under jaw.

2 Her young waiting-maid then her name is was Bessy,
And she in her bloom she was scarcely sixteen,
I slipped her ten guineas to dress in the fashion,

To go to a ball that was near Stephen's Green,
We danced and caroused until the next morning,
And then we came home by the first break of day,
I took my old woman quite loose in my arms,
And oftentimes wished she was laid in the clay.

3 It was early one morning she called upon Bessy,
to dress her in style to the doctor to go,
To swade her old frame with the best of good flannel,
And keep up her head with a full pound of tow,
But what do you think was the charge of the doctor,
A hundred bright guineas which did me surprise.
To dress my old lady complete in the fashion,
With a set of new teeth and a pair of glass eyes.

4 I took my old woman quite loose in my arms,
Come home my own darling I quickly did say,
I think half a guinea will buy you a coffin,
In less than a month you'll be laid in the clay,
I spent that long night in the arms of my Bessy,
The curtains being drew round the old woman's bed.
And when I awoke on the very next morning.
The first thing I found was my old woman dead.

5 When she was interred I called for the keys,
Of her place which I got likewise
There was 400 guineas sowed upon her bodice,
Which made my dear Bessy and me to surprise ;
There was five hundred more was hid in her bolster,
And three hundred more in the soles of her shoes,
Besides her gold watches and fine silver buckles,
We packed them all up in a trunk to be sure.

6 The auctioneer's book it came to four hundred,
Her parents began for to growl and to frown,
So all you young fellows that marries a widow,
Be sure that you plant them quite quick in the ground,
Then try her old bolster likewise her old bodice,
Be sure that you tear her old slippers in three,
In hopes by a widow you might get a fortune,
And live in contentment like Bessy and me.

This seems to be an extreme example of Allingham's point that the lovers were always supplied with 'ample means' but the cynicism of these young rovers aside the attraction of wealth looms large as a reason for marriage. Songs such as *All in my eye* and *The old hag and her money* can be written off as wishful thinking on the part of the song-writer, or the exception to the rule rather than the norm, as regards marriage practices, which included some exchange of wealth, practices which seem to have been

tightly regulated.⁴⁴ However, there is evidence which gives credence to the idea that the inspiration for such songs is not too far removed from ordinary life. Connolly quotes a County Mayo farmer who told the Poor inquiry commissioners:

I was a comfortable man, and had four cows and a heifer, till my daughter got married, and played me a trick that a good many girls have done before ; she ran off with a young man, and, after a week's sport, he sent her back without having married her; she never stopped at me, saying that he wouldn't take her without a fortune, until I was forced to give her three of my cows and money besides; moreover, I had to pay the priest.⁴⁵

As the result of such a sojourn the young girl's reputation was tarnished and in a society which did not look kindly upon illegitimate sexual intercourse⁴⁶ marriage was a way of allowing the individuals concerned and the families to continue to function as a unit without having to bear the full brunt of social sanctions. It can also be seen as a strategy by which the girl and her lover were able to circumvent parental objections to the union. Strategies such as this included the practices of the above mentioned elopement; the less drastic but more conspiratorial 'runaway match' in which the couple's relatives might take part; and abduction real or contrived.⁴⁷ The latter case, abduction, is an interesting point. The mere suspicion of inappropriate sexual liaisons was enough to set tongues wagging and start the rumour mill, which is the engine behind so many mechanisms of social control. This explains why abduction was used as a method to secure marriage, for where the girl was alone with a captor/suitor, even for a few hours the suspicion that she may have had sex either willingly or by force was enough for her to be marked out as unfit to be the wife of any man but the man who abducted her, thus her parents would have to swallow this bitter pill and allow the marriage to take place even where this meant a farmer's daughter marrying a labourer.⁴⁸ In the following example the virginity of a young woman has been taken and an unplanned pregnancy is the result of the union. However, again it is the dowry that convinces the father of the child to accept his responsibilities and this seems to have

⁴⁴Connolly in Cosgrove (ed.), *Marriage in Ireland*, p. 81.

⁴⁵*Report of commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poor in Ireland 1836*, Appendix F, p. 41. H. C. 1836 xxxii, 43.

⁴⁶*First report of commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poor in Ireland 1835* p. 79, H. C. 1835 (369) xxxii, Appendix A; Connell, p. 52.

⁴⁷Connolly, pp 85-7.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

been a common enough occurrence.

6

Text : *The old woman clothed in grey*, printer Haly, Hanover st. Cork; Bod., 2806 c. 18 (225) ; Harding B 25 (1419).

Verse: 1 An old woman all clothed in grey,
 Whose daughter was charming and young,
 And she was deluded away,
 By Roger's false flattering tongue,
 With whom she so often had been,
 Abroad in the meadows and fields ;
 Till her belly grew up to her chin,
 And her spirits quite down to her heels,

2 At length she began for to puke,
 Her mother possessed with fear,
 Straight give her a gentle rebuke ;
 And said child a word in your ear.
 I hear you've been playing the fool,
 Which some folks call hey ding-a-ding,
 Why did you not follow my rule,
 And tie your two toes in a string?

3 But who is the father of it?
 Tell me without further delay,
 for now I am just in a fit,
 To go and hear what he does say,
 Tis Roger, the damsel replied,
 He called me his dear pretty bird,
 He told me he'd make me a bride,
 But he was not as good as his word,

4 What ! Roger that lives at the mill ?
 Yes verily mother the same,
 Of me he has had all his will,
 I'll hop to him tho' I am lame.
 Go fetch me my crutches with speed ;
 And bring me my spectacles too,
 A lecture to him I will read,
 Shall ring in his ears thro' and thro'

5 This said, she went hopping away,
 And came to young Hodge in the mill,
 On whom she her crutches did lay,
 Saying, you have ruin'd my poor girl,
 In getting her dear maidenhead,
 The truth you can no ways deny ;
 With her I advise you to wed,
 And make her as honest as I.

6 But what will you give me, quoth Hodge
 If I take her now off your hands ;

You shall make me sole heir to your lodge,
Your money, your houses, and land
Your barns, your cattle and plows, (sic)
With every wether and ewe,
This done I will make her my spouse,
Speak up are you willing or no ?

7 She said, taking Hodge by the hand,
Let it come to have and to hold,
You shall have my houses and land,
My cattle, my silver and gold;
Make her but your dear honoure'd wife,
And thou shalt lord of my store,
Whene'er I surrender my life,
In case it was forty years more,

8 The bargain was presently struck,
The marriage and this being done,
The old woman wish'd them both luck,
Being proud of her daughter and son.
Then hey for a girl or a boy,
Young Mrs look'd fine as a duchess,
The old woman caper'd for joy,
And danced a jig on her crutches.

Although the name of Roger Hodge would suggest that this song was not of Irish origin it is found on a broadsheet which contains the song *O'Rielly from the county Kerry* which was published by a prolific printer from Cork named Haly, whose work is well represented in the collection of John Davis White (1820-93) of Cashel. White was a correspondent for the *Cashel Gazette* as well as being a local historian and ballad collector.⁴⁹ He was quite circumspect in the ballads that he collected and even censored some lines and verses in the songs that he thought appropriate to include in his collection, therefore it may well be the case that this song was available in the Munster region but was deemed unsuitable for inclusion. Regardless of its provenance what is instructive in this song is the pragmatic nature of arrangement (which reminds one of the County Mayo's farmer's complaint against his daughter as recounted by Connolly) and the degree of sanction towards the young girl from her mother, the rebuke she suffered being described as 'gentle'. This implies that unplanned pregnancy seemed to be regarded as a fact of life and it was how one coped with these facts, and the resources

⁴⁹John Davis White, *Sixty years in Cashel* (Cashel, 1893).

at one's disposal that determined the outcome for the woman. However, this is still a song of censure and can be seen as an effort to impose social control through the mechanism of a morality tale. As Merriam states:

Topical songs...are a reflection of the concerns of the culture of which they are a part. While they may contribute to the correction of those aspects of behaviour to which they call attention, simply through the means of putting them in the public eye, their major function seems to be one of comment of various aspects of everyday life. At the same time, such songs exhibit a keen eye for scandal and gossip, and they lead quickly to a further subgrouping of the topical song... This song group is concerned with direct social control, that is, songs are sometimes used, through admonition, ridicule and in some cases even more direct action, to effect actual change in the behaviour of erring members of society. Such songs may be directed toward a wide variety of social ills, among them sex offenses, such as the song in Dahomey heard by Herskovits and "sung against a young woman who had been careless with her favours..."⁵⁰

What the *Old woman all clothed in grey* reveals is that women who became pregnant outside of wedlock had recourse to certain strategies which enabled them to deal with the situation in hand. One of these was for the girl's relations to provide her with a dowry ; another was to marry below ones social status ; another was to swear an oath before a magistrate as to the identity of the father, which relied upon social pressure to coerce the man named into marriage or at least into providing maintenance as the law could not make such a demands⁵¹ (although Connell says that some magistrates stretched the law to breaking point in order to 'induce the man to make some payment. '); while yet another was to allege rape, which was a crime punishable by hanging, a charge which forced the man to accept responsibility or take his chances in court.⁵² So we can begin to detect a number of features that are served by these 'topical' songs, topical in the sense that although they might speak of an immediate event or interest, can be sung on later occasions where similar social conventions are broken. On the one hand they were merely vehicles for supplying gossip and satisfying morbid curiosity and on the other they were instructive and coercive. The hermeneutics of the text maybe open to discussion but the final interpretation was

⁵⁰Merriam, pp 196-7.

⁵¹*First report of commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poor in Ireland 1835*, pp 49-114, H. C. 1835 (369) xxxii.

⁵²Connell, pp 54-8.

always subjective and one took from it what one wanted. Other songs from the Harding collection which deal with the issue of the loss of virginity are *The blighted flower* and *Coming home from the wake*, the second of which tells of the consequences of sexual relations outside of marriage in a similar way to those addressed in the *Old woman clothed in grey*.

7

Text: *The Blighted Flower*, Printer: Sharp, J (London) c1845, Harding B 11 (2343)

Verse: 1 I had a flower within my garden growing,
I nourished it with fond and anxious care;
Rich is its charms of nature's own disposing,
Of tints unrivalled and with fragrance rare;
In an evil hour there came about my dwelling,
One who had blighted many a flower before;
He saw my gem in innocence excelling,
He smiled upon it and it bloomed no more.
 He saw my gem . . .

2 Next day I found it wither'd and degraded,
Thrown by the spoiler carelessly away,
It's fragrance gone – it varied beauties faded,
Despised, forsaken hastening to decay,
Vainly I strove the faded flowers to cherish,
Nought now remains of what was once so dear;
Only with life can fond remembrance perish,
Or cease to flow the unavailing tear.
 Only with life . . .

8

Text: *Coming home from the wake*. Printer Nugent, J. F. & Co (Dublin) between 1850-99, Harding B 40 (3).

Verse: 1 Young Nelly the milkmaid, so buxom and gay,
Did always delight with young Roger to play,
One evening resolved a dance for to take,
She asked of her mother to go to the wake.

2 Now Nell you may go, but I'll have you take care,
And of Roger's delusions acushla beware;
For unless this my counsel you rightly do take,
By my soul, you'll remember coming home from the wake.

3 So dressed in her best, away Nell did steer,
With pleasure expecting young Roger was there,
They danced and they played like a duck and a drake,
So that was the sport they had at the wake.

4 The pastime being over, they home took their way,

Until they had come to some cocks of new hay,
Where he led her a dance, and says she, for your sake,
My soul I'll ne'er forget coming home from the wake.

5 In some short time after, poor Nell, grew unwell,
And her mother says, tell me the reason, dear Nell,
Says Nell, I can't tell, if my life was at stake,
Unless it was that cursed dance coming home from the wake.

6 Now, Nell being a maiden of beautiful charms,
Always had a right to be aware of alarms,
So girls by Nelly a warning pray take,
And take care how you dance coming home from a wake.

Songs 6, 7, and 8 fit snugly into the categories that the Herskovits noted in their work in Trinidad, where they organised them into commentaries on 'the free and easy manner of...young girls ; the elderly woman who weds a man younger than herself ; allusions to the girls who love not wisely ; and variations on the theme of the young girl who finds herself with child, etc.⁵³ These are common themes in the Irish ballad collections which would tend to refute the widely held believe that Irish people in the nineteenth century had some special ability to repress sexual desire and that Irish women in particular did not succumb to the temptations of carnal lust. Again, as S. J. Connolly has pointed out using sample statistics for nine parishes in Ireland where records were kept, and comparing them to a similar study carried out in England and Wales in the period 1751 – 1865, the percentage of illegitimate births was of the ratio of 2.5: 6.1. Such statistics would appear to lend weight to the dominant thesis regarding Irish women's chastity but Connolly qualifies this by adding that 'All such official figures are affected by the fact that substantial numbers of Irish women pregnant outside marriage have long found it preferable to give birth to their illegitimate children in countries other than their own.'⁵⁴ Alongside this the practices of 'concealment and infanticide' are also considered by Connolly as possibly skewering the results.⁵⁵ However, by studying the evidence of the Poor Inquiry another reason emerges for the apparent moral superiority of the Irish girl and this is the fact that many Irish people both women and men married at a very early age, for the women it was not uncommon

⁵³M. J. Herskovits and F. S. Herskovits, *Trinidad Village* (New York, 1947) pp 278-84.

⁵⁴S. J. Connolly, 'Illegitimacy and pre-nuptial pregnancy in Ireland before 1864: The evidence of some Catholic Parish Registers' in, *Irish Economic and Social History* vol. vi. (1979), p. 9.

⁵⁵Connolly, 'Illegitimacy and pre-nuptial pregnancy . . . pp 10-11.

to be married from the ages of fourteen or fifteen and for boys the average was just a couple of years older.⁵⁶ Marriage therefore, coincided with the onset of sexual activity and the latter was legitimatised within the institution of marriage. According to the evidence given by a Mr. McCarthy to the commission in regards to illegitimacy and prostitution in the town of Drogheda he states: '[A]mong the females of this latter class (the lowest of the labouring population) there are comparatively few cases of bastardy, and in general it may be said that pregnancy is the consequence and not the cause of marriage.'⁵⁷ The reality of early marriage with the extended period of fertility and sexual activity within the marriage, combined with the lack of opportunity and of dependable employment hints at an element of fatalism which can be deduced in regular pregnancy and the large family.

From the evidence of the song-texts above one might suppose that the men had it all their own way however, quite a number of the songs that deal specifically with marriage, rather than love, express a contrary opinion and for many couples the institution brought about a role reversal where the man was more often than not subservient to the woman. In these songs the harridan has control within the relationship. These songs call to mind Merriam's point that '...music (and the song texts that accompany it) is in a sense a summatory activity for the expression of values, a means whereby the heart of the psychology of a culture is exposed without many of the protective mechanisms which surround other cultural activities.'⁵⁸ If we apply this thesis to the songs texts that are extant we can attempt to reveal at least part of the 'psychology of the culture' or ethos that in some measure informed the lives of the proletariat. The ethos that is revealed in the following songs is one which presents an image of a social *milieu* wherein the virago has the upper hand in the battle of the sexes, committing acts of violence and intimidation upon her husband often fuelled by alcohol which leads to suspicions of infidelity on the part of the woman and male impotency both sexually and socially. These songs can be interpreted as mere comic songs as

⁵⁶ *First report of commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poor in Ireland 1835* p. 79, H. C. 1835 (369) xxxii, Appendix A

⁵⁷ *Report of commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poor in Ireland 1836*, p. 50, .H. C. 1836 [35] xxx, Appendix C.

⁵⁸Merriam, p. 225.

Neilands has done suggesting that there needs to be no further comment or they can be seen as admonishing the weak male and urging him to regain control of what was, after all, his property. This interpretation sees them as part of a discourse of patriarchal power, correcting a perceived gender imbalance which was unsettling to the social order.

9

Text: *The Pensioners complaint against his wife*. Printer Pitts, J (London) c1819-44 : Harding B11 (1358) ; Johnson ballads 1863.

- Verse: 1 You neighbours all listen a story I'll tell,
 It's of a misfortune that has me befel,
 I married a jade and her name it is Nell,
 And she is always a drinking and bawling,
 Eighteen pounds of a pension I've got in the year,
 which causes my wife to drink whiskey and beer,
 Her tongue like a cannon does sound in my ear,
 Before the daylight in the morning.
- 2 To kindle the fire it is my first job.
 If I don't do it right I a (sic) slap on the gob,
 A kick or a clout, or a crack on the nob,
 I surely will get from my darling,
 Then out for the water the kettle to boil,
 And when I come home I must nurse a young child,
 I wish I was killed on the banks of the Nile,
 Before I had met with my darling.
- 3 Then Nell and her gossip sit down to their tea,
 while I in the corner have nothing to say,
 Or out in the garden a digging away,
 While Nell the cups she is tossing,
 then in for their leavings I chance for to hop,
 While Nell and her gossip are gone to the shop,
 Backbiting their neighbours and swallowing their drop,
 Hard fortune attend you my darling.
- 4 Oh! my shirt without washing does stick to my back.
 While she is sporting with Billy and Jack,
 And running in score for every nick-nack,
 While I must pay up the last farthing,
 Without shoes or stockings to cover my feet,
 My bed without either a blanket or sheet,
 I'm a show to the world when I go out in the street,
 Pray what do you think of my bargain.
- 5 Her beauty and praises I mean to disclose,
 she's dirty and lazy, with a short snuffy nose,

She's a disgrace to the women wherever she goes,
And her clothes all in tatters are hanging,
With a beard on her lip like a wandering Jew,
Not a tooth in her head that is sound, only two,
And a shift on her back, neither black, white, or blue,
That ever was wet with a washing.

6 I've travelled all nations, thro' France and thro' Spain,
Thro' Egypt and India, and home back again,
At Waterloo wounded, where I felt great pain,
And I ne'er met the match of my darling,
to finish my ditty, I firmly pray,
Before she either drinks whiskey or tea,
That something or other may whip her away,
Before the daylight in the morning.

10

Text: TCD White, vol. ii. f. 46. *The Scolding Wife*:

Verse: 1 Come maids, wives and widows, attention I pray,
And listen with patience to what I here say ;
It is just of my wife, I mean for to sing,
she is dirty and saucy, and that's a poor thing,
For ever she's scolding and fighting,
In that she is always delighting,
and all I can do won't her frighten,
she's going to the bad every day.

2 When first to this dame I got myself wed,
the curls of paper so hung round her head,
Her body was laced in a squeezer so fine,
And her wellington boots with the polish did shine,
but now she has alter'd her tune sir,
Roaring from morning 'till noon sir,
I wish I had one in her room sir,
Pray listen to what I now say.

3 Her cap which was once in the true dandy style,
Does now with turf ashes most elegant shine,
Her smock without washing has all gone to rags,
and her waterloo gown is all hanging in jags.
Pray what do you think of my wife sir ?
I'm sure she's the joy of my life sir,
I'm never a day without strife sir,
Oh! death may you take her away.

4 Her eyes with a selvage of red round about,
With Lundyfoot's powder she'll daub all her snout,
she's a beauty I'm sure abroad and at home,
And the A B C burned upon her shin bone,
But oh! if you were to see her house & dresser,
The devil ne'er saw such a mess sir,

I'll leave you the rest for to guess sir,
I wish she was under the clay.

- 5 For tipping off whiskey no equal has she,
And 21 times in the week she'll drink tea,
she'll sell the potatoes, the flax, and the meal,
the butter, the corn, and eggs she will steal,
to bring home the powder and shot sir,
along with a little sly drop sir,
then down goes the kettle and pot sir,
To the mischief I'll bob him she'll say.
- 6 In the making of butter, she's handy and clean,
Through the call (caul ?) of her cap the milk she does strain,
In stirabout making my wife is a dear,
clean noggins and spoons you will have never fear,
You know very well what I mean sir,
Her cake bread is wholesome and clean sir,
Her flummery bears a great name sir,
Her praises I'll sound far and near.
- 7 I'll sing a conclusion, and finish my song,
to tell all her actions, would keep me too long,
Enough for to say, I vow and declare,
she's as mild in her aspect, as Bruen the bear.
Farewell and adieu, now and for ever,
I think I behaved very clever,
the truth I have told you very near sir,
And my wife she's just going to her tea.

11

Text : *The Drunken Bachelors*. Printer : John E. Nugent, Printer, 35 Cook st. Dublin
White, vol. iii. f. 89.

- Verse: 1 Come all you young fellows that wish to get married.
I'd have you beware of a great dandy wife,
For if she be pretty or if she be handsome,
She will surely torment you then out of your life,
- 2 It was better for you she had two crooked ankles
a hump on her back and she lame of a thigh,
If she has a fortune her cheeks she will paint them,
When you rise in the morning in bed she will lie.
- 3 When this great dandy girl will rise in the morning,
She'd hop the grocers her morning to take,
She'll call for a glass and a small drop of bitters,
Her cheeks roled in flannel she has the tooth-ache.
- 4 But when the poor man he comes to his breakfast,
she is drunk in the corner not able to creep,
and where she is living good people I'll tell you,

- It is just in the middle of sweet Thomas-street.
- 5 He once was a clerk in a good situation,
But now my poor fellow she pledged all his clothes,
and if he would grumble without hesitation,
She'd up with the bellows and then break his nose.
- 6 I'd have you beware of those dandy girls,
that wears barrelled curls and plats in their hair,
for if you go to a fair or a market,
she will kiss with another the truth I declare,
- 7 When first I was married I thought an angel,
I took her a room in sweet Francis street,
I bought her a bed and a new pair of blankets,
A bolster and pillow that we might go to sleep.
- 8 She had a beautiful teapot, blue cups and saucers,
A lovely fine table that cost me a crown,
Last Saturday night I gave her my wages,
And then to drink whiskey my darling sat down.
- 9 The next thing I bought her was a pot and a kettle,
and a beautiful cupboard that stood by the wall,
She had all sorts of china that was fit for a lady,
And then my companion she have a ball,
She invited a tailor and likewise a weaver,
And a great dancing master was in Francis st,
My curse on the Lady for she left me quite naked,
She pledged the new shoes that was on my poor feet.
- 10 The whiskey being cursed when it got in her belly,
To the merchant's hall to preach she would go,
Along with a mad man that ran for swift - alley,
That bennet may rowl in nine stone of toe
And a small little match you'll get for a farthing,
To kindle the blaze to warm them well,
And send them to Lucifer to the regions below,
with dearest Peg Trantum for to ring the bell.

These songs may at first appear frivolous but the case of John Young against his wife is instructive. Young testified before Dr. Kaye, Q. C. 13 August 1878 that his wife had used abusive and threatening language towards him while drunk. He refused to give her his wages 'on account of the condition she was in' and she threw boiling tea over him and hit him in the head with a tin teapot'.⁵⁹ These unfortunate men are caught in a predicament not of their own making and the following song suggests that the

⁵⁹*Irish Times*, 13 Aug. 1878 cited in Steiner-Scott, pp 134-5.

women are calculating in their actions.

12

Text: *Husband Taming*, Gilbert, f,105. Printer: P. Brereton 1 Lr. Exchange St. Dublin c1867 ; Bod., 2806 b.9 (212) ; Bod 2806 b.9 (151) ; Harding B 11 (1610) Printer: Fortey, W. S. (London) c1858-85.

Verse: 1 Oh crikey what a rummy go there will be through the nation,
So married men just mind your eye you'll find an alteration,
The women they are fully bent & everyday they are aiming,
By hook or crook they'll find a plan to give the men a taming.

Chorus

Hokey pokey, her's a go the woman the aiming, [sic]
To raise a new invented plan, they call it husband Taming.

- 2 There lives a man not far from here they call him Billy Shingle,
He say's he'd give a thousand pound if he was only single,
He says his wife has just began to give him such a training,
She took a patent out to try the plan of husband Taming.
- 3 Every morning he must rise & kindle up the fire,
Sift the cinders, empty the po's that is her first desire,
He then must wash and dress the child and give the floor a sweeping,
while his wife she lays in bed another hour sleeping.
- 4 And when the kettle it is boil'd he's ordered not to wake her,
Until he's brought her nice soft rolls from Mr Snooks the baker,
He then must go and lace her stays it's no use his complaining,
Because he knows it is the plan she's got for husband Taming.
- 5 After breakfast he must wash while she goes out a shopping,
He must make the beds and hunt the fleas or else he gets a wopping
The napkins then he's got to dry and clean the breakfast table
and if he growls or says a word she wops Him with a ladle.
- 6 Now if a [friend] should pop in to let them see she's able,
She makes him stand behind the chair and rock the baby's cradle,
And if the child should chance to cry she drives him nearly crazy
He's got to take it up and sing ho hush a by a baby.
- 7 On Sunday if she takes a walk to see her cousin Atkins
In his best had (sic) he's got to take a half a dozen napkins,
So married men judge for yourself you see at what they are aiming,
To wear the breeches out and out give the men a taming.
- 8 Now single men just study this as you would study riches,
If you should get a wife don't let her wear the breeches.
If once she gets the breeches on she'll give you such a training,
And make you curse the patent plan they've got for husband taming.

Songs 9, 10, 11 and 12 are presented from the point of view of the browbeaten husband. The next song is in the form of a conversation or dialogue where complaints are aired and the details of the power struggle within the relationship are made explicit.

13

Text : *The Discontented Pair* White, vol., i. f. 179 ; Bod., 2806 c.13 (40). Printer Harkness, J. (Preston) c1840-66.

- Verse: 1 I have a wife a drunkard I know not how to guide her,
 when she awakes I dare not spake she treats me with such scorn,
 At night her nose brakes my repose it sounds like a bugle horn,
 Chorus : re fal de ral de.
- 2 I have a man a lazy man he hates the thought of toiling,
 His legs he spreads around the fire side to watch the pot a boiling,
 and then at night he scolds and fights all I can do won't please him,
 Happy I'd be if I was free I wish that death might seize him...
- 3 Don't you know you drunken jade all I can do won't please you,
 Till noon each day you lie in bed, and I'm afraid to rise you,
 I do prepare your breakfast all ready for the table,
 And dare taste none till you are done, to please you I am not able...
- 4 John you know you got with me £500 in money,
 Whilst it lasted we did agree twas all both bread and honey,
 In place we had both joy and peace whilst the money lasted,
 I thought that I might happy be but now my hopes are blasted...
- 5 You jade the cash I got with you its long ago you drank it,
 and after that what did you do, you pawned the sheets and blankets.
 I had as well a furnished house as any of my neighbours I am thinking,
 Now I am as poor as a church mouse all by your whiskey drinking.
- 6 You know it well you nasty brut you often did ill use me,
 And do you think I would stand mute to hear myself amusing,
 whilst there is a potstick on the shelf a bottle or a ladle
 You villian I'll defend myself as long as I am able.
- 7 You brazen face and impudent jade your tongue,
 will cause you ruin,
 You say of me you're not in dread, but mind what you are doing,
 You take great delight to scold and fight with those that don't offend
 you,
 Let go my hair I do declare to bridewel I will send you.
- 8 You do none of your prate to me or off your nose I'll scruen man,
 I bound myself to misery when I was bound to you, (man)
 I'll have my due and stick to you like sticking plaster,
 You villian I'll let you know petty coat will be the master.
- 9 My curse to any man I give that would marry to riches,

A wretched life he is sure to live if he gives up the breeches,
I am all in rags the cadgero bags I fear I soon must carry,
I rue the day so well I may that ever I did marry.

10 Before you joined temperance you know how you behaved it,
Twas to bridewell you were sent twice or trice your head was shaved,
You wives like me that disagree your husbands do not spare them,
the breeches I got on to try and I intend to ware um.

These songs are variations on the theme of the nature of the reality of married life beyond any descriptions that exist in the work of romantic poets. The dreary work of emptying chamber pots, killing fleas, cooking, cleaning, childminding etc., the domestic chores which are traditionally held to be ‘woman’s work’ allude to a society in which the assumed roles within the division of labour are seen to be, at the very least, negotiable. The comic element relies upon a sense of humour which is both barbed and acerbic. However it is the wilfulness of the women in the relationship that is the most provocative aspect of these works and the sense of emasculation was apparently common enough to warrant comment. This is hardly the stuff to fill the hearts of nationalist patriarchy with pride or fulfill the rhetoric of the *Nation* which presented the Irish male as the mark against which all others of the species were measured as can be seen in the following scientific table published in November 1844 to support the plight of Irish manufacture and the Irish working man:

LABOUR— Our manufacture and commerce having been destroyed by the execrable Union, our poor people have no employment, save in agriculture— which no more than any other *single* branch of industry never can employ a whole people. Hence the vast quantity of wretchedly paid and unemployed labour in Ireland. By a just retribution some of the consequences of this are grievously felt by England herself. The competition of the crowds of poor Irish that annually visit her reduces the English labourer’s wages and chances of employment. The English employer thereby saves something in wages; but he loses more in poor rates, for the support of the English labourer thus driven into the poorhouse.

Intelligence, activity, and docility, are the peculiar characteristics of the Irish working man, whether labourer or (illegible). Where having (illegible) is he deficient in skill it is simply owing to his want or opportunity of acquiring it at home, from the miserable condition of his country. And no man so readily acquires it when he gets opportunity. In connexion with this subject Dr. Kane quotes a comparison (for some years very frequently quoted by Mr O’Connell in his speeches) deduced from experiments of Professor Forbes, of Edinburgh and Professor Quetelet of Brussels, of the physical strength, &c of the Irish, English, Scots and Belgians, viz:—

AVERAGE

	Height ft. in.,	Weight st. lbs	Force of Blow Struck st. lbs
Englishman	5 8½	9 7	25 3
Scotchman	5 9	9 8½	26 7
Irishman	5 10	9 11	27 0
Belgian	5 8	9 6	21 3

Dr. Kane adds a London experiment, which showed that the utmost effort of an Englishman to raise weights with a crane was 24, 255lbs: of a Welshman, (sic) 15, 112lbs while an Irishman raised 27,562lbs. ! Thus physically as well as morally, superior to the Englishman is it not too bad that the Irishman should be his bond slave . . .⁶⁰

This being the case, one is left to wonder what kind of superwoman or amazon the Irish woman who could terrorise such a paragon of physical and moral virtue was? The put-upon wives in the following songs, whose depictions of the Irish husband do not exactly tally with the description of the Irishman by Dr. Kane, portray the most enduring qualities of the Irish woman as being those of patience, frugality and stoicism.

14

Text: *Lying Alone*. White, vol. i. f. 180; Harding B 26 (403). Printer: Moore, J. (Belfast), c 1846-52.

Verse: 1 Young ladies have pity on me,
 Let me in your company mingle,
 I once was a striplen so free,
 Like you I was happy and single,
 My mother advised me to wed,
 when till seventeen I had arrived,
 to church I set off in a trice,
 With a man lack a day to get married.
 I wish I was lying alone.

2 A short time he loved me sincere,
 And used me both kindly and civil,
 But the honeymoon scarcely was over,
 When my husband he turned out a devil.
 The bellows he threw at my head,
 My clothes to the pop shop he carried,

⁶⁰ *Nation*, 23 Nov. 1844.

- I often wished I was dead,
Before that I ever got married,
- 3 One night he came in a heat,
And burned my new boots in a shindy,
The cat he kicked under the grate,
And the table threw out the window,
then he took up on his back,
And off to the brokers he carried
He sold both the poker and tongs,
Oh! I wish I never got married.
- 4 He has but one shirt on his back,
To the grocer's shop he likes to be dashing,
Sunday all day he sleeps in the bed,
While his shirt and stockings I'm washing,
His trousers all full of holes,
Long before him my apron he carried,
He grunts and he snores like a pig,
Oh, I wish I had never been married.
- 5 My husband's a comical man,
He's a regular out and out nipper,
He lays out the money himself,
In tea, sugar, candles and pepper,
Sometimes for a halfpenny worth of starch,
A week or a fortnight I'm tarried,
I'm bothered to death and half starved,
Oh, I wish I had never been married.
- 6 Whenever he buys any meat,
Once a month or I'm greatly mistaken,
He'll buy a small bit of a stake,
Or a small bit of liver or bacon,
He says bread and butter is dear,
And the times are most shocking and horrid,
I drink water while he drink small beer,
Oh! I wish I had never got married.
- 7 To the landlord the rent he won't pay,
Because he declares he's not able,
He has nought to be taken away,
But two broken chairs and a table,
For the bed clothes the kettle and broom
and washing tub off he has carried,
May old Nick take him off very soon,
Oh, I wish I never got married.
- 8 I should be happy and joyful once more,
If I could but just it all right,
May old Nick come and whip him away,

some morning before its daylight,
While you ladies do single remain,
By a tyrant you'll never be hurried,
If I was but single again,
By Jingo I'd never get married.

The following two songs give us a glimpse at what might be considered a generous budget with a rather extravagant life style and one that perhaps only a tradesman, given the song-texts settings, might hope to achieve.

15

Text: *Mike and Kate or the Eighteen Shillings* M. Lenihan, Ms. P8419 (NLI); Firth c.20 (126). Printer Disley, H. (London), c 1860-83

Verse: 1 A man and his wife who lives in this street, on Sunday morning last,
They had a row I must allow as by the door I passed,
Come tell me now, then Kate, said he, and he gave her such a clout,
The way and how, come tell me now, my wages is laid out.

Ch: There's seven you see in family, to feed and find in clothes,
And Johnny dear you wish to know how your eighteen shillings goes.⁶¹

2 There is two and sixpence every week I pay to Mrs. Barret,
For a dirty cellar underneath, and a bed-room in the garret,
Eight-pence every Monday for a pound of mutton chops,
and nine pence to a servant made to carry down the slops.

3 Tenpence half-penny goes for coals a quarter every day,
And fourpence for coffee I must drink instead of tea,
Twopence half-penny for soap as I must tell you Mickey,
A farthing's worth of starch and blue, to stiffen up your dickey.

4 There are sixpence goes for flour according to retail,
You need not laugh the better half of it was Indian meal,
A penny every week to you to go and read the news,
A half-penny worth of blacking to polish up your shoes.

5 Potatoes for your dinner every Sunday must be found,
Three-pence more upon the score I pay for seven pound,
A shilling for a head and pluck I laid it on the shelf,
You bid me eat the horns while you eat the meat yourself.

6 Your twopence to the burying club every week I save,

⁶¹The discrepancy between the names Mike as is used in the title and Johnny used in the chorus of the Lenihan version is cleared up in the in the Firth version where the name is Johnny and Kate in the title.

- A penny to the barber every Sunday for a shave,
 there's eight pence for a petticoat I bought it second hand,
 A half-penny for thread and needles and a farthing worth of sand.
- 7 Three half-pence for salt and pepper, two - pence for pies,
 A farthing for a beef steak with a pair of rolling eyes,
 Two pence half-penny for a broom to sweep away the dirt,
 A half-penny worth of calico to mend your Sunday shirt.
- 8 There's four pence goes for cabbage and ten pence for salt meat,
 One shilling for a bustle for your eldest daughter Kate,
 A farthing I gave for a lace to tighten up her stays,
 A penny worth of poison to kill the bugs and fleas.
- 9 There's five pence half-penny for candles and well you know the same,
 Eleven pence for sugar and there's sixpence more for cream,
 The children's schooling ten-pence sure I nearly had forgot,
 And two pence in the market for an old chamber pot.
- 10 Now go to work and reckon up it is no easy job,
 You will find it to a farthing exactly eighteen bob,
 Many a woman in this town that is both young and frisky,
 If they would go upon the spree would spend it all in whiskey.

16

Text: *My £1. 5s.* M. Lenihan. Ms. P8419. (NLI); Firth b 25 (256). Printer: Fordyce, W & T (Newcastle), c 1840.

Verse: 1 Its of a tradesman and his wife I hear the other day.
 Who did kick up a glorious row they live across the way,
 Her husband prov'd himself a fool – his money it all went,
 He called his wife upon my life to know how it was spent.

Chorus : So she reckon'd up and show'd him and to show him had the
 cheek.

How his five and twenty shillings was expended in a week.

- 2 O he says my wages are all gone and it does me perplex,
 Indeed said she come list to me my bony cock of wax,
 Continually you make a noise and fill the house with strife,
 I'll tell you where your money goes I will upon my life.
- 3 There's 2s. 3d. for rent now attend to what I say,
 And there's 4s for meat and 3s. 9d. for bread,
 to wash your nasty dirty shirt there's 9½ for soap,
 1s. 1d. for coals old boy and 10d for turf and coak.
- 4 The red herring every morning that's 7d. a week,
 some times you send me out for fish for you say you can't eat meat,
 Last Monday night when you got drunk you dirty filthy bore,
 And 6d. went for India buck your cursed guts to cure.

- 5 There's 4d. for milk and cream. 1s for malt,
 there's 3¼ goes for vinegar and 2½ for salt,
 So 1d. goes for mustard too and 3½ for thread,
 And 2d. I gave the other night for a cod's head.
- 6 There's a 1d. for pepper too as you may understand
 2d. for soda starch and blue and a farthings worth of sand,
 there's 4½d. for candles too, to light you into bed,
 I wish the devil had you or else that you were dead.
- 7 There's 8d. for tobacco too and 7 farthing pipes,
 there's 3½ for sand and 6d. goes for tripes,
 there's 2d. for this and a pint you gave your brother,
 Last week you broke the Chamber-pot and I had to buy another.
- 8 When old boy to Crampton Court you go to drink and sing,
 While on a washing day you know I get a drop of gin,
 then I cheer up my spirits your money I must count
 But the devil a glass that you will take that I won't take a pint. (sic)
- 9 There's 1s. for potatoes and 6d. for greens,
 There's 10d. for a fat pigs cheek that's to be seen,
 One 6d. goes for coffee for sugar and tea,
 And a 1d. worth of puddings that you bought the other day.
- 10 Theirs a 1d. for a valentine for my daughter Maryann,
 For the child will go crazy if she does not get a man,
 There is 2d. for blacking and 8½ goes for cheese,
 And a farthing rushlight everynight.

Over the course of the nineteenth century the diet of the peasant and working class population fluctuated with the fortunes of both the material conditions of subsistence through population increase or crop failure and the economic environment generally. Mary Daly argues that it was in the period after 1815 when the potato became the staple food for most Irish families and items such as bacon, butter and milk came to be regarded as luxuries.⁶² From the 1830s but particularly with the onset of the potato famine the use of Indian meal became widespread and according to Daly 'continued as an essential part of many family diets for the next fifty years.'⁶³ The situation improved as the century wore on with the re-introduction of items such as bread, milk, tea, sugar, salt fish and oatmeal porridge, into the weekly diet of the peasant family yet the urban poor remained undernourished by comparison.⁶⁴ This

⁶²Mary E. Daly, *Social and economic history of Ireland since 1800* (Dublin, 1981), p. 96.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp 97-8.

being the case the inventories listed in songs 15 and 16 would appear to be of the type that the cities' labouring classes might have indulged in while dreaming of a better life. However, they do present a picture of a wife's duty in running the home and chastising the man for his interference in the private sphere, her sphere. The following song makes this invasion of the domestic realm explicit.

17

Text : *Wife's Lamentation*, White, vol. ii. f. 144. (Printer W. Birmingham, 92 Thomas St. Dublin); Firth b. 25 (58/59) c1867.

Verse: 1 Now girls before you get married,
 I pray look before that you leap,
 For fear that a fool or a sloven,
 Like me you might happen to get,
 If he's either the one or the other,
 He's just like the lad I have got,
 And for fear that you'd think that I love him,
 I'll give him the name of Watch Pot.

Ch: So it's better for maids to live single than marry a sloven like me,
 Until I get rid of my darling, contented I never will be,

2 He sits still at home at my elbow,
 For work he does not like to do,
 He peeps in each hole and each corner,
 I can keep nothing out of his view.
 He watches the bit that I swallow,
 He's worse than the Rat-catcher's dog,
 He turns up the pots and the dishes,
 And roots about like any Hog.

3 If I put on a pot of potatoes,
 He eats them before they're half done,
 He growls while the rest is boiling,
 And quickly the fight is begun,
 He bellows and bawls in a passion,
 No madman is equal to him,
 He's never done grumbling and growling,
 Till he's ready to bust in his skin.

4 One night we had bacon and cabbage,
 But little of that was my share,
 for while he was bolting it in him,
 All the time in my face he did stare,
 Why did you not boil some bacon,
 there is not enough for us two,
 but I'll leave you some of the cabbage,
 I think it is better for you.

- 5 If for stirabout he takes a liking,
 He's sure for to put on the meal,
 and for every two quarts he will thicken,
 to eat a pint raw he won't fail,
 come leave out my supper a cooling,
 Put milk in the pot and be quick,
 For shortly I mean for to scrape it,
 When I am done licking the stick.
- 6 When that he crams up his maw bag,
 Make my bed and I'll take a sleep,
 And when that you wash up the dishes,
 You may throw yourself down at my feet,
 There he will snore for four hours,
 and when that he opens his eyes,
 He'll call for a lump of dry bread,
 I'm almost famished he cries.
- 7 So now to conclude and to finish,
 Those verses that I have penned down,
 My curse I would give unto any,
 Would wed with a doating old clown,
 but marry some handsome young fellow,
 If he has not a penny at all,
 Will comfort your heart in the morning,
 And keep you all night from the wall.

In song 17 the *Wife's lamentation* we have the antithesis of the arranged marriage for security ; the urge for physical attraction and the innuendo of sexual fulfillment, it is after all the very least that a husband can do to keep his wife from the wall. Where sexual satisfaction is not found in the home there are other places for a woman to turn to gain succour, as with the wife who sports with, 'Billy and Jack', in *The pensioner's complaint against his wife*, or she who will 'kiss another at market or fair', in the *Drunken bachelors*. Promiscuity, infidelity and adultery are subjects which could have dire consequences for the woman.

18

Text: *Irish Providence* (Tune -*Sprig of Shellaligh and Shamrock so Green.*) Bod. 2806 c.18 (156); Harding B 40 (12) Printer: Nugent, J. F. & Co. (Dublin). c 1850-99.

Verse: 1 Arrah, darling, says Pat, to his spouse on his lap,
 At this present writing we're not worth a rap,
 With our faces so lean, and our debts on our back.
 Our cow, and our pig, dear Norah are dead,

Not a single potato is left us for bread;
the whole art of ploughing, my father taught me,
So I'll en'n take to ploughing, and plough the salt sea,
So sing bob, and sing didero, bodero whack.

2 When you're on the ocean, says Norah, my life,
Sure Providence then will take care of your wife,
For no babies have we not a Jill nor a Jack,
So when Paddy was gone what did Providence do,
Made the squire build for Norah a Cabin quite new,
He furnish'd it gaily, to dry up her tears,
And peopl'd it too in the course of three years.
To sing...

3 When Paddy return'd he was pleased to the heart,
To find his dear Norah so gay and so smart,
With rings on her ears, and silks to her back;
Who furnish'd for you this neat cabin says Pat;
Twas Providence, says, Norah dear Paddy did that,
Then Providence says Paddy looking all round,
To the neatest upholsterer ever was found.
To sing bob...

4 And tell me, dear Norah, the truth if you please,
Whose four little chubby cheek'd babies are these,
The little gassoons with their locks all so black;
They're mine and by Providence sent us says she,
Och ! bodder, says Paddy, then don't humbug me ;
If Providence minds to send legs to your chairs,
Do you think he's forot to send fathers for heirs.
To sing bob. . .

5 Ah! Norah, while I've been over the sea,
I'm afraid you have prov'd a sad traitess to me,
May whiskey console me, my heart's on the rack,
If while I sail over, like herrings and sprats,
Mr. Providence fills my cabin with brats,
Mr. Deputy Providence for me will ne'er do,
So to him and Old Nick I'll pitch babies and you.
To sing bob. . .

Irish Providence highlights the difficulties that women, of a childbearing age, faced in satisfying a wandering libido in their pursuit of extra-marital relations. If they could not pass the child off as belonging to their spouse the litany of sanctions they were likely to suffer ran from physical violence⁶⁵ ; abandonment by the husband ; expulsion from the family home ; all leading to economic privation, and social stigma

⁶⁵Elizabeth Steiner-Scott, pp 125-143.

and so the controlling morality mechanism of the ballad was employed to warn of such consequences. It was a similar fate as that faced by the unmarried mother (many of whom were servant girls and where forced to quit the work place which was more often than not also her home) and carried the same stigma, except where, as has been pointed out above (pp 133-4) the single mother had some opportunity to compel the father to accept his responsibility, where this failed another man might be induced to take mother and child on if enough money or property could be found to soften the blow. Reaction was so strong in the case of the adulterer because illegitimate children signified the cuckold and thus presented an assault upon the man's ego by calling into question his sexual prowess. But in both cases men were reluctant to take on another man's child and those who did, as Connell has pointed out, were considered in some way suspect:

No man would marry a woman that had a bastard, unless a very forlorn man entirely: a soldier sometimes stooped so low; some person as profligate as herself; a man needing money to emigrate; an old man who 'had nobody to wash his linen'; 'an Englishman and a pensioner'.⁶⁶

No such biological inhibitor acted on the male psyche and so it is no mystery that most of the ballads that deal with infidelity and sexual relationships with prostitutes concentrate upon relations instigated and carried out by men. The survival of these type of ballads also argues that resistance to the imposition of a prudish mentality upon the plebeian class by an improving bourgeoisie and increasingly authoritarian clergy was on-going.⁶⁷ This next selection contains songs which are preoccupied with infidelity, sexual potency, prostitution, and it also contains a panegyric to the *membrum virile*.

19

Text: *The thrashing machine* Harding, B 11 (3808) c 1845.

Verse: 1 There was a young farmer in —— it's said,
 And he kept a servant a blooming young maid,
 Her name it was Molly, tho' scarcely sixteen,
 She could work very well at the thrashing machine.

2 Her master said Molly, the times they are hard,
 If you will go with me into the farm-yard,
 I will harness young Dobbin, you know what I mean,

⁶⁶Connell, *Irish peasant society*, p. 55.

⁶⁷ On class and cultural conflict see J. S. Donnelly Jr, 'Élite responses to popular culture, 1660 -1850' , in J. S. Donnelly, Jr. and K. A. Miller, *Irish popular culture 1650 - 1850* (Dublin, 1999) pp 21-4.

- I think we can manage the thrashing - machine.
- 3 She said to the farmer what will mistress say,
He said never fear she is making the hay,
And while she is spreading the grass that is green,
Why we can be working the thrashing machine.
- 4 The barn-door was open, dobbin stood outside,
The farmer got the machine for to ride,
She said I think master we thrash very clean,
I see you can manage the thrashing machine,
- 5 When Dobbin was tired of going around,
He hung in the traces and bowed to the ground,
Tho' once in good order got quite thin and lean,
By working so hard at the thrashing machine.
- 6 The farmer jump'd off and around him he feels,
Says he I must rest, so he block'd up the wheels,
Molly led Dobbin and backwards did lean,
And he pushed again at the thrashing machine.
- 7 Now Molly said smiling, you're had a loss, [sic]
I think it requires a much stronger horse,
If Dobbin was strong like before he has been,
We then could keep working the thrashing machine.
- 8 When six months was over, remember it well,
Molly's front parlour began for to swell,
and very soon after she had got to wean
The fruit of her labour, a young thrashing machine.

20

Text: *The Rhubarb*, Firth b. 34 (260) Printer : Hodges, E. M. A. (London) c1846-54 ;
Harding B 11 (3269)

- Verse: 1 Come all you lads and lasses, and listen for a while,
I'll sing a funny ditty that will cause you for to smile,
A damsel passed me by, and she wink'd her funny eye,
And she said my dear come try if your rhubarb's up.
- 2 I said my charming fair maid how came you here this way,
I'm glad to meet you my dear this pleasant summers day,
Come go along with me my love, to yonder shady tree,
And I'll quickly let you see that the rhubarb's up.
- 3 We toddled both together them as loving as you please,
The birds were sweetly singing and the leaves on the trees,
And while we there did lay how we did sport and play,
And the damsel she did say, Oh, the rhubarb's up.
- 4 O my darling said I it is young and in its prime,

And I think it is a folly in delaying of the time,
I gave her such a squeeze down underneath the trees,
And she said do as you please how the rhubarb's up.

5 Soon after this young damsel she did smile at me and say,
I thought it young and growing but its withered quite away,
Come let us have a lark, for the night is getting dark,
But you cannot hit the mark till the rhubarb's up.

6 Then I said my pretty fair maid I mean to tell you plain,
If you meet me in the morning you will see it rise again,
by the dawning of the day if you chance to come this way,
I am certain you will say that the rhubarb's up.

7 Next morning very early I met her near the place,
She fell into my arms and each other did embrace,
Saying I'll leave my spotted cow for the fit comes on me now,
And I'll gang with you I vow for the rhubarb's up.

8 Together we are living now, I met her near the place,
In a pleasant, little cottage with a garden all around,
There's the lily, pink (?) and rose, that in the garden grows,
And when the juice (?) it flows then the rhubarb's up.

The two songs above are loaded with the kind of sexual innuendo that would send the prurient mind racing and the puritanical mind apoplectic. The language in both ; the euphemism of 'dobbin' for the penis in *The Thrashing Machine* ; and the use of Scottish colloquialism 'gang' in place of the English verb 'go' in *The Rhubarb*, suggest either English or Scots origin for both. However, both are found among the Irish ballads and street songs in the Bodleian collection, indicating their dissemination within Ireland. (In fact there is a version of the *Thrashing machine* in the Alan Lomax collection recorded by Peter Kennedy and sung by Annie O'Neil in Belfast in 1952.) A similar conclusion can be applied to the following song-text. The reference to Erin in the first line may be interpreted as merely a printers formula for substituting any two syllable word that would scan in order to appeal to the widest possible audience. In fact the word bonny would imply a Scots version probably existed.

21

Text: *The Gillyanter*, Harding, B 11 (1018) :(Printed and sold by W. & P. Fordyce, Newcastle and Hull ; J. Winham & Co. 66 Scotch st Carlisle)

Verse: 1 From Erin's bonny green clad hills,
To England I sail'd over,
With a pack upon my back,

I soon became a rover;
With maid or wife I caus'd no strife,
Nor with them stood to saunter,
But willingly I could comply,
To sport my gillyanter.
Chorus — Sing, Hey the gilly, hey the gilly...

- 2 When Adam in the garden was,
With his lovely deary,
Though monarch of the universe,
He was both dull and dreary,
Till his spouse as he allows,
To kiss her did him banter ;
He then complied to please his bride,
To sport his gillyanter.
- 3 Since from the rise of human race,
We're taught the art of courting,
Let none presume to say its wrong,
Or sinful to be sporting,
For nature's blaze must have her ways,
In spite of Jew or taunter,
Nor can divine, or bishop's fine
Prevent the gillyanter.
- 4 King David was a valiant man,
He nobly slew Golaih, (sic)
And after that, for Shelah's sake, (Bethsheba)
He murder'd poor Uriah ;
He took his wife to please his life,
This proves he was a wanter,
So in his fun he got a son,
With his old gillyanter.
- 5 This son became the wisest man,
He lov'd the lasses dearly,
And many a loving virgin had,
To sport with late and early :
And Samson great of mighty state,
From pleasure he'd not alter,
But gave his life to please his wife,
To sport his gillyanter.
- 6 Now to conclude and make an end,
I hope I gave no'casion,
To either Jew or Christian good,
To make there verses treason,
So here's a health, long life and wealth
To those who freely venture,
Nor be afraid of wife or maid,
To sport his gillyanter.

If songs 19, 20, and 21 could be held up by nationalist propagandists to support the theory that the English were morally inferior to the Irish then the following two texts show that the lower class Irish male had the same interest in engaging in illicit sexual relations as his English, Scots or Welsh counterparts. Perhaps the case could be made that the greatest difference was to be found in the language with which sexual encounters were recalled and that the Irish did not succumb to the same level of overall crudity.

22

Text: *Price of My Pig* Harding, B 11 (3170). Printer Bebbington, J. O. (Manchester) c 1855-8. ; NLI LO P140. Printer W. Kelly, (Waterford) c 1830

- Verse: 1 October the first, a day sure the worst,
 I took my way to the sweet fair of Trim,
 There to sell a swine it was my design,
 It was fat and fair, complete in each limb.
- 2 My swine was as mild as a lamb or a child,
 You might drive it all over the globe with a sprig,
 The truth now I tell, I sold it right well,
 Three pounds ten shillings was the price of my pig.
- 3 I clapp'd cash on my thigh, and a glass to my eye,
 And to town I did fly like a sporting young buck,
 I met a smart dame, she belonged to the game,
 She came up to me to be sure for good luck.
- 4 She tipped me the wink, we slipped in for to drink,
 But the jade bewitched me to dance Venus's jig,
 But in the wheel round she slipped her hand down,
 And stripped me quite bare of the price of my pig.
- 5 When I missed my share, like a man in despair,
 I ran tearing my hair, seeking her up and down,
 Each corner and lane I searched all in vain,
 But not a foot of the jade could be found.
- 6 Meet her where I will, I sure will her kill,
 I swear by the hair on Lord Norbury's wig ;(Lord Norbury the Hanging
 judge)
 Till the day that I die for vengeance I'll cry,
 On the jade that robbed me of the price of my pig.
- 7 To Navan next day I straight took my way,
 As I heard of a fair being then held as Shamm (NLI, 'fair beau in
 Slain/Slane)

When I caper'd there I was loaded with care,
And found that my walk was but labour in vain.

8 To the house of John Flinn I next stepped in,
Where I danced two reels and one double jig,
In hopes by the bye, I might cast an eye,
On the jade that robb'd me of the price of my pig.

9 By Tara and by Skryne, by the Lord of Killeen,
By the great bog of Allen, by the high hill of Howth,
By the Church by the Bell, by Paddy M'Kell,
Now for to swear more you know I am loath.

10 In all I did swear believe me sincere,
I will not spare her for tory or whig,
but for her bane action I'll have satisfaction,
Upon the jades bones for the price of my pig.

11 Since my case it is so, straight home I will go,
My shuttle to throw and from drinking refrain,
I'll stick to my loom while youth is in bloom,
And I'll never be caught by a strumpet again.

12 If the Lord of Mayo knew the cause of my woe,
He'd shortly come here in a coach or a gig,
He'd search all around till the jade be found,
And put her in pound for the price of my pig.

Alternative NLI verses

7 To Navan next day I straight took my way,
As I heard them say of a fair beau in Slain,
But when I came there I was laden'd with care
When I found that I had all my walking in vain...

9 . . .By Tara and Screen and the Lord of Killeen,
By the Bog of Bohama and the hill of howth,
By the Market-house bell and Paddy M'Kell,
And to swear any more you know I am loath,

10 But as I do swear and I am sincere,
I will not spare her for a Tory or Whig,
But for this base action I will take satisfaction,
Upon this cursed jade for the price of my pig.

There are elements in this and the following song that are not found in the English and Scots texts. These include the infusion of anger at the financial loss concomitant with a sense of guilt and resignation incurred by conducting such relations as is made clear in the second last verse. There is also a degree of mistrust for urban

centres. *The Price of My Pig* is the full version of the song that Douglas Hyde had found so objectionable, coming as it did from the mouth of as he said, ‘a man who, when he was young, never spoke English but who in his old age, attempted to tell in English verse how he was robbed of the price of a little black pig he had sold at the fair.’⁶⁸ This version differs somewhat from the one recorded by Hyde. It appears in the Harding collection on a balladsheet which also contains the nationalist song ‘Duffy’s advice to his Country’, printed in Manchester and sold by J. Beaumont of Leeds. There is also a copy in a chap book c1830 held in the National Library of Ireland. This calls a number of assumptions into question. First was the singer of the song speaking autobiographically, in other words was he the author of the song or was he merely reproducing a well known text and one that may not been ‘authentically’ Irish in any sense? Secondly, was the expurgated version recorded by Hyde cleaned up by the informant or by Hyde himself and what motivated such censorship? The first question is difficult to answer, Hyde’s claim that it was an autobiographical piece is indeterminate as its inclusion in the Harding collection and the chapbook shows. Without a specific credit to the author then this question is impossible to answer. More relevant, for our purpose, is the second question dealing with censorship or self-regulation. If Hyde’s informant cleaned up his version and removed the most objectionable phrase, ‘but the jade bewitched me to dance Venus’s jig’ with the less provocative ‘We danced a few reels, And wan double jig’ then we can put this down to the deference that a peasant would feel towards a member of the gentry. On the point of social stratification in mid-nineteenth century Ireland the Quaker James Richardson had this to say: ‘[A] county gentleman of good estate was regarded and approached by lesser men with sincere awe, and as for a nobleman – he was a sort of demi-god’⁶⁹ Again it is evidence of the power relations inherent in all acts of communications which socio-linguists have classified in terms of domains and registers, the domain being the social setting for the speech event, and the register being the speech type adopted, i.e. reverential, joking, insulting, comforting, etc. If, on the contrary, Hyde’s was the hand behind the bowdlerization then we can see it as an overtly political act. Hyde’s declaration that it was the language that the song was rendered in, being English, rather

⁶⁸Daly, p. 113.

⁶⁹J. N. Richardson, *Reminiscences of friends in Ulster* (Gloucester, 1911), p.4.

than the morality of the song content, which he found most problematic appears to be only half the story given the fact that the lyric change attenuates the sexual honesty confessed in the Harding and chapbook versions and leads one to conclude that the sentiment expressed was incompatible with the character of the idealized Irish peasant male. This conceptualization of a flawless innocent rural character being the receptacle of romantic authenticity would culminate in the outrage generated by Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* which exploded at the mention of the word 'shift' being uttered in the final act of the play and bring forth shouts of, 'That's not the West', from some members of the audience.⁷⁰ In his history of the Irish theatre Chris Morash claims that the riotous behaviour can be attributed to the audience merely 'asserting its traditional rights', and it was the imposition of new rules for audience spectatorship devised by the proprietors of the Abbey Theatre that lay at the heart of the disturbances.⁷¹ In this sense Morash's thesis aligns with Foucault's idea proposed in *Discipline and punish* of authority controlling the body and as a consequence society by directing behaviour along desired paths formulated by discourses of power emanating from various sources, i.e. state ; legal ; and administrative bodies, and these new discourses of self-policing insinuating themselves into the individual's private life and social relations.⁷² The *Musical Times* gives credence to this thesis when it refers to these new practices from the 1850s. This began initially as a comment upon the granting of an encore by a performer and later in relation to the behaviour of the audience during a performance as regards the proper time to applaud and how to conduct oneself in an appropriate manner during a performance.⁷³ Most tellingly, however, the *Musical Times* published the following piece upon crowd behaviour in admittance to a performance:

Hitherto it has been the custom to sell a large number of tickets entitling the holders of them to numbered places, and them to take money from as many as can get inside the doors, the prize of a seat falling to those whose physical strength can best endure the struggle to obtain it. Recently the plan has been tried by Mr. D'Oyly Carte, at the Savoy theatre, of making the crowd waiting for admission form a single file, so that there shall be no crush when the doors are opened. In France, where this method is universally adopted, the system

⁷⁰Christopher Morash, *A history of Irish theatre 1601-2000* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 135.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 136.

⁷²Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish, the birth of the prison* (London, 1977 [Paris, 1975]).

⁷³P.A. Scholes. *The mirror of music 1844-1944: a century of musical life in Britain as reflected in the pages of the Musical Times* vol 1 (Oxford, 1947), pp 218-9.

always works well; and there is every reason to suppose that it will eventually be equally successful in this country.⁷⁴

So Morash's argument lays part of the blame for the riot on resistance to this type of institutional 'improvement' however, he also admits that there was a political dimension to the uproar and that the sections that protested against the portrayal of the West were, 'offended against an imaginative geography, which idealized the western seaboard.'⁷⁵ The apotheosis of the Irish rural peasant life was the most successful and long lasting achievement of the Gaelicizing cultural nationalist movement. On Hyde's explicit objection, the usurping of the Irish mind by the English tongue (which had been the dominant language of the urban centres anyway,) was, as has already been pointed out, merely one of the developments that accompanied the processes of modernisation and urbanisation that the migrating Irish peasant had to comply with. It was these twin processes of change which threatened Hyde's idealised 'permanent' Irish identity forming culture.⁷⁶ The following song is further evidence that the culture of the common people in the nineteenth century was not quite as picturesque as the one cultural propagandists sought to prescribe.

23

Text: *A Much admired song song called Tie My Toes to the Bed.* Gilbert, f., 44; Bod., 2806 b. 9(59). Printer Brereton, P. (Dublin), c 1867.

- Verse: 1 When I first came to Dublin I viewed barrack - street
I was a hearty young fellow and smart on my feet,
I met with a girl call'd Bessey McCabe,
She brought me to a lodgin called sweed durty lane.
- 2 I had two hundred & a good suit of cloaths,
And to tell you the truth I had a new pair of brouges
I had a lovely felt hat and my waistcoat was red,
And young Bessey McCabe tied my toes to the bed.
- 3 When I awakened next morning young bessey was gone,
and five drunken girls to work they began,
They had black eyes, broken noses their blood ran in streams,
Faith says I to myself but they will end my days.
- 4 The Mistress I ask'd her where was my clothes,

⁷⁴*Musical Times* Apr. 1883.

⁷⁵Morash, p. 136.

⁷⁶ Comerford, *Ireland*, p. 141.

She told me my wife brought them off I suppose
Blugaronthers, says I, was I married last night
And they told me I was to a handsome young wife.

- 5 Call her in my good people till I see her face
I just came to Dublin to renew my lease,
she has my two hundred pounds and my darling fine purse
And if she be my wife she served me bad enough.
- 6 When I thought for to rise my 2 toes they are tied,
and they told me it was tricks that was play'd by the bride
she covered me snug in the bed with the cloaths,
But she never came back for to loosen my toes.
- 7 They brought me to (Illegible) and lock me up tight
Without sheet or blanket the length of the night,
the dicken's a bed was there to lie down,
but walking about like a bull in a pound.
- 8 So all you young fellows to Dublin does go,
Take care of young Bessey lest she serve you so,
She took my two hundred pound, my big coat, and my brouges
And she never came back for to loosen my toes.
- 9 When she brought me to trial she swore to her shoes,
divel a blaggard in Dublin but did me abuse,
the justice he threatened for to hang me dead
And he laughed at my wife tying my toes to the bed.

The last verse of *Tie my toes to the bed* is at first glance confusing, however, when this and the previous song are read as they should be, as out and out morality tales, it begins to make sense. The protagonists are subject to every calamity that could befall innocent men up from the country, and every sin and vice that can be leveled at the city or town is included. Drunkenness, prostitution, theft and the exploitation of the idealized rural Irish male even by the justice system in song 23, all warn of the dangers that wait to greet the unwearied traveler. This is made even more explicit in the following song:

24

Text: *Patt and his leather breeches*. Printer W. Kelly (Waterford), c 1830. NLI Irish Chap Call No. LO P140. Excerpt.

Verse: 1 Although a simple clown, my life's sweet as honey,
My daddy died in town, and left me all his money,

Some £20 and more with harrows ploughs and ditches
Grunters half a score and a pair of leather breeches.
Fal de ral le ra le

- 5 To Dublin I went off my spirits for to rally,
Each one at me did scoff thro' streets lanes and alleys
My woes came in by half, I got insulting speeches
One fellow bawls out calves, and another twig his breeches
- 6 A lass I met that night as I for fun was dodging,
I thought myself all right where I took my lodging
Next day how I did curse the girls and such witches
When I found she boned my purse and watch and leather breeches.
- 7 I left the house quite bare, it rained and snowed together,
Exposed all in my shirt as I was to wind and weather,
The women from me flew but they did not rue my riches,
Bit I'd give my head to get my leather breeches.
- 8 A watchman passing by, on duty never dozing,
And off to quod walks I my person for exposing.
the Justice spoke his will, and with insulting speeches,
Sent me to thread a mill without my leather breeches.
- (9) But now once more I am free, I'll buy the coach tomorrow,
And will from Dublin fly and drown all care and sorrow,
Once more to plow I'll go, a fig for pride or riches
No more I'll be a beau since I lost my leather Breeches.

25

Text: *The Connaught Man's Adventures in Dublin* in James N. Healy, *The Mercier Book of Old Irish Street Ballads. vo. iii. The People at Play* (Cork, 1969)

- Verse : 1 I am a poor Connaught man from the town of Athlone
I wish in my heart that I never left home,
I cam into Dublin to meet with my Friends,
I met with a young lady quite near to Sun Inn,
- 2 She says my dear sir, you are going astray,
And if you come with me I'll show you the way,
She brought me to Kingstown and carried my coat,
And gallop'd like thunder along the steam coach.
- 3 We went into a tavern and called for some wine,
she told the inn-keeper she was a cousin of mine,
I got then her dinner and strong punch galore,
So she says cousin Jack it is time to go home.
- 4 We went in the steam - coach without more delay,
We galloped like thunder to Dublin straight way,

- She called for a car lest her feet she would wet,
She brought myself and my coach into sweet Barrack street.
- 5 The jaunting-car boy he charged me half -a- crown,
I paid him the same then before I got down,
she brought me to a room at the sign of the crow,
and told me that there I my cousins would know.
- 6 Where my cousins came in and not one did I know,
Not one that came in but shook hands with poor Jack,
At twelve in the night when the landlord came down,
For the reckoning, kind sire, you will pay me one pound.
- 7 I paid him the reckoning without more delay,
And off to wood-lane they brought me straight way,
she called for a bed and lay downn by my side,
A poor Connaught man had this beautiful bride.
- 8 They blacked my face when I was asleep,
And before the daylight threw me into the street,
I balled all sorts of murder for my money and clothes,
So the police came up saying your drunk we suppose.
- 9 They brought me to the station without more delay,
And locked me up on a cell my prayers to say,
They put me in the black coach where I cried my fill.
And put me to gallop all on the thread mill.
- 10 I had forty-five guineas I stole from my aunt,
I'll make you all laugh when you hear of my jaunt.
Not a fiddler or piper could play in a fair,
Would make me to dance, and they made me dance there.
- 11 When they let me out I ran home to Athlone,
to kiss my old mother, that I left at home,
My curse on that lady, steam-coach and thread-mill,
where I'll never go for my cousins again.
- 12 So not to conclude and finish the joke,
They made me round the rack 'till my poor shins were broke,
To a sup o' their skilly. I scalded my nose,
So the poor Connaught man lost his money and clothes.

Texts such as these seem to agree with David Lloyd's proposition that, 'The aesthetic of nationalism accords with its political ends, subordinated at every level to the demand for unity. It is on the same grounds that the... street ballad is criticized by nationalists...with vehemence... Though their dismissals are fairly summary, one can

decipher the basis for the antagonism. Most importantly, the ballads are urban'.⁷⁷ This position as we have seen was implicit to Davis's criticism but was made overt in the words of Gavan Duffy the editor of *The Spirit of the Nation* when he said, 'The mass of the street songs make no pretence to being true to Ireland ; but only to being true to the *purlicious* of Cork and Dublin.'⁷⁸ Nationalist mistrust of the city is made plain in the following prologue to the popular 'Native Music of Ireland' column in which the hand of Davis and Duffy can be seen:

We have always said that we relied for good to the country more upon the Provinces than upon the Metropolis.'... 'All the world stares, seeing how, for many centuries, Paris has been draining the rest of *la belle France*, sucking the life blood of the country into its heartless central abyss. Dublin would do as much for Ireland, if its masters could have their wicked will. From the days of the Danes to those of the Conservative Saxons, there has been a struggle to concentrate in it the main springs of the country's motion, and thereby render it a fit engine for accomplishing with ease the purpose of external domination. There must and ought to be a Capital. But let it keep its proper place. Let not the country towns be drained or desolated to pamper it. There is tendency enough in the *centripetal* force of fashion, foppery, and folly, without adding adventitious advantages. On the contrary, let us rejoice when we see counter vailing [sic] forces springing up, which will serve to keep up the circulation, by drawing towards the limbs that share of vital nurture which is essential to the healthful existence of the entire.'⁷⁹

Again we are faced with the proposition that authentic Irish identity was formed and resided somewhere within a nebulous rural idyl and that cities were cess pools of sin and crime. The women who inhabited the songs were drunk, bloodied and battered, none of which physical or behavioural attributes were applicable to the female personifications of Erin in the guises of Hibernia, Granu Waile, the Shan Van Vocht, Mother Ireland, the Poor Old Woman or Caitlín Ní Uallacháin⁸⁰ even in her most despondent periods of subjection. The signal achievement of cultural nationalism was to convince the urban population that this representation was real and to reject their own

⁷⁷ Lloyd, p. 92.

⁷⁸C. G. Duffy (ed.), *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland* (Dublin, 1845) p. xv.

⁷⁹'The Native Music of Ireland' in the *Dublin Monthly Magazine* March 1842.

⁸⁰C. L. Innes, *Woman and nation in Irish literature and society 1880-1935* (New York, 1993), p. 2 ; David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland : colonialism, nationalism, and culture* (Manchester, 1988), p. 77 proposed that the personification of Ireland as 'woman' and 'mother' also necessitated that 'the purity of that image was maintained on all levels for, in order to maintain its mobilising force, "Woman" could only ever be an eternal essence beyond the physicality which suggested other, darker, demands and desires.' ; Steiner-Scott, p. 140.

history and doubt their own identity as city dwellers. Contained within the spontaneous outburst of, 'That's not the West' was the implicit cry 'That's not Ireland'. This brings us to the final selection of songs which calls another aspect of Irish culture that has a negative impact upon Irish family life ; drink and domestic violence.

The culture of drinking in Ireland has received mixed messages from nationalist commentators. It was seen as an essential part of the make up of the Irish spirit by Davis who invoked it to oppose the dull character of the English:

None are prepared to go further for the Temperance cause than ourselves . . . but if that change were part of a system for transforming the vehement, enjoying, Celtic Irishman into a bad imitation (and all imitations are bad) of the phlegmatic monotonous glutton, John Bull, the yeoman– or dyspeptic and crafty slave John Bull the shopkeeper– or the mean starving, John Bull the weaver– or the Black Beast John Bull, the collier– we would prefer our old state.⁸¹

Moore praised 'the bowl of Bacchus' in *Fill the bumper fair, One bumper at parting* and *Wreath the bowl* in terms which an educated middle class could find endearing. Davis's view of alcohol consumption among the Irish was romantically informed by his view of everything Irish ; drink fueled those flights of imagination which the Celt was capable of and oiled the social gatherings where song, dance and merrymaking were the abiding aspects of Irish social life. Parnell and the position of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the 1880s vacillated on the question of regulation of drinking habits, particularly if these measures were imposed from Westminster. On the one hand they baulked at the stereotypical representation of the drunken Irish and deplored the idea that Irish drinking habits were in anyway different to those in the rest of the United Kingdom, yet Parnell in his role of employer realised the negative effect drink had upon production.⁸² He hoped that another temperance crusade might arise spontaneously not only for the benefits abstinence would have on the populace but also on the impact it would have on government revenue, a consequence which had

⁸¹*Nation*, 15 Oct. 1842.

⁸²Elizabeth Malcolm, *'Ireland sober, Ireland free', drink and temperance in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 1986), p. 264, henceforth *Ireland sober*

happened with the previous drive of Fr. Mathew in the early 1840s.⁸³ However, the Party appears to have been split between those idealists who supported such measures as early Saturday closing and Sunday closing for reasons of social improvement and the pragmatists who recognised the importance of the support that Publicans gave to the Party.⁸⁴ Whatever romantic idea people like Moore and Davis had or the political considerations that IPP members had to take regarding the imbibing culture of the plebeians the people themselves lived under no such illusions.

26

Text : *Drunk, Drunk Again, Parody on Willie I have missed you*. Printer : Bermingham, W. (Dublin), c 1867. Harding B 19 (38).

- Verse : 1 Oh, Paddy, is it you, jewel,
 Drunk, drunk again,
 Indeed I fear you'll rue, jewel,
 You are the worst of men,
 I heard you in the hall, and I thought
 Your bones you'd break,
 For I knew 'twas you that staggered,
 Though a word you could not speak,
 But came tumbling up the stairs,
 Till you rowled into the room,
 Oh, Paddy, you're the devil,
 Whiskey is your ruin.
- 2 Though every week you're drinking,
 Yet this week of all,
 My brain was puzzled thinking
 What would I do at all,
 To-night there was no bread,
 So the childer had to fast ;
 But they cried till they were tired,
 So they went to bed at last,
 Yet they searched the public-house,
 And peeped into the little room.
 Oh, Paddy, you're the devil,
 Whiskey is your ruin.
- 3 My eyes are black from clouting,
 My bones are stiff and sore,
 My voice is hoarse from shouting,

⁸³Moira Lysaght, *Fr. Theobald Mathew the apostle of temperance* (Dublin, 1983), p. 31. According to Lysaght revenue from Irish spirit duty fell from £1,434, 573 in 1839 to £852,418 in 1844; Townend also calculates that per capita consumption of Sprit proof-gallons charged with duty in Ireland fell from a high of 1.53 in 1836 to its lowest point of 0.64 in 1842, p. 73.

⁸⁴Malcolm, *'Ireland sober . . .*, p. 265.

“Oh, murder, Pat, ashore.”
Last night I roared and bawled,
Till ‘twas almost break of day,
When I thought I heard you coming,
Then I got out of the way,
For I knew if you were drunk,
You’d shortly change my tune,
Oh, Paddy, you’re the devil,
Whiskey is your ruin.

27

Text : *The Drunken Family*. White, vol. iii. f. 30b.

- Verse : 1 We’re all drinking, scooping (illegible)
We’re all drinking at our house at (illegible)
My mo her bangs my father for going on the batter,
And there’s not a bat or lapstone he has not he’ll throw at her,
She sends them back with interest, perhaps they’d crack his crown,
And herself’s so very drunk, that a midget might kick her down.
 For we’re all drinking...
- 2 Monday’s the day for dowsing and managing
to make em lash, nothing is too heavy or too hot ;
It being Saint Monday, the cobbler’s holiday,
My father dowed his old surtong (?) for to begin the spree,
My mother doff’d her bran new gown, she put on one all in tatters,
and went up for Kitty Christchurch, so both when on the batter.
- 3 Tuesday morning we’re all craw sick,
Not able to get up as we are dying for a scoop.
My father grunts and growls with a face like an ape,
And my mother’s lying in the doss, and cannot rise a gape,
My sister pities both their cases, so goes over to the shelf,
and to raise a scoop to cure them, she walks off with the delph.
- 4 Wednesday morning we get yoked to the lapstone,
Every man’s determined to put in half a week ;
We stick like wax into our work, with all our main and might,
the way we’ll fob the kelthers (?) we do work day and night,
Soon the work is ended, Saturday night comes,
when the turf is in the sack, in Crampton Court
we treat our friends.
- 5 Saturday night we’ve a glorious skirmmage,
A roaring young rebellion is kicked up in the tent,
We all fight for ourselves, my father leathers all,
My mother’s parrot nose he hammers against the wall ;
My sister next gets in his claws, he grips her by the hairs,
He kicks her in the gable end, and heaves her down the stairs.
- 6 Sunday I put on my best suit of toggery,

to get a warm breakfast I walk down to the band,
 At seven in the evening I get to Crampton-court,
 To Steward's free-and-easy, where the singers all resort,
 If the chairman should be singing, he sometimes calls on me,
 I make no delay but sing about our drunken family.

The parody *Drunk Drunk Again* brings into light the debilitating effects of alcohol on the individual and the consequences that alcoholism has on the family. In that sense it contradicts the comical image that is commonly held of the drunken fighting Irishman that inhabit the rousing songs of fair day Shillelagh wielding Paddy.⁸⁵ In *The Drunken Family* we are presented with another dramatization of living within an alcoholic family; again it is comical but the frequency to real violence bears consideration.⁸⁶ Also we can observe that certain sections of the community were criticized for the part they played in contributing to this culture of drink and violence. The pawnbroker (who is referred to songs, 10 ; 12 ; 13 ; 23 ;24 ; 25 ; 26 and 27) was an ambiguous figure, profiting from the weakness of the drinker but also providing the means to slake one's thirst or indulge one's addiction. But a special place was reserved for the publican and spirit-grocer⁸⁷ who were seen to act like parasites living off the labour of the working man and causing dis-chord within the family.

28

Text : *The rise of the whiskey*. (Haly Printer, Hanover st. Cork), White, vol. ii. f. 298.

Verse : 1 You tradesmen of Cork , one and all now attend,
 Unto those lines I lately have penned,
 the price of the whiskey is now raised so high,
 the publicans all to the poor-house must fly.

Chorus : down with the whiskey, beer, porter and all,
 Distillers and publicans have got a fall,
 Likewise the pawnbrokers, tho'on us they frown,
 by the rise of the whiskey we'll pull their balls down.

2 When a poor tradesman received his week's pay,
 He went off to the ale-house without more delay,
 while he had money in plenty to spend,
 the publican welcomed him there as a friend.

⁸⁵Séamas Ó Maitiú, *The humours of Donnybrook, Dublin's famous fair and its suppression* (Dublin, 1995).

⁸⁶Steiner-Scott, pp 125-43.

⁸⁷ On the role of the publican and grocer in the drinks trade see Elizabeth Malcolm, *The rise of the pub, a study in the disciplining of popular culture* in Donnelly and Miller, *Irish popular culture 1650 - 1850* (Dublin, 1999), pp 50-72.

- 3 But when a poor tradesman his cash was run out,
He then was ejected without any doubt,
and if he would ask one darby on score,
the publican pitched him right out at the door.
- 4 Now since the whiskey is raised so high,
Poor children in sorrow no longer need cry ;
Two pence and a half for you must pay for one glass,
And the man that would buy it is only an ass.
- 5 A late proclamation, that's plain to be seen,
was signed and sent over, and sealed by the Queen ;
the price of the whiskey she had raised so high,
the publicans all in distraction will die.
- 6 Likewise grocers we cannot forget ;
The day is approaching they also must fret,
As the women's inclined to put money in store,
they won't slip in behind the tea-chests any more.
- 7 These young women's pleasure none can express,
As the whiskey is raised they can buy a new dress,
Of dandy fine flounces and frills a full score,
With a bustle behind and a bustle before.
- 8 Now to conclude and for to make an end,
Let the butcher and baker be always our friend,
In place of sick heads we'll have appetites keen,
For the price of the whiskey we'll buy a crubeen.

29

Text : *The Roguish Publican*, White, vol., i. f. 174.

- Verse : 1 My name it is Martin, by trade I'm a mason,
And into sweet Limerick I chanced for to stray,
I sat myself down by a publican's fire,
And twice for a naggin they made me to pay.
- 2 When I went in, I lade down the money,
And soon the damned rogue put it into his till ;
Now my wife's cloak he sent to the broker
In robbing poor people they think it no sin.
- 3 His name for to mention its not my intention.
this damnable rogue lives on Thomondgate hill,
And well I remember the cold frosty morning
He took my wife's cloak and left her in her skin.
- 4 So all jolly toppers I hope you'll take warning,
And drop drinking whiskey the round of the year,
On Saturday night you'll get your week's wages,
You'll bring home your wife a good piece of beef.

- 5 So deal with the butcher, you will find he is honest,
and likewise the grocer for powder and shot,
Call to the baker and bring home a large loaf,
So all day on Sunday you will have a full pot.
- 6 So on Monday morning your wife will embrace you,
And this to her darling she surely will say,
Johnny my dear, as you dropped drinking whiskey,
I declare to my goodness I will drop drinking tea.
- 7 In a couple of days young Johnny was walking,
He met with a publican's wife in the street,
she smiles and she says, won't you give us a naggin,
Your breath with the master I know it is sweet.
- 8 Young Johnny he viewed both her stays and her collar,
Her large dandy cad for to cover her head,
Twas your bluestone and whiskey left my back naked,
Go long to the devil, you damnable bitch.
- 9 I'll tell you in plain what they put in the whiskey,
Bluestone and costic and poison likewise,
may be you think that I am not in earnest,
But by the whole world I'll tell you no lies.
- 10 If you drink all your wages and leave your back naked,
And wants but one darby the very next day,
the landlady frowns and she quickly makes answer,
Go long, you blagard, I am going to my tea.
- 11 Young Johnny he dressed his wife like a lady,
His children with silk that hangs down to the ground,
Instead of a room, they have got a parlour,
The like in the city is not to be found.
- 12 He bought a new pot, a fender and bellows,
A two-arm chair to sit at his ease,
A beautiful teapot, three cups and three saucers,
And a new fashioned cradle the child for to please.

Songs 28 and 29 are scathing in their treatment of the publican and spirit grocer this class being presented as profiting from the misery of the people. Mary Daly writes that 'Most families survived on a permanent system of credit from the local shop...'⁸⁸ and she goes on to say that 'many families remained in a chronic state of indebtedness despite regular repayments...as the interest rates charged...frequently exceeded 10

⁸⁸Daly, *Social and economic history* . . . p. 53.

percent and in many cases was considerably higher.⁸⁹ Yet still she maintains that they provided a service that could not have been easily replaced...as credit ...kept many from starving during seasons of scarcity....⁹⁰ The many references to tea in the songs reflects its position as a high status commodity (besides the reference in the last two lines in verse 6 of the *Rise of the whiskey* ‘As the women’s inclined to put money in store/they won’t slip in behind the tea-chests any more’, which I interpret as suggesting the grocer gaining sexual favours in return for supplying alcohol to alcoholic women)⁹¹ much sought after and which was exploited by the shopkeepers as a way to keep their debtors in thrall. Also the references to adulteration of the drink itself seems to have been a common enough practice leaving a bad taste in the mouth as it did, with possibly worse effects, have been worthy of comment. But in *Rise of the whiskey* and *The roughish publican* we get a glimpse of how wonderful life could be if people could simply stop drinking. The temperance movement of Fr. Theobald Mathew made popular this act of self denial with, it is estimated, some 4 million people in Ireland by the year 1842 having taken the pledge to become teetotal.⁹²

30

Text : *Hurrah for Father Mathew’s Mill*. Printer : Harkness, J (Preston) c 1840-66. Harding, B 20 (15).

Verse : 1 Two jolly old toppers once sat at an inn,
 Discussing the merits of Brandy and gin,
 Said one to the other, I’ll tell you what, Bill
 I’ve been hearing today of Father Mathew’s Mill

2 You promise, by signing the paper (I think)
 that ale, wine and spirits you never will drink,
 You’ll give up, as they call it, such rascally swill,
 and then you go into Father Mathew’s Mill.

 There’s a wheel in this mill that they call “self-denial”
 they turn it a bit, just to give you a trial;
 Old clothes are made new ones, and if you’ve been ill,
 You’re very soon cured in Father Mathew’s Mill

 The poor were made rich, the rich were made strong,
 the shot (credit) was made short, and the purse was made long,
 These miracles puzzled both Thomas and Bill,

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 108-9.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., pp 97-8.

⁹² Townend, p. 72.

At length they went in for Father Mathew's Mill.

A little time after, I heard a great shout,
I turned round to see what the noise was about,
And a crowd, among which were both Thomas and Bill,
Were shouting hurrah for Father Mathew's Mill.

Hurra for Father Mathew's Mill gives some indication of the motivation driving such a mass popular movement ; it was not just the rewards that giving up drinking brought about to the individual in economic and social terms, there was also a millenarian aspect that accompanied Fr. Mathew himself ; a cult of personality developed around the priest and inspired his followers.⁹³ As Hoppen has noted for many in the crowds that went to hear Fr. Mathew speak and subsequently undertook total abstinence, he appeared in the role of 'traditional holy man who could make the lame walk and the diseased whole again'.⁹⁴ The language of revelation contained in the song that, 'the ill will be cured... and the poor will be made rich...etc.', bares out Hoppen's thesis. Much more straightforward in its praises for the sober life is this next song which includes the curious line, 'Come British lads with us combine'. For a song dealing with the temperance movement in Ireland, it would suggest that fierce differentiation along lines of national identity was not the dominant pre-occupation of the masses that nationalist propagandists would have us believe.

31

Text : *Downfall of the Whiskey Bottle*. Printer : Stephenson, M. (Gateshead), c 1838-40. Harding, B 11 (962)

Verse : 1 Tee-totallers where'er you dwell,
Good news to you I have to tell,
In Limerick, Cork, likewise Clonmel,
Thousands have joined tee-total.
For Mr. Mathews of great fame,
The drunkard daily does reclaim ;
May laurels crown his noble name,
for reclaiming many thousands.
May all who wear his coat combine,
To help him in his grand design,
To bannish misery and crime

⁹³Lysaght, pp 25-7.

⁹⁴K. T. Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800 conflict and conformity*, second ed. (2nd ed., Harlow, 1999) pp 85-6.

From Erin's sons and daughters.

Chorus : So the whiskey bottle is nearly dead,
The stuff's confin'd to its death-bed,
And the stick which broke so many heads,
Long life to father Mathew.

2 The Rev. Mr. Mathew's fame,
From pole to pole we will proclaim,
And Hibernia's sons may bless his name,
For putting down the monster.
The whiskey in the cells do lie,
Condemned by him and soon must die,
which makes the gaugers and the landlords cry,
What have you done tee-total?
But this oil of maddening fire's found out,
Mathew has put them to the route,
And his inside he'll turn quite out
And brand him as a traitor.

3 There's Limerick City of ancient fame,
Where Sarsfield did his rights maintain,
Long in record will stand his name,
As the bulwark of our nation.
Two hundred thousand in this town,
Determin'd to put drunkenness down,
Their memory ever shall be crowned,
For upsetting drunken Bacchus.
By Mr. Mathew they were bid,
And nobly signed the temperance pledge,
Against poor John a war did wage.
Captain Malt is now in danger.

4 From Limerick unto Waterford town,
Alcohol is now put down,
He left the camp with a heavy frown,
And quickly is retreating.
For Mr Mathew's heavy brigade,
With tee-total shot did him engage.
And the blue destructive is dismayed,
Long time they've kept the fortress,
With their freezed oceans they could not stand,
Before our mighty temperance band,
We'll drive them from old Erin's land,
No more to spoil our barley.

5 The publican and his whiskey taps
(His wife will lose her dandy caps,)
Success attend tee-total.
Their laces are just like a fiddle,
No more the drunkard they can diddle,

Of his cash they long did nibble.
They're beginning to run crazy
But we'll clap a plaster on their heads,
By tee-total doctors get them bled,
Which will confine them to the bed,
For drowning Mr. Barley.

6 May sobriety abound,
Through Ireland to resound,
Then Erin's harp shall sweetly sound,
The glories of tee-total.
Each neighbour loving will unite,
The stick and bowl they'll put to flight,
And Alcohol with all his might,
No more he shall deceive us,
For he crawled out in every street,
In our brains did slyly creep,
And the paving stones he made us meet,
In the dirt to lie till morning.

7 Come British lads with us combine,
To tumble down the landlords sign,
And be jerry lads, it is no crime,
Too long they have lived in clover.
In their dandy clothes they cut a shine,
At balls and plays they look so fine,
While drunkards children daily pine,
Tee-total lads will chance it.
The blue-devils we will bind in chains,
No more they'll meddle with our brains,
With tee-total engines quench their flames,
Our victory is certain.

8 My song is ended lads, huzza,
With Father Mathew march away,
with the whiskey traps no longer play,
And come and sign tee-total.

32

Text : *The Errors of Whiskey*. Gilbert, f.282.

Verse : 1 Boys have you heard of the news ?
Have you read the Queen's proclamation,
The publican's are all confused ;
They are now in deep disconsolation ;
As whiskey has now got a rise,
It will make many drunkards walk civil,
Keep tears from poor children's eyes,
And guard thousands of souls from the devil
It was too long a curse of our isle,

- A child of a drunkards well known
 He's a picture of disconsolation,
 How sad is poor drunkard's home,
 A temp're for grief and vexation,
 For detraction, for enmities, lies,
 And every description of evil!
 A drunkard by all is dispised,
 Who would wish to live honest and civil—
 For whiskey is source of all crimes.
- 2 He who loves children and wife,
 Will soberly try to support them,
 While a drunkard is starving through life,
 And his earnings the publican's sporting,
 A sober man walks without fear,
 His friends and his family praise him,
 While a drunkard knows not where for to steer,
 For fear that his master might seize him—
 Then he would be paid for his crimes.
- 3 If whiskey was raised long ago,
 The poor might live in satisfaction ;
 But while it was selling so low,
 It led too many into distraction
 Sent many to live in the grave,
 It was cause of both bloodshed and slaughter,
 Sent many across the salt wave,
 And brought millions before the Recorder—
 It has filled our poor houses jails.
- 4 As you gaze on the drunkards deathbed,
 If you will find it a picture of horror,
 His children perhaps starving for bread,
 While they are shedding tears o'er their father,
 While he thinks on past follows and strife,
 He fears on his journey to enter,
 As we're told in the true Book of Life,
 No drunkard God's Kingdom can enter,
 That man surely dies in despare.
- 5 If those dangers you wish to avoid,
 Your drunkenness and follow give over,
 Your senses will not be annoyed,
 If you try to live honest and sober,
 It is a man's duty to pray,
 For grace to avoid wicked station ;
 You'll be guarded from all evil ways,
 And exalted in every temptation,
 That does our weak spirit annoy

But temperance came at a price at least for the publican and the following song of *schadenfreude* highlights one of the incidental benefits that come out of the individual's reform (of which we will hear more in the following chapter).

33

Text : *The Publican's Lament*. Gilbert f. 6 (f.,203 & f.,204).

- Verse : 1 As I was walking up Pimplyco Way,
A publican's wife I heard sorely complain,
In a mournful accent these words did explain
I'm pining in angush this fortnight.
For porter or whiskey were are getting no call,
I fear there's no use in house keeping at all.
The most of my things I have stuck in the pawn,
I fear I can never release them.
- 2 Since father died it was easy for me,
to sit to out breakfast bread, butter and tea,
While the poor drunkards children were in poverty,
And I spending their Fathers earning,
I had servants to wait for a rap in the hall,
and quarters of beef coming in from the stall,
My pocket-book ready at every call,
But alas now my purse it is empty,
- 3 Before Father Mack began temperance I had money to spare
Fat beef in my pot free from trouble and care,
A large crinoline in the fashion I'd were,
And all by the drunkard's expence,
Inside my shop window there hung a fine screen,
the like with my mother I never had seen,
A two armchairs that was fit for a queen,
And everything that I want'd
- 4 When down the new well with my friends I could (illegible)
To skip like a lady the time pass'd away,
To inhale the fresh breeze of the water,
By husband in fashion could dress like a squire,
With a watch in his fob & and shins by the fire,
A long pipe in his gob without pension or care
And all by the poor drunkards wages.
- 5 It greaves me to see those men pass my door,
Well clad who was naked & tattered before,
Running to me for a naggin in score,
Before the daylight in the morning
Now to my grief I am sorry to say,
Those foolish men left me this many a long day,
Its from me like the foam of the sea
Which leaves me alas to mourning,

- 6 She cries when she looks at her black book account,
Of debts that was on to a certain amount,
That she never will get nor the sight of discount,
the fortune she had for her daughter,
She swear on her oath that she'd rather be dead,
than eating the lumpers instead of good bread
Her stomach is weak there's a pain in her head,
Since she get the tea in the morning,
- 7 Now to conclude and finish my song,
And advice I would give unto every man,
Get a cup of tea & a steak in the pan,
for the price of this whiskey and porter,
Believe me for truth if from drink you refrain,
Your children and wife can walk out neat and clean,
You know that your purses they often have drained,
And your doom at the end is the bridewell.

In this chapter I have tried to provide an alternative reading of some aspects of life for the labouring classes of Ireland in the nineteenth century by allowing the commentaries of the imponderabilia of actual life to seep through the almost solid narrative of political, social and economic history that sees the constitutional settlement as the overriding concern for the whole population of the country. What becomes obvious to the researcher when examining the ballad collections that exist for the period 1800-1900 is the extent to which the material contained within has been under utilised as a source for social and cultural history in favour of a polemical nationalist versus unionist culling of the collections. There are, of course, many ballads that fit into this overtly political category and I will deal with some of these in the next chapters. It is undeniable that the political question was a major factor in people's lives, particularly in the period when political economy was the doctrinal fashion for British Liberal governments, and thus intervention or the lack of it impacted directly on the living conditions of the people. However, as we have seen people were as often as not more interested in politics on the micro level, in their own personal relationships ; in gossip and scandal ; in eking out a living by whatever means ; negotiating roles within marriage and satisfying their needs and wants be these financial, libidinous, Bacchanalian or various combinations of all three ; and finally in trying to make sense out of the cards that life had dealt them. If, as Davis said, the ballads of the poor were

of the coarsest sort, ‘wherin [the] occasional thought of frolic or wrath, or misery’ was ‘unable to redeem the mass of threadbare jests, ribaldry, mock sentiment from the heathen mythology, low thoughts...’ then they merely reflected the lives and culture of which they were a product. The drunken, promiscuous, violent, mean, and innocent characters that inhabit these songs speak of people and situations that were familiar to the audiences as well as the composers of the ballads, if this was not the case they would find no audience. The insights into human behaviour and culture gained by ethno-musicologists when applied to a ballad history can provide the basis of an alternative understanding of how the people organised and thought about themselves. As Merriam, the Herskovits and Lloyd pointed out, the ballads although they are a form of entertainment are also much more than mere aural wallpaper by their having the ability to transmit knowledge and reinforce proper codes of conduct often employing humour which almost inevitably contained a moral sting in the tail. I leave the final word to John Ashton a nineteenth century collector, who bemoaning the passing of the heyday of the street ballad had a more sympathetic understanding of the art form than the one displayed by Davis:

Over Street Ballads may be raised the wail of “Ichabod, Ichabod, their glory is departed.” They held their own for many centuries, bravely and well, but have succumbed to a changed order of things, and a new generation has arisen, who will not stop in the streets to listen to these ballads being sung, but prefer to have their music served up to them “piping hot,” with the accompaniment of warmth, light, beer, and tobacco (for which they duly have to pay) at the Music Halls... These Street Ballads were produced within a very few hours of the publication of any event of the slightest public interest; and, failing that, the singers had always an unlimited store to fall back upon, on domestic, or humorous subjects, love, the sea etc., etc.⁹⁵

⁹⁵John Ashton, *Modern street ballads 1888* (London, 1888), preface.

Chapter 4

Soul Food

The tone of society in Ireland is becoming more and more 'Protestant' every year; the literature is a Protestant one, and even the priests are becoming more Protestant in their conversation and manners.¹

A defining feature of nineteenth century Irish society was the battle for souls between the various confessions on the island. Ostensibly this conflict did not differ radically from the one which occurred between the adherents of the Roman and Reformed versions of the Christian faith throughout Europe since Luther's ninety five theses on the power of indulgences, which he sent to the archbishop-elect of Mainz Albrecht of Brandenburg in October 1517² became public. The overriding difference was that after three centuries of theological and doctrinal debate, the battle-lines were more fully developed. This was a consequence of sectarian propaganda informing popular misconception and consolidating widespread prejudice, as a result of religious settlement through endowment and its accompanying resentment. Central to this conflict were a set of issues which lay at the heart of the sixteenth century European schism and its nineteenth century Irish echo. The abuses of the Roman church, in so far as these were understood by Luther, Zwingli, Calvin etc., such as simony, superstition and the profusion of extra-Biblical practices as well as the all too temporal concerns of the ecclesiastical organisation had not been addressed, to the satisfaction of the Reformed churches in any real sense, since they had first come under attack. The Council of Trent which sat at different periods between 1545-63 had merely widened the gap between the uncompromising Bible dependant Christianity of the Reformers and the trenchant traditionalists of Rome.³ The general timbre of the early Reformation held that Luther's concept of 'justification through faith,' i.e. salvation being dependant solely upon an act of God, made the previous staple of good works and religious observance irrelevant for the individual to be considered righteous, this idea became accepted doctrine among the new congregations. Other areas of conflict grew around

¹W. R. Wilde, *Irish popular superstition* (Dublin, 1972, [1852]), footnote, p. 17.

²Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford, 1991), p. 100.

³V. H. H. Green, *Renaissance and Reformation* (2nd ed., London, 1991), pp 186-90.

questions relating to the authority of the pope; the removal of intermediaries between the individual and God by allowing access to the gospels in the vernacular; controversy over the exact status of the eucharist after consecration at the mass;⁴ and the issue of clerical celibacy. The Tridentine decrees held that the Church alone could interpret the Scriptures properly; that true Christianity was supported by tradition ‘handed over’ by God to his people by the prophets and apostles and therefore bore equal weight with the gospels; the concept of transubstantiation, this being the actual physical change of the communion bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ, which had been accepted doctrine since the late thirteenth century, was reaffirmed in the face of Luther’s idea of consubstantiation (both the flesh and blood of Christ and the bread and wine existing simultaneously), or Zwinglian understanding which saw the consecration of the host on a purely symbolic level.⁵ All of these issues or some combination of them were to come to the fore in what has been styled the Second Reformation which took place in Ireland in the nineteenth century. However, religious controversy at that period in Ireland did not exist in a vacuum and so it went beyond mere theological debate and became embroiled in the wider political and cultural contest. The eventual granting of Emancipation and the reluctant manner in which it was conceded, allowed religion to become a running wound of poisonous animosity as well as the rallying point for nationalist agitators whose political ambitions overrode any concerns for national unity.⁶ The dominant culture of the nation, the very source of national identity, was considered to be, by both the Protestant and Catholic clergy, peppered with popular versions of Roman Catholic religious ritual and symbolism. In fact it was these trappings of Roman Catholicism that was for many the very essence of Irishness (see below pp 189-90) and therefore they excluded a large minority of the island’s population.⁷ It will be this contest for political and cultural supremacy refracted through a prism of religiosity that will be the subject of the following chapter, heavily weighted in the direction of popular Roman Catholic reaction to the evangelical mission (whose most salient points will be included to provide some historical context) which

⁴E. A. Livingstone, (ed.), *Concise dictionary of the Christian church* (Oxford, 2000), pp 350-1 ;ibid., p. 640.

⁵Ibid., pp 585-587 ; ibid., p. 142 ; ibid., 640.

⁶See Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* pp 123-53.

will again be examined through the ethnomusicologist's method of song-text analysis. Unlike the morality tales and songs of social comment previously analysed, where the serious business of personal relations and social control are discussed in a humourous and self-deprecating manner giving the impression, in many cases, that the songs were written on a whim, the songs and other texts in the following chapter are predominantly splenetic; the satire is cruel and the sectarian agenda is explicit and unapologetic, but the motivation for their production does not waver, these songs are also concerned with getting people to conform to the orthodox (which ever one is being promoted) and reject heresy in all its manifestations, in this way these too are songs of social control.

The failure of the Reformation in Ireland has been well documented. The reasons given range from the unevenness of governmental control throughout the island in the Tudor period,⁸ (a period unparalleled in the intensity of religious activity in England); to the unattractiveness of Irish benefices in comparison to their English counterparts due to their relative impoverishment.⁹ Other reasons emphasise the lack of Irish speaking missionaries to promote the word of god in the vernacular of the people¹⁰; which could be coupled with the inability of the illiterate Irish to partake in Scripture reading, one of the central tenets of the Reformed faith, even when these texts were made available.¹¹ Finally, the impact of the Counter-Reformation upon the Gaelic and Old English population disrupted the early reforming mission.¹²

If the selling of indulgences was for Luther the catalyst that sparked the Reformation, then the Second Reformation in Ireland can be put down to a deliberately proactive movement of proselytism which emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century and which found provocative expression in Archbishop William Magee's *Charge delivered to the clergy of his archdiocese* on his inauguration as

⁷J. G. MacWalter, *Irish reformation movement* (Dublin, 1852), p. 163-6.

⁸Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth century Ireland, the incomplete conquest* (Dublin, 1994).

⁹Steven G Ellis, *Tudor Ireland, crown, community and the conflict of cultures 1470-1603* (London, 1992 [1985]), p.198.

¹⁰Alan Ford, 'The Protestant Reformation in Ireland', in C. Brady and R. Gillespie (eds), *Natives and newcomers* (Dublin, 1986), pp 50-74.

¹¹Ellis, p. 184.

¹²Ellis, pp 221-3 ; Lennon, pp 320-2.

archbishop of Dublin in St. Patrick's cathedral on 24 Oct. 1822.¹³ At first glance the *Charge* appears to be a stock taking rather than a mission statement.¹⁴ At no point in the address does Magee, explicitly, call for an all out assault on the Roman Catholic church, rather, he attempts to circle the Establishment wagons in the face of incompetence, lack of confidence, or, lethargy on the part of the Church of Ireland ministry. Admittedly he does this by holding forth the merits of his own religion while debasing the beliefs of the 'Romanists' or the 'Independents,' both sects he sees as posing some threat to his own faith. On closer inspection it is the reaction to Magee's *Charge*, which can be gleaned from a number of letters addressed to the archbishop from a section of the Roman Catholic hierarchy including the Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland Dr. Curtis, responding to the, 'trumpet blast'¹⁵ as Marcus Tanner put it, of the Second Reformation which turned up the heat of religious controversy that ensued for the next several decades. This reaction is understandable given the charged atmosphere that existed between the confessions in the struggle for both spiritual and political supremacy on the island. A *de facto* working arrangement of religious tolerance, a kind of uneasy truce between the denominations had gradually evolved by the last quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁶ There was of course sectarian violence,¹⁷ and none more destructive than that which accompanied the rebellion of 1798, however, even where sectarian violence did occur this was driven first and foremost by either economic or social motives, e.g. competition for scarce resources or resentment at the imposition of taxes and levies in the former case¹⁸; and in the latter case as the century drew to a close and the nineteenth century dawned the identity defining boundaries of commemorative celebrations such as St. Patrick's Day, 12 July or the Popish Plot 5 November increased ethnic tensions which might then erupt into violence at the local

¹³Irene Whelan, *The bible war in Ireland*. . . , p.155-6.

¹⁴For an overview of the state of the Church of Ireland in the early nineteenth century see Sean Connolly, *Religion and society in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dundalk 1994 [1985]), pp 7-10 ;

¹⁵Marcus Tanner, *Ireland's Holy Wars, the struggle for the nation's soul* (Yale, 2003), p. 208.

¹⁶ Connolly, *Religion and society* . . . , p.18.

¹⁷James Kelly, 'The genesis of "Protestant ascendancy": the Rightboy disturbances of the 1780s and their impact on Protestant opinion' in Gerard O'Brien (ed.), *Parliament, politics and people* (Dublin, 1989); Connolly, *Religion and society* . . . , pp 18-30.

¹⁸David W. Miller (ed.), *Peep O'Day Boys and Defenders, selected documents on the county Armagh disturbances 1784-96* (Belfast, 1990).

level.¹⁹ However, by and large sectarian conflict does not seem to have occurred due to doctrinal differences over questions of transubstantiation or justification by faith. The relaxation of the Penal Laws and the gradual granting of rights to Catholics in the various relief acts (1778, 1782, 1792, 1793) for pragmatic political reasons²⁰ and in response to their declarations of loyalty²¹ are testament to this state of affairs. It was not until some phenomena came along to upset the finely balanced equilibrium of confessional stasis that co-habitation became problematic. The terror of 1798 could be said to have been the pivotal event which had lasting repercussions in forming the attitudes and the subsequent actions of the Protestant community for the next century²²; mistrust and suspicion are probably the most apt adjectives to describe this attitude and they are succinctly relayed in songs like the following:

34

Text: *The Six Priests Tune – Black Joke*, in *The Protestant : or true blue loyal songs, toasts, sentiments, &c. &c.* (Dublin, 1825), NLI.

Verse: 1 Six Priests dined together one *Friday in Lent*,
 To raise a rebellion it was their intent.
 With their long black cloaks and vestments so white ;
 One swore by the Pope, another swore by the devil,
 Another roared out in terms more civil;
 The fourth shouted out by the powers of man,
 To raise a rebellion I'll do all I can,
 With my long cloak and vestments so white.

2 The fifth he roared out, as he carv'd up some mutton,
 “O’Lord ! how I should like to be Heretics gutting,
 With my long fork and great carving knife.”
 “Bravo,” said the sixth, “I second your motion; “
 Then those six *holy sons*, of wine took their portion,

¹⁹Jacqueline Hill, ‘National festivals, the state and ‘protestant ascendancy’ in Ireland 1790-1829’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxiv. no. 93 (May 1984) ; Whelan, *The bible war in Ireland*, p. 154.

²⁰Jacqueline Hill, ‘Religious toleration and the relaxation of the penal laws: an imperial perspective, 1763-1780’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xlv (1989).

²¹Thomas Bartlett and D. W. Hayton, *Penal era and golden age: essays in Irish history, 1690-1800* (Antrim, 1979), p. 190.

²²David Dickson, *New Foundation : Ireland 1660-1800* (Dublin, 1987), p. 192.

- They all with one voice did truly agree,
That in Protestant blood they would wade to the knee,
With their long black cloaks and vestments so white.
- 3 They toasted *Lord Edward*, and gave him three cheers,
They filled up full bumpers to traitors and *sheers* [sic];
With their long black gowns and vestments so white;
When a clap from each one made the house for to ring,
It's God save the Pope, and down with the King,
The chairman cried out, "as tis getting too late,
I'd better sit down and settle the state,
With our long black cloaks and vestments so white."
- 4 Then one of those Priests to another did say,
If we chance to be taken we'll see *Botany Bay*;
With our long black cloaks and vestments so white,
So take my advice, and kill all you can,
Spare not a woman, a child, or a man;
For heaven you'll get for doing such deeds,
And clearing the country of ruinous weeds,
With our long black cloaks and vestments so white.
- 5 The chairman arose, who was father *M'Bride*
I have a plan in my pocket this town to divide:
With my long black cloak and vestments so white.
Here is *Stephen's Green*, I will give it to thee,
But as for the *Castle*, its for you and me,
And as for the rest you may all have the *College*,
Then our *holy religion* will spread and get knowledge.
- 6 But in the arrangement there was a demur,
For Just at that moment in stepped *Major Surr*,
With his long sword and pistols so bright,
O, its then how they looked, and oh ! how they stared,
Had he been *Old Nick*, they could not be more scar'd ;
The Major well knowing they were desperate foes,
Instead of the *Castle* gave them the *Provost* !
With long black cloaks and vestments so white.

Feelings of mistrust, coupled with a sarcastic treatment of the perceived hypocrisy of the Roman Catholic clergy with the six priests enjoying a meal of mutton and drinking their bellyful on a Friday evening in Lent as they plot the overthrow of the legitimate government is

evident in the above song. This perception of the hypocrisy of the whole institution and culture of Roman Catholicism can be seen as providing part of the motivation for a campaign of mass conversion. Although there had been various spells of evangelical activity in Ireland during the eighteenth century,²³ as is evidenced by the frequent visits and countrywide tours of the founder of Methodism John Wesley (21 times between 1747-91) it appears that penetration among, and, moreover, relevance to, the Roman Catholic population was haphazard to say the least.²⁴ However, it was in the aftermath of the Rebellion of '98 that an upsurge and concerted proselytising effort took place. The number of Bible or educational related Societies that were formed in the first two decades of the nineteenth century gives some indication of this. In 1806 the Hibernian Bible Society drawn up along the same lines as the British and Foreign Bible Society, was formed; 1809 saw the founding of the Sunday School Society for Ireland; 1811 what became known as the Kildare-street Society was formed for the purpose of 'promoting the education of the poor in Ireland' by 1819 this Society was in receipt of a government grant of £5, 538 and had 1,122 schools under its protection. 1814 and 1816 saw the establishment of The Irish Evangelical Society, (IES) and the Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish, through the Medium of their own Language, (commonly known as the Irish Society) respectively.²⁵ One of the founding members of the latter society was Henry Charles Sirr, town-major of Dublin, and the man falsely credited with dealing the death blow to Lord Edward Fitzgerald. This is the same Major Sirr referred to in *Six Priests*.²⁶ These last organisations as their names suggest catered to the Irish speaking population. In the case of the IES this was done by preaching and reading Scripture at fairs, markets and other occasions of social gatherings. The Irish Society initially provided Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer in Irish and from 1821 copies of Boyle's Irish Bible, printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Hibernian Bible Society.²⁷ The effectiveness of these societies in preaching in the language of the peasant can be seen in the testimony of

²³Whelan, *The bible war in Ireland ...*, pp 3-37.

²⁴Tanner, p. 207

²⁵J. G. MacWalter, *Irish reformation movement* (1852), pp 145-152.

²⁶Sirr, Henry Charles (1764-1841) *ODNB* vol, xviii.

²⁷MacWalter *Irish Reformation Movement*.

John Garrett, the Irish-speaking parson of Ballymote, Co. Sligo who told archbishop Power le Poer Trench in 1835:

I invariably preach in Irish at funerals; and no mandate of the priests can keep the peasantry from crowding round me, and swallowing with mouths, ears and eyes every word I utter, which I impute to my preaching the Gospel without seeming to allude to their errors : and I have several converts who left the mass-house after frequently hearing my Irish sermons at funerals.²⁸

Irish speaking preachers such as the Methodists Gideon Ouseley, James McQuigg and Charles Graham who had been riding the circuit since the early years of the century²⁹ caused enough of a stir to have the following ballad penned against their activities:

35

Text: *Second edition of the recruiting sergeant for the empty church and idle clergy commonly known by the false appellation of Irish teachers. Air – The Boyne Water. Bod., 2806 b. 10 (141) ; Harding, B 19 (5). (Thaddeus Connellan d.1854).*

1. Good christian people pray give to this my brief narration,
Concerning the corrupted state of this our Irish nation,
Like a firm rock she stood the shock against false doctrine preachers,
But now alas is much annoy'd by upstart Irish teachers.
- 2 Tegue Connellan first laid the plan when he failed of holy orders,
From the church of Christ he did recant with Lutherlike disorders,
To London he set off with speed to begin his machinations.
And set his engines there to work against his native nation.
- 3 Saying as my countrymen refuse your books in English language,
Let's set translators fast to work, each with his pen will brandish,
And when this job is done complete to the end of revelations
My life at stake you'll find this bait pervert the Irish nation.
- 4 Teague's new found plan adopted was and met with approbation,
A scribbling swarm soon appear'd to work this great translation,
A set of paltry hungry dogs fed by lampoon and libel,
To London ran with open mouths and feasted on the bible.

²⁸ *Memoir of the Hon. and Most Rev. Power le Poer Trench, last archbishop of Tuam*, ed. J. D'Arcy Sirr (Dublin, 1845), p. 380.

²⁹ Whelan, *The bible war in Ireland . . .* pp 86-90.

- 5 A fund was then prepared with speed by liberal donation,
Each bible member did subscribe for sake of innovation,
Then with the salves of English gold their needy ills (sic)
Beat up you'll find we'll soon enlist five thousand Irish masters.
- 6 A crew of mean-bred grovelling slaves who picked up scraps of
learning,
Can scarce procure a second shirt to keep the first from swarming,
If we transport this naked tribe into some decent raiment,
From priest and pope they will elope and barter all for payment.
- 7 These wretched fanes for trifling gain have bartered their salvation,
And lest the pay would fail some day each reads his recantation,
When the rotten branch falls from the tree by clear demonstration,
Will bear no fruit fit for use but for conflagration.
- 8 This motly crew were you to view in Kingscourt-street parading,
With staff and crutch limping to church a sight the most degrading,
It was strange news to see full pews in the law church so cram'd sir,
Their loathsome stench to the pulpit went the parson wished them
damn'd sir.
- 9 Blest Ireland all Europes boast for piety and morals,
As O'Halloran and Keating show 'ere Dearmod's baneful quarrels.
The seminaries then produc'd saints, bards, and antiquarians,
Tho' represented now to be unletter'd rude barbarians.
- 10 Once happy isle where comforts smiled sound learning and devotion,
Where peace and harmony did reign bright star in all the ocean,
From distant shores in search of lore came crowds of different nations,
But now John Bull counts us too dull without his information.
- 11 John Bull and Teague have made a league a thing more strange then
any,
What was put down from Bessys reign until the days of Nanny,
That now John Bull with pockets full buy Irish for young Paddy.
Tho' we're assured he still abhor'd the name of his grand daddy.
- 12 But Johnny Bull we plainly see your far-fetched deep intentions,
Let your pedantic bringing slaves live on their yearly pensions,
The lords anointed will stand fast we hold them as our teachers,
Bring Theady's pets to the nags head and dub the out (sic) as preachers.
- 13 If to London you do bring this crew they'll think the city stormed,
Beholding such a multitude of creatures so deform'd,
Some blind, some lame, some hump'd some maimed,
John bull you bought a fairing,
I dare presume you'll curse the broom that swept such dregs from Erin.
- 14 I wonder Jack you were so slack or acted such a fool sir,

By paying these pedantic knaves for keeping a no school sir,
You are always kind to sinecures who feel no conscious scruples,
So you may boast you have a host of teachers but no pupils.

15 I recommend to every friend especially to parents,
To keep their children from the schools of Theady's vile adherents,
Obey your church and shun the church condem'd by all our pastors,
Who criminate and reprobate apostate Irish masters.

The Irish teacher and in particular the convert 'scripture reader' then became equated in the popular mind as being a tool for the proselytisers although again in the light of the decline of the Irish language their effectiveness has been questioned.³⁰ Besides this drive for religious conversion on the part of the clergy there was the opinion abroad that the Established Church was merely the confessional wing of the Protestant ruling elite, commonly ascribed the title 'protestant ascendancy' during the last decade of the eighteenth century (a contentious designation but one nonetheless appropriate to the political hegemony they enjoyed and their self perception³¹), which deplored any concession to the Roman Catholics as undermining their 'rightful' position of natural supremacy and which became mindful too of the false sense of security that the Act of Union afforded. 'Bishop James Doyle (James of Kildare and Leighlin who published under the initials JKL) said of the Established Church that it was perceived as, 'More a political than a religious establishment . . . not as the spouse of the Redeemer, but as the handmaid of the ascendancy.'³² In the early decades of the century the simmering possibility of Catholic Emancipation kept the Church of Ireland and the powerful congregation it served on the defensive.

36

Text: *Catholic Emancipation in The Protestant : or true blue loyal songs... : Tune St. Patrick's Day in the Morning.*

Verse: 1 A plague on these Papists, they'll make such a pother,

³⁰Ibid., pp 98-107.

³¹Hill, 'National festivals . . .' p. 36.

³²James W. Doyle, *Letters on the State of Ireland Addressed by J. K. L. to a Friend in England* (Dublin, 1825), p. 69.

When once they've *converted* their Bill to an Act,
 They'll always be teasing for something or other,
 Concessions no quiet will purchase;
 What, though we give them Army – Navy–
 What, though we give them Law and State;
 We ne'er shall dissuade 'em
 Till Judges we've made 'em;
 And when they're appointed and duly anointed,
 Be-wigg'd and be-rob'd with a Catholic oath,
 They'll tell us, that still they're oppressed –disappointed,
 And must have a touch at our Churches.

2 It is not just simply the sitting in Parliament,
 Ever can justify suitors like these;
 The same sort of favour, *Guiscard* to great *Harley*, meant,
 Papists would grant to the nation;
 Don't we remember,
 The Fifth of November,
 With Piercy, and Catesby, the Parliament Gates by,
 And Termond, Tom Winter, Garnet and Fawkes,
 And Digby and Rookwood, who all lost their pates, by
 Their genius for assassination.

3 Trust not, my friends, to their cringing and lowliness:
 Always the case, when they want any thing,
 Set them once free, and for praise from his Holiness,
 England's tranquility's bartered,
 Then with their signs, and shrines, and shrivings,
 Starving on fish, and stews and eggs;
 With vespers and matins,
 And Saints in rich satins,
 They'll touch up their Lordships of Durham, and Winchester,
 London, and Ely, and Archy of York;
 They'll light up their fires, and make their hot pinchers stir,
 England's poor Church, will be martyr'd

4 Every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday,
 Well we must fast, by the rules of our Church:
 What's meat on the *former*, is death on the *latter* day,
 He who eats mutton, is *undone*,
 Then, on their knees, to saints in velvet,
 Kissing the stumps they stand upon;
 Cutting strange capers,
 And sticking up tapers
 And just as the vespers chime in with their merry ticks,
 Domine Francis drops in for a call;
 And takes us to Smithfield to see a few heretics
 Burnt for the glory of London !

5 Then upon Sundays, and every Church festival,
 Singing and dancing and Op'ras, and Plays,

Will drive the folks mad, while the Priests, as the test of all,
 Give them a holy ablution,
 Protestant Parsons whipp'd and scoff'd at,
 Quakers and Methodists, thump'd and ston'd;
 A nice joke to dish up,
 They'll broil you a bishop,
 And then pay their Priest; for, their road to heaven pence
 Serve them as well, as at Knightsbridge or Kew;
 His Rev'ence sends off to Rome, two and seven-pence,
 Home come a full absolution . . .

This nightmare vision for the Anglican church of Catholic emancipation contains so many of the propagandistic elements that pandered to the general level of sectarian intolerance playing, as it does, on the fears of the past as the aforementioned Gunpowder Plot, and conjuring up images of the end of civil and religious liberty when Sabbath breaking and mandatory fasting (both Roman Catholic practices and both associated with the majority culture) are enforced under a new constitutional arrangement. This vision was shared by the Roman Catholic population, for many of the same reasons but having vastly different results. Added to the possibility Emancipation being realized as a political expedient, the second decade of the nineteenth century saw the air charged by the widespread belief among Roman Catholics that the millenarian prophesies of Signor Pastorini, or prophesies attributed to St. Colmcille would be fulfilled.³³ These beliefs in which the end of Protestant supremacy or oppression was foretold made their way into the street ballads of the day. Thomas Powell, a Roscrea magistrate, reported to Dublin Castle in 1823 that 'Since I have known this country, the agitation of the people has never been so high, of either class ; ballads and prophecies are industriously circulated by the one, and Orange associations are forming by the other...'³⁴ However, as Zimmerman points out failure for the appointed day to fulfil the expectations did not mean that the prophesy was proved wrong (a classic example of the stubbornness of a belief system), the balladeer simply shifted the date into some time in the future, thus the year of 1825 which it was believed Pastorini had singled out as year zero and became so in some ballads, glided almost imperceptibly into the year '29, or the 'year of forty-three,' and so on, as each

³³S. J. Connolly, *Religion and society* . . . , p. 24. Pastorini was in fact an English Catholic bishop called Charles Walmesley and who had published a diatribe against all heretical sects entitled *A general history of the Christian Church* in Dublin in 1790.

year failed to deliver the knock out blow to the enemy, even after immediate demands were met.³⁵ The following song combines both the supernatural traits and the political reality of O'Connell's victory in the Emancipation campaign, as well as the promise of another new dawn, this time of repeal ; it is also illustrative of Old Ireland's exclusivist idea of the nation as being made up solely of the Milesian Catholic population:

37

Text: *The Shamrock Green Island*. Harding B 25 (78).

- Verse: 1 Some times I am thinking a word for to send
 To the gallant brave friend to the people,
 Though he did but serve my mind to contend,
 And show him the strength of old fear nought,
 I am going to relate the strength of us here,
 How we are prepared on the present new year,
 True sons of milesians without dread or fear,
 Each county in Ireland can raise a battallion
 Of fine able fellows to exceed many millions,
 Light guards to relieve them, free, able, and willing,
 To clear off our shamrock green island.
- 2 Saint Patrick the apostle before did (illegible)
 The torture, we bore in this nation.
 With his cross he drove the toads and the serpents,
 And all of the obnoxious creatures,
 Then he consecrated the kingdom all round,
 The gospel he preached when the heathens he found,
 In the christian faith he had them all round,
 And then on a rock christ's church he erected,
 The blessed incarnation by him was respected,
 The rankest of heathens he had them convicted
 All over the shamrock green island.
- 3 Till a serpent arose as it happened before,
 When Adam and Eve were in eden,
 And kindled a torch with Luther enforced,
 By establishing a new reformation,
 Then Calvin, Cranmer and king Henry,
 They joined the new system and signed the decree,
 Corrupted our scripture and poisoned our creed,
 And they were assisted by all rotten mankind
 All that fell from the church was increasing in numbers,
 Till they reached our shore and make it no wonder,
 They infected our shamrock green island.

³⁴Maura Murphy, *The Ballad singer and the role of the Seditious Ballad* . . . , pp 80-3.

³⁵Zimmerman, pp 29-31.

- 4 Before this division our faith and baptism,
 One church and one God we adored,
 So bull or lion, no mastiff you find,
 Or the wolf that resides in sheeps clothing,
 But Christ himself said the house would not stand,
 If it was divided or built upon sand,
 If only remains till the storm comes on,
 Then great is the fall of the new inventions,
 The church with one horn, will be torn to splinters,
 There is none but the strong can stand storm or tempest,
 That grows on the shamrock green island.
- 5 Old Lucifer said to Luther that day,
 For three hundred years I'll defend you,
 Till a prophet shall rise in the eastern sea, (sky ?)
 And, in spite of my aid, he will end you.
 Now the time is expired that the Devil desired,
 And Daniel already our bondage has freed.
 The Limerick condition he made them to yield,
 All those new religions will be shortly be mourning,
 No longer the torch for them will stand burning,
 Our Parliament home to ourselves is returning,
 To adorn our shamrock green island.
- 6 In Munster remained the standard of fame,
 The true sons of old Granu to aid him,
 All Catholic Powers in Europe around us,
 Are waiting with patience to lead them.
 The Knights of St. Patrick is already at hand,
 Waiting with patience to get the command,
 And all their delay is a token from Dan,
 To scourge all those vipers, and quickly dispatch them,
 To Clontarf for (illegible), like the Danes, we will march them,
 And there in the lake, from their sins we will wash them,
 And clear off our shamrock green island.
- 7 Religion will smile once more in our isle,
 When the lion and bull-dog's departed,
 The mastiff also, and the wolf in sheep's clothing,
 The fleece we will shear off them naked,
 One half of the rest we will then (illegible) away,
 The tithes and high taxes no longer we'll pay,
 The fruit of our labour we'll have from this day,
 No longer we'll have either bailiffs or pastors,
 Informers, or peelers, or perjured blood (suckers ?)
 (Next line illegible)
 All over the Shamrock Green shore.

It was against this backdrop of nervousness that Magee's *Charge* called for the

clergy of the Church of Ireland to assert their authority as representatives of the one and only true Catholic and Apostolic Church.³⁶ ‘Common exertion,’ the archbishop said, ‘it is manifest, will not now suffice.’ The implication of this being was an extraordinary effort is needed in order to counter the, ‘irreligion and false religion [which] abound. We have fallen on “evil days and evil tongues” and there is no slumbering on our post. We may rest assured, that if we join lukewarmness from within to the unending hostility which assails us from without, . . . the triumph of those who labour for the downfall of our Church will be soon completed.’³⁷ In this sense one can see the merit in the argument that the ‘second reformation’ in Ireland was concerned, not only with ‘proselytising Catholics and evangelising foreign pagans’, but was ‘first and foremost a movement for Protestant renewal’.³⁸ In the address Magee makes claims for the Established Church’s authority, legitimacy and supremacy in all areas of religious thought and action; and also claims that, ‘Political considerations, unfortunately, make it the interest of many whose condition is influential, to court the favour of those who are hostile to the Established Church— and therefore in their property, their character, and their teaching the clergy of the national religion are resisted and oppressed.’³⁹ From these passages we can begin to get a sense of the feeling of vulnerability that the Anglican Church in Ireland experienced; it was not only under attack from other Christian sects within Ireland but it was apt to become a pawn in a wider political game wherein expediency was the ultimate arbiter. If the *Charge* had been merely a call to arms in defence of the Church of Ireland then, most likely, it would have passed on without much comment, however, there was one passage that came in for especial attention from the Roman Catholic hierarchy such as Dr. Curtis archbishop of Armagh. The offensive passage from Magee declaims:

We, my Reverend Brethren, are placed in a station in which we are hemmed in by two opposite descriptions of professing Christians. The one possessing a church, without what we can call a religion ; and the other possessing a religion without what we can call a church ; the one so blindly

³⁶ Archbishop Wlm. Magee, *Charge delivered to the Clergy of his Archdiocess* [sic] (Dublin, 1822).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Joseph Leichty, ‘The popular Reformation comes to Ireland : the case of John Walker and the foundation of the Church of God, 1804’ in R. V. Comerford, Mary Cullen, Jacqueline R. Hill and Colm Lennon (eds), *Religion, Conflict and Coexistence in Ireland, essays presented to Monsignor Patrick J. Corish* (Dublin, 1990), p. 170.

³⁹ Magee, *Charge delivered to the Clergy of his Archdiocess*

enslaved to a supposed infallible ecclesiastical authority, as not to seek in the word of God, a reason for the faith they profess; the other so confident in the infallibility of their individual judgment, as to the reasons of their faith, that they deem it their duty to resist all authority in matters of religion.

Dr. Curtis attributes to Dr. Magee's uncompromising ebullient attitude, expressed in his *Charge*, the direct responsibility for the, 'Horrible act of placing a calf's head on the altar of the chapel of Ardee'. This act of defilement of a sacred space appeared symptomatic as well as symbolic of a culture of intolerance contradictory to, 'an age so highly renowned for its information, and liberality, and when so much noise is made, of boasted new plans of education, bible societies, and proselyting teachers. . .'⁴⁰ He points the finger of blame for the outrage squarely at the archbishop 'But the unheard of crime. . . need not be traced to any remote or general origin, as we are furnished with a more direct and immediate cause of [its] production, in the degrading sentence lately pronounced against all Catholics, without exception, by an archbishop of the Established Church.'⁴¹ Even more emphatic is the response from JKL to the offensive statement. JKL deconstructs Magee's *Charge* on all counts and uses Magee's assertion to be the one Catholic and Apostolic Church as the petard to blow a hole in his argument as well as a convenient source to highlight the inherent contradiction of the attack on the New Lights or the schematics within the already schematic church:

As an archbishop of the Established Church, I would beg leave to ask you, my Lord, who are you and where did you come from? From what Heaven have you fallen? What Earth produced you? Turn over the records of your Church, tell us the names of the Bishops who preceded you ; show us how they were connected with the Apostles, or with those who receive the Faith from them. Produce your claim to that title "Apostolic," which you so ostentatiously put forth, but to which your Grace has as good a claim as to the Dukedom of Leeds! . . . There is no declamation, nor high colouring of words, which can veil that wound which is ever gaping in the side of your Establishment. . . . Luther, my Lord, to whom your Grace is greatly indebted, for it is from the confession of Augsburgh, the fruit of his mind, though written by Melancthon, that your Articles are principally formed, he would not assume the title of Apostolic, but he claimed to be an Apostle. Perhaps it is from him your Grace's Church derives her title! . . .But why, my Lord, are you not satisfied with claiming, against the New Lights, the character of Apostolicity, but seek also to usurp that

⁴⁰Dr. P. Curtis, *Two letters from the most Rev. Dr. Curtis, Roman Catholic Primate of Ireland respecting the horrible act of placing a calf's head on the altar of the chapel of Ardee and also his answer to the Protestant archbishop Magee's charge against the Roman Catholic religion.*(Dublin, 1822).

⁴¹Ibid.

of “Catholic,” and endeavour to possess it in common with that Church, to which the whole Universe has exclusively assigned it? Who, before your Grace, has ever imagined that the Established Church in these Countries was Catholic? Does not Catholic mean universal? Is it as to doctrine? No— for here doctrine is confined to these two Islands; in one of which it is not believed by the one hundredth part of the People, in Scotland by only a similar proportion. . . Her doctrine may be good or bad; *but it is not universal.* ⁴²

The claim of Protestant sects to be entitled Catholic was not new to Magee, it had been argued in the *Protestant and Papist’s manual* that ‘[it] belongs to all Christians, who adhere to “the faith once delivered to the Saints,” and have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. . . Wherever Christ is, (wherever Christ is worshipped) there is the Catholic church.’⁴³ However, JKL answers this theological explanation with the common sense assertion that when one asks directions to the Catholic Church in any town one is not directed to the Anglican church.⁴⁴ JKL also calls into question the justice of the payment of tithes by members of a different church to a church that claims such spurious universalism.⁴⁵ This type of appeal to the judgement of the masses over high theological points is common. In Magee’s *Charge* and Curtis’s and Doyle’s replies we get the essence of the controversy that is about to unfold both through doctrinal debates and in the medium of popular ballads. The war was to be waged against superstition in the religious practices of the Roman Catholics as these were commonly perceived by Protestants evangelicals who relied upon the assumed superior intellectual, one might even suggest, rational basis for their faith to their own congregations, as much as to any potential Roman Catholic audience, possibly as a way of encouraging their own adherents to avoid falling into line with a system or culture of folk beliefs which crossed sectarian divisions. On the Roman Catholic side the main point of attack was the justification of the Reformation in claiming any moral authority, being, as it was understood and portrayed, a man made event spawning a plethora of erroneous churches. In other words the war was to be carried on between novelty and tradition, infallibility and the gospel, and the rival claims for spiritual authority. The

⁴²James Warren Doyle, (James of Kildare and Leighlin) *A letter to His Grace the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin [i.e. W. Magee], in consequence of unjust animadversions against the Roman Catholic Religion written by a Dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church* (Dublin, 1822), pp 14-7. Emphasis in the original.

⁴³*A Protestant and Papist’s manual* (London, 1813).

⁴⁴Doyle, p. 17.

⁴⁵Whelan, *The bible war in Ireland* . . . p. 160.

following song brings the major points regarding legitimacy and the power of priest to absolve sin into sharp relief; it also provides a historical context for the Roman Catholic wariness of over-reliance on the bible as a platform for living a full Christian life.

38

Text: *A dialogue between a Protestant Gentleman and a member of the Roman Catholic Church*. White col. vol. ii, f. 86 ; *Dialogue between a Priest and a Parson*. Printer : Such, H. (London), c 1863-85. Bod., 2806 b. 10 (161).

- Verse: 1 You sons and daughters of each persuasion,
Give ear with patience to what I say,
It being a dialogue that has took place,
With 2 well known gentlemen the other day,
This left off branch that belonged to Luther,
He asked the other how his creed was wrong,
He says I'm scoffed at by each vile intruder,
So between them thus the argument went on,
- 2 Now my dear friend I wish you will tell me,
How no salvation there's to be found,
In no other Church than the Roman temple,
Was I to search the wide world round,
Did not our Lord say to his disciples,
My peace unto all of you I leave,
Go preach the Gospel and teach all nations
That men of all sects they may be saved.
- 3 Kind sir, to answer that simple question,
For your conversion I will make bold,
Our blessed Lord he sent his disciples,
To bring all stray sheep unto one fold,
The key of his Church he also gave to Peter,
To reign triumphant as the Scripture tell
And said at all times he would be with her,
To defend and guard her from the pains of hell,
- 4 Now my dear friend the scripture tell us,
That graven images shan't be adored,
Which you in worship do daily practice,
If you contradict me I'll say no more,
Besides each Sunday at divine service,
It's from the parson those words were told,
That our religion it is the same,
The Apostles taught in the days of old,
- 5 Kind sir, to say that we worship images,
It is a falsehood believe me true,
We only have them within our temples,
To remind us of what they for the Lord did do,
That we may also take patern by them,

- For they were pure without spot or stain,
 Then the Imps of Satan we do defy them,
 For by their maxims we'll salvation gain.
- 6 Kind sir, moreover you did discover,
 That your Person daily does so explore,
 That your Religion it is the same,
 The Apostles taught in the days of yore,
 But where was your church before Martin Luther,
 Or the reformation had first began,
 It was Bess and Neddy with old Harry Tudor,
 For lust invented that wicked plan
- 7 Now friend there's still another objection,
 I have to make to the Roman creed,
 This is the Doctrine you call confession,
 By which the Catholic's from sin is freed,
 I don't believe it that the Almighty,
 E'er gave the power unto any man,
 Of forgiving sins by confessing truly,
 As faith alone is our only plan.
- 8 Kind sir, that question is easy answered,
 If you peruse the 6th chapter of James,
 Where our blessed Lord his disciples ordered,
 To confess their sins the proof is very plain,
 When the key's to Peter and his Priests were given,
 To lock and unlock the gates of Heaven,
 Saying whose sins you shall release they are set free,
 And whose sins you shall retain, retained shall be,
- 9 Now my friend you can't tell me it's a libel
 For saying that you have no rule of faith,
 Where in you know that we have the Bible
 By which we're guided early and late,
 Will it not lead a man to salvation,
 As it surely is God's written word,
 For to confute me in this dictation,
 I'm sure you cannot be so absurd,
- 10 Kind sir, how can you say you've the Bible
 To be your regular rule of faith,
 Where by that it is so well corrupted,
 From this reformation present to the date,
 First by king Harry it was perverted,
 By Martin Luther and Cranmer too,
 So by that answer you are confuted,
 As a correct copy you have not it's true,
- 11 Now friend, I find that all your objections,
 Unto my questions are very true,

Besides your rule of faith is the perfect one,
 So whilst I live I will it pursue,
 I see it plainly and very clearly,
 There's but one Lord, one faith, one true church alone,
 So with a heart felt joy to embrace it,
 I'll live and die in the Church of Rome.

Songs such as the one above from a Roman Catholic point of view are quite common; a Pauline conversion takes place after a dialogue between members of the opposing faiths, the scales fall from the eyes and the truth is revealed in all its glory. Historical accuracy is irrelevant as long as all the religious bogey men and women are included in conjuring up feelings of superiority and revulsion. Songs such as number 39, and 40 are what the nationalist John Hand in 1873 describes as 'polemical ballads' and suggests that they were 'always in high favour':

The Church was persecuted with fiendish malignity; and the people loved and clung to her the more for that very persecution. Innumerable were the ballads written in her behalf, or pourtraying [sic] her sufferings— the majority of them, from a literary point of view, being the very quintessence of absurdity . . . Of the religious class, the controversial was perhaps most admired. It gave scope to the bard for the display of his biblical lore and sublime invective, qualities altogether indispensable to the rustic muse.⁴⁶

39

Text : *Mary's Conversion to Catholicity*. Air – *A fair field and no favour*. M. Lenihan. P. 8419 NLI ; Bod., 2806 b. 10 (160).(n/d)

- Verse: 1 On a fine summer's morning for pleasure, I roved by a green spreading shade,
 Where I saw a young man discoursing and curting a beautiful maid.
 I being anxious to watch their manoeuvres I sat myself under a tree,
 He says to this beautiful female I'm afraid you're not constant to me.
- 2 Kind sir, she quickly made answer, I can find no objection to thee,
 but that we are of a different persuasion which my mamma related to me.
 So if I would marry a Roman my friends would disown me indeed,
 I might live at the loss of my fortune for joining the catholic Creed.
- 3 My charmer I pray now attention, and listen to what I'll unfold,
 The bles't holy Scriptures does ask us what we would exchange for our soul,
 Therefore be advised by your lover, by numbered in St. Peter's flock,
 Read verses 16th and 18th Matthew you'll find Saint Peter's Rock.

⁴⁶Hand, p. 14.

- 4 Kind sir, I admit that portion and texts from the scriptures are true,
Excuse me for being so presumptuous the truth I do tell you indeed,
My friends would all chide and degrade me for joining the Catholic creed.
But Peter denied his own master therefore must bid you adieu.
- 5 Fair lady I own that Saint Peter denied his blest master but why,
Our Lord and redeemer foretold it and you know that Christ can't tell a lie.
But where was your church of calvin luther in that cursed wicked man (sic)
It was Harry, and Bess and old Cranmer the first Reformation began.
- 6 Kind sir do not talk of reform, but support you the Catholic cause,
Come show me a proof of Confession, before I submit to your laws,
Also you must prove me a purgation, for our clergy do it deny,
They saw where the tree is standing wherever it falls it must lie.
- 7 Maria, the question is simple, I'll answer you that at a word,
Where were the souls of all people from Adam's great fall to the flood.
If that is not fit to convince Christ's death and decension (sic) to hell,
Come show me the wretch male or female who dare my true doctrine rebel.
- 8 But Endam [sic] you spoke of confession peruse the 5th chapter of James,
Like unfortunate Gregg you endeavours the catholic church to detain,
He thought he confute blest Maguire but the swift alley miscreant was bent
He thought to make good his false doctrine which came 15 hundred years late,
- 9 Ah sir do not fly in a passion or be the least angry with me,
For since you showed me path of salvation I'll forsake my relations for thee,
I have twenty five hundred pounds sterling besides an estate of my own,
We can roll in our carriage of splendour each Sunday to the church of Rome.
- 10 So now these (sic) young couple got married and lives both in content,
they are joined in wedlock got fathers and mothers consent,
He has 25 hundred pr annum believe me the truth I unfold,
So now let the sons of St. Patrick the faith of St. Peter uphold.

40

Text : *The Palentine's Only Daughter*. (Printer Haly, Hanover st. Cork.). White col.,
vol. iii. f. 10 ; Bod., 2806 c.8 (249).

- Verse: 1 As I was going through Thomastown, As Phoebus was a dawning,
Ri fal al the ral, etc.
Who should I meet upon the way but an Irish Palentine's daughter...
My hook began to glitter and my flail was in good order,
she asked me would I stop with her to cut and save her corn
She said, when it is all cut down we'll want you for thrashing after...
- 2 What wages you pay to me, if I remain this harvest ?
We will set it all on task to you, and I must acquaint my parents ;
I step'd into the house with her, and thus approached her father,
And suddenly he asked of me where was my native harbour ;
I lively made answer – sir, in Donerail I was born,
Ri fal...

- 3 I then was bound to work for them when we had made the bargain,
 And got the best of nourishment and a bed well aired and warm,
 This maid to shake the straw for me, whilst I should rake the barn,
 To fix the sheaf upon the key whilst thrashing of the barley,
 she sold it in the market and the price put in the horn,
 Ri fal...
- 4 When I saw it was all thrashed out I asked her to discharge me ;
 She said, we have another job of work, so take your time till morning,
 She went unto her mother with a whisper in the corner,
 And said she should invite him in to dine within the parlour,
 she said, if you encourage him, he'd wait another quarter
 Ri fal...
- 5 Her mother took me by the hand, and said she would not part me,
 She brought us in a jug of punch, and said we should be talking,
 She said, we are a languid pair that's feeble with the palsy,
 And we'd want some men to till this plain and keep it in good order ;
 She said, if you refrain from mass, we'll make you man and master,
 Ri fal...
- 6 What do you mean by staying from mass ? I do not understand it ;
 she said, if you desert from it, you'll get my child and fortune,
 Besides a house and cattle with my haggart and my corn,
 And 50 pounds I will lay down with a lease upon the farm,
 I will give you harrows, cows, and ploughs, and four horses
 all well harnessed.
 Ri fal...
- 7 Sure scripture says there's but one way for us to gain salvation,
 And I bid adieu to you and yours for fear of my damnation !
 Luther may rue the day he flew from us to his false preaching,
 and Harry too his wives he slew thro' lust and indignation,
 the scriptures pure they did abuse when they were excommunicated,
 Ri fal...
- 8 I find you are an upright man, I like your conversation,
 And I will invoke in future days the Blessed Virgin Mary,
 I'll join the fold where Peter's flock enjoyed and gained salvation ;
 And that the host our Saviour left to save his congregation,
 Our gracious Lord is with his church, himself laid the foundation,
 Ri fal...
- 9 Now my song is ended and my pen is out of order,
 they gave me what they promised me, and we were all rewarded ;
 We agreed and soon got married by the priest before the alter,
 And I brought them all to mass with me from Satan to reform,
 And then I made good Catholics of the Palentine's wife and daughter,
 Ri fal...

In simple terms these songs present the debates that were current and yet again provide model narratives for righteous behaviour. The moral courage of the Roman Catholics in the face of material temptation gains for them material reward, by staying true to their faith they convince Protestant women to convert and as a result gain substantial dowries. These songs make it appear that the merest whiff of incense or mention of the lasciviousness of King Harry ought to be enough to make any Protestant a potential candidate for conversion. The reality of a dialogue was somewhat different. On Thursday 19 April 1827 there began a series of debates between the Rev. Mr. Pope Church of Ireland and the Roman Catholic priest Fr. Maguire (referred to in verse 8 of song number 39 *Mary's conversion to Catholicity*) in the Lecture Room of the Dublin Institute, Sackville st. These debates went on for six days and were widely published in the newspapers. Each of the participants nominated three topics for discussion before the contest began. Mr. Pope proposed the subject of the Infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church, on the first day, the point to be defended by Fr. Maguire. Day two saw Fr. Maguire call on Mr. Pope, 'for proofs to sustain his rule of faith,' on, 'The divine right of private judgment to *pronounce* upon the *authenticity, integrity, and canonicity* of Scripture, and to determine its meaning in articles of faith.'⁴⁷ Days three and five saw Mr. Pope asked Fr. Maguire to argue the merits of the subjects of purgatory and transubstantiation respectively; with Fr. Maguire raising the issues of justification of the Reformation on day four and on the point that 'The Protestant Churches do not possess that *unity* which forms the distinctive mark of the true Church of Christ,' on the final day. The chairs were taken by Admiral Oliver for the Protestants and Daniel O'Connell,

⁴⁷ *Authenticated report of the discussion which took place between the Rev. Richard T. P. Pope, and the Rev. Thomas Maguire, in the Lecture Room of the Dublin Institution (Dublin, 1827).*

Esq. for the Roman Catholics.⁴⁸ Mr. Pope was a well known controversialist and the obvious irony evoked by his name was not lost on the writers of ballads and doggerel.

41

Text: *The Late Bible Meeting at Carlow.* (Where the Popish Fathers experienced so signal a defeat, by the united exertions of their Protestant opponents, the Rev. Messrs. Pope and Daly.) Tune *O breath not his name* in *The Protestant or True Blue . . . c1825*

- Verse: 1 When the ignorant Priesthood at Carlow late met,
 They were doubtless surpris'd there to find
 Their *master, the Pope*, 'mid the heretic set,
 In a heretic form, too, inshrin'd
- 2 One and all cried the Fathers, "our doings are done!"
 As they ey'd him with sore consternation:
 "'Tis the *Pontiff* himself, that's as sure as a gun,
 In his whim of *tran-sub-stan-tiation!*"
- 3 And the Protestant *Pope* belaboured them well,
 'Till he made their dull heads soft and malleable ;
 Yea, so truly he made all his arguments tell,
 They acknowledged his Highness *infallible!*
- 4 But he spar'd them not yet, 'till he prov'd them sincere ;
 Then he levied the Church contribution,
 By *confessing* them first, and, by *penance* and prayer,
 Holding forth the last hope – *Absolution !*
- 5 Ah! little the greasy rogues thought, as they hied,
 That morning, with zeal truly Roman,
 That a *Pope* was at hand, who would humble their pride,
 And prove them mere *Catholic shewmen!*
- 6 O, shame on the craft which the Scriptures would quote,
 To shew that the Scriptures are wrong !
 By rejecting God's word, without *comment and note!*
 Just to lead us blindfolded along !
- 7 Thus Priest-craft and mystery ever allies,
 To blast all the good, by God given,
 And thus, from foul marshes, dense vapours arise,
 Obscuring th' glories of Heaven.
- 8 O! make thy way straight, blessed Lord, if it be

⁴⁸Desmond Bowen, *The Protestant crusade in Ireland, 1800-70: a study of Protestant-Catholic relations between the Act of Union and Disestablishment* (Dublin, 1978), pp 107-8.

Thy will, that thy creatures should know it ;
And grant that, for knowledge, we still cling to Thee,
WHO ALONE OF THY GRACE CAN BESTOW IT !

9 But save us, oh ! save us ! from men vile, as base,
Whether decked out in *lawn* or in *ermine*,
Who presume to *withhold*, or to *grant*, thy *free* grace
As *passion* or INTEREST determine !⁴⁹

The Rev. Mr. Pope's arguments outlined in this song and in his debate with Fr. Maguire were the old reliable arguments that had been rehearsed in various forms for over a century.⁵⁰ On the subject of infallibility Protestant opinion generally revolved around the point that, 'Papists acknowledge the Pope to be the supreme Head of the Whole Christian Church, and to be infallible. Protestants believe no human creature to be infallible; and acknowledge Christ alone to be the universal Bishop of his Church.'⁵¹ On Transubstantiation it was understood that 'Papists believe that the elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist are converted into the real body and blood of Christ. Protestants believe such a conversion of the elements commonly called Transubstantiation, to be unscriptural and impossible.'⁵² This point was a very sticky one, it was the trigger for a violent sectarian dispute that took place in the Dublin parish of St. Nicholas Without in 1858 (see below) as well as the target of a certain amount of satire. One story that did the rounds dealt with the actual change in the physical properties of the host, in which the Protestant wife of a Catholic gentleman (a rare but not unheard of arrangement)⁵³ was asked to prepare the communion bread for a mass in their house, the story continues:

She did so; and on presenting them to the priest, said, 'These sir, you wish me to understand, will be changed into the real body and blood of Christ, after you have consecrated them.' 'Most certainly,' he replied. 'Then, Sir,' she rejoined, 'it will not be possible, after the consecration, for them to do any harm to the worthy partakers ; for, says the Lord, 'my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed ;' and 'he that eateth me shall live by me.' 'Assuredly,' replied the priest, 'they cannot do harm to the worthy receivers, but must communicate great good.' – the ceremony was proceeded in, and the bread and

⁴⁹*The Protestant ; or True Blue Loyal Songs* . . . (' . . . 'sung, with universal applause, at the Anniversary Meeting of the Bible Society in Carlow, August, 1825, by J. L. Esq. of that town . . .').

⁵⁰Bowen, *The Protestant crusade* . . . p. 107.

⁵¹*A Protestant and Papist's manual*, p. 26

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³Bowen, *The Protestant crusade* . . . p. 143.

wine were consecrated; the priest was about to take and eat the bread; but the lady begged pardon for interrupting him, adding ‘I mixed a little arsenic with the bread, Sir, but as it is now changed into the real body and blood of Christ, it cannot of course do you any harm.’ The principles of the priest, however, were not sufficiently firm to enable him to eat it. Confused, ashamed, and irritated, he left the house, and never more ventured to enforce on the lady the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation.⁵⁴

Newspaper reports on the Maguire-Pope ‘controversy’ even picked up on the demographics of the audience making this the subject to scrutiny and comment ‘ It is a curious that advice, amounting to a prohibition was given by the Priests to their respected flocks, cautioning them against attending the meeting. Four fifths of the Roman Catholics present were in Orders...’⁵⁵ The *Morning Register* recounted that, ‘2000 tickets would not be too great a supply for Protestant purchasers !!! What is the motive that accuses the more fanatical of the Protestants? Victory, indubitably... – victory in their minds over souls.’⁵⁶ The language used to described both combatants is on the whole measured, Mr. Pope is credited with being eloquent, tempered and judicious, while Mr. Maguire is commended on his tact, readiness and subtlety.⁵⁷ The Protestant newspapers are more sure of their man and his cause, ‘The Reverend Gentleman (Mr. Pope) in a strain of eloquence which even surpassed his exhibitions on all former occasions... evidently made a powerful impression on the other portion of the assembly who still continue Roman Catholic.’⁵⁸ The churlish editorial outburst in the *Dublin Correspondent* is the only occasion when party considerations overtake what had been a remarkably subdued reportage:

The *liberal* press could not deny Mr. Pope some praise, but what it affected to bestow, was a little invidious. He was praised for powerful eloquence; his competitor for sound reasoning. Mr Pope’s eloquence is indeed powerful, but his reasoning is not less so ; and it is of that vigorous and masculine description, which needs not the poor source of [illegible] and subtlety, and sophistry, upon which the Theologians of the schools are obliged to rely, when they have to struggle with the truth. The hair splitters of the dark old times are feeble champions in these days of light, and reason, and liberty. The dialectic of the Sorbonne will achieve nothing in our days happily.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ *Watchman*, 13 Jan. 1827.

⁵⁵ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 19 Apr. 1827.

⁵⁶ *Morning Register*, 18 Apr. 1827.

⁵⁷ *Dublin Evening Post*, 21 Apr. 1827.

⁵⁸ *Dublin Evening Mail*, 23 Apr. 1827.

⁵⁹ *Dublin Correspondent*, 28 Apr. 1827.

At the close of the final session the speakers had difficulty leaving the building such was the crowd that waited outside. The horses were unhitched from the Fr. Maguire's carriage in which he was, 'dragged in triumph thro the crowded streets by a wild and enthusiastic crowd', according to the *Freeman*,⁶⁰ who were more subtle in their claim of victory for their man in contrast to the triumphalism of the *Correspondent*. But in the end what did the debate achieve? The arguments carried on in these debates were the standard entrenched polemics subscribed to by either side, as *Saunders's Newsletter* succinctly put it 'What its (the controversy's) ultimate result may be we, of course, cannot anticipate; and we will conclude with the words of a gentlemen somewhat concerned in the matter, and who observed, that the only conviction on his mind was, that nobody could be convinced.'⁶¹

Contrary to the impression created by songs 38,39,40 wherein conversion seemed to favour the Roman Catholic church it would appear that the traffic of the faithful was more likely to flow in the opposite direction. Attacks upon the central tenets of the Catholic faith, combined with the work of Scripture readers and the distribution of religious tracts it would seem were having some effect upon the rural population. A brief survey for the years 1826-7, the period which includes the Pope-Maguire controversy, is illustrative of this point. News of the progress of the Reformation was carried in both the Catholic and Protestant papers such as the *Dublin Evening Post* in the case of the former and the *Dublin Evening Mail* for the latter; but the Protestant journal the *Watchman* provides a telling example of how the progress of the reformation was reported not only in content but in style. At first the trickle was carried unobtrusively 'On Sunday last, eight persons (five being of one family) abjured the errors of Popery in the Church of Kilmacthomas. No fewer then fifty-four individuals have become converts to the Protestant Religion in the neighbourhood of Askeaton within the last fortnight.'⁶² Gradually the announcements became more formalised and by including a table the figures took on an air of authority:

⁶⁰*Freeman's Journal*, 28 Apr. 1827.

⁶¹*Saunders's Newsletter*, 26 Apr. 1827.

⁶²*Watchman*, 2 Dec. 1826.

On Sunday, the 10th instant, (December) fifty-seven persons, twenty-five men and thirty-two women, late Roman Catholics, recanted the errors of Popery and embraced the truths of the Gospel, as held by the Established Church of Ireland, in the Parish Church of Cavan. The numbers now stand thus:—

Announced in our last Number.....	195
On Sunday, 10 th December.....	<u>57</u>
Total.....	252. ⁶³

Until finally the irrefutable evidence was allowed to stand alone, commentary being redundant, the mute witness of stark fact lent weight to the claims of conversions on a tidal scale, under the title PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION we are given the following:

following:	Men	Women
Arvagh Church, Co Cavan.....	0	1
Ballyshannon Co. Donegal.....	2	0
Ballinlough Co. Roscommon.....	2	0
Ballinasloe Galway.....	37	35
Calry Co. Sligo.....	3	2
Crossmolina Co. Mayo.....	1	0
Carrickmacross Co. Monaghan.....	0	2
Cong Co. Mayo.....	0	1
Donamoine Co. Monaghan.....	3	0
Featherd Co. Tipperary.....	6	2
Heynestown Co. Louth.....	0	1
Irishtown Co. Dublin.....	1	0
Kilcormick Co. Wexford.....	1	3
Kilmore-Erris Co. Mayo.....	1	0
Lisnaskea, Co Fermanagh.....	1	0
Longford Co. Longford.....	0	1
Limerick Cathedral.....	1	2
Limerick St. Olaves (sic).....	4	0
Maghera Co. Down.....	2	2
Mark's Dublin.....	4	1
Mary's Enniscorthy Co. Wexford.....	4	0
Nass, Co. Kildare.....	1	1
Newtown Barry. Co. Wexford.....	2	1
Peter's Drogheda Co. Louth.....	4	3
Stephen's New Church Dublin.....	5	0
Wexford Church Co. Wexford.....	2	0
Total.....		145. ⁶⁴

Who could argue with the evangelical's claims of great numbers converting when confronted with such a 'scientific' presentation of the facts? This was all part of the proselytising campaign; in the popular imagination of Protestant Ireland the success

⁶³Ibid., 16 Dec. 1826.

accruing to the Reformation was attributed, as the Rev. Pope stated, ‘to the march of human intellect [which] was proceeding in its majestic course, for the information of all nations, and that the light of the nineteenth century would speedily break in upon the church of Rome, and expose it to an indignant world.’⁶⁵

42

Text: *March of Intellect in Ireland*. Harding B 11 (2322).

A parent asked the priest his boy to bless,
Who forthwith charg’d him, he must first confess;
‘Well,’ said the boy, ‘Suppose, sir, I am willing,
What is your charge ? ‘To you, tis but a shilling,
‘Must all men pay ? and all men make confession ?
‘Yes every man of Catholic profession.’
‘And who do you confess to?’ ‘Why, the Dean.’
‘And does he charge you?’ ‘Yes, a whole thirteen.’
‘And do the Deans confess?’ ‘Yes, boy, they do;
Confess to Bishops, and pay smartly too.’
‘Do Bishops, sir, confess? if so, to whom ?’
‘Why, they confess, and pay the church of Rome.’
‘Well, quoth the boy, ‘all this is mighty odd,
And does the pope confess ? ‘Oh, yes, to God.’
‘And does God charge the Pope ? ‘ ‘No, quoth the priest,
‘God charges nothing,’ – ‘Oh, then God is best,
‘God’s able to forgive, and always willing,
To him I shall confess, and save my shilling.

Irene Whelan has suggested that there existed an arch of proselytising success that ‘stretched from the Atlantic to the Irish Sea across Sligo, north Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh, Louth and south Down’ in other words areas which had ‘experienced heavy Protestant settlement and where a substantial Protestant middle class helped to bolster the confidence of the landed elite.’⁶⁶ The example of Cavan in the mid-1820s appears to support this argument. Cavan had become a centre of conversion activity and by Christmas 1826 the rate of conversion was such that a party of the Catholic hierarchy including Dr. Curtis Primate of Ireland, along with his suffragans the Rev. Doctors, McHale, Magauran, O’Reilly and Crollly went to Cavan to see for themselves what exactly was taking place. Rather than see this as the result of some intellectual epiphany or spiritual revolution the prelates had their own

⁶⁴Ibid., 21 Apr. 1827.

⁶⁵*Authenticated Report of . . . Pope, and Maguire.*

⁶⁶Whelan, *The bible war in Ireland* . . . p. 166.

explanation:

...the Most Rev. Dr. Curtis, Metropolitan of the Province, the Right Rev. Dr. Magauran, the Right Rev. Dr. M'Hale, [sic] and the Right Rev. Dr. Croll, proceeded to Cavan, where the Right Rev. Dr. O'Reilly had appointed a meeting with his Clergy, in order to obtain every information in their power, concerning the causes of the defection in some districts, under their spiritual superintendence. . . . After a solemn appeal to God, that might be regarded as equal to an oath, the clergy and laity, who were examined, clearly established the following facts:— 1st, That money, salaries, situations in the Hibernian Schools, profitable employment, clothing, and other species of bribery, were proffered to the poor Catholics, for the purpose of betraying them into a temporary and hypocritical abandonment of their faith. 2^{dly}— That the miserable creatures who yielded to these temptations, were worthless vagrants, strolling beggars, prostitutes, with their illegitimate, idle school-masters, unemployed labourers, some notorious characters, and disguised Protestants, pretending to be Catholics that they might be qualified to participate in the reward of perversion.⁶⁷

So all the elements for a popular and negative construct of the convert were in place. Archbishop MacHale claimed that 'individuals were tempted to apostasy by bribery and corruption — . . . the highways were covered with carts, conveying to the strong citadel of the Reformation, [Cavan] a precious cargo of vagrants, who were allured by the Jewish rewards of the new religion . . .'⁶⁸ Proselytisers were accused of behaving in the manner that we would nowadays associate with religious cults, 'one man was threatened with death for attempting to rescue a sister of fourteen years from the hands of her persecutors.'⁶⁹ In the discourses that were ongoing around religious affiliation and conversion, the issue of class and character became a source of dispute. For the Catholic Church, as is outlined above, converts were usually made up of 'worthless vagrants, strolling beggars, prostitutes, with their illegitimate, idle school-masters, unemployed labourers, some notorious characters, etc. . .', in other words, all those who converted were morally dubious. On the other side of the coin Protestant commentators portrayed new converts as, 'of respectable appearance,' or 'highly educated.' In the *Watchman* many of the accounts of converts have short anecdotes attached which usually allude to their social status i.e. 'the gentleman who conformed in

⁶⁷*Saunders's Newsletter*, 23 Dec. 1826.

⁶⁸John MacHale, D. D., *Letters 1820-1834* (Dublin, 1893), xxxiv. p. 228.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

St. Peter's Church, Athlone was a man of education and classical acquirements, and well versed in Scriptural knowledge ; or, 'This person is a schoolmaster, an exceedingly well-informed man' ; or, 'One of these converts appears to be highly respectable, and nearly related to a neighbouring Parish Priest.'⁷⁰ Reporting that 'The conversion of a former Roman Catholic priest Rev. Mr. Murphy of New Ross Co Wexford accompanied by his father, mother and other members of his family who abjure[d] the errors of popery and conform[ed] to the protestant religion . . .'⁷¹ must surely have been a real coup. Even accepting that the quality of converts was not always of this calibre the unquestionable benefit of adopting the Protestant faith was shown to have a domino effect:

Ballyhaise Church Co. Cavan three men and seventeen women conformed. Our correspondent accounts that very naturally for the majority of females on that day by stating, that the great proportion were the wives of men who had formerly recanted ; and who, being struck with their alteration in manners and morals since that event, conscientiously embraced a faith which led to such practical results.⁷²

So much is implied in this short anecdote that it is quite telling. Firstly the women had seen a marked improvement in the behaviour of their husbands. What this improvement might have been can only be guessed at but if we use the songs of complaint from chapter 3 we can see that the women were most concerned with drinking, work-shy, feckless, and violent husbands. Secondly, if these related problems could be addressed by religious conversion then conversion *en masse* was the solution for all of society's ills. Finally for the evangelicals engaged in carrying out the Second Reformation these were inherently Roman Catholic or rather Irish attributes. However, this was a blatantly racial and sectarian misreading of the improving phenomena as the same set of problems existed in the rest of the predominantly Protestant United Kingdom. These problems were in fact class based or rather one should say were associated in the minds of social reformers, to which the evangelical movement was attached, with poverty and ignorance (although ignorance, drunkenness and violence were never the sole preserve of any one class) and although the same prescription of abstinence, observance and obsequiousness (made palatable by a modicum of

⁷⁰*Watchman*, 7 Apr. 1827.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 24 Mar. 1827.

education) was recommended for the British working class and their Irish counterparts, in the Irish case this had to be accompanied by the renunciation of one's religion if it was Roman Catholic and as a corollary the denial of one's culture which was regarded by many as one and the same thing. The extent to which this conflation was assumed can be seen in the following list of complaints, that the apologist for the proselytising campaign J. G. MacWalter levelled against the Roman Catholics and against the whole system of folk beliefs which William Wilde had recounted in his *Irish popular superstitions* (1852) and which then became regarded as the essence of *authentic* Irish culture. MacWalter, in the same year that Wilde's work was published, poignantly and aptly called this critique of Wilde's findings 'Denationalising notions':

The religious feeling indulged in, to a lamentable degree at that period [post Emancipation] by Roman Catholics . . . was practically proved to be utter superstition. Michaelmass had its poooca to fright or please; in most places the warning wail of the non-existing banshee was considered with sacred awe ; the leprechaun tended his meadow revels . . . His [God's] Sabbaths were welcomed to be desecrated by the card-player and the dancer— by the blasphemers and the drunkard. Sunday evening dances, the only afternoon worship in the country, were frequently productive of disgusting brawls, and always of less noisy though as evil doings. The place of dance-revel was generally a cross-road; cakes, with endless apocryphal emblems, rested on the top of a churn-staff – placed so as to escape enchantment— until the 'likeliest' lad led out the 'duckiest colleen' . . . Whiskey-drinking followed; the unrefined excitability of the Celt got up ; and the alpeens [sic] always flew thick and fierce about the heads of the yelling revellers, ere the night's sport terminated. . . . Hurling was another favourite pastime on Sabbath-day, after the supposed sacrifice had been celebrated. . . . Fairs were always identified with faction fights; mass-going with the entire lot of fun, especially with drinking and match-making. Country public-houses did no business worth talking of unless on Sundays – so much so, that prosperity grew connected with the name of Sunday : a man observed doing well would be told it was 'his Sunday. . . . Need I say a word about *wakes*, and the horrifying deeds occurring at them? *May-boys* luxuriated in their innocent mummeries, as did also *wren-boys* at their appointed time. St. John's eve was greeted with bonfires to keep harm from the growing crops or thriving cattle, to which little ceremony priests' masses were invariably added for the same intention. That luck might come of it St. Bridget had her *breedogue* on the first of February, and Candlemas-day its countless candles, as gifts to the 'alter' . . . I well remember seeing the calving cow attended with the most solemn ceremony ; holy-water sprinkled, blessed candles lighted, and prayers for her safe delivery offered to the Virgin ! I, even I, have observed pilgrimages to holy wells, and the holy wells themselves strewed around with heaps of rotten rags, the

⁷²Ibid.

donations of visitors to the presiding deity. I, even I, remember attending masses offered of sick and dying cattle; for the cleansing of houses wherein had been some malady ; for the purification of new abodes ; for the success of the growing crop of some well-paying farmer ! The priests who so offered what they call Jesus, the Son of Jehovah, are yet living, and, of course, yet trading in these offerings!... *In short, everything had a superstitious attribute or origin, quite opposed to Christianity and which attributes are by some unfoundedly deemed national. They became so.*⁷³

MacWalter's unintended ethnographic sketch gives us access to a web of social activity and relationships carried out within a cultural framework in which every act had a real as well as a symbolic meaning, it was perceived as the very locus of nineteenth century Irish identity although it applies only to the rural, peasant and Roman Catholic population, in other words the majority (Connolly calculates the percentage of Roman Catholics of the total population of Ireland in the period 1834-1901 as varying between 80.9 percent in the pre-famine era to 74.2 percent calculated from the census of 1901.)⁷⁴

MacWalter acknowledges Wilde's researches as the basis for his optimistic analysis of the march of intellect among the Roman Catholic community. However, Connolly also includes the impact of the Famine upon the rural poor as creating the *milieu* in which a 'devotional revolution' could take place. It was, according to Connolly, the thinning out of the poorest sections of the community combined with a new enthusiasm for greater orthodoxy among the catholic clergy and hierarchy rather than Protestant evangelicalism which really put paid to popular or folk religion.⁷⁵ Also one must not assume that the Protestant population was immune to an equivalent set of religious/superstitious beliefs and disrespectful practices⁷⁶ ; the admonishing of the congregation by the First Magherafelt Presbyterian Church in 1831 over excessive behaviour while waking the dead is evidence that similar folk practices and rituals were also of concern to the authorities in the Protestant section of the community by the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ The evangelicals were convinced that they had the remedy to

⁷³MacWalter, *Irish Reformation Movement* pp 163-6. Emphasis added.

⁷⁴Connolly, *Religion and society in nineteenth-century Ireland*, p. 3.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp 49-54.

⁷⁶Ray Gillespie, *Devoted people, belief and religion in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997).

⁷⁷Linda-May Ballard, 'Before death and beyond: death and ghost traditions with particular reference to Ulster', in Hilda R. Ellis Davidson and W. M. S. Russell (eds), *The folklore of ghosts* (Cambridge, 1980), pp 13-42.

these barbaric practices and superstitions that they were sure infected the souls of the Irish Catholics and which had the potential and effect of confusing their protestant neighbours and this was the opinion that exposure to the word of God would do its work upon these unfortunate and deluded people. The modification of behaviour by a religion that evidently fed the mind as well as the soul would only seem to enhance the claims for the march of intellect but within a year of these claims being made by Mr. Pope and the *Watchman*, the progress of the Second Reformation was about to be unsettled by the irresistible force of popular Catholic Nationalism in a triumphant mode with O'Connell's success at the Clare by-election, and the Catholic Relief Act of 1829. O'Connell's Catholicism along with his work in attempting to alleviate the lot of his Roman Catholic countrymen by maximising his influence with various Whig/Liberal governments earned him a special place in the Protestant street ballad catalogue. Around O'Connell all the negative aspects of Irish identity are recounted, Roman Catholic superstitious belief in purgatory, absolution and the power of relics are conflated with the political ambitions of Catholic Ireland for repeal and the historical context for Protestant supremacy through invoking the almost sacred names of Derry, the Boyne and Aughrim, to produce a song that reiterates the trinity of Irish identity, ethnicity, religion and politics.

43

Text: *Dan O'Connell in Purgatory* in *The Orange Standard*, (Glasgow, nd.), NLI.

- Verse: 1 Have you not heard the Scripture saith,
 How some, departing from their faith,
 Received the doctrine from beneath,
 Forbidding for to marry?
 Now this is Rome, the mystic whore,
 Who keeps the Keys of Heaven's door,
 And trades in dead men's souls demure,
 By Popish Purgatory.
- 2 Old Doctor Miley he has said,
 When Dan, the Irish king, was dead,
 Angels were waiting at his head,
 His soul to Heaven to carry;
 Maynooth and Rome they formed a plan,
 And robbed the Angels of old Dan—
 The Kerry Boy, we understand,
 They have got in Purgatory.

- 3 Despatches from the Pope have come,
To all the priests of mystic Rome,
To change or alter poor Dan's doom,
His soul from thence to carry;
Commanding them to celebrate
High Mass throughout the Church of late,
His soul from thence to extricate
Out of this Purgatory.
- 4 You Papists gather up your pence –
You know he's waiting in suspense,
Your Liberator bring from hence,
No longer let him tarry!
Your Dan, that pleaded for Repeal,
Is bearing now Peg Tantrim's flail;⁷⁸
Pay up, ye sons of Granuaile,
Your king's of Purgatory.
- 5 The heretics, they cannot tell,
About this gulf 'twixt Heaven and Hell,
Where Dives did for water yell,
And none to him would carry;
But Rome has made it more complete,
they have holy oil to grease their feet,
And holy water if it's meet
For Dan in Purgatory.
- 6 Think on your king, and for him pray –
He agitated night and day –
Like Balaam's ass, aloud did bray,
'Gainst Aughrim, Boyne and Derry,
On walls of clay, of bricks and stones,
He pictured Death's head and cross-bones;
Ye Foigabalachs, how he groans !
He is heard from Purgatory.
- 7 To Bernard he bequeathed his soul,
His body to the Irish mould,
His heart to Rome – that was the whole –
His head a wig did carry.
He's looking now to every part
where he gave body, soul, or heart;
O bring your cash, and then you'll start
The old Fox from Purgatory.
- 8 O hard's his fate, if he must stay,
Like other beggarmen, I say!
For gratis prayers on All-Saint's Day,

⁷⁸B.E.'s *Dictionary of the canting crew*, ca. 1690, defines the phrase, 'gone to Peg Trantum's' as simply meaning dead. In the context of the song she is the personification of death.

- O let that never carry!
 Sell scapulars, crosses, cords, and beads.
 And all green sashes and cockades,
 All Irishmen – do lend your aid
 For Dan in Purgatory.
- 9 They say they have power to bind or loose,
 In Heaven or Hell, just as they choose,
 the Papist that dare to refuse
 To pay to her Sanctuary;
 They'll curse with candle, book, and bell –
 These poor blind dupes deserve it well,
 That would let Peg Tantrim's flail, pell-mell,
 Thrash Dan in Purgatory.
- 10 Now, Stowell Gray and Hugh McNeill
 May churches build 'gainst Granuaile–
 While Rome's the head, Maynooth's the tail–
 Their projects will not carry,
 'Twas braying, boasting, blustering Dan,
 When travelling to the Holy Land,
 That lost the trick his merits scann'd –
 He's now in Purgatory.
- 11 Here's books and bags form my son John;
 In agitation he'll go on,
 And chase the Saxons every one,
 From Tara's Hill to Derry;
 He'll drive all heretics abroad –
 They have no right to the holy sod –
 they would not eat the wafer god,
 Or believe in Purgatory.
- 12 Before my song comes to a close,
 Here's a flowing health to those
 Undaunted Boys who faced their foes –
 The 'Prentice Boys of Derry:
 Let all true brethren with me join
 To sing of Aughrim and the Boyne,
 Where we received the Pass and Sign
 To walk over Purgatory.

This popular form of sectarianism is reinforced in what would have been considered reputable publications such as the *Watchman* who printed a satirical catalogue of relics supposedly up for auction which included such desirable celestial objects as:

Lot 1. The ark of the covenant; the cross of the good thief: both somewhat

worm-eaten.

2. Judas's lanthorn, a little scorched; the dice the soldiers played with when they cast lots on our Saviour's garment. . .
3. The tail of Balam's ass, that spoke when he saw the angel.
4. St. Joseph's axe, saw, and hammer, and a few nails he had not driven: a little rust eaten. . .
8. Several drops of Christ's blood, on different occasions; as his circumcision, bearing his cross, and crucifixion. . .
17. The towel with which he wiped his disciple's feet, very rotten.
18. Part of the money paid Judas. . .
35. The arm and some part of the body of Lazarus; ill kept, and smells.
45. The staff delivered by our Lord to St. Patrick, and with which he drove all the venomous creatures out of Ireland.
47. The most holy fore-finger of John the Baptist, with which he pointed to Christ. . .
- 99 A second forefinger of St. John the Baptist, with which he pointed at our Saviour, and said, "*Ecce agnus Dei*," &c. from Toulouse.
100. As good a one from Lyon; another from Florence, wants the nail.⁷⁹

In the 1830s religious life in Ireland was dominated by the Tithe War and the fears expressed in song 36, *Catholic Emancipation*, that, 'They'll tell us, that still they're oppressed –disappointed,/And must have a touch at our Churches,' seemed to be only too accurate. With the Church Temporalities Act 1833 and the Rent Charge Act 1838 this particular boil was lanced to the degree that the landlord and not the parson became the focus of popular disaffection, although the residue of poison that was left of an alien church claiming universal authority, festered until Gladstone's Church Act (1869) disestablished the Church of Ireland which became a voluntary body in 1871.⁸⁰ During the decade of the 1830s the attention of the Reformers shifted to the stony ground of the West Coast of Ireland which became fertile land for proselytiser activity. From Achill down to Ventry a new wave of evangelicals under the tutelage of Power le Poer Trench Archbishop of Tuam (1819-39) who set up the Connaught Home Mission Society in 1830⁸¹ and his successor as head of the Reform campaign Bishop Robert Daly of Cashel (1843-72), began to exploit discontented and/or desperate locals who resented or could not afford to pay the dues imposed by the Roman Catholic clergy for

⁷⁹*Watchman* 24 Feb. 1827.

⁸⁰S. J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 1998), p. 149.

⁸¹Bowen, *The Protestant crusade* . . . p. 203.

religious services rendered.⁸² These complaints were most persuasively brought to light by a Catholic Priest the Rev. David O. Croly, in his *Essay religious and political on ecclesiastical finance, as regards the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland*.⁸³ Croly had two main complaints. First he attacked what he saw as the continued politicisation of the Irish clergy in the aftermath of the successful Emancipation campaign. Secondly, and more importantly, Croly identified money as the root of the discontent between clergy and laity, thus bringing a latent anti-clericalism to light:

The people are losing respect for the priests and religion; which is now, to all appearance, rendered completely subservient to the exaction of money. The priest and his flock are continually coming into hostile collision on pecuniary matters— the former endeavouring to enforce his demands by the dint of terror ; the latter paying with the utmost reluctance and quite ripe for shaking off the expensive yoke of clerical authority.⁸⁴

Croly then exposed the extent of the abuse that the sacraments were being put to and how this caused disaffection between Priest and people, ‘The revenue of the Parish Priest is derived from a variety of sources. There are Confession dues, Marriage dues, Baptism dues, Mass dues, and dues for Anointing. . . It sometimes happens that this business is not transacted quietly’ [sic].⁸⁵ Croly’s *exposé* alleged that in some cases children were refused baptism, new mothers were not ‘churched’ and even the dying were open to be witness to unseemly haggling over monies due for the performance of extreme unction. The sacraments were becoming nothing more than commodities in a religious economy; as such it was hardly surprising that simony was rife with the laity expecting or rather demanding ‘value for money.’⁸⁶ It could be alleged, that the sacraments had a calculable price and absolution could only be withheld with difficulty if confession was paid for in full and was accompanied, of course, by a suitable show of remorse. This was Croly’s central thesis, the debasing of spiritual life by the material preoccupations of the clergy. This criticism lends some authority to the propaganda that was published in the *Watchman* regarding the behaviour of the Priests and their

⁸²See Connolly, *Religion and society in nineteenth-century Ireland*, pp 10-11.

⁸³D. O. Croly, *An essay religious and political on ecclesiastical finance, as regards the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland; interspersed with other matter not irrelevant to the subject* (1834)

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 29

⁸⁵Connolly, *Religion and society in nineteenth-century Ireland*, pp 29-38. Emphasis added.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 32.

relationship with their parishioners.

At Christmas and Easter, it is the rule with every Parish Priest, on Sunday to publish his weekly stations through the villages; on Monday, for example, at such a man's house, all the villagers are to attend, men, women, married, and unmarried. Should, however, any one absent himself on this day, for the want of money, or any other cause, however legitimate, the Priest sends the vestments (the priest's sacred garb) to his house the following day, as a punishment upon the miserable man. The poor individual is then obliged, should he pawn his blanket, to prepare a dinner for the Priest, – with tea and sugar, bread, beef, mutton, fowl, hay and oats, and plenty of whiskey; although it may be for the want of a shilling to pay the Priest's dues that the unfortunate wretch absented himself the day before, which he could not pay at the periodical season of the Priest's dues !!!⁸⁷

The priest and his love of money seems to be topical enough to warrant the following verse from the song *The Fall of Tipperary* which details the process necessary in order for a candidate to seek election, part of this process is to seek approval from the Roman Catholic Bishop.

44

Text: *The Fall of Tipperary*. c1866. MS 5159 Maurice Lenihan. NLI . Excerpt.

The priests may love their country well
I do not doubt they do;
But more they love their Mother Church,
And power – they love it too.
But more than church, then power, than all,
They love the good rhi-no
And money makes as mares of old,
The gaitered ones to go,
The Priest may love his glass– his book
His friends, and most – his horse,
But all for cash he'd fling aside,
Or sell without remorse.

Croly's accusations earned him the reputation of a 'self-degraded' and 'malignant slanderer,' and his pamphlet was considered to have given great comfort to the 'enemies of the institutions (which) he now abandoned,'⁸⁸ from his Catholic colleagues. Criticism although it may have been heart-felt and motivated by concern for the church as it was in Croly's case was anathema to the church fathers who saw it as providing ammunition to proselytisers like Edward Nangle. With such a fraught

⁸⁷Charles Burke, *Popish episcopal tyranny* (Dublin, 1817), (thanks to Hugh Fenning).

⁸⁸*Irish Catholic Magazine*, 16 Jan. 1836.

relationship existing between Priest and people over finances a church that offered charity or welfare of any kind was bound to attract adherents (however, disingenuous, temporary or convenient) particularly in the disastrous decade of the 1840s. Trench and Daly's men took to the West coast and the poorer areas of Dublin and doled out helpings of pottage with a generous slice of the word of god on the side. Nangle's mission began when he visited Achill in 1831 and saw the decrepit state of both religious and economic life.⁸⁹ Due to his success he attracted the attention of Archbishop MacHale, who, Nangle claimed, encouraged his congregation whilst on an episcopal visit to the island to:

Show no kindness to those who differ from you in their religious opinions; withhold from them the commonest courtesies of life; they are accursed of God and his Church, and they should be abhorred by you; put them in coventry, shame them into a profession of Popery; and if that won't do, starve them into a hypocritical conformity.⁹⁰

MacHale's unequivocal attitude added fuel to the flame of religious intolerance. The perception of the convert and the proselytiser in the popular Roman Catholic imagination was bitterly summed up in the adjectives used to describe them as, 'perverts,' 'jumpers,' 'cathbracks,' 'heretics,' and 'souters,' etc. Converts were figures to be despised and vilified by their former friends and ostracised in their communities, and the songs that were penned and sung about them dovetail perfectly in to category of topical songs when we remember what Merriam said regarding them, ' . . .this song group is concerned with direct social control. . . songs are sometimes used, through admonition, ridicule and in some cases even more direct action, to effect actual change in the behaviour of erring members of society. . .'⁹¹ The following songs then, should be seen as a warning and a brake upon any potential erring members of the Irish Roman Catholic community and their Protestant patrons, as a preventative to stop conversion and as a device to try to unsettle the new convert and regain them for the church of Rome (switching one's allegiance from one church to another seems to have been quite common).

45

Text: *A Song for the Perverts commonly called Cathbracks*. White, vol. ii. f. 111

⁸⁹MacWalter, pp 199-200.

⁹⁰Ibid.

- Tally hi ho says Miles tally hi ho the grinning,
Tally hi ho the lies a trashing you'll get for the sinning.
- 8 Says Lucifer then with a roar send Atkinson to Gurtayalla,
Send dryhake to sweet Capamore let Foley and Fahy soon follow,
Let Harrigan first smell the crath let Connell then see the white shilling,
And the Callaghans nothing but froth keep him for faith he is willing,
(Chorus)
- 9 When Lucifer finished his speech the others then bowed with submission,
But cathbrack gave a terrible screech and craved for the devil's permission,
Saying I'll go wherever you'll tell I'll coax and tempt every person,
I'll bring down many to hell and we'll all have a day of diversion.
Chorus.
- 10 Cathbrack had a head like a snake his two eyes were wild red and blazing,
The flames from his throttle did break his long teeth were truly amazing,
His tail had a murdering sting the smell of his carcass was killing,
No devil in hell such a thing for evil so ready and willing,
- 11 Then Lucifer gave him a kiss and hugged him up tight in his arms,
The serpent then gave a loud hiss and Hake said were on for the harm.
So serpent, cathbrack and dry hake jumped out of hell's fiery prison,
And soon did Luther and Calvin o'er take who sometime before them had risen.
- 12 So beware of the monsters of woe they are marked with the hand of the devil,
With poison their lips overflow that would bring you to ne'r ending evil,
Then shout the hell fiends like a wolf and raise up the finger of scorn,
Scout them back to their own native gulf for surely twas there they were born,
Tally hi cathbrack tally hi ho on Friday,
Tally hi ho "whack whack" says iskar trashing them finely.

The term Cathbrack itself is a reference to the first lesson in the Protestant school Irish reading primer and translates as 'speckled cat,' it was used derisively to denote someone who attended one of the schools established by an evangelical society.⁹³ Analysis of the song text above would suggest also that a Cathbrack was a convert who took up Scripture reading or preaching himself. For these reasons special attention was given to the Cathbrack who became abject to a degree that ordinary Protestants or even the demons of hell were not subjected to as can be seen in verse 10 above. This can be attributed to the feeling of odium that attached itself to the convert. As Desmond Bowen points out conversion from one faith to the other (almost invariably from Roman Catholicism to one of the Protestant faiths among the lower

⁹³ Thanks to Miriam Moffit for this information.

The proceedings were commenced by some observations by Mr. O’Sullivan(the Roman Catholic parish priest in Dingle), in which he used opprobrious names and insulting language when speaking of converts; whose numbers, he said had lately been increased by improper means used in the workhouse.

Rev. Mr. Lewis (Church of Ireland)– Mr Chairman, if Mr. O’Sullivan so far forgets himself as to use such language, it will be impossible to proceed in this investigation. . .

Mr. O’Sullivan– I did not intend to give offence: I thought *soupers* and *perverts* were their right names.

Mr. Lewis – I thought everybody knew that such names were *slang nicknames*.⁹⁷

The attempt by proselytising evangelicals to attract converts using honey instead of vinegar is explained as only the latest ploy in a long line of misguided efforts by the Establishment to try to detach the Irish Catholic from the church of Rome:

Through the penal laws and attempts to force by either law or violence the Irish into conversion to Protestantism when this failed grudging concessions were made, never fully comprehending the depth of attachment that the people had to their faith. . . And now, in this later age, one can look upon the wonderful follies of governments and smile, where it not that the modes of conversion of the age of blood and oppression are replaced to-day by the sectarian agency of soup and stirabout, and calumny and insult.⁹⁸

47

Text: *Advice to the Soupers*. Air – *One bumper at parting*. White vol. ii. f. 112

Verse: 1 O ye Biblemen, Soupers, and Jumpers,
No wonder ye work for your pay,
For ye knock out an illegant living,
By leading poor souls the wrong way;
But it’s little ye care for the murder,
Of any unfortunate souls,
While you have, instead of wet lumpers,
Your beef, and your bacon and rowls.
With canting, blaspheming, and lying,
Ye hypocrites ! ain’t ye afraid ?
Och, give up your lies and your souping,
And take to some honest trade.

2 Now where was your church before Luther,
Come answer me that on the nail,
Twas no where – ‘tis only a new-light,
While ours was never to fail;

⁹⁷*Kerry Evening Post*, 10 May, 1851. Emphasis in the original

⁹⁸*Irish Quarterly Review*, vol, vii. 1857-8. Appendix to Jan. 1858, Soup and Sanctification: Letter from the Editor To His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant.

The rock of the true Church is Peter,
But your rock was Harry, they say,
Now could ye be from the Apostles,
When you only began t'other day ?
With canting, blaspheming, and lying etc.,

- 3 Four loaves in the week and two shillings,
Is given to them that'll cant,
But who'd sell his soul to the devil,
Even though he's in hunger and want;
Even though he's in hunger and want;
When a shop-keeper's goods is ill-gotten,
He sells them off cheap I'll be bound –
So the church of the Souper's being rotten,
They pay you for b'lieving its sound.
With canting, blaspheming...
- 4 They get up their schools and their teaching,
They are only to knit and to sow –
But they very soon take to their preaching,
If the children are once let to go;
They talk you so fair and so oily,
They coax you your children to send,
With their crotchets and plain work and muslin,
But it's all devil's work in the end
With canting, blaspheming...
- 5 They keep skulking about to your houses,
To asking [sic] you the Bible to read,
But tell them you'll have no connection,
With Harry, or Bess, or their breed;
And tell them your house is your castle,
And then if they will not withdraw,
Just make them decamp in a hurry,
But do it according to law.
With canting, blaspheming...
- 6 And now to conclude, ye poor Soupers,
A word of advice take, I pray,
O think of your souls, wretched sinners,
And think of the last dreadful day;
You're teaching what's false – and you know it,
But you do it for silver and gold,
Oh, pray for repentance, and show it,
By joining the one holy Fold,
With canting, blaspheming, and lying,
Ye hypocrites ! ain't ye afraid ?
Now give up your lies and your Souping,
And follow some honester trade.

The attraction for converting and proselytising is not hard to see, 'Four loaves in

the week and two shillings.’ Claims such as these were at the heart of the investigation which took place into the workhouse in Dingle.⁹⁹ One witness Mary Breen stated that ‘Protestants were better treated than Roman Catholics; and that she became a Protestant in order to keep her children with her; her one child who remained a Catholic being sent to the workhouse in Liscarney.’ She also claimed that Mr. Lewis gave her sixpence once in the street and that she ‘never liked going to church; and used to be angry when they used to be running down the Virgin Mary and putting Queen Victoria above her.’¹⁰⁰ Under cross-examination from Mr. Lewis she claimed that upon leaving the poorhouse she was one person among five recusant families who had dined on, ‘bread and tea,’ at Fr. O’Sullivan’s, ‘new colony in Green Lane’. She also confessed that she had, within the last month, asked twice to be taken back into the Church of Ireland using the same phrase to Rev. Lewis which she had earlier used in relation to Fr. O’Sullivan that upon seeing Mr. Lewis her ‘heart opened’.¹⁰¹ Such was the excitement that the controversy evoked that when the session adjourned rioting occurred in the town between the religious mobs. It becomes clear from Mary Breen’s evidence that neither side was above using bribery as a tactic in the battle for the souls of the people and that the people were opportunistic and pragmatic in their approach to their faith, understanding that keeping body and soul together was their Christian duty. The Cavan conversions and praise for duplicity can be seen in verse 6 of the following song.

48

Text: *On Doctor Doyle*. National Archives: Chief Secretary’s Office Registered Papers, Outrage Reports (CSORP.OR., 1831. B/101.),

Verse: 1	Ye sons of Erin’s fruitful soil, maintain the constitution, Still be advised by Doctor Doyle. you’ll vanquish persecution. In public fame his sense and worth And sanctity is glorious, The F——m error he exposed, Thank heaven he’s still victorious.
	Chorus

⁹⁹Micheál Ó Mainnín, ‘A post-mortem on the Protestant crusade in Dingle’ in *The Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society*, no. 29. (Tralee, 2000), pp 99-117.

¹⁰⁰*Kerry Evening Post*, 10 May 1851.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

Lord F——m he is not deranged,102
His friends have all reneag'd him,
No more poor Catholics h'll seduce,
With lady L—— 's bacon

- 2 It was in the house of parliament,
the mighty peer assailed him,
Where he could not himself defend,
But God still never fail'd him,
'Twas said he should be surty
For Newtownbarry slaughter,
This late crusade would fain degrade,
The pillar of heaven's author,
- 3 It was in the year of twenty-five,
before our legislature,
By Granu's side he firmly stood,
Like Dan our agitator,
Since government asks his advice
On any great occasion,
He like Peter guides our holy church,
To keep her from invasion.
- 4 Let this proud lord bear on record,
What tithes has instigated,
How starving clans infest our lands,
Tranquillity's defeated.
By means of tythe Bonclody streams
Were stained with harmless creatures,
But the 18th of June will vengeance call
Down from a great Creator.
- 5 How oft the poor have suffered sore,
widows and orphans mourn,
by paying tithes to sinecures,
And getting no return,
What the church of god did not commend,
How can success attend it ;
His lordship's reformation failed,
How could it else have ended ?
- 6 In Cavan sure, not long ago,
you sent about your libels,
The Catholic Church to stigmatise
With Lady Lucy's bibles.
But not one convert out of all
remained of reformation
When they got the clothes, the bread, and beer,

102 This is a reference to Lord Farnham

They embrac'd the true foundation.

7 Come toast the Prelates of our church,
For God himself did send them.
Be loyal to your gracious king,
And ready to defend him ;
Kind heaven inspires great Dr. Doyle,
His pen is never idle,
(Illegible)

Besides the work- house the school was seen as a place where Roman Catholics were left open to attacks on their faith as can be seen in verse 4 of *Advice for the Soupers*. It is unsurprising when one remembers that education was the cornerstone for the march of intellect that the Reformers placed so much trust in and based so much of their work on. This was surely a real worry for the Catholic church if MacWalter's figures are to be believed:

The numbers carried in the actual *Irish Society Record* for the year 1852 is: 60 Clerical Superintendents ; Four clerical agents ; An Inspecting Agent ; A Collegiate School at Ventry ; 95 Scripture-readers ; 620 Teachers ; 26,934 Scholars ; 8,046 who had qualified to pass into higher classes ; 2,213 of which were women, and 92 were above the age of fifty. In 1854 these numbers were 24 Missionaries ; 6 Lay agents ; 145 Scripture Readers of whom 23 were Inspectors of Irish Schools ; 29 Schoolmasters ; 14 Schoolmistresses ; 400 Irish Teachers.¹⁰³

The apparent ease with which one could become a preacher is outlined in the following song

49

Text: *A Souper Melody by Nell the Washerwoman*. Air— *There is no luck about the house* White vol. iii. f. 181

Verse: 1 The Swaddler's *choker* on my line,
Is dangling fair to see,
But in his case my "Elbow grease,"
Is all the grace has he:
Is all the grace has he, my dear,
Is all the grace has he, —
That muslin round his big bull neck,
Is all the grace has he,
Is all the grace has he my dear . . .

¹⁰³*Irish Society Record*, no. iv (Dublin 1852) Feb.; *Ibid.*, no. xv Mar. 1854 ; MacWalter, p. 226.

- 2 Oh Nell, says he, one day to me,
 I hear some angel call:
 “Bill quit your loom and on the Coombe,
 Go preach in Weaver’s– Hall,–
 Go preach in Weaver’s Hall, my dear
 Though dark as mud you be ;
 A white cravat, will cure all that,
 And make the saint of thee.”
 Go preach. . .
- 3 Prepare soft soap and soda too,
 And wash the pot and pail,
 And in them put my coverslut –
 My shirt without a tail;
 My shirt that has no tail, my dear,
 And muslin superfine,
 Oh! wash them well, my charming Nell,
 And dub me a Divine,
 My shirt that has . . .
- 4 Wash’d and clean’d, the Swaddler’s *kit*,
 And hung it out to dry,
 While Will the weaver, smiling said,
 His Bishopess was I,
 His Bishopess was I my dear,
 His Bishopess was I; –
 If *Bess* was Pope, may I not hope,
 A Bishopess am I ?
 His Bishopess was I . . .
- 5 Now *Rowdies* bring me muslin rags,
 And *Tommies* off the wall,
 That *Nell* may make and no mistake,
 Fine Parsons of you all,
 Fine Parsons of you all my dear,
 Fine Parsons of you all,
 To rub your skirts, with holy flirts,
 And Bishops in the “Hall.”
 Fine Parsons of you all..
- 6 Come Ticket-of-leave and Treadmill pets,
 Come patrons of the stews,
 Whose generations never had,
 A character to lose –
 Come lost to shame and warp’d and lame,
 Come cripples from the womb;
 And in three shakes, *Nell* undertakes,
 To Parsonize the Coombe,
 To Parsonize the Coombe my dear . . .

A Souper Melody satirizes the idea held by Roman Catholics that in the

Protestant sects anybody can preach his (inevitably male) own interpretation of Scripture, all one requires are some fancy clothes, and the evangelical's conversion experience. Thus this song unconsciously promotes the anti-democratic principles of the Roman Catholic church and emphasises the conservative nature of Irish Catholic nationalism in this early phase. Also, in simple terms for mass consumption, it sustains the doctrinal thesis of tradition being handed over to the church and calls any and all reformed churches New Lights.¹⁰⁴ This was the same charge that J.K.L. levelled at Archbishop Magee's claim to authority and legitimacy ; it also makes much of the Protestant clergy's right to marry and most importantly it re-enforces the idea that converts and indeed the evangelicals themselves are drawn from the lower echelons of society, being weavers, and washerwomen. References abound to the 'Coombe' an area in the Liberties of Dublin where Dallas's preaching had had much impact in rejuvenating the local Protestant clergy and inspired the Irish Church Missions. This is unsurprising for as Crawford points out in relation to the social composition of Protestant Dublin, '... as regards social divisions the Church of Ireland working class [in Dublin] lived in the parishes of the medieval core around Christ Church cathedral and in the parishes to the west, both north and south of the River Liffey'.¹⁰⁵ These areas also feature in the following songs:

50

Text: *Murphy is Coming*. Gilbert call no. 784-49415 : Irish Printed Ballad Sheets: Dublin Local Studies Collection. f. 121.

Verse: 1 Oh crikey good gracious where will we run,
 for Murphy is coming alas we are done,
 We're done to a certainty what shall we do,
 There's Murphy the preacher he is just now in view,
 Across the George channel (illegible)
 to make us all convert in Erin's Green Isle,
 So rise all your windows tomorrow fore noon,
 You'll see Murphy arrive in a large air balloon.

Chorus

Oh where will we wander, where will we steer,
 Murphy is coming oh dear, oh dear,

¹⁰⁴For a brief explanation of the New Light vs Old Light controversy see Connolly, *Religion and society*. . . pp 15-7.

¹⁰⁵John W. R. Crawford, *Churches, People and Pastors : The Church of Ireland in Victorian Dublin, 1833-1901* (Ph.D. dissertation, NUI Maynooth, 2003), p. 20

- He's going to convert us oh good lack a day,
For Murphy is coming get out of the way.
- 2 Now Murphy is coming all covered with gold.
And he'll land at the poddle hole as we are told.
Such a wonder fellow [sic] there never was known,
He'll storm Gills Square and he'll take Pimlico!
To the 15 acres to preach he will steer,
Where they'll have rivers of soup and bog holes of beer,
and the way they'll have room and won't be in the dark,
I hear that they're going for to white wash the park.
- 3 When he gets into Ireland the soup oh what fun,
Like suds down the sink hole in hogsheads will run,
He says he's determined mavorneen says Pat,
to carry old Ireland off on his back.
Right over the land, Limerick, Dublin and Cork,
He will cover them all with his track [tracts]and his broth,
There's Ulster and Munster and Connaught says Sam,
He will battle his way with the shank of a ham.
- 4 Now he'll give a blow out to men of great mirth,
And he have Soupers from every strange nation on earth,
And all sorts of games he will have them in vogue,
that'll be kiss me quick, push the pin, shuffle the brogue,
He'll have preachers and soupers both Dutchmen and Jews,
Spanorians, Ethiopians and great Parly Voos,
Highlanders, Laplanders, and Indian foo fangs,
Lilliputians, Highthutians, (sic) and China wang wangs
- 5 Now Murphy is coming and come sure he will,
All the hens, ducks and asses he swears he will kill,
He'll soon be Arch D—l or Bishop says pat,
That is if he doesn't be caught in a trap,
With his tracks and his soup Mr Murphy did say,
He'd carry O—d and far is away,
right over the Ocean it would make him sweat,
He was coming at X Mass but hasn't come yet.
- 6 In the West the old soupers they are all going mad,
And I heard of a daughter near Ballinfadth, [sic]
Ran away from her mother and whistled huzza,
Saying Murphy is coming get out of my way,
Right over the country in (?) she jogged
She then took her labour (?) was lost in a bog,
And the very last word she was heard for to say
I'm converted by Murphy get out of my way.
- 7 He'll have hand bills and foot bills and bills (illegible)
To nice you and coax you in country and town,

One hundred pounds he will give it is said
For your coat, shirt or breeches, and five for your head,
100 I give for your two little toes,
Fourteen for your fingers and five for your nose,
And if he converts you bones, body all sound,
You will be rewarded with £2,000 ? [illegible].

51

Text: *The Devil among the Soupers. Air– Billy O'Rourke's the Bonchat. White col., vol. iii. f. 164.*

Verse: 1 Sometime ago in the regions below,
 There was fear and consternation,
 For Heresy was fast losing its grasp,
 On the holy Irish Nation;
 So the imps of sin were all gathered in,
 A meeting most hideous and hateful,
 To try and devise by scheming and lies,
 Some way to seduce the faithful.

Chorus: Good people all both great and small,
 Smiths, Carpenters, and Coopers;
 Did you ever hear tell of the council in Hell,
 And the Devil among the Soupers.

2 First spoke out the Devil genteel and civil,
 Says he it's a shame and a scandal,
 Hell is thinner each day that those people pray,
 And they wont give me any handle;
 For hundreds of years with swords and spears.
 I have murdered them early and lately,
 But the stronger they grow, for every blow,
 I am baffled and ruined completely.
 Good people . . .

3 But though puzzled sore I have one thing more,
 You must help me now or never,
 For if this should fail I must give leg bail,
 And let them alone for ever,
 Down on the Coombe where there's elbow room,
 I will build a great shop, and I'll stoop sir,
 To buy young souls with penny rolls,
 And old ones with money and soup, sir.
 Good people . . .

4 When the imps heard this they began to hiss,
 For that is their cheer, down there sir,
 And they cried here below, our friends we'll know,
 When they take in that shop a share, sir.
 And the ladies, too, our work can do,
 With their satins, hats and hoops, sir,

And every swell, who has a ticket for hell,
Can give out tickets for soup, sir.
Good people . . .

5 Acush-la machree, sure this shan't be,
We'll not let them come here with their schooling,
And our holy Church leave in the lurch,
With their knavery and tom-fooling,
But however it goes we must have no blows
Or we will all to Botany Bay be sent,
Let the women and boys, without riot or noise,
Use them tenderly and decent.
Good people . . .

The line 'But however it goes we must have no blows' it would seem was more wishful thinking than a reflection of reality on the ground. According to one Protestant publication the Parish Priest of the Roman Catholic St. Nicholas Without (outside the old city walls) Fr. M'Cabe, told the Under Secretary Colonel Larcom in 1858 that 'if the Scriptural schools and classes of the Coombe were not discontinued, he (Fr. M'Cabe) could not be responsible for any loss of life which might take place or for any destruction of property'.¹⁰⁶ However, this statement was made in the wake of a foiled attack upon the Catholic Church by a Protestant mob in an area of Dublin which had a high number of Protestants,¹⁰⁷ at least up until the 1860s.¹⁰⁸ It could be said that both the statement and the threat upon the chapel were the result over a dispute in regards to the doctrinal thesis of transubstantiation. The story goes that a convert had taken the consecrated host out of St Nicholas's chapel 'in his pocket' a blatant act of sacrilege and then went to the nearby parish of St Michael's and St. John's and had done exactly the same thing; the same man had also made an attack upon the alter of St. Nicholas's during a mass, and had to be restrained by the congregation.¹⁰⁹ Tensions in the area were obviously high and successive concessions to Roman Catholics since the granting of Emancipation, of which the loss of control of Dublin Corporation in 1840 was cold hard proof, could only be seen as an attack upon the certainties of life for the Protestant

¹⁰⁶*The Church of Rome Unchanged: A memorial record of the intolerance and antichristian spirit of the priesthood of the church of Rome, evidenced by acts of outrage perpetrated in the parish of Nicholas Without, Dublin* (Dublin, 1858), p. 2.

¹⁰⁷*Freeman's Journal*, 16 May, 1858.

¹⁰⁸Crawford pp 26-7.

¹⁰⁹*Freeman's Journal*, 16 May, 1858.

people, this no doubt would have had a profound negative psychological effect upon them. The Liberties of Dublin which incorporated both the Catholic and Protestant churches of St. Nicholas Without appeared to be, considering the frequency of references to the Coombe and Weaver's Hall in song-texts, the centre of proselytizing. Since the end of 1848 the Church of St. Michan's on the Northside of the Liffey was also hot-bed of religious controversy and Souper activity:

The late Edward Bickersteth and Mr. Dallas, who came as a deputation from the committee of 'The Special Fund,' to the clerical meetings, in April, 1849, held a meeting of the Dublin clergy in Trinity College; it was then resolved to form a 'Committee of Correspondence,' for the carrying on and conducting the controversy in that city, and various preachers enlisted themselves as willing to co-operate in this mission. The Rev. C. F. MacCarthy (curate of St. Michan's) was afterwards appointed to superintend some readers, who were then, for the first time, engaged to go, two-and-two, through the streets, lanes and alleys inviting Romanists to attend the sermons, &c., conversing with them freely on the subject of religion, distributing amongst them handbills and tracts, and pressing on the people the importance of abandoning a system which leads men to perdition, instead of salvation through Christ.¹¹⁰

This activity encouraged reaction and the rhyme, 'Souper, Souper, ring the bell, Souper, Souper, go to hell' according to Mr. Halahan Rector of the Parish of St. Nicholas Without taunted him and the other men of the cloth whenever they ventured out onto the streets of their own parish.¹¹¹ Another complaint in the same record highlights the low-level constant intimidation and abuse that Evangelicals had to contend with, as well as the power of the ballad to make their lives uncomfortable. Mr. Joseph Harris proposed to a meeting where these resolutions were aired that:

. . . while generally the police force are entitled to the highest commendation, yet that some members of it are deserving of censure for neglect of duty, and for tacitly encouraging those who transgress law and order, is manifest from recent magisterial investigations in Dublin, and in other parts of Ireland. Itinerants to whom ballads are supplied are allowed by some constables to occupy public thoroughfares, surrounded by numbers of idle and disorderly persons, who eagerly listen to exciting suggestions against "Soupers," *i.e.* Protestants . . .¹¹²

¹¹⁰MacWalter, pp 265-6.

¹¹¹*The Church of Rome Unchanged* . . . p. 6.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, pp 10-1.

Text: *The Soupers Welcome. Air– Bishop Mac Que.* White, vol. iii. f. 187

- Verse: 1 Good people attend while I sing you a song,
 And I promise you all that I won't keep you long;
 Did you hear of the fine new apostles that come,
 To bribe us away from the old Church of Rome
 Ri tol the rol addy – Na-bochalish, says Paddy,
 Don't they wish they could get us so soft on the Coombe.
- 2 There's Lords and there's Ladies, and men of estate,
 Here's Parsons, and Bishops, so high and so great;
 And they've come to convert us, these Illegant soupers
 Ri tol . . .
- 3 They are not too exact in the sort that they get,
 For every thing's fish that goes into their net,
 Though you plundered, or murdered, or cursed like a trooper,
 No matter you'd be a God-send to a souper ;
 Ri tol . . .
- 4 But above all 'tis children they seek for their prey,
 For they know that the young can be best led astray;
 So they pet them and coax them and to keep them from drooping,
 They've built a fine house, sir, to drink their fine scup [sic] in.
 Ri tol . . .
- 5 Sure Judas was bad, and has every ones curse,
 But these fellows must think that we paddies are worse,
 He got thirty pence, and they expect that we'll stoop,
 To sell them our faith for a fat mess of soup.
 Ri tol . . .
- 6 In old times they attacked us with cruel armed men,
 But boys I don't think they'll try that game again;
 We are too strong for their force, we'll be keen for their wiles,
 For we know them through all the soft solder and smiles.
 Ri tol . . .
- 7 The Church was our friend, when few friendships had we,
 And now we'll stand by her, acushlamachree ;
 She is our best guide and comfort so tell debator
 We'll cling to her closer the more that they hate her,
 Ri tol . . .
- 8 And the dear Holy Mother so gentle and strong,
 That would give us all good and keep from us all wrong,
 Whom we love, and who loves us from Heaven so high,
 Och 'twill be a queer world when we bid her good-bye.
 Ri tol . . .
- 9 Now boys we don't want them we'd sooner they'd go,

But if they will deal with us whether or no,
Arrah sure we'll not under the compliment stoop,
But we'll give them — — — in exchange for their soup.
Ri tol . . .

Persecution was not confined to the streets of Dublin, similar intimidation is evident in country parishes and Dingle again is illustrative of the bitterness that became palpable, the two protagonists are again Fr. O'Sullivan and Rev. Mr. Lewis:

'If the parson should stroll to you, Donald Montgomery—
If you be a shoemaker, Donald Montgomery,
Stab him and bore him, behind and before him,
The lapstone will floor him, brave Donald Montgomery.'

In this strain are several verses which were dinned in the Rev. Mr. Lewis's ears (who is the present superintendent) where ever he went. Oft the threats they contained were all but put in execution. It will be asked, did the priests really countenance this? On one occasion, in open court, before the board of magistrates, "Father Owen," the present priest, said determinedly, in defending his staff of ballad singers, "Had I a voice I'd sing these songs in the broad street, and I would not suffer any one to interrupt me."¹¹³

Even in the overwhelmingly Protestant city of Belfast the Catholic clergy had the temerity to give advice to the soupers, although this following song may be read more as an excuse in the guise of a re-affirmation of the usual arguments.

53

Text: *Dr. Cahill's Letter to the Soupers of Belfast*. White, vol.iii., f. 260

- Verse: 1 You Roman Catholics of Erin's nation,
Assist my geni,[sic] till I lay down
That noble letter from Doctor Cahill
Unto the soupers of Belfast town.
They thought to meet him in a discussion;
They're not ordained in Christ, you know
That is the reason our holy Father.
Unto their challenge he would not go.
- 2 Brave Doctor Cahill he wrote a letter
Unto the soupers he did not fail,
To let them know they were in darkness,
The truth of scripture he did reveal;
He says they're branded with crimes of paganry,
The Blessed Virgin they do deny,
But the seven sacraments our Redeemer gave us,
They do say it is all a lie.
- 3 Now let me ask them one scripture question,

¹¹³MacWalter, pp 174-5.

- These are the word our priest did say;
 What is the reason they don't do penance,
 For all the time they've passed away?
 They know our Redeemer, with his disciples,
 For forty days he fasted, you know—
 That is a parable for the soupers,
 And all the Catholics they ought to go.
- 4 We well remember the last discussion,
 In the Retunda, where he did stand.
 Brave Father Maguire against Pope and Gregg,
 They had to own that they were wrong,
 It's for those vipers and their false doctrine,
 The holy gospel they do deny;
 They're like the pagans have no religion,
 In mortal sin they'll live and die.
- 5 Now read the Bible, and search the scripture,
 Where is the verse you can show to me ?
 The true foundation for all those soupers,
 You cannot find it in history,
 Their feet are but a weak foundation,
 It's only sand ; it will slide away,
 But our holy church is the true foundation,
 Whilst St. Peter he holds the keys.
- 6 Now to conclude and to end my subject,
 There's one advice I give to Harry's breed,
 To think on Luther, and likewise Calvin,—
 The Devil tempted them to deny their creed,
 They're like the blind that will sit in darkness,
 Their eyes are closed for eternity,
 Till they return to the true religion,
 The light of heaven they'll never see.

So many of the songs merely regurgitate the same elements of controversy but they present clear evidence that these theological and doctrinal points of argument were in the public discourse and as such held some sway over the construction of an individual's sense of being or identity. The following song sums up for popular consumption the features of the Second Reformation and the Roman Catholic response to it as it explicitly indicts the methodology of the proselytiser and the character of the convert, to modern sensibilities it is singular in its lack of charity.

54

Text: The Bibleman's downfall or, done is the new reformation. Air Oh that I ever was married, in Sheil's Shamrock being a collection of patriotic and national songs on

various subjects (Dublin, 1840), vol. iii., Gilbert, Call No. 784-49415.

Verse: 1 Give ear to my tale you true sons of old Pat,
Draw near and attend to my ditty,
The Bibleman's downfall I'll speak upon that,
Perhaps it would excite your pity,
The sweet saintly creatures they have lost the lob [sic]
The government's grants they no longer will fob.
Oh! what will they do for a soul-saving job,
Since done is the new Reformation.

2 Saint Ousley may go and cry candy for nails,
For brass, glass, and old halfpence, too, sir,
Saint Gordon may go and close reef the top sails,
Drink grog and cut rusty burgoo sir;
Saint Farnham no more need give bacon or brogues,
To belly - starved objects or jail petted rogues,
For kid-napping papists no longer in vogue,
Clean done is the new Reformation.

3 The holy tub brawlers may give up all hope,
To proselyte our little island,
Since Father Maguire he battered down Pope,
The bible boys' trade it is spoiling;
The bribes they have failed never more for to be,
Saint Dixon's¹¹⁴ gone and old Jockey Magee
In carron's [sic] old boat they may sail merrily,
And chat on the new Reformation.

4 The famous old child trap it has struck its flag, (Bird's Nest)
That pillar of real fornication,
Where there the vile fruit of each strumpet and wag,
Was received without equivocation
This school of curs'd lust at length is done out,
Where incest was cherished without any doubt,
I am really happy it has got the rout,
A blow to the new Reformation.

5 That nuisance of error the Kildare place,
Its society now may take leg, sir,
Since manly O'Connell brought it in disgrace,
Its pensioners may go and beg sir;
The holy Saint Harcourt in grief now may say,
The church is in danger or my brain's astray,
I dread e'er its long that the tithes they won't pay,
Oh pity the new Reformation.

6 The props of the law church great Boyton and Stack,
With Singer and Horner together,

¹¹⁴(Rev. T. Wlm. Dixon Curate of St Peter's Drogheda former R. C. Priest)

these modern saints they will surely get cracked,
And bounce like buck goats on a tether;
To see the great change since the year '28,
the Papists exalted for to legislate,
Whilst the hand of fortune seems to extirpate,
The beautiful new Reformation.

7 You charter-school gentry now take my advice,
Since parliament sure did forsake you,
the old way to heaven take it for your choice,
In the true church of him who did make you,
In her you'll find comfort and ease, for your mind,
She is literally eyes to all those who are blind.
In her the sweet port of salvation you'll find,
Without any new Reformation.

As the century moved on each concession granted to the Roman Catholics made them more sure of themselves and more vocal in their conviction that the prophecies of Pastorini and Colmcille would be realized. Disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland¹¹⁵ in 1871 under Gladstone's Liberal government finally delivered the promise to the majority of the people of Ireland to be freed from the burden of supporting either financially or figuratively an alien church. This next song highlights, just as the previous one does, the tendency to conflate religion and politics in Ireland, it is tempting to suggest that there is no separation between the sacred and the profane but as the episode relating to the stolen hosts shows this could not be further from the truth; rather it appears that in the religion of the 'other' or the opposing political faction, nothing was sacred.

55

Text: *Down Fall of Heresy*. Printer : Brereton, P. (Dublin), c1868. Gilbert col., Dublin and Irish Collections-Special Collections Call No. 784-49415 :

Verse: 1 Good people all attention pay,
Unto those lines that I relate,
Concerning with Church has failed,
Tho Cromwell has proclaimed it,
Then Parson now has cause to cry,
As Gladstone cut hiz loaf so tight,
His greasy pot no more can boil,
With mutton beef and bacon.

¹¹⁵ *The Irish Church Act 1869*, 32 & 33 Victoria, c. 43 (26 July 1869). The act came into force 1 Jan. 1871.

Chorus

The lofty wheel is moving round,
The side that's up is getting down,
A rotten creed cannot be sound,
When lust is its foundation.

2 Our gracious Queen we'll recognise,
Because she acted shrewd and wise,
The noble Gladstone to appoint,
To be our Liberator,
The Lord that died upon the Cross,
Has built his Church upon a rock,
And said no other Creed but that
Should ever gain salvation.

3 The prophesy has come to pass,
That every man should go to Mass,
There is but on earth one true flock,
Protected (?) by our Saviour,
There are many Pulpits made of late,
Where every common man could preach,
But the Lord a malediction laid
On every alteration.

4 The Parson now will lose his fat,
His rosey cocks are getting slack,
His coach and 4 and all his stock,
Is near exterminated.
His wife must sell her hat and veil, [sic]
To buy herself some India mail
And wean herself from bread and tea,
To buttermilk and potatoes.

5 The Parson now must emigrate,
And leave his handsome dwelling place,
To preach the creed that Luther made,
He read his recantation,
He said alas what shall I do,
To the glebe of Shannon view,
Where rents or rates I never knew,
Since Luther's reformation.

6 Says the Parson we'd have better times,
If Bess and Harry were alive
For they'd roast the Papists in the fire,
Both Bishop, Priest and Deacon.
But Gladstone now and Mr. Bright.
And all the members are combined,
To take from us what William signed,
When Seamus was defeated.

The Souper controversy did not end with Church Disestablishment and reaction by Roman Catholics to the practices of Protestant clergy existed well into the twentieth century.¹¹⁶ The Second Reformation failed to live up to the expectations of those proselytising ministers who convinced themselves that education and the unstoppable march of intellect would see conversion *en masse*. Even that ardent apologist for the cause J. G. MacWalter could only put a figure of around 35,000 converts by the year 1852,¹¹⁷ a full thirty years after Magee's *Charge* was laid, this out of a total Roman Catholic population of approximately 5,000,000 in the census year 1851.¹¹⁸ However, evangelicals did leave an indelible mark on Irish society their criticism of the superstitious tendencies of Roman Catholics in their religious observance and practice contained a grain of truth which the ultramontane hierarchy since the Synod of Thurles 1850 could not nor did they wish to shake off. Orthodoxy was the watchword of the new breed of Roman Catholic prelates like Paul Cullen to whom folk lore and popular superstition were just as much evidence of ignorance and immorality as they were to the evangelicals. MacWalter was satisfied that he had seen evidence of the advance of civilisation in the progress of the reformation when he included this passage from Dr. Wilde's *Irish Popular Superstitions*:

One of our most learned and observant Roman Catholic friends has just written to us, in answer to some queries relative to superstitions – ‘The tone of society in Ireland is becoming more and more ‘Protestant’ every year ; the literature is a Protestant one, and even the priests are becoming more Protestant in their conversation and manners. They have condemned all the holy wells and resorts of pilgrims, with the single exception of Lough Derg, and of this they are ashamed: for, whenever a Protestant goes upon the island, the ceremonies are stopped ! Among all the affectionate mentions of his dearly-beloved father made by John O’Connell, he had not the courage to say ‘*the lord rest his sowle.*’ I

¹¹⁶M. H. MacInerny, The Souper Problem in Ireland in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record 1921* (Dublin), pp 140-56.

¹¹⁷MacWalter, p. 286.

¹¹⁸The inclusion of religious denomination in the census figures did not take place until 1861 at which time the number of Roman Catholics stood at 4,505,265 or 77.69 per cent of the total population of 5,798,967. However, an official estimate compiled by the commissioners of public instruction in 1834 showed that there was 6,436,060 Roman Catholics out of a total population of 7,954,100 or 77.06 per cent. Allowing for the impact of the famine on the Roman Catholic population and taking into consideration the gradual decline of the number of Roman Catholics by four percent between 1861 and 1911 the number of 5,000,000 is based on a figure of 77 per cent of the 1851 total of 6,552,385 people, W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics Population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978).

have watched these changes with great interest.¹¹⁹

Such a realisation can only be interpreted as the effect of the modernisation of Irish society in which the anglicising process played a large part. It was one outcome of a discourse of identity formation informed by improving middle class attitudes carried to the people in a drive for education whether in the national school system or through the new orthodoxy of the devotional revolution. Although it may seem an oxymoron the use of the Irish language, Herder's 'embodiment of the *Volk*'s soul', by societies such as the IES and the Irish Society was done to undermine the rich seam of religious beliefs, and their attendant customs, practices and behaviour that was the basis of a large part of Irish Catholic identity, or at least that of the peasant majority. This was done to impart a system of beliefs and values that approved of individualism, criticism and independence and thus were inimical to a collective- kin based, conservative, highly structured society. This structure and this culture were cornerstones of identity of the Irish Roman Catholic not merely as a religion but as a world-view and an ontology, it was this that helped to shape a sense of Irishness and it was this that the evangelicals and proselytisers could not overcome. It was the reformation that was taking place within the Catholic Church itself that had the greatest effect upon the culture of the majority of the people. Rome had more of an impact in denationalising or rationalising (usually the preserve of the civilised) religion than all of the Soupers put together.

¹¹⁹MacWalter, p. 283; Wilde, *Irish popular superstitions*, footnote. p. 17.

Chapter 5

UNION FOREVER

‘An absence of difference . . .’

On 22 January 1801, exactly two years after the idea of a union was initially raised and seriously considered in the Irish parliament, the first session of the imperial parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland ushered in a new era in the political life for all the people on the island of Ireland and created a constitutional landscape wherein the vista was appalling or appealing according to the relative political outlook of the beholder. This new era began not with a bang but a whimper, the bluster of the preceding two years of political wrangling having fizzled out among an unseemly and, by some accounts, drunken scramble for patronage, place hunting, and out and out bribery engendered by the chief secretary, Lord Castlereagh, Dublin Castle, and the British Secret Service, remarkable even by contemporary standards.¹ The press in Ireland were circumspect about the introduction of the union adopting a wait and see policy; highlighting the benefits that might follow politically while still being critical of the potential threat to Irish society by the flight of the political class to the metropolis with its subsequent effect upon the prestige of Dublin attendant to the removal of the national legislature. However, the New Year editorials of both the *Dublin Evening Post* and the *Freeman's Journal* looked to the future more in hope than anxiety:

may general and perfect tranquility pervade the land ! may plenty smile upon it ! may we enjoy all the advantages of the British Constitution, and walk erect in the freedom and security of civil right— may Irishmen be prosperous and happy ! peaceable and virtuous !²

The editorial in the *Freeman's Journal*, a paper that would become a moderate voice for Irish nationalism and a champion of the repeal and emancipation campaigns later on, being at this time a Dublin Castle organ stated on 1 Jan. 1801 the day that the Union came into being that:

¹Sir Jonah Barrington, *The rise and fall of the Irish Nation* (Dublin, 1843), pp 459-575. On Secret Service involvement see Patrick Geoghegan, ‘The Making of the Union’, in Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Acts of Union : the causes, contexts and consequences of the act of Union* (Dublin, 2001), p. 42.

²*Dublin Evening Post*, 1 Jan. 1801.

we...beg to approach our patrons with grateful acknowledgments, and to greet all our correspondents on the consoling vista which, we trust, is about to open before Ireland, with as happy a change as spring effectuates in the renovation of the earth. If thus, like the bird of peace, we offer to our readers ‘a leaf of olive,’ indicatory of the total subsidings of those *waters of strife* which partially deluged the land, and remind them that ‘the storms of (political) winter are over and gone,’ and the eternal year of domestic conciliation and imperial union is come– if so, we trust we will deserve their approbation, and not be thought amiss to just awaken their reflections about previous public dissatisfaction– the more so, as we point to set offs of encouraging recompence in future.

This therefore, we exult to think a new year and new century, that unveil scenes of coming happiness to Ireland– and what is more, that open indefinite advantage and glory to the British Name, the British Nation, and British Empire, now concentrate in a fimilarity [sic] of interest in unity of councils and commerce – in a word, in a perfect identity of Government, and participation of prosperity. The equal action of this Constitutional principle, must bring Ireland soon to a prosperous par with Great Britain – tis therefore a prize and a gift for a new year and new century, more valuable than the ‘wealth of Ormus of Ind.’ Because it perpetuates our maratime [sic] empire and that now-established concord that consists in a victory over ourselves, a discomfiture of party prejudices and domestic disagreement– an absence of difference thus rallies us on the rock of an impartial Union, where, while we co-operate together, we can never fall beneath our enemies!³

The load-bearing phrase ‘an absence of difference’ is the key concept upon which the unfolding of Irish history for the next two centuries pressed. The overarching political settlement of Union might, with the best will in the world, be envisioned to tie up legislative anomalies, economic policy differences, and hope to quiet the spirit of independence that was symbolized by the 1782 constitution, but it failed to address the underlying causes of division on the island of Ireland because the minority religious community was intolerant of and made feel insecure by the majority religious community ; while the majority were resentful of their own condition, both in the legal and economic senses relative to that of their Protestant neighbours and hopeful for the millennium. Even the unity of the United Irishmen was predicated upon a religious division with the Irish Roman Catholics or as Wolfe Tone called them the ‘Irish properly so called,’⁴ needing guidance from the stupor of superstitious bigotry to the

³*Freeman's Journal*, 1 Jan. 1801.

⁴D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, pp 123-153.

promised land or rational state of late eighteenth century enlightenment by a new Protestant and Dissenter secular clergy who preached the radical doctrine of the French Revolution. For the British establishment union meant protection for the Protestant complexion of Ireland by ingeniously removing the machine and symbol of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland, the Irish parliament,⁵ thus subsuming the increasingly influential Irish Roman Catholic majority into a British Protestant nation.⁶ This was an eminently logical if ultimately ineffectual way to play the numbers game. Unity of purpose might be achievable while at war with France whose record in dealing with the locus of Irish Roman Catholic identity, the Holy Roman Church was lamentable, but it could never be enough to create the much desired “absence of difference,” and even when Union for security reasons was considered it was regarded with as much suspicion by its advocates as by its detractors as the following songs make clear:

58

Text: *Paddy, the Pointer, to the staunch Dogs of Ireland. Air Bow, Wow, Wow.*
Published by Dowling 5. College Green. TCD Early Printed Books Library. Call # S ee 55 (14).

- Verse: 1 Come hither all you Irish dogs, I'll tell you a little fable,
Tis all about your Dogships and B— y P— t so able ;
A mighty pretty subject this to put a Dog'ral tune on,
So pray attend, while down I sit, and howl about a Union.
 Bow, wow, wow,
 Fal del ral de radi ady,
 Bow, wow, wow.
- 2 Some say that England is a Dog, with cannister his tail on –
That Ireland is the cannister, while Frenchmen lay a sail on;
The Dog in anger foams and frets, and makes a mighty row on't,
And turns to bite the cannister – but breaks his teeth, I vow on't.
 Bow . . .
- 3 But take another simile, I think more like the matter,–
Suppose the *Parliament* a *pye*, and *Ireland* the *platter*;
An *English Mastiff* standing bye, a steadfast looker on, sirs–
While angry *Cat*, and *Orange Dog*, are fighting for a bone, sirs.
 Bow . . .
- 4 The Mastiff views their difference, and casts a longing loose eye,

⁵C. D. A. Leighton, ‘Gallicanism and the veto controversy : church, state and Catholic community in early nineteenth-century Ireland’, in, R. V. Comerford, Mary Cullen, Jacqueline R. Hill, and Colm Lennon (eds), *Religion, conflict, and coexistence in Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), p. 141.

⁶Thomas Bartlett, ‘Britishness, Irishness and the Act of Union’, in Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Acts of Union . . .*

And presently he jumps between, and swallows up the *Goose pye*;
While Dog and Cat, with empty guts, on either side retire,
And scratch, for want of else to do, their Fleas before the fire,
Bow . . .

5 But once there was a *Bull Dog*, that wished to have a Union,
Between a *Wolf Dog* and himself, to live in close communion.
But first as a preliminary, said good master Dog– y
Pull out your teeth, and pair your claws, and ware this little clog– y.
Bow . . .

6 The Wolf Dog was a stout beast, but was not very clever,
And pared his nails, and drew his teeth, and bound himself for ever,
So when they came to share the meat was brought them from the
market,
Bully bade his comrade off, and grin'd and growl'd and barked
Bow . . .

7 England is a snug shop and Billy is a dealer,
No matter for my story if a tinker or a taylor,
Ireland is a simple boy, and Billy does invite him,
To leave his family and his friends and with him to unite him
Bow . . .

8 The boy, he binds himself for life, and makes a bargain silly,
And gives his fortune and his fate in trust to English Billy,
Who, when his tiller full he finds, by swindling or extortion,
Is sure to lock poor Paddy up, or give him but a portion,
Bow . . .

9 But ev'ry Dog has surely heard, with ears erect and straight up,
That France a Monster is, that eats the little and the great up,
And having swallowed all at home, now seeks abroad to prowl too,
And leave us Dogs, both great and small, to hunger and howl too.
Bow . . .

10 Our *kennels* he would wreck, nor leave us straw to lye on–
Or leave us game to fill our paunches, or our skill to try on;
Would spoil or carry off our wives – I mean to say our bitches,
And knock our puppies on the head, or drown them in the ditches.
Bow . . .

11 Then tho' we may be *different Dogs*, let's seek to hunt together,
And drive this monster from our fields, and keep her thence for ever;
Let's join the chase in full cry, with spirits brisk and spunky,
To crush this monster, form'd between the *Tiger* and the *Monkey* *
Bow... *Voltaire's simile of his countrymen.
Your most obedient humble servant, Patt bow, wow.

Ambivalence towards the proposed Union is plain to see in the previous song,

and it appears that it is the threat posed by France which sways the author, who does not seem particularly comfortable with the idea of being made dependent on the British parliament's sense of justice, fair play or generosity. It was the war against Napoleon that pre-occupied Pitt and his government and a union of the two kingdoms was a political expedient whose time had come and which, if, for no other reason than for that of internal and external security, had become necessary to implement, with all its unwelcomed consequences for Ireland:

59

Text : *Positive John or Nothing can cure him. Air Norah n'Kheeftagh*, a new lyric ballad on the Union. Sold at Dowling's, No. 5, Corner of Anglesea-st, College Green. Where may be had several other Serio-Comic Songs – All the Pamphlets on the Union, and every new Publication. TCD Early Printed Books Library. Call # S ee 55 (11)

- Verse: 1 Immerged in Wars,
 Tattowed [sic] with Scars,
 Poor Jacky Bull repented,
 A War to wage,
 With Gallic Rage,
 That ever he had consented,
 Odzooks, says he,
 I sure might see,
 If my Wits were somewhat riper,
 That wrangles in France were nothing to me
 But now I must "pay the Piper."
- 2 My Gallant Troops,
 In numberless Groups,
 I packed off all to Flanders,
 To aid the Dutch,
 A lubberly Clutch,
 Who called them senseless Ganders,
 The Belgic Stork,
 My Gallant York,
 Endeavoured to teach new Paces,
 And shewed his Heels were as light as Cork,
 By winning the *Dunkirk Races*
- 3 To mangle and maul
 The Graceless Gaul,
 I formed the grand Alliance,
 With German, Pruss
 With Turk and Russ,
 But France set us all at defiance,
 From Head to Foot,
 From *Beaver* to *Boot*,
 I smell of rank taxation,
 Though duped I'll still maintain the Suit,

- And subsidize each Nation.
- 4 From East to West,
 Tho' sore oppressed,
 And pestered in each direction,
 The kelter I'll rise,
 And D—m my Eyes
 But France shall have sound Correction.
 Both House and Lawn,
 I'll Pledge and Pawn,
 Till a Monarchy I can make her,
 And when all other means are gone,
 I'll Pillage poor *Thady's* Acre.
- 5 The Irish too,
 A troublesome Crew,
 Seem tired of my Connexion,
 They grumble and growl,
 But *M'anim en Doul*
 If they shan't *feel* my protection,
 The Paddy's may boast,
 That at free cost,
 My Troops and Fleets to defend them,
 But dearly they must pay for the roast,
 As soon as I've time to attend them.
- 6 My friend Will Pitt,
 Is a codger of wit,
 A trap for the Irish he baited,
 With Pension and Place,
 For a Scurvy Race,
 Whom Pat in his ——te has feated.
 The Past they'll sell,
 As time will tell,
 On Orange-Boy – and Defender
 And both, for them, may travel to Hell,
 The Devil, the Pope, or Pretender.
- 7 “Divide and Rule,”
 The Roman School,
 Has taught the English Nation,
 Is th' only way,
 To hectoring sway,
 And absolute domination,
 The *Yankees* proved,
 Too far removed,
 For my successful practice,
 But *Grauna Weal*— my well-beloved!
 Can answer what the fact is.
- 8 Both father and son,

To fight for fun,
 I've caused for mere diversion,
 And Friend – and Brother,
 Destroyed each other,
 And thus I've kept both in coercion,
 With Britain's cause,
 And English laws,
 Patt's leagued in close Communion
 But lest he might escape my claws,
 I'll tip Mr. Paddy an *Union*.

9 Oh then how I'll fleece,
 The Irish Geese!
 The devil a feather I'll leave them,
 At my National Debt,
 They may fume and fret,
 And say that I want to enslave them;
 For laws I've made,
 They'll have free trade,
 With a plentiful share of my Taxes,
 And he that *squints* at the changes made,
 Shall traffick in gibbets and axes.

10 “Blood and Ounds” says Patt,
 “John what are you at
 “Do you think I have lost my reason?
 “I'll stand up *tight*,
 “For my Country's right,
 “And that I think no Treason;
 “Our King we'll love
 “Our loyalty prove,
 “Maintain our Constitution.
 “And joined as one,
 “You'll find us John,
 “All firm to *this* Resolution.

These songs, ambivalent in their attitude towards the Union, voice similar concerns regarding the perceived financial cost or rather loss to Ireland that a union would entail. This, it would appear, was wishful thinking on the part of the Irish. Bolton has pointed out that since 1796, the year of the threatened French invasion, confidence in the Irish government's ability to cope with the possibility of a landing was so diminished that the Bank of Ireland refused to advance £150,000 needed to maintain the public service.⁷ In 1797 the Lord Lieutenant Earl Camden turned to Pitt to

⁷G. C. Bolton *The passing of the Irish Act of Union: a study in parliamentary politics* (Oxford, 1966), p. 22, henceforth *the passing of the Irish Act of Union*.

request the sanction of a loan to bail out the state and thus the Irish parliament was beholden to the British government financially. This situation did not improve in fact the Irish state became further indebted to Westminster as the century came to a close.⁸ Reality it seems was somewhat at odds with common perception a result of an anti-union propaganda campaign that had been waged intermittently since the 1750s when a pamphlet suggesting the benefits of a union became the inspiration for a series of pamphlets presenting the counter-arguments which warned of ‘the dreadful scenes of desolation, calamity, and distress,’ if a union should be enacted.⁹

Although reference to the religious make up of the island’s population is made, it is not the religious divide that animates the early songs which comment upon the union. On the contrary it is noticeable the number of occasions when the name Patt [sic] is used in either the title or the text to denote an Irishman of any hue and is not the sole preserve of the Roman Catholic with which it later became associated ; rather it is Green and Orange that are used to denote party. Even the use of the term ‘Thady’s Acre’ as a metonym for Ireland as is used in *Positive John* is resonant of later sentimental phrases which littered popular songs such as the ‘ould sod,’ or ‘the shamrock shore,’ or ‘Paddy’s land,’ phrases which are redolent with peasant familiarity but which lent themselves readily to the political propaganda of the ballad writers. In the face of the union it appears that suspicions were raised surrounding the consequences that this new constitutional arrangement would have upon national identity (before the tropes of nation and Irish became synonymous with Roman Catholicism¹⁰) with the disappearance of the Parliament in College Green, particularly if the mortal wound was inflicted by the Irishman’s own hand as can be seen in the final verse of song 60.

⁸Ibid., pp 46-7.

⁹R. B. McDowell, *Irish public opinion 1750-1800* (London, 1944), p. 244.

¹⁰At a later stage Cardinal Cullen could write that ‘ the nationality of Ireland means simply the Catholic Church’ quoted in D. J. Keenan, *The Catholic Church in nineteenth century Ireland a sociological*

(60)

Text: *Billy Pitt and the Union*. Dublin Dec. 1798. NLI: LO 2208¹¹ ; Harding B 14 (314).

- Verse: 1 Come neighbours attend, while I tell you a story,
 Of a cunning young blade whom they call Billy Pitt,
 Who, gulling John Bull of his cash and his glory,
 On a notable scheme to repair them has hit.
- 2 This Billy long time to prevent our uniting,
 And loving each other had hung up the boys;
 Now he flatters himself that because we've done fighting
 An Union he'll carry without any noise.
- 3 But why should our isle be United to Britain,
 With debt overwhelm'd and with taxes affess'd (sic)
 Why because, as of late by the Clerk has been written,
 They may take our all from us, and leave us the rest.
- 4 Good neighbours a tempest appears to be brewing,
 And hark, the wind whistles a terrible squall,
 Shall Irishmen then be involv'd in the ruin,
 By putting their backs to a tottering wall.
- 5 The Clerk he informs us the Romans and Sabines,
 United, some thousands centuries ago!
 But the latter rememb'ring the flames of their cabbins,
 And rapes of their daughters, would fain have said no.
- 6 The Sabines United thus laid the foundation,
 Of the power, the grandeur, the greatness of Rome;
 And thus for the sake of a "separate" nation,
 Must Ireland Unite to be beggar'd at home.
- 7 Seven Provinces also we're told by the Clerk,
 United and broke from the oppression of Spain;
 But the Parallel here leaves us all in the dark,
 For they never returned to th' oppressors again.
- 8 Arrah Paddy beware, there's snake in these offers,
 For Billy can gild, whilst he poisons the pill;
 And 'tis sure, d'ye see, when he's emptied your coffers,
 He'll send them all back for the boys to refill.
- 9 Let England with Europe still wrangle; but neighbours,
 What has our little island to do with the strife?
 Let Paddy enjoy the fruits of his labours

study. (Dublin, 1983), pp 28-9.

¹¹McCormack gives a different reference for this in the NLI.

And Billy may fight all the days of his life.

10 Let traitors the rights of their country surrender,
And barter their voices and the virtue for gold,
But the sons of Hibernia, strong to defend her,
As they ne'er bought, so they ne'er will be sold.

11 Then neighbours Uniting in bonds of affection,
Prepar'd for the worst, for the best let us hope,
And may he who'd betray us to foreign subjection,
Let Judas, receives his desserts in a rope.

Verse 7 of *Billy Pitt and the Union* appears as something of a threat whose veil leaves nothing to the imagination with its allusion to the breakaway republic of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, though the threat was, in the end, empty. Verse two as with verses seven and eight of *Positive John* refer to the rumour that the rebellion of '98 and its suppression were part of a Machiavellian plan on behalf of Pitt and the Irish administration to allow the country to dissolve into chaos in order to have the Union passed.¹² This theme along with an idealistic view of the religious environment prevailing on the island is more fully explored in the following song *Unanimity against Union*:

61

Text: *Unanimity against Union, A British Ballad, somewhat altered for the Use of Irishmen. Air – Success to the Duchess. Publisher Dowling 5 College Green.)* TCD Early Printed Books Library. Call # S ee 55 (14 a)

Verse: 1 We sons of old Erin, unite in one cause,
Bound together by nature and honor's fair band—
To stand by our country, and cherish her laws,
And give to each other our heart and our hand;
In this phalanx unite –
what foes can affright,
Whilst NO PRIVATE FEUDS do our interests dissever:
But this be our boast,
And our ultimate toast,
THE FREE LEGISLATION OF IRELAND FOR EVER.

2 That our cause is but one, and we all should unite,
Needs no more demonstration than what we have seen;
How like fools and like madmen we lately did fight,
Set together to quarrel 'bout Orange and Green!
We pull'd and we haul'd
Til half strangled and mauled,

¹²G. C. Bolton *The passing of the Irish Act of Union . . .* pp 50-3.

In destroying each other we thought ourselves clever,
But now the fray's o'er,
We'll be madmen no more,
But stand up for OLD IRELAND AND FREEDOM FOR EVER.

3 The ploughmen who labours all day on the plain,
By nature, by country, by feelings a brother –
And the landlord *who lives on*, and owns the demesne,
Were they form'd by their maker to fight with each other?
Ah ! no; 'tis well known,
That if let alone,
They would mutually essay and always endeavour,
Their brotherly love,
To each other to prove,
And forward THE INTERESTS OF ERIN FOR EVER.

4 In vain did our tempters endeavour to breed,
About creeds and religion, most dreadful confusion;
For the trick was well known, and too old to succeed,
Tho' some gulls were trapp'd in the threadbare delusion;
But now all agree,
And must therefore be free,
Shall we e'er on each other draw daggers? Oh ! never;
Incendiaries down,
In country and town,
WE'LL STAND BY EACH OTHER, AND ERIN FOR EVER.

5 Thus oft' have we seen a poor man and his wife,
Set together to fight by an *ill-minded neighbour*,
On reflection, desist from the ruinous strife,
And their mutual deceiver abuse and belabour;
His plans all display'd –
By CONCORD we'll frustrate our wily enslaver;
And join heart and hand,
All our foes to withstand,
By maintaining THE RIGHTS OF OLD ERIN FOR EVER.

6 In vain then shall France e'er attempt to invade –
Or a foreign Leviathan strive to enslave us;
Our own legislators shall cherish our trade,
Of our natural rights none shall dare to bereave us;
Thus happy and free,
We ever shall be,
Shall we yield to be robb'd by an Union? Oh ! never;
But this be our boast,
And our ultimate toast,
THE FREE LEGISLATION OF IRELAND FOR EVER.

But was feeling against the union as unanimous as the above piece of
propaganda would make out. For Roman Catholic Ireland movement towards relief was

generally driven by London and not by Dublin.¹³ As the sociologist Jeremiah Newman has pointed out regarding the influence and determination of colonials towards natives: however humane the colonial policy of the metropolitan power may be, it can be countered by measures emanating from new centres of politics set up by the emigrants themselves.¹⁴ This in fact tallies with Anderson's consideration of creole nationalists although it offers the rather different perspective, that the indigenous population may be better served from a dispassionate centre and not by those espousing nationalist ideologies bound up with local prejudices. It may in some way explain what appears anachronistically to modern eyes as the implausible support of the Irish catholic hierarchy for the Union. What one needs to consider is how the Irish Parliament was viewed by Irish people towards the end of the eighteenth century. In 1898 the question 'Why is Ulster Unionist?' was asked by a contributor simply titled *U* in the *New Ireland Review*:

how do we reconcile the fact that political position of Presbyterian Ulster in 1898 was diametrically opposed to that which it adopted in 1798 . . . Samuel Neilson, the editor of the *Northern Star*, himself the son of a Presbyterian minister, was the most trusted representative of the professional and trading classes amongst the United Irishmen. From his prison in Fort George he wrote to his wife on July 21, 1799:—

"I see a Union is determined of between Great Britain and Ireland. I am glad of it. In a commercial point of view it cannot be injurious; and I can see no injury the country will sustain from it politically. So decidedly am I of this opinion that I would purchase or rent land in Ireland at this moment in preference to any country on earth, had I it in my power."¹⁵

Again *U* quotes from the correspondence between Archibald Hamilton Rowan (who he describes as 'the chief representative of the Presbyterian gentry and landowners among the United Irishmen') and his father and wife in the years 1799-1800:

I congratulate you upon the report which is spreading here, that a Union is intended. *In that measure I see the downfall of one of the most corrupt assemblies, I believe ever existed; and instead of an empty title, a source of industrious enterprise for the people, and the wreck of feudal aristocracy.*

¹³Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine 1798-1848* (Dublin, 1972), pp 12-5.

¹⁴Jeremiah Newman, *Race: migration and integration* (Baltimore, 1968), p. 28.

¹⁵R. Madden, 'United Irishmen, their lives and times' vol. iv., p. 105. quoted in *New Ireland Review* vol. 9 (Dublin, 1898), pp 258-9.

Success to the Union if it is intended. You may have heard me declare the same opinion long since. It takes a feather out of the great man's cap ; but it will, I think, put many a guinea into the poor man's pocket . . . the present, or rather the late government of Ireland, was disgraced by a shameless, corrupt, oligarchic aristocracy, whose power ought to be done away, as Robespierre said about Paine, 'for the good of both countries'.¹⁶

These comments highlight that not all saw the dissolution of the Irish legislature as the catastrophe that the pamphleteers presented. More pessimistically for the anti-unionists than *Unanimity against the Union* but probably more realistically as regards the relations that existed between the parties is the following song which allows that Pitt merely took advantage of the intolerable conditions that prevailed before, during and after the rebellion of 1798. Also it becomes apparent in verse 5 that the name 'Paddy' is some kind of ideal Irishman/nation that is not mired in the bloody mess made by Croppy and Orangeman but to which the Orange party seemed to engage in and continue somewhat over-enthusiastically when the rebels had surrendered. The inconsistency of the song writer is revealed in verse 11 where Patt is presented as a Roman Catholic peasant and the claim that, 'the Paddies are completely divided' in verse 12, shows a combination of versions of the name Patrick which unconsciously mirrors the complexity of the categorisation of Irish identity before it had hardened along confessional lines and to which particular names have been assigned to one party or the other.

62

Text: *Whose to Blame Air The Night Before Larry Was Stretched*. Published at Dowling's the Apollo Circulating Library, No. 5 College Green. TCD Early Printed Books Library. Call # S ee 55 (12)¹⁷

Verse: 1 The week before *Camden* hopt off,
 The *Junto* attended his Levee,
 And swore his recall was enough,
 The ruin the hopes of the Bevey ;
 For, just as He kicked up the Row,
 And made a fine blaze through the Nation,
 To think of deserting them now,
 Must give all his friends sore vexation.
 Tol lol – de rol lol – de rol lol.

¹⁶Archibald Hamilton Rowan, *Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan* (Dublin, 1849), pp 340-50 quoted in *New Ireland Review* vol. 9 (Dublin 1898), pp 259.

¹⁷According to McCormack date of publication 1799.

- 2 Says Jeffries, “Why, what can I do
 “With those hell born lads of the *Lemon*?
 “They were once friends to Orange and Blue,
 “But now they’re possess’d by some daemon,
 “I scourged their broad backs to the bone,
 “Thought strangling and flogging would *cool* ‘em;
 “But twenty times *hotter* they’re grown,
 “So you must seek some other to rule ‘em
 Tol lol- . . .
- 3 “Besides *Tommy Pelham* is *off* [2nd earl of Chichester]
 “Quite sick of the job he had taken,
 “The work he thought damnably tough,
 “So he travelled and saved his own bacon,
 “A climate too hot for poor Tom,
 “Can’t be wholesome for my constitution,
 “I think it’s high time to be gone,—
 “Farewell boys! That’s my resolution.”
 Tol lol . . .
- 4 “My lord,” said the squad one and all,
 “If the sanction we lose of your *nomen*,
 “We fear it will cost us a fall,
 “And cut out tight work for our Yoemen.
 “For strangling and flogging the *Crops*,
 “We see was a bad speculation;
 “They’re rising all round, thick as hops,
 “Upon us they’ll wreak retaliation,
 Tol lol . . .
- 5 But Jeffries was deaf to their suit,
 And swore “twas in vain him to *bother*,”
 So he left the wild Irish to *shoot*,
 To *strangle*, or *flog* one another,
 The French to invade us had swore,
 And vast preparations got ready,
 But had they in time reached our shore,
 the game was all up with poor Paddy.
 Tol lol . . .
- 6 We fell to work hammer and tongs,
 The *Orange* the *Green* both together,
 With sabres, with guns, pikes and prongs,
 Each party the other did leather.
 With slaughter we strewed the green plains,
 Our cannons the welkin made rattle,
 And *piously* knocked out their brains,
 Of men, women, children and cattle.
 Tol lol . . .

- 7 Exhausted with conflict and strife,–
 With vengeance and rage to each other!!!
 The Orangeman ravished *Crop's* Wife,
 And *Crop*, in revenge, killed *his* Mother!!!
 The Demons of Discord, their brands,
 High flourished throughout the whole nation,
 And madmen, with parricide hands,
 Spread ruin and wide desolation,
 Tol lol . . .
- 8 To settle this damnable *Row*,
 The gallant old *Corney* came over–
 The works of the loom and the plough,
 And the national peace to recover;
 The standard of *mercy* he reared,
 Put an end to the system of terror;
 Tyrannic Oppression was feared,
 And *Croppy* repented his error,
 Tol lol . . .
- 9 *Humbert* and his *sans culotte* crew,
 Just landed in time to be taken;
 Of his allies, an ill - fated few
 Got “*what the cat left of the bacon*, ”* (*The Gad ?)¹⁸
 But just when the strife was all o’er,
 The Orangeman’s pistol and halter,
 Revived the vile system once more,
 Which *Corney* came hither to alter.
 Tol lol . . .
- 10 In Wexford and Wicklow tis said,
 That *Orange* for *Croppies* went *grouching*.
 A cold-blooded slaughter he made,
 Though he sometimes came in for a dousing
 The poor simple peasant was banged
 Out of loyalty into sedition,
 For, when caught, he was *pistol’d* or *hang’d*
 On the *verdict* of – JUSTICE SUSPICION,
 Tol lol . . .
- 11 If found at his plough or his spade,
 Or his anvil with leathern *bib* on,
Patt died by a *bullet* or *blade*,
 “For the rascal had no Orange ribbon;
 “And he wore a *frize coat* and *big brogues* –
 “Of rebels, the sure designation,
 “Tis loyal such *craw-thumping* rogues,
 “To *shoot* or *hunt* out of the nation
 Tol lol . . .

¹⁸In the original.

- 12 Thus feeling by rancour and strife,
 The Paddies completely divided;
 The favourite scheme of his life,
Johnny Bull, to adopt, now decided.
 “A *Union*,” says John, “is the shears,
 “For clipping the wings of all classes,
 So I’ll take from them Commons and Peers,
 And load them with panniers, likes *asses*.
 Tol lol . . .
- 13 Now, our gracious good Monarch God save,
 And also, our FREE CONSTITUTION;
 And *shackles* and *chains* to the *slave*,
 Who consents to it’s least diminution.
 Great Britain, we love and respect,
 And value her friendly connection ;
 But, while he has means to reject,
Patt never will crouch to subjection. Tol lol . . .

As can be seen in Verses 3, 8 and 9 of *Billy Pitt and the Union*, the theme of financial ruin for Ireland by uniting with England becomes a recurring motif. This is also evident in *Positive John* and the following song *The Union*. Songs such as these probably reflected and in turn would have informed popular attitudes towards the Union by predicting the decay of Irish industry and influenced the later songs that sought repeal formulated on the idea that the Irish economy had been buoyant until the passing of the Act which had led to the demise of Irish manufacture. This tautology indicates that it is often easier to accept an explanation for a predicted outcome by falling back upon the predictions rather than to look for a more plausible but prosaic explanation such as lack of inward investment, or the mere recognition of England’s and Scotland’s unparalleled industrial growth and the unfair comparisons to which Ireland was then subject.

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Text: *The Union* a lyric canto appointed to be sung, or said, in all meeting houses, by Poor Patt. Air *Lillibulero/ Protestant Boys*. Printed 5 College Green – Price 3d. Advertised in the *Dublin Journal* 15 Dec. 1798. TCD Early Printed Books Library. Call # S ee 55 (10)

Verse: 1 Arrah, dear Teague, did you hear the decree,
Lillibulero Boul en ga Lha,
 That United men we shall all of us be?
 Lillibulero . . .

- No longer divided,
 The thing is decided,
Billy Pitt says the word, you know that's good as law;
 He'll tie us together,
 All in the same tether,
Sing, Lillibulero . . .
- 2 Says England, "Dear Pitt, since 'tis Union you want,
Lillibulero . . .
 By J——s I'll give you a belly full on't
Lillibulero . . .
 "About a reform,
 "You kicked up a storm;
 To put down his countrymen each took his oath,
 "But Representation
 "Of the Irish nation,
 "You Spalpeens! I'll soon take away from you both.
- 3 "And if *Green* be the colour you like, by the mass!
 "*Lillibulero . . .*
 "You'll be pleased when your streets are grown over with grass,
Lillibulero . . .
 "As men fond of pleasure,
 "You'll soon have your leisure,
 "Disburdened of commerce and quite at your ease,
 "Without manufactures
 "To act as my factors,
 "And think yourself happy to bask in my rays.
- 4 Says Patt, "now by *Union* what is it you mean?
Lillibulero . . .
 "Is it binding these nations all fast in one chain?
Lillibulero . . .
 "That yok'd like post hacks,
 "You may leather their backs,
 "If they dare to run restiff (sic) while you hold the reins
 But take care master *Pitt*,
 "Tho' State Coach-man you sit,
 "Lest they upset their driver and kick out his brains.
- 5 'Tis a scheme that quite bothers one's wig, faith and troth,
Lillibulero . . .
 That a thing *bad* for one would be *better* for both,
Lillibulero . . .
 Sure poor Paddy Blunder,
 Has no cause to wonder,
 His friend Johnny Bull should his interest protect,
 But the closer connexion,
 Pat feels strong objection,
 As the friendship of John, he begs leave to *suspect*.
- 6 Sure Johnny F—— went strait to the ****

- Lillibulero* . . .
 Oh! betwixt them how neatly they settled the thing !
Lillibulero
 For Johnny so keen,
 And so cunning I ween,
 He has drove a good job for us all you may swear.
 He'll make the *wild Patts*
 All as tame as "*gelt cats*"
 And strike a sure bargain for C—C—
- 7 Arrah, since we've a parliament, not to our mind,
Lillibulero . . .
 Sure to take it away from us is very kind,
Lillibulero . . .
 As for th'Emancipation
 Meant by the *Great Nation*,
 Twas a most *Atheistical* plan, to be sure,
 But to end Botheration,
 Resign Legislation,
 And then you have *Freedom* and *Trade* more secure.
- 8 Oh, what a commence for a new export trade,
Lillibulero
 Is a batch of our Parliament men ready made?
Lillibulero . . .
 From a cargo so pure,
 I am *sartin* and sure
 Mr. Pitt would enrich his collection of tools
 Reinforce his Scotch friends,
 To secure all his ends,
 Tho' he set them down *knaves* thus exported by fools
- 9 By C—st we'll not send him such blundering elves,
Lillibulero . . .
 As would act for their country and not for themselves,
Lillibulero . . .
Hal. (sic) Grattan and *Curran*
 May die of the *murrain*,
Duquery, George, Ponsonby, Flecher, and all,
 While *Turn coat E—*,
 And *Bluff Paddy D—*,
 Staunch proxies for Ireland shall stand at White-hall.¹⁹

¹⁹Edith Mary Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament 1692-1800 Commons, Constituencies, and Statutes* (4. vols, Belfast, 2002), vi. pp. 102-5. Rt Hon. William Brabazon Ponsonby: Ponsonby was a prominent opponent of the Union, supporting Grattan when he made his appearance in the House on the morning of 6 Feb. 1800. He voted against the Union in both 1799 and 1800, but after the event he urged reconciliation; *ibid.*, iv. pp 93-4. Henry Duquery: 1790 Duquery purchased his seat for Rathcormack, and he continued to support the Govt. during Westmorland's administration . . . He resigned towards the end of 1793 and went into opposition . . . at the beginning of the 1795 session he attacked the French war as wanton and unjust; *ibid.*, iv. p. 178 William Fletcher: Professional Lawyer, MP for Tralee 1795-7. He associated with Ponsonby, Curran, and the opposition group both in parliament and at the Bar. Cooke

- 10 When *Bully* (Egan)²⁰ at Westminster takes his own seat,
Lillibulero . . .
 By my soul he'll enliven the British debate,
Lillibulero . . .
 He'll roar, sweat and fume,
 But should any presume,
 To call order, or on his sweet speech to remark,
 Blood-and-ounds how he'll fight,
 And not fail to invite,
 His opposition, next day, to a walk in Hyde Park.
- 11 Then all our political jobbers may sell,
Lillibulero . . .
 Their vile b——h Hacks to the Premier of hell,
Lillibulero . . .
 No longer the tribe,
 For their owners a bribe,
 Can procure, so they'll *cant* them for what they can bring,
 For all they consider,
 Is – who's the best bidder?
 For conscience, for Country, for God, or for King.
- 12 But national eloquence, mute as a mouse,
Lillibulero . . .
 What's to become of our fine Senate House,
Lillibulero . . .
 Twill serve *Astley* or *Hughes**
 Our cannaille to amuse,
 With pantomime, tumbling, or menagerie,
 Of beasts not so vicious,
 And tricks less pernicious,
 Than what *near* the same place, we're long used to see
- 13 Won't it be a vast benefit now to our trade,
Lillibulero . . .
 When the laws to *promote* it in England are made!!!
Lillibulero . . .
 John Bull's in such hurry,
 Our favour to curry,

mentioned him as being present with them at an anti-Union meeting of the Bar in September 1798 :
 Ponsonby, Curran, Fletcher and Hone (maybe this is the Hal of the verse above ?) were present, voted in
 the majority but did not speak.' Fletcher supported Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform . . .
 and he did not sit in the Union parliament. George is not listed in this work.

²⁰Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Acts of Union, the causes, contexts and consequences of the Act
 of Union* (Dublin, 2001). p. 41. John 'Bully' Egan anti-Union. MP.

- He does no regard his own interest *at all*;
 And if Patt his relation,
 Resigns Legislation,
 Why Patt — *as the weakest must go to the wall*.
- 14 Tis not long ago since we heard a vast deal,
Lillibulero . . .
 'Bout *Renunciation* and *simple repeal*
Lillibulero . . .
 But this mighty boon,
 We're to lose very soon,
 While *Grattan* who gained it's reviled and disgrac'd
 And now this great charter,
 We're called on to barter,
 For Union, Dependance and honour debased.
- 15 *Entre nous* Johnny Bull, it was not like a friend,
Lillibulero,
 To rob us of *that* you came here to defend,
Lillibulero . . .
 Our Free Constitution,
 Is such retribution,
 As we for your friendship ne'er dreamt we should pay,
 A much greater evil,
 The French or the Devil,
 Could scarcely have dealt us, had they gained the day.
- 16 We have oft seen a cur, to whose draggled backside,
Lillibulero . . .
 Butcher's boys have an old rusty cannister ty'd
Lillibulero . . .
 Now if we may dare,
 A case to compare,
 Suppose England the cur, by French butchers assailed
 While hiss'd coss'd and groan'd
 And at last to death stoned,
 Poor Ireland's the cannister ty'd to her tail.
- 17 But what will our brave Orange Yoemen now say,
Lillibulero . . .
 When their *good British friends* shall have served them this way,
Lillibulero . . .
 Alas! when too late,
 They'll repent, this sad fate,
 Of their Countrymen whom they no mercy have shown,
 They'll feel to their cost,
 What their folly has lost,
 And that cutting our throats they were cutting their own.

The footnote that relates to the line 'Twill serve Astley or Hughes' sums up the

sense of foreboding that is general:

* British gentlemen, providers of Amusement, and eminent for the exhibition of Wild-beasts, Raree[sic] shows, etc., etc., who in the event of an Union may occasionally condescend to visit the mouldering remnant of the Irish Metropolis, to divert the melancholy of its desponding inhabitants.

The date given for song 60 *Billy Pitt and the Union* is 1798 and the defiant last verse of song 59 *Positive John* ; along with the general tenor of song 61 *Unanimity against the Union* indicates that these were also written before the final reading of the Bill in the Irish parliament in June 1800. Opposition to the proposed settlement made bedfellows out of groups that were not merely strange but down-right antagonistic, ‘the friends of Catholic Emancipation were seen on the same benches with those of Protestant ascendancy, the supporters of reform divided with the borough influence, a sense of common danger drew men together who were dissimilar in sentiment, adverse in opinion, jealous in interest’²¹ Thus this disparate group managed to ward off the first attempt at passing the Union in 1799 but respite was short-lived and the motion was not only back on the table but had been passed within eighteen months. This *volte face* was achieved for the prosaic reasons of patronage and place hunting (see verses 9, 10, 11 of *The Union*) and the behaviour of William Handcock MP for Athlone, is instructive of just how persuasive the government side could be. Initially Handcock was adamantly anti-union; Barrington writes that he had, ‘made and sang songs *against* the Union in 1799, at a public dinner of the Opposition, and made and sang songs for it in 1800’.²² Handcock had held this anti-union position until the lord lieutenant, Lord Cornwallis, and chief secretary Castlereagh applied unbearable pressure in the form of the title of Lord Castlemaine which caused him to relent and see the error of his ways. With the opposition so fractious and heterogeneous, it is no wonder that a small degree of divide and rule would elicit results and all the while the war with the French was hanging like a sword of Damocles over the heads of both Houses of Commons. For this reason alone the author of song 58 *Paddy the Pointer*, who might be unhappy with the idea of union, appears to be resigned to accept his fate in order to defeat the French. This last reason is the over-riding factor in the British government’s decision to opt for re-running the

²¹Barrington, p. 526,

same issue so quickly after its first defeat thus allowing the Irish Commons to cogitate, debate and finally come up with the right result, a privilege which power elites continue to enjoy. As Tadhg Ó Ceallaigh points out in his review of Bolton's book: '[W]hat strikes the Irish reader with a shock is that Pitt was not only unconcerned about Ireland but was notoriously uninterested in Irish affairs. It was the war with France which forced him to take some account of Ireland and to enquire as early as 1792 whether the Protestant opposition might not be less intransigent if further Catholic Relief, which seemed unavoidable, were tied to an Union.'²³ Catholic relief was an attractive proposition for Pitt for the obvious purpose of instigating loyalty to the British cause among the Roman Catholics and as a preventative measure to distract militants like the Defenders from being seduced by the lure of Jacobin republicanism. According to Bolton's argument the Union was initially conceived of as a sop to those who would have further relief for Catholics, maybe even the possibility of full emancipation, foisted upon them.²⁴ Pro-unionists of various shades emphasised whatever point of the proposal that appealed to them in an effort to persuade those sceptics less enamoured with the plan. On the one hand the measure was presented as a formula which could protect the Protestant position in Ireland by diluting the Irish Roman Catholic majority in a Magna Britannica. This was then used by pro-unionist Roman Catholics and their liberal sympathizers as the most likely rationale for lifting the few remaining penalties placed upon them.²⁵ Such a simple plan would suggest that it should have found all round acceptance; its undoing came about when the Union materialised but relief did not. It then became apparent that the balance of the equation was turned on its head. Within the new framework security and stability became the dominant factors while emancipation and justice were erased, for the sake of the King George III's coronation oath and Protestant supremacy,²⁶ an eventuality which led to the resignation of Pitt. The part the king played was recognised by the British establishment and the *Freeman's*

²²Ibid., p. 285. Emphasis in the original.

²³Tadhg Ó Ceallaigh review of G. C. Bolton *The passing of the Irish Act of Union*. . . in *Studia Hibernica* no. 8 (Dublin, 1968), pp 184-8

²⁴G. C. Bolton *The passing of the Irish Act of Union* . . . pp 11-3.

²⁵McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion 1750-1800*, pp. 248-9.

²⁶The Roman Catholic pro- union pamphleteer Theobald McKenna had warned about just such an outcome in his *Memoir on some questions respecting the projected union* (1799), p. 23., cited in R. B. McDowell, *Irish public opinion 1750-1800*, p. 248.

Journal made an effort to defend His Majesty's standing by printing a litany of his good works on behalf of the Catholics of Ireland which included among other things the opening of Trinity College to Roman Catholics (men of course); the establishment of the seminary at Maynooth; recruitment into the military; reform of the law regarding lease holding and renting; and significantly the arrangement whereby the 'profession of the law was made to extend its honourable and profitable practice to Catholic young gentlemen, whose ambition and capacity stimulated them to embrace that learned career, which so often crowned abilities with abundant reward and substantial fortune.'²⁷ All of this was however, not enough. It was the instrumental, security driven nature of the Union, and its failure to fulfil the substantive expectations of Irish Roman Catholics (a truth which no panegyric from the *Freeman* could erase) that coloured the perceptions of the constitutional arrangement for this section of the population. The passing of the act of union without emancipation only served to highlight the Protestant character and ambition of the new nation. Mistrust and frustration since the recalling of the sympathetic Lord Fitzwilliam in 1795 had allowed the relationship between the Roman Catholics and the national parliament to sour. Union had done nothing to sweeten the Catholics disposition as the imperial government seemed to act in the same high handed way as the former ultra-protestant majority in the Irish parliament, the opportunity, if ever one existed, for a consummate integration of identities along ethnic lines, within the archipelago was lost. Irish Roman Catholic loyalty was rejected and like a spurned lover the injured party turned inwards and took consolation in self-pity and a seething sense of betrayal, as Barrington put it almost half a century after the event:

It is true that they [the Catholics] were deceived; but it was a corrupt deception, and they felt it during eight and twenty years . . . the Catholic body were misled, or neutralised, throughout the entire of that unfortunate era. In 1798 they were hanged; in 1799 they were caressed; in 1800 they were cajoled; in 1801 they were discarded; and after a lapse of twenty-six years, they were complaining louder then when they were in slavery.²⁸

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Text: *O'Connell's New Song on Emancipation* in Michael Mulcahy and Marie Fitzgibbon, *The voice of the People, songs and history of Ireland* (Dublin, 1982).

²⁷*Freeman's Journal*, 7 Mar. 1801.

²⁸Barrington, p. 528.

- Verse: 1 I'm Daniel O'Connell, the mighty Agitator,
 Descended from Gadhael, of a regal grand line,
 In the annals of fame my ancestors were traced of,
 From the earliest period to the present time:
 For 28 years I have fought most courageous,
 Tho' surrounded by enemies, I never yet retreated,
 Without the loss of a man I have gain'd Emancipation,
 And added fresh laurels to Erin go Bragh.
- 2 I have roll'd up a mill-stone against a steep mountain,
 By the assistance of O'Gorman Mahon and Sheil,²⁹
 Back'd by John Lawless³⁰ of the Order of Liberators,
 And the praiseworthy champion brave Thomas Steel.³¹
 When we had it at the pinnacle we were sure of being victorious,
 We had 7 million Catholics to roll it down head foremost,
 Going to the City of London we heaved it on before us,
 It being the conditions of Erin go Bragh.
- 3 We roll'd it up to the Parliament House in clover,
 Where we met our old friend the noble Anglesea,
 Says Wellington to O'Connell, you are welcome over,
 My brave second Moses, your country shall be free.
 I have known the Irish to be firm and true,
 they fought most courageous at the battle of Waterloo,
 And upon the continent their foes they did subdue,
 And soon let them know they were from Erin go Bragh.
- 4 After the Bill was read and laid on the table,
 there was a majority of one hundred and four,
 Each liberal Member his talents display'd most able,

²⁹S. J. Connolly, (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Irish History*. (Oxford, 2002) James Mahon (1800-91) adopted the name the O'Gorman Mahon took a leading part in O'Connell's election campaign in Co. Clare in 1828. p. 407. Richard Lalor Sheil, (1791-1851) pp 510-1.

³⁰*ODNB* xxxii, 783-4: John Lawless (c.1773-1837), more idealistic and less pragmatic than O'Connell, he opposed the Liberator on the issue of Burdett's 'wings' which accompanied the proposed measure of Catholic emancipation in 1825. Lawless worked tirelessly for the Catholic Association during the Co. Clare campaign but fell out of favour with O'Connell in the 1830s.

³¹*ODNB* lii, 367-8: Thomas Steele (1788-1848) Protestant landlord, one of the earliest members of the revived Catholic Association, devoted lieutenant to O'Connell, and made 'head pacificator,' of the emancipation movement. He seconded O'Connell's nomination for Co. Clare in 1828 and is credited as having persuaded O'Connell to stand on that occasion.

the like in the Senate was never heard before.
May peace and plenty flow on our native isle,
And cause our distressed workmen again for to smile,
May trade and industry be promoted likewise,
To cheer up the sons of Erin go Bragh.

- 5 Now we're emancipated, God bless his gracious Majesty,
He may sit in pomp and dignity in peace on his throne,
No jealousy in future, nor any animosity,
By the true members of the holy Church of Rome ;
As Dan, our noble advocate, boldly pleads in Parliament,
From his country's services no bribe can him draw,
the valiant sons of Granua will loudly give, with one consent,
Three cheers for O'Connell and Erin go Bragh.

O'Connell, although he hailed from a Catholic gentry background on the Iveragh Peninsula in Co. Kerry, was to an extent a product of the vaunted reforms of George III and the relaxation of the penal laws. He was one of those Catholic 'young gentlemen . . . whose ambition and capacity stimulated them to embrace that learned career,' [the law], but who used his talents to exceed the promise of individual, 'abundant reward, and substantial fortune,' to help balance the equation which Union without emancipation had upset, and ultimately to have the Union repealed. The emancipation campaign is inseparable from the person of Daniel O'Connell. He was one of the founding members of the Catholic Association in 1823³² ; his co-opting of the clergy to act as agents for the Association at the local level was typically shrewd and led to the politicisation of that class for generations³³ ; he managed public opinion on the Catholic question in both islands by creating an environment in which the 'moral force' of his argument and its supporters reduced the opposition to voices in the wilderness ; and finally the mobilisation of the Roman Catholic masses into a popular movement through the means of the Catholic rent, was a stroke of political genius that had few if any historical comparisons and made O'Connell a political figure of international reckoning.³⁴

³²Seán McMahon, *Daniel O'Connell* (Cork, 2000), p. 50.

³³R. Dudley Edwards, *Daniel O'Connell and his world* (London, 1975), p. 20.

³⁴*ODNB*, xli, 439- 49.

Text : *Catholic Rent Air – Cottage Maid* NLI. Broadside Ballads,

- Verse: 1 You genuine muse divine your aid to me incline,
While I announce a happy visitation. The Lord
Has decreed, our clergy should proceed, and
Gather in this innocent taxation. 'Tis a virtuous
Plan not formed to trapan, but to redress once
More the sons of Erin. Our rights for to reclaim
For our sons of fame, O'Connell may above by your station.
- 2 Our foes were fully bent this for to prevent.
Still they tremble at our pious institution.
In Union we consent to pay this Christian rent,
In compliance with our King and constitution,
Our island is distressed by penal laws oppressed,
And our children are drove to desolation,
Our clergy can't withstand our saintly land,
As we find in Divine Revelation.
- 3 When proud Lucifer fell and he was cast into Hell,
Through licentious inclinations, and legions won,
His wit as we read in holy writ, which caused me
To renounce divine ordination, to the sign of the nags
Head reform'd pagans fled ; with Ridly, Cranmer, Cox and
Parrer, The demon's so decreed, our clergy for to weed,
Nothing since was seen but cruel slaughter.
- 4 Old Erin's sons awake your clergy's council take,
Be obedient to the laws of the nation,
In Union, we consent to pay this Christian Rent,
As an avenue to Emancipation.
'Twill put oppression down and those who on us frown,
And restore to us ancient Melicians,(sic)
Priest hunters we'll subdue, Our rights again renew,
O'Connell you are the pride of our nation.

As O'Connell's legend grew his association with the cause of Ireland became almost metaphysical:

66

Text : *The Deeds of O'Connell* in James N. Healy, (ed.), *Old Irish Street ballads, vol., ii. History and Politics :1798-Parnell* (Cork, 1969).

- Verse: 1 One night as old Granua reclined to rest,
 And Dame Nature in her soft couch slumbered,
 The moon beams from heaven shone forth from the west,
 And the sky had bright stars without number,
 I laid myself down for to rest without fear,
 When an angelic vision to me did appear,
 And thus spoke heroic saying 'son lend an ear,
 To your father's advice, brave O'Connell!'
- 2 I then started frantic the vision drew near,
 And began his advice then as follows—
 Saying 'remember what you've undertaken this year,
 As Erin for liberty hallows,
 The hall it shall flourish the time's yet to come,
 And your voice reach across George's channel,
 Be advised by your father my ever dear son,
 And remember the deeds of O'Connell.'
- 3 'O remember the year so glorious' he cried,
 'When I emancipated poor Erin,
 In Kingstown I was taken and soon after tried,
 But no sting of a toad was I fearing
 In the four-courts of Dublin I was'ent put down,
 The world rejoiced while each serpent frown'd
 When the schemes they invented were flung to the ground,
 O remember brave Daniel O'Connell.'
- 4 'When the writ of terror to the house entered in,
 The law lords they seemed much confounded,
 It was called a delusion a mockery and snare,
 So Denmen and Campbell expounded;
 Then justice her trumpet did sound her loud call,
 It shook the foundation of Harold's – cross wall,
 Then the Martyr's from prison stepped one and all,
 Oh, remember the deeds of O'Connell.
- 5 'It's to Mullaghmas and Tara I led Erin's sons,
 And from that to the famed country (sic) Longford,
 All Ireland was pledged for freedom to a man,
 From Dingle along down to Strangford.
 From Galway to Limerick and the sweet county Clare,
 Thro' Wicklow and the Curragh of Kildare,
 I freed Erin from bondage and many a snare,
 And my name it is Daniel O'Connell.

- 6 Now my mind being embarrassed by base slumbering thought,
As the moon's silvery rays shone around me,
Says he 'Son remember the villainous plot,
When the packed jury thought to confound me
For seeking the right of old Erin the Green,
And breaking the fetters bound her in disdain,
I defended her cause till their efforts were vain,
Oh remember the deeds of O'Connell.
- 7 'I remember', says Granua, in the year '98
When my sons were both hung and transported,
How many fine men were it not for brave Dan
Would like slaves from this land be exported
And at the conspiracy of Doneraile³⁵
He stood up like Hector with vigour and zeal.
He put down usurpers and made them to quail
Did the famous brave Daniel O'Connell.
- 8 'His name will be revered all over the land
In the ancient pages of history shown,
For blessed Father Maguire did nobly stand
When Magarigan against him had sworn,
Your clergy he freed them from bigotry's clue
When in the ditches they preached the gospel to you,
Their foes he confounded and did them subdue
Now, remember the deeds of O'Connell.
- 9 Granua awoke from her slumber overwhelmed with joy,
As what passed seemed her most endearing,
The dark sable of night had pass'd from the sky,
and Sol's bright golden rays were appearing
For the wrongs of this country always I'll stand
As my son brave Daniel so before done,
And Erin will shine like the beams of the sun
As foretold in the dream of O'Connell.

In the *Deeds of O'Connell*, the Liberator becomes an advocate to Granua the personification of the nation, in a sense he becomes greater than the nation. His success with achieving emancipation allows him to hold the country in thrall, and prompted

³⁵J. Anthony Gaughan, *Doneraile* (Dublin, 1968), pp 51- 69. In 1829 twenty one men arraigned at the assizes of Doneraile to be tried for conspiracy to murder, 'three prominent members of the local squirearchy'. Four were convicted, three of these were acknowledged to have taken active part in Whiteboy activities, these were convicted before O'Connell acted on behalf of the defence which saw the rest of the accused eventually acquitted. O'Connell's input did succeed in having those convicted having their sentences commuted from the death penalty to penal servitude for life, and this sentence was finally 'reduced' to transportation to New South Wales.

Thomas Davis to write to the Duke of Wellington in 1844 that ‘the populace idolise him
They think more of him than of their farming, or religion. They prefer him to priest
 or neighbour or angel. He is their hero. They pray for him, endure for him, obey him,
 would die for him....’³⁶

67

Text : *The Liberator* in James N. Healy (ed.), *Old Irish Street Ballads*, vol. ii. (Cork, 1969).

- Verse: 1 ’Tis 50 years since Erin’s tears
 Called forth her bold Defender,
 Her wrongs to right by legal fight,
 Whose cry was ‘no surrender!’
 O’Connell’s nod, like St. Patrick’s rod,
 Drives all reptiles before him;
 For he had proved how much he loved
 The sainted land that bore him.
 He had pledged his word nor brand nor sword,
 Shall be used to reinstate her;
 Nor pike, nor gun shall raise the fun,
 While lives the Liberator.
- 2 The Switzer lays all sound the praise
 Of Tell, their native hero;
 And Poland reared some sons who scared
 Old Nick, the Russian NERO!!
 France may claim the glorious same,
 Left them by Napoleon ;
 But their crow’s usurped, their freedom’s curbed,
 By Louis Philippe, that old *Tarpaulin!*
 But what are those, who verse and prose,
 Call great, to our Agitator,
 The Champion he, of Liberty,
 Long live the Liberator.
- 3 *Arrah*, look at the clan of Connaughtmen,
 He led to Connemara;
 Sure Leinster still can crowd the hills
 Of Mullaghmast and Tara!
 Go where he will, down dale, up hill,
 The heart-felt gratulation,
 Proclaims it clear, he needn’t fear,
 Like kings– assassination,
 When long-felt woe, made bosom glow,
 Like volcano’s burning crater,

³⁶C. Gavan Duffy, *Thomas Davis : the memoirs of an Irish Patriot, 1840-1846* (London, 1890), pp 228-9.

That flame was cured, by one soothing word
From Ireland's Liberator.

4 In vain they've tried on every side,
Our love for him to weaken,
In every sense, our confidence
In him remains unshaken;
He *has* been tried, and would have died
For Ireland, did she need-him.
He still commands a million hands,
What monarch can exceed him?
His throne is part of each Irish heart
Except the worthless traitor,
All creeds to see, with Altars Free,
Up stands the Liberator.

5 What cares Dan, when government's clan
With slander do attack him?
Whilst the old with prayers, the young with cheers,
Are ready all to back him.
His fingers beck, can drive or check,
Our 'Monster Agitation,'
Without fire or steel we'll win Repeal
As we've won Emancipation.
Though '43 did, wonders, we
Will in '45 do greater,
They thought 'twould die, still our rallying cry,
Is 'Repeal and the Liberator!'

The cult of personality which grew up around O'Connell caused much unease among O'Connell's critics like Thomas Moore and his backers from the Limerick Political Union who wished for a less over-whelming presence, and the minority but vocal class of pious clergy who did not agree with the politicisation of their brethren, such as the Rev. Croly. O'Connell's celebrity and power was such that the newly crowned Queen Victoria wrote in her diary regarding a levee which he was to attend in St. James's Palace in February 1838 that he was, 'the only person who I was very anxious to see and who I was much interested to have seen . . .'.³⁷ But the myth of O'Connell, apart from his undeniable victory over the British establishment in 1828 was founded not on a quixotic sense of Irishness (although he did play this up when it was beneficial) but on playing the game of politics at the highest level and achieving maximum advantage for Catholic Ireland wherever possible. Throughout the decade of

³⁷Quoted in James H. Murphy, *Abject loyalty: nationalism and monarchy in Ireland during the reign of*

the 1830s O’Connell’s behaviour towards his stated aim of repeal of the Union appears ambiguous. The pragmatist in him achieved much by cooperating with the Whig governments that held power, for most of the decade, with just a short break in 1834-5. Particularly constructive was the relationship that the Irish bloc headed by O’Connell formed with the government of Lord Melbourne after the 1835 election. From 1832, but especially after the defeat of O’Connell’s reluctantly tabled motion in 1834 for the setting up of a House Committee to look into the effects and workings of the Union was trounced in the Commons,³⁸ the issue of Repeal was allowed to become, by and large, dormant and it remained thus as long as favourable measures, or, ‘good government’ for Ireland, in accordance with O’Connell’s vision, was forthcoming. After the 1835 general election, with the appointment of Thomas Drummond as undersecretary, the real effects of Catholic emancipation began to be felt as Catholics and liberal Protestants began to take up office as sheriffs ; resident magistrates ; and eventually as judges,³⁹ although the extent of this ‘affirmative action’ should not be overemphasised.⁴⁰ However, by 1840 O’Connell could sense the change coming in Westminster, and thus set about trying to re-invigorate the Catholic political machine to achieve his ultimate goal by founding the Loyal National Repeal Association in August 1840. With the Tories returned to power in the general election of 1841 O’Connell decided to go all out for Repeal.

68

Text : *Glorious Repeal Meeting Held at Tara Hill* in Michael Mulcahy and Marie Fitzgibbon, *The Voice of the People, songs and history of Ireland* (Dublin, 1982).

Verse: 1 Come all you Irish hearts of oak,
 And brave Tara heroes,
 The chains that bind us must be broke,
 In spite of all those Neroes.
 O’Connell gives you great applause,
 Throughout this Irish nation –
 You’re foremost in Hibernia’s cause,
 Requesting liberation.

Chorus: Hurrah for Dan and noble Steele,
 The pride of Erin’s nation;

Queen Victoria (Cork, 2001), p. 22.

³⁸Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine 1798-1848*, p. 170.

³⁹*ODNB*, xli, 445.

⁴⁰Ó Tuathaigh, pp 82-9.

In spite of Wellington and Peel
We'll gain our liberation.

2 On Tara Hill, the other day,
Five hundred thousand did assemble,
Teatotaler's bands did sweetly play
Our foes for to make tremble;
The streets were neatly arched with green,
Our flags hoisted in rotation,
Three cheers were given for the Queen,
And four for liberation.

3 When gallant Dan to Tara came,
Our boys did loudly cheer him,
He roused the hearts of old and young,
That assembled there to hear him
He'll surely free us from the yoke,
If our aid we freely lend him;
You would think it was an angel spoke,
For the clergy did attend him.

4 Think on the words of noble Steele,
Of the Protestant communion,
To our enemies he'll never yield,
Until we repeal the Union.
He tells us if we all unite,
In spite of all alarms,
We'll surely gain the glorious fight,
Without the force of arms.

5 Kilkenny, Cork, and Limerick too,
Call for the rights of Granua;
Tipperary showed what they could do,
In Cashel and in Nenagh;
Five hundred thousand on the plains,
Demanding liberation –
Not half that number swept the Danes,
Far from our Irish nation.

6 God Bless our Queen, long may she reign,
What foe dare to offend her?
Granua's sons, with swords and guns,
Are ready to defend her.
Long live each man that joins with Dan,
No matter what communion,
But in spite of all the tory clan,
We will repeal the Union.

The figure of five hundred thousand attending the repeal meeting at Tara on 15

Aug. 1843 seems excessive but it compares convincingly with the figure of eight hundred thousand as put forward in O'Connell's propaganda and interestingly the figure of 1 million which appeared in the *Times* which could hardly be considered as being supportive of the repeal movement or O'Connell in any way. MacDonagh suggests that a half million people at the meeting might not be too far wide of the mark.⁴¹

69

Text: *The Repeal of the Union or the Liberation of Mr. O'Connell*. Air – *Viv 'la* in James N. Healy (ed.), *Old Irish Street Ballads*, vol. ii. (Cork, 1969).

Verse: 1 Rejoice each patriotic brother,
Daniel's foes have knuckled down,
Freedom's cause will shortly smother
Tyranny in Europe round;
the castle-hacks they have surrendered—
Their ambition's clearly low,
O'Connell's liberty defender,
Bigots fall at every blow.

Chorus: Viva La ! the Liberator,
Cheer the hero, three times three,
Erin! soon he'll reinstate her,
Make her glorious, great and free.

2 The Welsh hussar, that valiant soldier,
Lost his pin at Waterloo,
Let him puff, I will uphold, sir,
All his threats will never do ;
They must and shall repeal the union,
Erin's thriving by degrees,
The measure's back'd by each communion;
taffy home and eat your cheese.

3 After all your vile inventions,
Erin's cause for to repeal
In order for to bleed contentions,
Franklin went and liked Ise Sheil [sic];
They thought O'Connell's condemnation;
They immediately to bring,
Soon there came an alteration,
Free him was a safer thing.

4 Let the vile obnoxious villians,
That seek Daniel's overthrow,
Keep in mind how many millions,
Soon would cause them grief and woe;

⁴¹Oliver MacDonagh, *The Emancipist, Daniel O'Connell 1830-47* (London, 1989), pp 29-30.

Very few in Paddy's nation.
From the Causeway to Cape Clear,
But would come with desperation,
And revenge O'Connell dear.

5 Well we've now emancipation,
Thousands to it had a spleen,
Now so great's the alteration,
Orange it has joined the green ;
Great O'Connell did unite them,
Now they go then hand in hand,
Danger never shall affright them,
Whilst brave Daniel leads the van.

6 Now our hero's liberated,
Patiently we'll wait awhile,
To see if sorrow be defeated,
Or will fortune ever smile ;
The day's at hand ; O'Connell tell us;
All our heights we will recall,
Tyranny shall never quell us.
But by Daniel rise or fall.

This song along with song number 67 make sure numbers with their references to O'Connell being 'liberated' can be dated after he and a number of his companions including Charles Gavan Duffy and Thomas Steele,⁴² were released from what MacDonagh has called a, 'martyrdom-de-luxe',⁴³ in Richmond Bridewell on 7 September 1844. Their incarceration was predicated on a charge of sedition and conspiracy, in relation to a monster meeting due to be held on 8 October 1843 at Clontarf,⁴⁴ the legendary site of Brian Bóruma's victory over the Vikings in 1014 (referred to in song 68). This site was redolent with historical symbolism that was easily understood by both parties thus forcing the authorities' hand. The Law Lords intervened on O'Connell's behalf to have the charges against him, and the rest of his party, struck out with Justice Denman claiming that there were some discrepancies in the compilation of the jury in the case. Denman argued that if this fact was overlooked then, 'trial by jury itself, instead of being a security to persons who are accused, will be

⁴²Helen F. Mulvey, *Thomas Davis and Ireland, a biographical Study* (Washington, D. C., 2003), p. 139.

⁴³MacDonagh, p. 247.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp 239-40.

a mockery, a delusion and a snare.’⁴⁵ The cancellation of the meeting as a consequence of its being, ‘proclaimed,’ the day before it was to be held, ought to have been enough to convince the government of the pacific nature and moderation of O’Connell’s agitation (referred to in songs 68 and 69) and enabled them to let the matter drop, but such was the atmosphere of suspicion abroad that the government felt that it had to act. The fact that such a corrosive atmosphere existed was made apparent by the leaders of another fledgling group of Irish nationalists who have left a record of the almost palpable sense of paranoia that animated Dublin Castle’s actions. The following extended quote is taken from *Dublin Monthly Magazine* of March 1842. In it the editors of the publication conduct a discourse analysis, as they imagine it from the administrations point of view, of the ballad *Irish Molly O*:

DISCOURAGEMENT

There are nothing but ups and downs in this hapless life . . . one day in Grafton st. . . we turned into Jude’s, to take a cup of coffee . . . We had scarcely been seated and begun to regale, when (gentle reader, can you imagine our consternation and dismay?) we overheard the following conversation.

“A. It is a most insidious political ballad.

“B. What do you mean?

“A. What an innocent you are! I suspect you to be one of them! What a simpleton you must take me for, to imagine I could be imposed upon by an affectation of ignorance.

“B. Good heavens! Is there to be an *ex officio* – a prosecution – information – indictment– what is it to be? I assure you, I have nothing to say to the fellows – but I feel the perspiration rolling down my forehead at the bear mention of the things you say. It is impossible to see you without thinking of the Attorney-General; and I should be sorry to incur even your suspicions. But I assure you I saw no harm in the thing.

“A. Well, positively, that bangs Banagher, as the saying is. So you affect to think that there is no covert meaning in the version of “Irish Molly O!” Tut! It is incredible. The thing is so obvious. It is all of a piece with the doctrine of “Irishmen for Irish offices.” First of all, there is the Irish Office itself represented by Irish Molly– so enticing to a poor fellow from t’other side of the channel. Then, there is Molly’s father representing the national feeling of true Irishmen. Then to put the matter beyond all doubt, you call the Scotch youth who comes to look after Molly “a foreigner.” Now this might have been done with impunity during the late “feeble and vacillating administration” who dared not to prosecute the press. But I beg to assure you that the present “firm and united government” have no such qualms. Had there been, whilst the former held office, lampoons upon them or upon any of them, from plain Jock

⁴⁵ Thomas Denman (1779-1854), *ODNB* xv, 799-804.

Campbell down to the dressy under-secretary, things should have been passed over. But now we have a new order of things. Here is a weak attempt, by making the stranger a Scotchman, and by the name given to him, to make it appear that the appointees of *the late* ministers are persons aimed at. But the evil lies deeper, and so does the libel. It is a plain stroke at the root of all British connection, and as such it shall be met and put down, *and the law shall be vindicated.*”

So saying, the gentleman rose, put on his hat, and hastily wished his companion a good morning. You may guess how *we* felt upon this occasion. We remained for some time pondering upon this extraordinary dialogue, and meditation on what was to be done. At first, we thought of publishing a disclaimer of any political meaning in the ballad ; but, on mature deliberation, we determined to give merely the above simple statement of the facts, which we hope will not prejudice us in the mind of any fair -judging persons ; and we can only say in conclusion, that as the important services of the gentlemen, who have been thus brought into question, have been so little appreciated by Irishmen, we trust that such of them as have already left us will show their sense of this ingratitude by never again honouring this country with their presence in any official capacity : and that such of them as still linger here will be induced to take the earliest opportunity of following their predecessors, and imitating the wholesome example.⁴⁶

This is the song which exercised the minds of the Castle hacks according to the *Dublin Monthly Magazine*: 70

Text: *Irish Molly O!* in *Dublin Monthly Magazine* 1 Jan-June 1842. NLI

Verse: 1 Oh! who is that poor foreigner that lately came to town,
 And like a ghost that cannot rest still wanders up and down?
 A poor unhappy Scottish youth; – if more you wish to know,
 His heart is breaking all for love of Irish Molly O!

Chorus: She’s modest, mild and beautiful, the fairest I have known—
 the primrose of Ireland— all blooming here alone—
 The primrose of Ireland, for wheresoe’er I go,
 The only one entices me is my Irish Molly O!

2 When Molly’s father heard of it, a solemn oath he swore,
 That if she’d wed a foreigner he’d never see her more,
 He sent for young MacDonald and he plainly told him so—
 “I’ll never give to such as you my Irish Molly O!”

3 MacDonald heard the heavy news – and grievously did say,
 “Farewell my lovely Molly – since I’m banished far away,
 “A poor forlorn pilgrim I must wander to and fro,
 And all for the sake of my Irish Molly O!

4 “There is a rose in Ireland – I thought it would be mine;

⁴⁶‘The native music of Ireland’ in *Dublin Monthly Magazine*, Mar. 1842.

But now that she is lost to me I must for ever pine.
Till death shall come to comfort me, for to the grave I'll go;
And all for the sake of my Irish Molly O!

5 "And now that I am dying – this one request I crave,
To place a marble tomb-stone above my humble grave ;
And on that stone these simple words I'd have engraven so –
MacDonald lost his life for love of Irish Molly O!"⁴⁷

This piece was published by the same personnel who had promoted Irish music in the earlier *Citizen* magazine, the organ in which two of the greatest propagandists of Irish nationalism in the nineteenth century, Thomas Davis and Charles Gavan Duffy, cut their journalistic teeth. If the above piece is to be believed then the level of paranoia points to a culture of fear in which threats to the status quo were lurking in every shadow, and the editors did nothing to dispel this fear but rather encouraged it for their own ends. Of course, the reality of their very definite political agenda makes one suspicious of the fact of the conversation itself; however, evidence from the Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers, Outrage Reports (CSORP. OR.) suggest that concern was real and countrywide. It is also of note that some of the messages contained in the street ballads were not as cryptic, as those supposedly secreted in *Irish Molly O*.⁴⁸

71

Text: *Hurra for Dan* fragments and accompanying letter: National Archives:
CSORP.OR., 1843, 5 (Clare)/ 12375)

County of Clare.

Kilrush June 24th 1843.

I beg leave to state that on this evening a strange man went from door to door through this town singing songs of the most inflammatory nature followed by a large crowd of people, and when coming to the Barrack door was prevented from singing by the orderly, at which the crowd gave a loud grown in the most insulting manner.

The following is the substance as taken down by me and (illegible) *Hurra for Dan* who with Teetotlars . . . will have the union in College Green,

Verse: 1 If our tyrants dare oppose us,
 We will have them troops Man for man,
 And sweep those reptiles off the land,
 Rouse boys from slumber and let them know the Sons of Granuawale,
 Who are (illeg) with the yoke of the locusts,
 We will no longer bear,

⁴⁷Ibid., Feb. 1842.

⁴⁸Maura Murphy, 'The ballad singer and the role of the seditious ballad, pp 79-102.

But will give them three cheers on the plains of Kildare.

- 2 Little did the Saxon Corporation think it would come to pass,
To see the Mayor's gold chain go to Mass,
Billy Pitt will be put down by Ennis' Sons and Popish Dan,
- 3 Erin's green isle will flourish in splendour when those
Boyne blood hounds must surrender,
Lord Castlerea (sic) cut his throat tis true,
So will Peel, Wellington and Stanly (sic) too,
- 4 Those bloody Orange men who,
Soap the rope to hand the Pope...(end)

This man had no ballads nor could I find that he distributed any privately.

Samuel Bradshaw,
2 Head Constable,
John Mylett (?)
1 Sub Constable.

Kilrush June 22 1843.

In submitting this document beg to state that there are at present persons going about singing very inflammatory songs (seditious ballads) which therefore prevents any documents being produced against them, they sing in the evening and go from house to house attended by a number of persons who groan any persons that don't give them any encouragement.

From the present state of society it would be almost impossible to prove in a court of justice, the words made use of by them. They get I am told three to five shillings a Night.

William Hanna,
1 Sub inspector.

So it appears from William Hanna's letter that the singing of seditious ballads was both a popular and profitable business. These letters provide a contextual framework for the ballad -singing incident as Maura Murphy makes clear:

[they] often give a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the apprehension of the singer and the reasons for which the incident was brought to the attention of the Castle. Thus, the Castle records do what an ordered collection of ballads cannot do – they put the ballad into its correct historical perspective, and throw some light on the viewpoints of three different groups – the local authorities, the central authorities in Dublin Castle, and (though to a lesser extent) the ballad singer himself and his admiring audience.⁴⁹ As song 71 *Hurra for Dan* shows, the street singers were unrestrained by

⁴⁹Ibid.

nationalist elite considerations regarding the unity of all creeds and so they regurgitated the sectarian platitudes which formed part of the discourse of identity. Sentiments were expressed in a language⁵⁰ which was readily accessible to their audience and which we encountered in the previous chapter on Religion. Even when the lyrics were more reserved than say those in song 51 *The Devil among the Soupers* the ballad singers evoked a sense of the inevitability of Roman Catholic supremacy and the feeling that the Orange would metamorphose into the Green due to an unspecified revelatory event causing collective amnesia regarding their own identity and leading to a form of national communion.

72

Text: *The Land of Shillelagh and O'Connell* Accompanying Letter. Newbridge Barracks 9th Aug. 1831. National Archives: CSORP.OR., 1831. B/101

Sir,

I have the (illegible) to enclose for your consideration an inflammatory ballad which has been sung, during the whole of this morning in the market place of this village. These productions which are intended to produce revolt, might, I should imagine be suppressed by the local police; and, in the present instance, I have requested the Sergeant of that corps, who is stationed here, to take the ballad singer before the Magistrate. But believing it, also (illegible) that the circumstance should be known, to the Secretary of State, I have taken the liberty of bringing it under your notice.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your obedient and very humble servant,

Chas. Benson

Barrack Master.⁵¹

⁵⁰A similar point regarding the division of the language used by the street balladeers and the 'lace curtain ballads' of the middle class publishers of the *Spirit of the Nation* being conditioned by their social class is made by Maura Cronin, 'Popular memory and identity', p. 129.

⁵¹(Written on the back of Benson's letter is the following note signed JD whom I take to be John Dunne "This ballad is a mischievous and seditious libel. The Hawker ought to be apprehended and held to bail (illegible) informations being previously made before a magistrate ; but it will be important not to rest there ; every effort ought to be made to find out the printer and thro' him, the person or persons who composed a (illegible) for circulation of such libel." JD.)

- Verse: 1 You sons of Hibernia your voices resound,
O'er the green hills of Erin and vallies around,
in praise of O'Connell of fame and renown,
who wisely intends to keep bigotry down
In our land of shillelagh and shamrock so green.
- 2 He's true to his country and firm to his cause,
He keeps down all factions, corrects all bad laws,
He'll cause peace and union in Erin the green,
And never will sanction foul rancour or spleen
 In our land of shillelagh . . .
- 3 The man of the people is gallant and bold,
By bigotted (sic) factions he'll ne'er be controll'd
for the land of our fathers we'll firmly stand,
with dissenting brethren we'll walk hand in hand.
 In our land . . .
- 4 Six centuries long now our chains we have bore,
With tears and prayers we long did implore
The sons of Britannia, who ne'er would feel,
Till heaven at length sent O'Connell and Steel.
 In our land . . .
- 5 Oh! Wellington sure you well know its true,
In our blood we were drenched at the fam'd Waterloo,
We fought for our Monarch to uphold his crown,
and our only reward was damned papists lie down.
 In the land . . .
- 6 Oh! sad to reflect on, and fatal the day,
when Granu's own parliament was tore away,
from the green isle that Patrick chose for his land,
where venomous reptiles shall never more stand.
 In our land . . .
- 7 O'Connell our hero has planted a tree,
An Irishman's motto, we'll die or be free,
For tyrants in Ireland too long they did reign,
But our ancient milesians will flourish again.
 In our land . . .
- 8 O'Neill and O'Brien and Sarsfield the brave,
With glory and honour they went to their grave,
Tho' fighting for shamus - a chaugha, that knave,
Who left us in bondage till this very day,
 In the land . . .
- 9 Our heroes in thousands are exiled from home,
And wander afflicted, compelled for to roam,
When the land of their birth is unfettered and free

They'll return, dear Erin, in triumph (sic) to thee
In the land . . .

10 Harp of Tara awake the bold tone you once gave,
Let its sound raise the heart of the poor and the slave,
Let discord be banished, our deadliest foe,
For O'Connell to bigotry gave the death blow,
In our land . . .

11 Ye sweets maids of Erin a garland entwine,
The shamrock, the laurel, and roses combine,
For our hero O'Connell, his soul is divine,
In posterity's records his glory will shine.
In the land . . .

16th Aug. 1831 John Dunne.

It is easy to see what was so 'mischievous and seditious' about *The Land of Shillelagh and O'Connell*, being, as it is, a fairly damning recounting of the popular interpretation of historical events from a nationalist perspective. Dating as it does from August 1831 its proximity to the triumph of the emancipation campaign and the provocative flexing of Catholic muscle evidenced by mass mobilisation, suggests that it had the potential to undermine the self-confidence of what had been, until recently, a privileged sect and one that perceived itself as such. The Irish Protestant establishment, felt songs such as these had the potential to lead to civil discord and to further subvert the status quo. What is most noteworthy in this song, however, is the airbrushing of O'Connell's record for using the rhetoric of the bigot to appeal to his overwhelmingly Roman Catholic audience.⁵² O'Connell may be excused for using intemperate language as a political weapon and not necessarily as expressing heartfelt convictions but that merely makes him appear as his Tory and Orange enemies portrayed him as the quintessential slippery Pat, never meaning what he says, never saying what he means, attempting to obfuscate by using the charm which went along with his Irish bull and talking up imagined grievances for personal gain.⁵³ His enemies were not slow in exploiting what they perceived as his weak spot i.e. his reliance on his demotic base:

(73)

Text: Newspaper *Warder* (Dublin) 16 Sept 1843, p 5: *Songs of Blarney*

⁵²Hoppen, p. 21.

⁵³Brian Jenkins, *The Chief Secretary*, in D. G. Boyce and Alan O'Day, *Defenders of the Union, a survey of British and Irish unionism since 1801* (London, 2001), p. 56.

- Verse: 1 Hurrah for Repale! let the cry ring aloud,
And mountain and valley re-echo the din;
The blood seeking Sassennachs haughty and proud,
Will quail in their hearts when our war notes begin.
- 2 Too long they have crushed us, too long they have swayed,
But the term of their license will quickly be o'er,
though the cry of revenge has awhile been delayed,
Now raise it in earnest and pay off the score.
- 3 When Repale we have got there is nothing we'll want,
For Erin and freedom then make the air ring!
Good whisky and bafe you will have without scant,
And when we succeed I will soon be your king!
- 4 'Tis I'll lead the way, stick you fast to my tail,
But remember my boys— need I give you a hint,
You'll neither get whiskey, nor bafe, nor Repale,
Unless, my dear jewels, you *bring me the rint*.

However, *The Land of Shillelagh and O'Connell* goes further than just ignoring past sins and suggests that O'Connell was actively pursuing a policy of reconciliation. Even if this was the case given his role as the advocate for Roman Catholic Ireland, staunch or ultra Protestants were not willing to be seduced by what they considered to be a tool of the anti-Christ thus the song inhabits the further reaches of poetic fancy. This oversight as regards political actions and political reality displays the same element of wishful thinking that occurs in verse 5 of *The Repeal of the Union*, and which is prominent in the songs of the idealistic *Spirit of the Nation*, where, a rapprochement between Orange and Green, finds its most refined expression.

74

Text: *Native Swords, a volunteer song*. — *1st July, 1792*. Air *Boyne Water* by Thomas Davis. C. Gavan Duffy and Others, 2nd edition *The Spirit of the Nation, Ballads and Songs by the writers of the Nation* (Dublin, 1846), pp. 34-5. Excerpt

- Verse: 1 We've bent too long to braggart wrong,
While force our prayers derided ;
We've fought too long, ourselves among,
By knaves and priests divided ;
United now, no more we'll bow,
Foul faction, we discard it ;
And now, thank God ! our native sod,

Has native sword to guard it.

2 Like rivers, which, o'er valleys rich,
Bring ruin in their water,
On native land, a native hand
Flung foreign fraud and slaughter
From Dermot's crime to Tudor's time,
Our clans were our perdition ;
Religion's name, since then, became,
Our pretext for division.

4 But, now, no clan, nor factious plan,
The east and west can sunder –
Why Ulster e'er should Munster fear,
Can only wake our wonder.
Religion's cross, when union's lost,
And "royal gifts" retard it ;
And now, thank God ! our native sod,
Has Native Swords to guard it.

75

Text : *Song for July 12th 1843, Air -Boyne Water* by J. D. Fraser in C. Gavan Duffy and Others, 2nd edition *The Spirit of the Nation, Ballads and Songs by the writers of the Nation* (Dublin, 1846), pp. 35-6.

Verse: 1 Come– pledge again thy heart and hand–
One grasp that ne'er shall sever;
Our watchword be– "Our native land"–
Our motto – "Love for ever."
And let the Orange lily be,
Thy Badge, my patriot brother,
The everlasting Green for *me*;
And – we for one another.

2 Behold how green the gallant stem
On which the flower is blowing;
How in one heav'nly breeze and beam
Both flower and stem are glowing.
The same good soil sustaining both,
Makes both united flourish;
But cannot give the Orange growth,
And cease the Green to nourish.

3 Yea, more – the hand that plucks the flower,
Will vainly strive to cherish:
The stem blooms on – but in that hour
The flower begins to perish.
Regard them, then, of equal worth
While lasts their genial weather;
The time's at hand when into earth
The two shall sink together.

4 Ev'n thus be, in our country's cause,
Our party feelings blended ;
Till lasting peace, from equal laws,
On both shall have descended.
Till then the Orange lily be
Thy badge, my patriot brother–
The everlasting Green for *me* ;
And– we for one another.

The *Spirit of the Nation* contains many songs on the same theme, *The Irish Catholic to His Protestant Brother*; or Davis's *Orange and Green will carry the Day*, songs which appear to be written more in expectation rather than hope. These ballads which became associated with Young Ireland posed enough of a threat for a young Isaac Butt to decry them at an anti-repeal meeting in June 1843⁵⁴. The *Warder* reported that:

The book he (Butt) held in his hand was a republication of several of the political ballads which have been published in the columns of that journal (the *Nation*) – they were now collected into this book, and republished at a very cheap rate, and extensively circulated through the country; and he (Mr. Butt) did implore the earnest attention of the meeting, of the country, of the government, to the open and avowed principles declared in these ballads (hear, hear). They remembered the wise man who said, "Give me the making of the people's ballads, and I care not who makes the laws". The Repealers acted literally upon this principle; for while they deserted the House of Commons altogether, they circulated ballads . . . among the people (cheers).

Butt's address is strewn with quotes from the songs contained in the *Spirit of the Nation*, praising the poetry for its aesthetics and the poets for their style and intellect yet his aim is to provoke reaction from the loyal crowd by taking phrases such as 'ourselves alone' and twisting these to suit his own purpose:

They might learn from a foe – and while some persons were debating about the proper time for being loyal, and while some where praising the government for one thing and other blaming them for another, let the motto of the loyalists of Ireland be – independent of any ministry, and with interests dearer than any ministry at stake – To do at once what is to do, And trust 'ourselves alone'.⁵⁵

As regards the wished for reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant reality

⁵⁴ *Warder*, 17 June 1843.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

mocks this ideal when on examining the lyrics of *Native Swords* in a copy of the 2nd edition of the book in the National Library of Ireland and one finds a correction to the text, made in pencil, which blots out the word priest in verse one of the song and replaces it with spleens. As this minor act of vandalism shows Davis risked alienating his audience by suggesting that the priests were at one with the knaves in sowing the seeds of division and it was this non-partisan approach to the construction of a national identity that set him and ‘Young Ireland,’ (as O’Connell derisively called Davis’s bloc) on a collision course with O’Connell over the so called ‘Godless colleges’. This falling out appears not so much a rift as a spat and Davis and O’Connell apologised and pledged themselves to each other for the sake of Ireland and Repeal.⁵⁶ However, after Davis’s death in 1845 relations between Young Ireland and O’Connell deteriorated again, this time over the possibility of O’Connell entering Lord John Russell’s Whig government thus exposing his *penchant* for doing deals and accepting compromise over the unbending ideology of younger firebrands of the *Nation* group. The fault-lines which became apparent in O’Connell’s attack on Davis and the language he used of Old Ireland (Gaelic and Roman Catholic) verses the upstart and secular Young Ireland soon developed into a full blown schism and reignited the debate as to the ultimate goal of Irish nationalists.⁵⁷ Was the final solution for nationalism to be mere repeal of the Union and the setting up of an independent legislature under the Crown as the Repeal Association sought ; or, complete political separation culminating in sovereign independence, as a new generation of radical nationalists such as John Mitchel espoused? The rift continued to grow until O’Connell’s death in Black ‘47.

76

Text: *O’Connell’s Dead!* written and composed by P. M’Cabe, Carlow. Harding, B 19 (60).

Verse : 1 O’Connell’s dead, alas ! for Erin,
 Her sorrows and her wrongs,
 That patriot soul no more shall yearn,
 for the land of many songs.

 2 How are we changed– oh ! land of woe
 Since this great tribune died,
 What countless evils to us flow ;

⁵⁶Mulvey, pp 178-81.

⁵⁷MacDonagh, pp 265-96.

- In this unholy Saxon tied.
- 3 Ghastly famine's hideous form,
Stalks broadly through the land,
Fierce hunger with its gnawing worm,
Walks most boldly hand in hand.
 - 4 Extermination's iron rod,
The peasant's cabin sweeps,
And where the poor man prayed to God,
Now fatten flocks of sheep.
 - 5 The best and bravest of her sons,
Are exile's far away –
Manning the strangers battle guns,
In many a raging bloody fray,
 - 6 Spirit of a gallant race,
Martyred in this worthless strife,
Speak to your brethren words of peace
Tell them to spare their brother's life.
 - 7 Or if in battle ye must fight,
then fight with fearless heart and will,
For the cause of justice and of right,
On Tipperary's lofty hills.
 - 8 And more across the broad Atlantic,
Leaving friends and home behind,
Oh! the thought that drives them frantic,
Is that their rulers are so unkind.
 - 9 Let us pray that a day may yet come,
When our exile's returning shall float the green flag high,
And proudly bear it to their own home,
Where its sunburst shall wave to its God in the sky.

O'Connell's death in 1847 coincided with the worst year of the Potato Famine which spanned the period 1845-9. The Famine had an effect upon the country that has no comparison; the population decreased by approximately ten percent between 1845-51 with 800,000 people either dying or emigrating according to the census of 1851.⁵⁸ Although some suggest that earlier famines had been responsible for greater mortality rates than the mid 1840s event⁵⁹ and that the Great Famine earns its title merely because

⁵⁸Lee, p. 1.

⁵⁹E. M. Crawford, *Famine: the Irish experience 900-1900, subsistence crises and famines in Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1989).

it is the ‘last and best remembered,’⁶⁰ it cannot be denied that the timing of the Irish famine ensured that it would have devastating consequences for a society and a culture which was undergoing rapid change in response to the economic and industrial developments in the rest of the UK and further afield. As the catastrophe was played out a discourse emerged which presented it as a ‘visitation of God’ upon a shiftless and morally contemptible race. When viewed in these terms the Famine could be interpreted as a second physical front (the Second Reformation being the spiritual front) in the fight to reconstruct the Irish character and people in the image of their Anglo-Saxon neighbours across the Irish sea.⁶¹ For those politicians and commentators blinded by the abstract science of political economy the Famine threw up some stark yet simple choices: improve or die; progression or extermination; shape up or ship out, and for many the last choice proved the only option to ensure survival. Some landlords took advantage of provisions in the Poor law specifically one which held that those seeking relief had to quit their house and land thus allowing the landlord to clear their estates.⁶² One group announcing themselves as ‘Noblemen, gentlemen and landed proprietors desirous of promoting emigration as a means of giving effect to other measures for permanently improving the condition of Ireland . . .’ sought to encourage, under the sway of the doctrine of Robert Malthus,(1766-1834) the mass deportation of the Irish peasantry as official policy⁶³ as an alternative to the natural check, in Malthusian terms, of famine and death. State assisted emigration, on a wide scale, was seriously considered⁶⁴ until events overtook deliberations and by 1848, as Fitzpatrick put it, ‘the sense of urgency receded, largely because the extension of private emigration seemed to render state assistance unnecessary,’ yet some assistance was forthcoming at state, local, and philanthropic levels.⁶⁵

77

Text : *You can emigrate for nothing*. Tune : *There’s a good time coming*. White, vol. ii.

⁶⁰S. J. Donnelly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p. 194.

⁶¹Peter Gray, *Famine, land and politics* (Dublin, 1999), pp 227-83, henceforth *Famine*. . .

⁶²*Ibid.*, pp 295-6. David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1912* (Dublin,1984), p. 15.

⁶³*Report of the select committee of the House of Lords on colonization from Ireland together with minutes of evidence*, (202) [737] [737-II] H.C.1847 vi. p. 218.

⁶⁴Gray, *Famine* . . . pp 300-1.

⁶⁵Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1912* pp 17-20.

f. 190.

Verse: 1

You can emigrate for nothing boys,
You can emigrate for nothing,
do not toil and starve like slaves,
But trust yourselves across the waves,
And emigrate for nothing,
Then wait not for a better time,
Or till your purse be stronger,
But hasten to some foreign clime,
Don't wait a moment longer.

Chorus: You can emigrate for nothing boys,
You can emigrate for nothing,
You can emigrate to crown your joys,
Don't wait a moment longer.

2 You can emigrate for nothing boys,
You can emigrate for nothing;
Those mortal who their hard fate curse,
And think it cannot be much worse,
Can emigrate for nothing;
To lands where corn in plenty grows,
And trade is getting stronger,
Sure, every one will thrive that goes –
Don't wait a moment longer.

3 You can emigrate for nothing boys,
You can emigrate for nothing,
Pray do not see (or wish) your children dead,
Because they cry to you for bread—
But emigrate for nothing,
You then will soon see better days,
And your body will be stronger,
You'd be among the first who says –
Don't wait a moment longer.

4 You can emigrate for nothing, boys,
You can emigrate for nothing;
Yet strange to say, folks do not know,
Which is the best to stop or go —
Now they can go for nothing.
But every one at home who says,
Who should have gone when younger,
Ought in that house to end their days,
Where skilly tries their hunger.

5 You can emigrate for nothing, boys,
You can emigrate for nothing;
Then do not stop one moment here,
But take your wives and children dear,
And emigrate for nothing.

But should their love be great for friends,
For you it is much stronger;
By persuasion you'll soon gain your ends,
Don't wait a moment longer.

6 You can emigrate for nothing, boys,
You can emigrate for nothing;
And when your daily toil is done,
You'll write to tell your friends at home,
To emigrate for nothing.
Then do not fear the tempest's roar,
Though it were ten times stronger;
But gather up your little store,
Don't wait a moment longer.

The rationale behind the claims of the group of gentlemen mentioned above for, as they called it, 'Colonization from Ireland,' was predicated upon the *laissez faire* doctrine of political economy and individual responsibility. They reported that, 'Supposing it to be the aim of a poor law to render the owners of the soil responsible for the wellbeing of its inhabitants, the effect, whilst population continued vastly in excess of employment, would be a confiscation of the land, (under the aforementioned clause) and a more complete pauperizing of the poor . . .'⁶⁶ In other words, State interference with the rights of private property, was intolerable to the interested parties who were the authors of the report and it was a condition that could find no support within a newly dominant culture of free trade or as Mitchel expressed it a culture wherein, 'the markets must not be *led*'.⁶⁷ How intervention, as the second clause suggests, could act detrimentally upon an already desperate population was made clear, at least, in terms of the internal logic of the report:

There is a circle of evil which we believe cannot be broken through, save by a great mortality or a great emigration. Supposing starvation to be prevented this year by maintaining millions of destitute people at the public cost, what, we must ask, is to happen in the year 1848 and in the year 1849 ? . . . there are but two alternatives which can be suggested ; first, the introduction of capital ab extra to such an amount and its application in such a manner as will immediately and greatly increase production ; or, secondly, such a diminution of the numbers to be fed as will preserve them within the limits of the existing resources.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷John Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (perhaps)* (Dublin, 1861), p. 179. Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁸*Report of the select committee of the House of Lords on colonization from Ireland together with minutes of evidence*, (202) [737] [737-II] H.C.1847 vi. p. 202 *Minutes of evidence Appendix No. 25*.

The report comes down against the, ‘Introduction of capital ab extra,’ because this by itself, would not be sufficient to turn an inefficient labour force into a profitable and productive one. Without a serious reduction in the number of farm labourers, and the report gives the number of Irish labourers needed to work, ‘100 Arable Acres,’ as being eight men, while in England for the same acreage the figure given is three, (somewhat contradictory with Dr. Kane’s claims for Irish superiority) the report explains that no amount of, ‘artificial introduction of capital by state advances . . .’ could be expected to break this, ‘circle of evil.’ Interestingly one of the most telling phrases in the report echoes the Evangelicals’ critique of the Irish Roman Catholic:

The transition must be made from a lower to a higher system of husbandry, as well as from a lower to a higher kind of food. Farms must be enlarged, labour must be combined, a whole population must, in short, be educated afresh, and induced to alter their habits, character, and mode of life, before the most lavish application of capital can produce the desired result.⁶⁹

This recipe for social engineering is probably the most forthright political, rather than religious or moral, declaration of a policy of Anglicisation. Zimmermann catalogues the progress of the catastrophe of the famine and the ensuing emigration through such songs as *The Rotten Potatoes* and *The Emigrant’s Farewell to Donegal*,⁷⁰ both published in 1847 the nadir of that terrible period. The propaganda value of the event for Irish nationalism was not fully realised during the worst period of the crisis, although the *Famine Poetry*⁷¹ of Young Ireland continued to harangue the conscience of government through the pages of the *Nation* but it was not until John Mitchel coined the phrase that, ‘the Almighty God sent the potato blight, but the English created the Famine,’⁷² and emotionally exploited the thought processes of a parliament which contemplated the idea of mass emigration, that culpability was placed beyond the realm of revision in the popular mind for succeeding generations. The effects of the Famine combined with the grotesquely insensitive actions of some British politicians and the establishment, evidenced by the *Select Committee Report*, and the haughty attitude of the British media handed Mitchel and the newly radicalized Irish nationalists a victory

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Zimmerman, pp. 236-8.

⁷¹John Mitchel, *The last conquest of Ireland (perhaps)*, pp 208-9.

in the propaganda war that still resounds. Indeed the idea of the British establishment's complicity in the tragedy of the Famine was fastened in the popular imagination most demonstrably by the late twentieth century song *The fields of Athenry* through its association with the Irish Roman Catholic diaspora in Scotland and ironically in certain of the bastions of English cultural identity, the soccer stadiums of the North West of England especially those in Manchester and Liverpool both receptacles of large numbers of Irish emigrants.

Whatever moral capital nationalist propagandists could gain from official incompetence or the governments dithering between non or limited intervention and the unremitting crassness of the emigration debates inspired by the doctrine of political economy, the positive spin on the process itself as portrayed in *You can emigrate for Nothing* is countered in the following comic song which diaries the travails one might be subject to and which might make the settler think twice before embarking on such a precarious journey:

78

Text: *The Joys of Emigration*. Printer: O'Keefe 18, George's st, Waterford. White col., vol. ii. f. 2.

Verse: 1 All you Whose minds are bent on straying,
 Listen now to what I'm saying,
 whilst I without exaggeratin'
 Relate the joys of Emigration,
 If England causes many a nettler,
 You'll find Swan River, quite a settler;
 And though they boast it has no equal,
 Hear the facts and Judge the sequel.

Chorus: Listen folks of every station,
 These are the joys of Emigration,

2 Upon the island first appearing,
 Your piece of land requires some clearing;
 And ere the place is fit to stop in,
 You must for months the trees be chopping,
 Around a fire at night you're hovering,
 Your clothes the part of your covering,
 As dozing then you dream of riches,
 A Crocodile seizes you by the breeches

⁷²John Mitchel, *Apology for the British government in Ireland* (Dublin, 1861), p. 53.

Listen folks . . .

3 You hungry awake, and as you peck first,
A Kangaroo walks into breakfast ;
You feel aggrieved, and take he live ill,
So beat his brains out with a shovel,
Upon the instant that you're a victor,
In walks his friend the Boa-Constrictor,
Who, just to prove he has no manners got,
Bolts your toast, and swallows your tea-pot.
Listen folks . . .

4 The ground all clear, that you'd to cut on,
You choose a spot to build a hut on,
Your seed you sow and ere tis harred in,
Wild men come in and spoil your garden;
With gun you put them to flight then,
For which they fire your hut at night then,
And though your body gets no hurt on,
You're glad to escape with your old skirt on,
Listen folks . . .

5 Deprived of house and bed and bedding,
Without a house to put your head in;
You begin to grieve that you're a rover,
And curse the ship that brought you over ;
As beneath the trees that form your vistas,
Sand-flies cover you o'er with blisters ;
When to your wife you then won't show you,
You're such a *guy*, she would not know you,
Listen folks . . .

6 Now having passed a year or two there,
With still the same dull dreary view there;
You find tis but a galling fetter,
Without a chance of getting better;
You take stock to judge quite willing.
but find you're minus every shilling ;
When quite enraged at being worsted,
You curse the place and leave disgusted.⁷³

Despite the potential for disaster as outlined in *The joys of emigration* this course was undertaken by 8 million Irish people between 1801-1912.⁷⁴ Not all were reluctant participants in the process and voluntary migration can be seen as pro-active response towards an unpromising or at worst non-existent future.⁷⁵ Dissatisfaction with

⁷³Fitzpatrick estimates that by 1872 the Emigration Commissioners assisted approx 140,000 people to settle in the Australian colonies, p. 18.

⁷⁴Ibid., p.1.

⁷⁵W. R. Wilde, *Irish popular superstitions*, p. 23.

conditions at home no longer had to be endured. The lure of the New World was strong, state-assistance with the price of passage to Australia and the relative cheapness of passage to Canada made these preferred destinations in the early part of the Famine⁷⁶; while after 1848 the California gold rush drew the disaffected to the U.S. like a magnet, and the development of Irish communities or neighbourhoods, in the urban centres of Britain, and the U.S. speeded up and to some degree lessened the arduous and lonely nature of the process of emigration. The emigrant's lot was not all bleak and the experience of exile did not always have to have the sentimental longing for return that informed Moore's and the romantic nationalist opinion of emigration as portrayed in the penultimate verse of song 76 *O'Connell's dead!* In fact Fitzpatrick argues that the Irish emigrant was the least likely to seek return to his or her homeland compared to members of other ethnic groups such as the Italians, Germans or English.⁷⁷ As the fragments from following song, *The Irish Emigrant's Address to his Irish Landlord*, show, emigration could be interpreted as a form of resistance to both history and the social forces which tried to maintain the status quo; as William Allingham put it when writing of the following song, 'this song exults in the turning of the tables by which their 'honours,' the landlords, are to be reduced to the poor-house and *India Buck* (Indian-corn porridge).'

79

Text: *The Irish Emigrant's Address to his Irish Landlord*, Air - *O Susanna, don't you cry for me* fragment : William Allingham, *Irish Ballad Singers and Irish Street Ballads* in Charles Dickens (ed.), *Household Words* No. 94.(London, 1852), p. 366.

Excerpt

I'm now going to a country where
 From poor rates- I'll be free,
 For poor Ireland's going to the dogs
 As fast as fast can be,
 You know you'd like to stop me,
 So I'll do it on the sly,
 With me I'll take a half-year's rent,
 Your Honour- won't you cry ?

Chorus O, your Honour! – the Poor-house is your dart,
 Before, like those by famine dies, your childer breaks your
 heart.

⁷⁶Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1912* pp 9-13.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 7.

I don't believe I ped the rint
Within the last three years,
And so I owe your Honour
Some trifle of arrears;
I mention this, because I think,
You'd like to say *good-bye*
For these arrears I have them snug,
Your Honour, don't you cry.

I hope your Honour may have luck,
When all the country's waste,
And when they give out-door relief,
May your honour get a taste,
But if they build a union,
For the landlords there to fly,
And you get in— why, then I think
Your Honour need not cry.

Now, when I'm landed in New York,
That moment I will get
A gallon of rum, and drink your health,
With what I'm in your debt.

Allingham writes:

This ballad, treating, not without sarcastic force, of passing events and sharp actualities, must sink fast into the ears of its audiences, and somewhat deeply too. The copy we quote was purchased from two women, singing it loud and shrill through a town on a fair or market day. They seemed to have plenty of eager customers, and more attentive listeners.

It might be instructive to note that the tune for this song is the Blackface standard *O Susanna* written by Stephen Foster. The use of a Blackface air in this song suggests a certain amount of cultural dissemination which is often ignored in Irish historiography and the content of the song alludes to a degree of individual agency which nationalist historians often fail to grant to their subjects who are most likely portrayed as victims of history.

Within a year of the publication of the *Report of the Select Committee*, while parts of Ireland were still gripped by the terrors of hunger and disease, a small group of nationalists led by William Smith O'Brien and including James Stephens, Michael Doheny, Thomas Francis Meagher and Terrence Bellew McManus, inspired by the Revolutions in Europe which seemed to be sweeping all before them, became embroiled

in what could be described as a political sub-plot with tragicomic overtones (two men were shot dead by police)⁷⁸ and which was derisively dismissed as the, ‘affair of Widow McCormack’s cabbage garden.’ This was to be the last hurrah for nationalist Ireland in the guise of Young Ireland and the first agitation for repeal of the union and the establishment of an independent Ireland through recourse to physical force.

Transportation to the colonies for those who participated in the debacle along with mass emigration transplanted the sense of injustice felt by those who could pinpoint the beginning of their misery which coincided and therefore must be caused by the enactment of Union. This accusation is amply illustrated in the following two songs which advertise the list of complaints and help to mythologise Ireland’s decline and whose only redemption can come from breaking the constitutional connection:

80

Text: *The distressed sons of Erin*. NLI SongBook 7 Call # J. 39988 (Dublin). BS 19.

- Verse: 1 Sweet Erin my country how long will your [illegible, possibly grieve]
Exhausted and torn no hope of relie [sic, possibly relief]
Your bright shining sons to America are bound,
That land where sweet union and freedom is found.
- 2 Our Builders are down that staple fine trade,
By which our poor labourers and others got bread,
The industrious weaver so cold on his Loom,
For want of employment is obliged to roam.
- 3 A few years ago our Country did shine,
The friends of St. Patrick the Shamrock did entwine,
Our Members of Parliament so grand they did go,
And our bright shining tradesmen the gold they did show
- 4 Oh! fatal was the day that the Union passed away,
The cause of our ruin and [illegible possibly, road to decay],
The nobs of our country to London must go.
And our natives are distressed in sorrow and woe,
- 5 Sweet Ireland most dear, farewell and adieu,
My heart it relents at parting with you,
To the wilds of America your sons they are fled,
Torn from their families to seek for some bread.
- 6 The distress of our country reaches to all,
The tradesmen the labourers, the great and the small,

⁷⁸Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848* (Cork, 1849), pp 262-7.

No difference of religion, no bribery or gain,
Should oblige quarrels when our burden's the same.

- 7 Let religious dissensions be now laid aside,
May the friends of our country never divide,
But entwine round our Harp so noble and free,
Like true hearted Irishmen for ever to be... [last verse is illegible]

Text : *Union NLI Song Book 6 Songs, Ballads and Poetry of Ireland* Call # J 82108
(1865).

Verse: 1 How did they pass the Union?
By perjury and fraud:
By slaves, who sold for place or gold
Their country and their God,
By all the savage acts that yet
Have followed England's track:
The pitchcap and the bayonet,
The gibbet and the rack,
And thus was passed the Union,
By Pitt and Castlereagh.
Could Satan send for such an end
More worthy tools than they?

2 How thrive we by the Union?
Look round your native land:
In ruined trade and wealth decayed
See slavery's surest brand;
Our glory as a nation gone,
Our substance drained away,
A wretched province trampled on,
Is all we've left to-day,
then curse with me the Union,
That juggle foul and base,
the baneful root that bore such fruit,
of ruin and disgrace.

3 And shall it last, this Union,
To grind and waste us so?
O'er hill and lea, from sea to sea,
All Ireland thunders No!
Eight million necks are stiff to bow—
We know our might as men,
We conquered once before, and now,
We'll conquer once again;
And rend the cursed Union,
And fling it to the wind—
and Ireland's laws in Ireland's cause,
Alone our hearts shall bind!

Mass emigration from Ireland to the U. S. continued after the Famine and it supplied not only a labour force but thousands of men to swell the ranks of the armies of the North and to a lesser degree the South⁷⁹ as the American Civil war gradually traced out its bloody arc from beginning to end. Some Irishmen were already practised in the arts of war prior to the attack on Fort Sumter due to their participation in the state militias, such as the New York 69th, an exclusively Irish outfit. The rhetoric of Irish nationalism was rehearsed in these breeding grounds and in the secret societies such as, the Emmet Monument Association and the Irishmen's Civil and Military Republican Union, at times by participants of the 1848 rebellion. James Stephens was one among many stars from the Young Ireland firmament,⁸⁰ who kept the dream of Irish independence alive and helped to give birth to the Fenian movement in the 1850s. On 5-6 March 1867 the culmination of years of planning, conspiracy, training, aborted risings and false dawns, the Fenian Brotherhood finally managed to launch an attack upon the British forces in Ireland. It was, according to Comerford, not so much an attack as a, 'hosting on the hillside,' ; with the intention of disrupting as seriously as possible the smooth running of military operations, such as troop movements, without actually engaging with crown forces until support from Irish-America arrived.⁸¹

Charles Villiers Stanford recalled the event:

The Fenian rising at this time caused a certain amount of mild excitement in Dublin circles. We knew the race too well to expect anything so serious as barricades, and the native love of a scrimmage with the 'Polis' was the most we had to dread. One flash of the pan at Tallaght near Dublin was the nearest approach to a pitched battle. It lasted a few minutes only, and a wag compared the Fenians to the Persians, pointing out that the Persians fled from Greece, but the Fenians fled from Tallaght (the village is pronounced Talla). There were Homeric accounts in the papers of three country policemen vanquishing an army of three thousand, and the whole affair had a strong family resemblance to Smith O'Brien's historic cabbage garden. The more serious developments of the movement were over the channel, at Chester and Manchester.⁸²

It might be deemed yet another damp squib which was over before it had begun

⁷⁹James. P. Gannon, *Irish rebels, Confederate tigers: the 6th Louisiana Volunteers, 1861-1865* (Mason City, Iowa, 1998).

⁸⁰Comerford, *The Fenians in context: Irish politics and society 1848-1882*, (Dublin, 1998), pp 33-4.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, pp 122-138.

but the event and its aftermath provided a chapter in the narrative of Irish nationalism and another company of heroes for the ballad singers and song-smiths to eulogise. In fact it was the campaign to rescue two Fenian prisoners in Manchester, alluded to by Stanford, which threw up some of the most popular songs and rallying cries like, *The smashing of the van or the three Manchester martyrs; A lamentation on Allen, Larkin and O'Brien* ; and most popular of all, *God Save Ireland*, songs which coloured the nationalist palette and promoted either consciously or subliminally the idea that death and self-sacrifice were now the true measure of patriotism.

82

Text : *God Save Ireland, Air-Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching* by T. D. Sullivan, *Nation* 7 Dec. 1867.

- Verse: 1 High upon the gallows tree,
 Swung the noble-hearted Three,
 By the vengeful tyrant stricken in their bloom;
 But they met him face to face,
 with the courage of their race,
 And they went with souls undaunted to their doom.
 God save Ireland! said the heroes;
 God save Ireland! said they all:
 Whether on the scaffold high
 Or the battlefield we die,
 Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall!
- 2 Girt around with cruel foes,
 Still their spirit proudly rose,
 For they thought of hearts that loved them far, and near;
 Of the millions true and brave
 O'er the ocean's swelling wave,
 And the friends in holy Ireland ever dear.
 God save Ireland! said they proudly;
- 3 Never till the latest day,
 Shall the memory pass away,
 Of the gallant lives thus given for our land;
 But on the cause must go,
 Amidst joy, or weal, or woe,
 Till we've made our isle a nation free and grand.
 God save Ireland! say we proudly;
 God save Ireland! say we all.

How different the sentiments expressed in these songs are from the restrained

⁸²C. V. Stanford, *Pages from an unwritten diary* (London, 1914), pp 93-4.

and positively pacific ballads that comment upon O'Connell's agitation e.g. *the Catholic rent* which advises its listeners to 'Be obedient to the laws of the nation,' or these lines from *The Glorious repeal meeting held at Tara Hill*, 'We'll surely gain the glorious fight / Without the force of arms,' by the late 1860s then, moral force had been joined if not superseded by physical force as a legitimate tool for nationalists in order to win their point. However, for these nationalists, whether they emigrated or chose to stay in Ireland; whether they espoused constitutional or military means, the call to return to the golden age of legislative independence was never far from their lips and the fulfilment of this wish was touted as a panacea for all the social and economic ills which could be conflated into the one word, 'Union.'

For Catholic Ireland, union, without the passage of an act to secure Roman Catholic emancipation, was a union that was stillborn and the war against France merely acted as a perfume to disguise the stench of putrescence. When the war finally came to an end and the economy began to decline, due to the return of demobilised soldiers and a slump in demand of agricultural production, in turn leading to a re-organisation of the traditional patterns of agriculture,⁸³ it appeared that all those predictions foretold in the anti-Union songs regarding the flight of capital, investment, prestige, and power were merely being fulfilled. Incremental re-adjustments, the reluctant tweaking of the system, by various British administrations, and most reluctantly by Tory administrations, designed to placate an intemperate and volatile race was always playing catch up in an endless cycle of concession and demand. The emancipation campaign had seemed to prove to Irish Catholics that the only way they could get what they wanted was by mass mobilisation which carried with it the implied threat of violence if their wishes were thwarted. Brinkmanship was O'Connell's *forte* but on the subject of repeal he was always about to blink first because the logical conclusion to the numbers game being played out, the elephant in the corner that dare not speak its name, was a Catholic controlled Irish parliament and therefore Protestant Ireland's worst nightmare. Moore, the quintessential parlour Paddy, knew this and the possibility that it would lead to complete separation but he could only broach the

⁸³Tony Gray, *The Orange Order* (London, 1972), p.98.

subject in his cups at home in Sloperon. But there was another section of the population who had a very different outlook on the constitutional connection and it is to the songs of the Unionist, Loyalist and Orange party who constructed another discourse around Irish nationalism that I now turn my attention.

Chapter 6

Shamrock, Rose and Thistle.

The construction of a nationalist Irish identity or any identity for that matter as it is conducted through ongoing discourses comes about not only from the point of view of the subject but also from the discourses that the 'other' construct. In the previous chapter we saw how the union of Great Britain and Ireland became the epicentre of discontent among the majority population. In the minds of this audience the union became synonymous with economic decline, political impotence and sectarian privilege as each grievance was brought into focus as and when necessary by anti-unionists and Repealers. Repeal of the union promised a return to a golden age

83

Text: *The Splendour of the Old Hat*. Printed : Kelly, W (Waterford) NLI Irish Chap Books c1830 Call No. LO P140. Credited to Samuel Ferguson in Song Book 6 NLI *Songs, Ballads and Poetry of Ireland* Call # J 82108 (1865) *No 1*.

- Verse: 1 Hibernia's sons I pray attend,
 Whilst I unfold my tale,
 the former bloom of my old hat
 In anguish I will bewail,
 When first I bought it on old
 Erin's isle, our blessings were not few,
 the laurel green revived no spleen
 When my old hat was new.
- 2 When my old hat I purchased first,
 It was in Erin's Isle,
 Kind Heaven upon our labour
 The propitious seem'd to smile,
 No jaring wife or envious joys,
 Could our fond heart subdue,
 Both peace and plenty did abound
 When my old had was new.
- 3 The farmer when bright Sol arose
 To traverse the fragrant field,
 To view the works of nature
 And to see his forefold yield,
 Each nymph and swain trip o'er the plain,
 Amidst the balmy dew,
 Industrying sweat, but harmless love

- When my old hat was new.
- 4 What total desolation has fell,
 On St. Patrick's isle,
 Since the nobles of our nation
 Emigrates to a foreign clime,
 And to their great dishonour
 From their native shore they flew,
 No such injustice did preside,
 When my old hat was new.
- 5 With happiness we once were bless'd
 Within this fruitful place,
 No care or strife perplex'd our lives
 All did reside in peace,
 Industry on each brow displayed,
 No hardship could we view.
 No paper money then was paid
 When my old hat was new.
- 6 The earth spontaneously produced
 Its golden harvest rare,
 Our merchants stores had plenty,
 Irishmen could spend a pound or two,
 The quart and glass
 Went merrily round
 When my old hat was new.
- 7 No foreign or domestic joys
 Disturbed our sweet repose
 And paddy's sons when armed well
 Defied all daring foes,
 No party marks or lodges vile
 No orange tinged with blue,
 No, nor rebellion was not known
 When my old hat was new.
- 8 Alas how altered is the times
 Rich folks dispise the poor
 And pays them off their wages
 Quite scornful at the door.
 Our tradesmen they are so oppress'd
 Can scarce get work to do,
 It was not so in Bonny's days,
 When my old hat was new.
- 9 The Lord once more to us restore
 Good trade and lasting peace
 May we abide in mutual love
 And brotherly embrace
 May Irishmen of every sect

Industrious paths pursue,
May such good times once more abound,
As when my old hat was new.

The vision of Elysium portrayed in *The splendor of the Old Hat* was countered by the anti-Repeal side and the following song, which comes from the later period of Home Rule, is a good example of how the prospect of the undoing of the Union was presented to the Protestant and unionist people of Ireland:

84

Text: *Glorious Days for ould Ireland*. White, vol. iii. f 270

- Verse: 1 Assist ye Muses me wake invintion,
Inspire me jaynus while now I pin
The agitation through Eryans nation,
Her Parliament to restore agin.
- 2 Ough, wor I Sazor, or the great Belshazor,
Or Nebokudnazor who wrote o' Throy
Shure its I'd be thrating and celebraten,
The greatness that we'd thin enjoy.
- 3 We'll have apparitions and smoky kitchens,
And lovely althars all dhressed compleate;
Faix when we're victorious weel be uprorious,
And the air all glorious with the smell of mate.
- 4 The girls dhressed in habits out shooting rabbits,
Or dancen beautiful upon the flure;
And the pigs, the craythurs, will enjoy their nathurs,
In a gutther puddle forninst the dure.
- 5 No more bycottin, or in prison rottin,
Nor bailiffs coomin for to take our kays,
No constabullary or other dhromedary
To interfere with our pleasant ways.
- 6 Shure weel all goo raslin up at Dublin Castle,
Wid no durty polees to take up the ground,
And Miss Anna Parnell, that pleasant darlin,
Sheel be handin the tay and the whiskey round.
- 7 Wud busums burstin, and for whiskey thirstin,
Great O'Connell's statchya will be up right soon.
Shure there'll be the scrimmage for to see his image.
And his lovely countenance just like the moon.
- 8 Its beyant all tellin how weel be yellin,

And our vices swellin like a big thromboon,
What jokes and funin, and the pape runnin
For to see the Liberathur done up in stone.

9 And thin the patherns and days of fitin,
which we delight in, agin ill be;
And our swate clergy, the heaven's reward 'im
Thayl be gardin us from heresy.

10 We'll have good livin and we'll be givin
Ourselves to coort, and dhrink, and fight,
Then we'll have good atin and fun and thratin,
And swate divarsion from mornin till night.

11 Now for the conclusion to my eefusion,
And for to finish what I have pinned,
May the great Saint Austin likewise Chrisostin,
And the Pope of rome upon us descind.

12 May Saint Theresa likewise Lucreesha,
Grant unto us that we never fail;
May swate Saint Pether be our royal protekther;
And thin, bedad boys, weel have Repale.

The language of this song is in the most hackneyed form of stage Irish, and the author had a good ear for parody particularly in grasping one of the stylistic conventions of the popular Irish ballad this being the overblown misapplication of classical and biblical references in verse two, a characteristic of Irish balladry which Zimmerman terms, 'pseudo-learned allusions.'¹ But looking past the style to the content brings us to the crux of this chapter, to the meaning of Irish identity for the Unionist community. Zimmermann pays scant regard to this element of Irish street balladry and publishes only seven songs from the loyalist or unionist repertoire. This oversight is easily explained when one remembers that Loyalist, Orange, and Unionist culture and tradition lay claim to a British identity which makes terms like rebel and songs of rebellion moot in the context of Ireland's relationship with Britain. The overt, even didactic expression of British identity that accompanies the Orange and Unionist rituals has confirmed their

¹Zimmermann, p. 99.

relationship with the British establishment, particularly with the ultra Tories, and has seen them very definitely inside the imperial tent. This is not to say that Unionist or Loyalist identity is never at odds with the object of their devotions i.e. British rule; there were times during the nineteenth century in the 1830s² and under Gladstone's various administrations from the 1860s to the 1890s when the particular strain of Irish Unionism and its distinctive idea of British identity was out of step with the reforming ideals of modernising governments.

In *Glorious Days for ould Ireland* the references to boycott, O'Connell's statue and Anna Parnell date the song to the decade of the 1880s when the economic pressure of the Land League and the Ladies' Land League was tied to the political demand for Home Rule or Repeal by another name. In this period Irish nationalism advanced on two fronts. On the one hand the Land League, headed by Charles Stewart Parnell but driven by Michael Davitt, engineered a campaign designed to force the British government into drawing up legislation dealing with the outstanding issues which Gladstone's first land act of 1870 failed to address. Alongside the Fenian leader John Devoy, Davitt and Parnell instigated the New Departure, an idea which was first aired in Devoy's telegram to Parnell of October 1878, but which finally began to take shape in June 1879.³ There were a number of strands in Devoy's proposal but the main point was to tie the land question to the national question. This was something of a break with Fenian, I. R. B. and *Clan na Gael* hardline policy as it proposed to temper the men of action's steel of uncompromising physical force by giving its backing to parliamentarians such as Parnell. However, the Irish National Land League (21 Oct. 1879) took on a militant aspect, which espoused the practices of intimidation and social ostracism during what became known as the Land War (1879-82), although these tactics were, in fact, old reliable coping strategies when it came to dealing with social crises. Whether it was through this campaign or Gladstone's natural instinct of 'justice for Ireland' or a combination of both,⁴ a number of increasingly interventionist land acts

²Tony Gray, pp 121-32.

³T. W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish revolution 1846-82*, (Oxford, 1981), p. xi ; Comerford, *The Fenians in Context*, pp 225-8.

⁴Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: an Irish history, 1800-2000* (London, 2003), p. 43.

were brought forward (see below pp 309-13). Many among the British establishment considered these acts to be detrimental to the economic status quo because they were perceived as altering the traditional relationship between landlord and tenant, in favour of the tenant.⁵ The New Departure was, it appeared, bearing fruit, perhaps not in the way that Devoy had intended, as 'land' took on a life of its own and soon overshadowed the political question, for the time being at least,⁶ but it did bring the forces of nationalism and agricultural reform together. On the other hand Parnell in his guise as leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party was gaining support for the idea of Home Rule from the Liberal Party and Gladstone's policy of providing justice for Ireland was generating a reaction from the Tory, Church of Ireland and the Orange Order which would finally coalesce into a brand of British nationalism⁷ which bolstered Protestant ethnic identity. This sense of identity was founded, theoretically at least, on the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Declaration of Right of the following year, but more prosaically it found its most ebullient expression in the Protestant William III's victory over the forces of the Catholic James II, with the political touchstone of the legislative union thrown in, every episode which served to humiliate the Roman Catholic and Gaelic Irish population became a locus for this messianic sense of identity. The fact that the north eastern corner of the island was the only region to industrialise heavily with the employment and relative wealth that such development brings, coupled to the fact that it was also the area where protestantism was predominant⁸ seemed to support the idea that Ulster Protestants, who claimed descent from seventeenth century English and Scots settlers, were the beneficiaries of divine providence, a chosen people.⁹ Any act perceived to upset this

⁵W. E. Vaughan, 'An assessment of the economic performance of Irish landlords, 1851-81' in *Varieties of tension*, p. 181 cited in Comerford, *Fenians* . . . p. 223.

⁶Bew, *Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-82* (New Jersey, 1979), pp 49-54.

⁷Alvin Jackson, 'Irish Unionism, 1870-1922' in D. G. Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds.), *Defenders of the Union A survey of British and Irish unionism since 1801* (London, 2001), p. 116.

⁸Moody, p. 28.

⁹James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National identity Since 1885* (London, 1995), pp. 23-45. Loughlin quotes from T. B Macaulay's, *The History of England* and E. Ashmead-Bartlett's speech delivered in the Town Hall, Westminster, 22 Feb., 1887 both of which stress the Anglo-Saxon basis for identity in east Ulster.

eminent position was therefore an act against the will of God, and by extension the constitution. Whig/Liberal policies towards some form of accommodation with Roman Catholic Ireland from the 1830s onward seemed to be aimed at frustrating God's will.

The disestablishment of the Anglican church in Ireland has been called, 'Gladstone's first great Irish measure,'¹⁰ and it seemed to give proof to the great fear that had dogged the Protestant population throughout the century and which we encountered in the previous chapter on religion in the song *Catholic Emancipation*¹¹:

A plague on these Papists, they'll make such a pother,
When once they've *converted* their Bill to an Act,
They'll always be teasing for something or other,
Concessions no quiet will purchase...
...They'll tell us, that still they're oppressed –disappointed,
And must have a touch at our Churches....

The Irish Church Act (1869) was the first component in the programme of Gladstone's 'mission . . . to pacify Ireland.'¹² The other elements of this strategy were Land Reform and at least a willingness to consider the possibility of Home Rule, an idea to which he was finally converted in 1885. However, seen from a Unionist perspective disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland appears as merely the first in a litany of concessions to the Fenian threat which had become real in the failed rebellion of 1867 ; the bungled Manchester rescue 18 September and the Clerkenwell prison bombing (which killed 12 innocent people) on 13 December of that same year.¹³ Disestablishment of the protestant episcopal church leading to partition of the English and Irish churches has been called by Moody, 'the first institutional breach in the union of Great Britain and Ireland'.¹⁴ This event in combination with Gladstone's attempts to 'do justice' to Ireland¹⁵ in the aftermath of, 'an armed attack on the order of our national life . . .'¹⁶ was seen by both British nationalists and Irish Unionists as capitulating in the

¹⁰W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland V Ireland under the Union* (Oxford, 1989), p. 272.

¹¹*The Protestant ; or true blue loyal songs . . .* (excerpt)

¹²Lord Eversley, G. J. Shaw Lefevre, *Gladstone and Ireland, the Irish policy of parliament from 1850-1894* (London, 1912), p. 27.

¹³R. V. Comerford, 'Gladstone's first Irish enterprise, 1864-70' in Vaughan (ed.) *A New History of Ireland V* p. 442. Moody, *Davitt*, pp 51-2.

¹⁴Moody, *Davitt*, pp 117-9.

¹⁵*Times*, 6 Aug. 1868, quoted in Moody, p. 118.

¹⁶*Times* 26 Nov. 1867.

face of Fenian violence.¹⁷

85

Text: *To College Green? Yes!– No!! Union* 9 Apr. 1887.

Verse: 1 Oh! Paddy dear! and did you hear
 The end of the debate?
 Our hopes of Home Rule crushed again!
 And we with joy elate.
 We surely thought, that what we sought –
 Or all we dared to own–
 Was no vain dream! by artful scheme,
 The Grand Old Man made known,
 Our Members – sent from Parliament –
 Would meet in College Green,
 And God Save Ireland should be sung,
 And not God Save the Queen.

2 I met this day the uncrowned king,
 With others of his band,
 Said he, “My boy, we’ll now employ
 Our lads in I-re- land–
 The Grand Old Man showed us the plan,
 We’ll ring the ‘Chapel Bell’
 We’ll pay no rent and Parliament,
 Will think on Clarkenwell;
 And they’ll submit, and us permit,
 To meet in College Green,
 And God Save Ireland shall be sung,
 And not God Save the Queen.

The references to Clarkenwell and to the non-payment of rent in *To College Green Yes ! - No!* are to remind the audience/reader of the part that the Fenians and the Land League played in framing and maintaining what appear as Catholic Ireland’s insatiable demands thus raising protestant levels of insecurity. Concession after concession seemed to fall into the lap of nationalist agitators and all to the detriment of unionism and the loyal population of Ireland. In 1870 Gladstone oversaw the first of his Land Acts whereby a version the Ulster custom in which compensation for improvements made by the tenant was made law and applied to the whole island.¹⁸ The Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act¹⁹ fell far short of the wishes of the catholic tenantry and their representatives. This act was intended to give a semblance of security to

¹⁷J. L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish nation* (London, 1938), pp 96-7.

¹⁸Eversley, pp 41-50.

¹⁹Bill to amend Law relating to Occupation and Ownership of Land in Ireland 1870 (29) ii, 259 [33 Vict].

tenants, as it proposed to put a brake upon the landlord's ability to raise the rents excessively and evict arbitrarily without at least incurring some penalty to his pocket.²⁰ At least this was the theory behind the move. Gladstone explained his reasons behind promoting the bill in a letter to Cardinal Manning the Archbishop of Westminster:

The policy of the Bill is this, to prevent the Landlord from using this terrible weapon of undue and unjust eviction by so framing the handle that it shall cut his hands with the sharp edge of pecuniary damages... Wanton eviction will, as I hope, be extinguished... And if they extinguish wanton eviction, they will also extinguish those demands for *unjust* augmentations of rent, which are only formidable to the occupier because the power of wanton, or arbitrary eviction is behind them.²¹

In the second reading in the House of Commons Gladstone defended the bill against criticism from Disraeli, who claimed that it 'would affect the security of all landlords and all property, without giving Ireland any advantage,' by outlining the three main provisions:

One was the confirmation of Irish customs. Another grand provision was the assertion of the principle that improvements made by the tenant were the property of the tenant. And a third principle of the Bill, which was by far the most prominent in the lengthened statement it was my duty to inflict upon the House was that damages for eviction were to be paid to the tenant.²²

It was quite an achievement for Gladstone to get it past his cabinet, let alone parliament, as many, such as the Duke of Argyll, Lord Clarendon (until his death in June 1870), and Robert Lowe Chancellor of the Exchequer, were old school political economists who saw the bill in a similar light to Disraeli as interference with contract and property rights. Clarendon himself said that the Land Bill was, 'an attempt to bribe the tenant into obedience to the laws by subsidizing [him] out of the pocket of the landlord',²³ although the inevitable coercion act that followed could be said to have been the stick accompanying the carrot. When the bill finally passed its main provision of compensation had been altered in the Lords by the Tory Lord Cairns to remove the clause regarding, 'non-payment of rent due to special circumstances' which meant that in times of dire need such as the West of Ireland experienced later in the decade that the

²⁰Moody, *Davitt*, pp 118-9.

²¹Letter to Cardinal Manning, 16 Feb. 1870 quoted in Hammond, p. 100. Italics in the original.

²²Hammond, p. 101.

²³Richard Shannon, *Gladstone Heroic Minister 1865-1898* (London, 1999), p. 83.

Landlord still had the right to evict free of any penalty. Gladstone was fearful that more changes forced by the Conservatives in the Committee stage would, ‘effectually maim the measure and make it useless for its purpose’²⁴ an eventuality which came to pass. For the Irish Bishops the measure fell short of providing security for the tenant ; for Irish nationalists like Davitt, who saw land tenure as a pressure point in British policy toward Ireland it was too little too late, an provided too good an opportunity to miss. This mealymouthed reception from Roman Catholic and nationalist Ireland, and Gladstone’s behaviour in regard to land and Home Rule in later years, only served to reinforce Unionist and Tory opinion that Gladstone was regularly being hoodwinked by the silver tongued rapacious Irish, as the humourists Sellar and Yeatman observed pointedly, ‘Gladstone . . . spent his declining years trying to guess the answer to the Irish Question ; unfortunately whenever he was getting warm, the Irish secretly changed the Question’²⁵. Justice for Ireland required radical, root and branch reform but the measures could only be adopted incrementally thus it appeared to nationalists that they were continually being short-changed and to unionists that they were constantly being overcharged. The following song satirises the efforts of the Land League agitation and parodies one of the hallowed songs from an earlier period of Irish patriotism Moore’s *Minstrel Boy*:

86

Text: *The Munster Maid* ‘With apologies to the shade of Tom Moore,’ in “*The Blarney Ballads*,” by C. L. Graves. *Union* 29 Sept. 1888

- Verse: 1 The Munster maid to the wars has gone –
 Mick Davitt’s voice awoke her;
 Her porridge-pot she has girded on,
 And grasped the family poker,
 “Munster men !” cried that Amazon bould,
 “Tho’ all the world defied ye,
 This arm for you the fort would hould,
 These faithful petticoats hide ye.”
- 2 The battle raged, but the foemen fled,
 Before her bilin’ courage,
 But first with her poker she’d open a head,
 And then pour in hot porridge ;
 Till the boys from her petticoat folds crept out,

²⁴Hammond, pp 101-3.

²⁵W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and all That* (London, 1930) ch. 57.

And accepted her invitation,
To help her to finish the stirabout,
On an inward application.

Relations between the Unionist community and the Liberal party further deteriorated when the Land Law (Ireland) Act was enacted in August 1881. This Act secured the 3 Fs, fair rent, fixity of tenure, and free sale; yet still Parnell and the Land League greeted it with a certain amount of scepticism and proposed to bring test cases in court in order to force further concessions from the government. It has been suggested that this move was also necessary in order to hold the League together in the face of internal regional and class tensions.²⁶ One must also consider the possibility that Parnell, Davitt and Devoy having got used to controlling a machine or national (or rather three quarters national) movement could readily acquiesce to its dismemberment through the large scale acceptance by the tenantry of reasonable laws from London, this would indeed remove a powerful weapon from their armoury while they were far short of their goal of Home Rule or complete separation. Parnell was imprisoned in October 1881 ostensibly for a speech which seemed to suggest that justice for Ireland was incompatible with English rule,²⁷ although his failure to condemn the tactics of violence and intimidation employed by the League the previous year might also have contributed to his incarceration.²⁸ In an effort to take the heat out of the situation Gladstone sought an accommodation with Parnell which culminated in the Kilmainham Treaty of May 1882.²⁹ Under the terms of this unofficial pact Parnell gave his support retrospectively to the Act on the provisos that the government would release the League leaders such as Andrew Kettle that had been jailed alongside Parnell himself; some arrangement regarding rent arrears was worked out; and the fair-rent clauses of the Land act of 1881 would be extended to leaseholders.³⁰ As a consequence the Arrears of Rent (Ireland) Act became law in August of 1882 and so the Kilmainham Treaty became yet another affront to conservatives and unionists alike as the beginning of a pact made in hell in which their lives and traditions were to be sacrificed for the sake of

²⁶Bew, *Land and the national question* . . . pp 185-94. Jackson, *Home Rule* . . . pp 43-4.

²⁷Bew, *Land and the national question* . . . p. 195.

²⁸Bew, *Charles Steward Parnell* (Dublin, 1991), p. 44.

²⁹Hammond, pp. 263-82.

peace and quite.³¹ The following song is taken from the *Union* newspaper, established in January 1887 which was specifically set up to counter the influence of the nationalist press:

87

Text :*I Wish I was an Irishman*. ‘A Correspondent of the *Drogheda Conservative* has furnished us with a poetic effusion as to how eviction proceedings are regarded even in John Bull’s country’. *The Union* 26 Mar. 1887

- Verse: 1 I be a poor hard working man,
 As tries to do the best he can,
 But, Mr. Editor, look you,
 It sometimes seems, to me, it do,
 As I imbibes my ‘arf a pint,
 The world is somehow out of j’int–
 It is,
- 2 I rents a house in Angel Grove,
 And every week there comes a cove
 As sez, “Now fork out two and six,
 Or, ‘pon my life, I’ll sell your sticks.”
 And Mither, very well we knows
 If we don’t pay, why out we goes –
 We does
- 3 But there in Ireland, as I ‘ears,
 they went on tick for seven years;
 And when the bailiff chucked ‘em out,
 My ! weren’t the poor coves knocked about;
 Folks called them patriots, they did,
 And M. P. ‘s sent ‘em each a quid –
 They did
- 4 Think’s I this ‘ere’s a paying game,
 So when the cove next Monday came,
 Sez he “ Pay up ‘ere ;” “Not for Joe,
 Sez I. Sez he, “Then out yer go,”
 Sez I “I ain’t got no ‘arf crown ”
 Sez he “Stump up.” I knocks him down–
 I does.
- 5 I’m working off a fortnight’s ‘ard,
 I write this from the labour ward.
 I’ll tell you something, Mister, ‘bout
 Myself, but don’t you let it out
 this is quite private, understand’,
 “I wish I was an Irishman – I does. (*Bradfordshire Standard*.)

³⁰Bew, *Land and the national question . . .*, p. 215.

³¹Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism . . .*, pp 5-8.

As far back as Gladstone's first land act in 1870 his Irish policy was seen as having the potential to undermine both the law and society in the rest of the United Kingdom. Gladstone showed himself to be awake to this problem when he wrote, '[T]he fear that our Land Bill may cross the water, creates a sensitive state of mind among all Tories, many Whigs, and a few Radicals. . .'³² It was feared that by establishing land courts in Ireland, a move which was expected to accompany the bill that the government and the judiciary would be interfering with the time tested principle of the landlord's absolute right regarding his property, this was a restraint on the landlord's power, and it was thought that it could set a precedent for a similar system of arbitration to be set up in Britain. In fact a separate Land Court was not established until Gladstone's second Land Act in 1881 a measure that seemed to have concession to Land League agitation written all over it as far as Unionism and the Tories were concerned and which could, therefore, easily be construed as giving the green light to anarchy and a disregard for the law.

Important though the land question was it was the threat to the constitutional position that really animated the Protestant Unionist and Loyalist population. For Protestant Ireland the very real possibility of a Home Rule parliament in Dublin could be interpreted as some kind of diabolical inversion of the whig trajectory of history as propounded by Macaulay in his *History of England*, (a work described as having a seminal influence on loyalist and Ulster unionist identity construction,³³) which would see Irish Catholicism and nationalism attain dominance and overthrow the natural progression of British constitutionalism and civilisation. Liberal weakness in the face of Irish nationalism's single-minded determination, and the Roman Catholic's insatiable appetite for ascendancy, supremacy, and revenge appeared to be handing the birth-right and cornerstone of later nineteenth century Protestant identity, the constitutional connection, on a plate. The following statement issued by the Archbishop of Dublin Lord Plunket in 1886, the year of the collapse of Gladstone's administration, over the

³² Hammond, p. 93. Quoted in Shannon, p. 84.

³³Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism*....p. 25.

Home Rule crisis, points out:

I have carefully considered the statements put forward by those who advocate Home Rule, and I cannot for the life of me discover where the grievance is to be found. If any of our fellow-countrymen were living under the tyranny of penal laws, as they were, unfortunately, some years ago, if Catholic emancipation had not become a fact, if they were able even to complain of the ascendancy in this land of a State Church, or if they were able to persuade us that, owing to some fault in the limits of the franchise . . . they have not a voice in the Imperial Parliament upon questions such as education or the land . . . I would look at the matter in an entirely different light. It is no use trying to trample out a real grievance. But if there be no grievance, then we must trace these demands for Home Rule to one of two causes . . . sentiment or . . . ulterior aims . . . Undoubtedly, behind the claim for Home Rule— and we should be fools if we did not believe it— *there lurks the demand for entire separation . . .*³⁴

The fears articulated by Lord Plunket gave impetus to a vigorous Unionism which was being spread across the whole of the British isles and made most tangible in a new periodical the *Union* which advertised its party line with the prospectus, ‘A Journal Devoted to the maintenance of the Union of the three kingdoms.’³⁵ In its first edition the following song is published:

88

Text: *The Union Song*. Words and Music by W. Mozley and Co. 127 Regent St London W. *Union* 29 Jan. 1887.

Verse: 1 Flag of our Islands, the Flag of the Sea,
 Sacred thy Crosses, joined one in Three.
 ‘Ware him who touches the Flag of the Free!
 Union for ever!

Chorus – Union then now and Union for ever,
Dare you the law of this Kingdom to sever,
Ring out your battle cry Never, oh! Never,
 Union for Ever!

2 Strength is our Union, our Union is Light,
 Union is Freedom, Union is Right;

³⁴*Journal of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin, 1886), Special Meeting (23 March), pp liv-lxii quoted in David Hempton ‘For God and Ulster’ : Evangelical Protestantism and the Home Rule crisis of 1886’ in Keith Robbins (ed.) *Studies in Church History 7, Protestant Evangelicalism : Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c.1750-1950* (Oxford, 1990), p. 227. Emphasis added.

³⁵*Union* 29 Jan. 1887.

Where is the man that for Right will not fight?
Union for ever! (Chorus.)

3 Out with fell faction, on party tricks frown,
Strike for ONE Parliament, Kingdom and Crown,
Where is your party if Country be down?
Union for ever! (Chorus)

4 Stand we united, divided we fall ;
Right, Light and Freedom, our watchword and call,
All be in one then and one be in all.
Union for ever (Chorus)

Early on the editors of the *Union* made their intentions and agenda clear:

The *Union* has for its main objects:–

a To counteract the influence, all over the world, of Irish Nationalist Press by the agency of Loyalist journalism, dealing with Irish affairs from an Imperial point of view;

b to enlist the sympathies of Loyal Irishmen throughout the empire, and to concentrate and preserve much Unionist Literature, the value of which is to a great extent lost, from being scattered through the columns of the daily press;

c To keep the British public specially informed upon the system and practices of the Parnellite Party at home and abroad.

These purposes designed for *The Union* is to afford a handy weapon of attack as well as of defence. It contains the pith and essence of the literature of Irish affairs and presents in a condensed and regular form.

The Separatist Party in Ireland is well served by several Weekly Papers, such as *United Ireland*, *The Nation*, *The Weekly News*, and other organs all illustrated with cartoons, which are distributed in thousands over the UK. This is done largely by the gratuitous circulation, and a similar method ought, it is submitted, to be adopted by the Loyalist party.³⁶

So the *Union* took as its template the nationalist newspapers and as part of their project the editors encouraged and published poetic works in a format that would not have been unfamiliar to Davis, and Gavan Duffy in style if not in content.

89

Text: *The Union Paeon*. *Union* 26 Feb. 1887.

Verse: 1 And in Ireland, rich and poor –
All of Erin's worth – distained
Millions proffered them as lure,
Landlord, tenant – both maintained
Firm and fast,

³⁶*Union*, 12 Feb., 1887.

First and last,
That the Kingdom must be one—
One great whole – while earth and sun,
their appointed courses run.

2 As the circling seas unite,
To protect our island coasts,
So, restless in their might,
Shall the loyal Union hosts
Still be found
To surround,
Guard and keep the British State,
Spite of treason and of hate—
Sovereign, and inviolate.

3 Union flag! of three combined—
England's red and Scotland's white,
With Saint Patrick's blue entwined
Ever float in all men's sight,
Cowards ! hark !
Traitors ! mark !
Never shall the Empire mourn,
Patrick's cross from that flag torn,
Loyal thousands so have sworn.

The reference to Saint Patrick's blue is somewhat confusing as the blue field which forms the background of the Union flag is in fact taken from the Scottish Saint Andrew's saltire. The fimbriated (bordered) red saltire of Saint Patrick is mounted on a white border, and is credited with being a heraldic device dating from the twelfth century, from the arms of the Anglo-Norman Fitzgeralds and has no significance for the Irish nation other than this for being included in the 1801 flag.³⁷ This mistake is almost incredible in an organ whose sole purpose was to promote a sense of British identity, the construction of which needed to be founded on some sort of shared idea of history in order to create a legitimating myth, which could then, in turn be projected onto the public through language, culture, and symbols, the most abstract yet tangible of which is the national flag. The national flag therefore is a kind of shorthand for the idea, sentiments and actuality of this imagined community called the nation, getting something as obvious as the elements of its composition wrong, in a propaganda sheet, is curious at least. A similar oversight occurs in the following piece regarding England's lions on the royal ensign transmogrifying into leopards, an occurrence which

goes unrecorded by vexillologists³⁸ :

90

Text : *Run Up the Flag. Union* 20 Aug. 1887

Verse : 3 See where our ensign flashes in the light.
Beneath its folds three British hearts unite,
Emblazoned on its field forever be,
The Imperial Emblems of the Kingdom's Three!
Old England's Leopards, Scotland's Lion bold,
And Erin's Harp, in pride of green and gold;
Run up the flag in pride of people's cheers,
The Army, Navy, Yeomen, Volunteers—
The grand old flag, supreme o'er land and seas,
The flag that braves the battle and the breeze.

One explanation for these oversights is that the authors do not let the truth stand in the way of a good story, image or rhyming scheme all things which are useful for constructing a popular historical narrative. Although inconsistencies such as the above might not stand up to close scrutiny they are indicative of the process of nation construction and the collective suspension of disbelief required to achieve the nationalists' (in this case unionists') goal. An interesting point regarding the *Union Paean* is how the voice of the majority is ignored in verse 1 which presents the entity of the United Kingdom as a natural occurrence and not the outcome of history. In fact this point is probably not all that remarkable, the *Union*, unlike the songs published in the *Spirit of the Nation*, is apathetic towards the idea of reconciliation between the Settler and Gaelic traditions and any attempt to forge an uncontested Irish identity, therefore it does not shy away from labelling those who disagree with its point of view as cowards and traitors. The antipathy it expresses towards the other party suggests that it has much more in common with the songs which make up the later repertoire of nationalist balladry than the earlier Young Ireland poetry. This merely indicates the gradual solidification of already polarised communities brought about by real events and the presentation of them in popular discourse. The editors of the *Union* advertised a very different result to the numbers game, as it was to be played in Ireland, seeking to absorb

³⁷A. MacGeorge, *Flags : some account of their history and uses* (London, 1881), pp. 54-64.

³⁸MacGeorge, pp. 36-44. Whitney Smith, *Flags through the ages and across the world* (New York, 1975), pp. 180-8.

into the greater United Kingdom the millions of disaffected Irish nationalists whether they liked it or not, as the next piece *A Plea for Union* makes clear:

91

Text: *A Plea for Union. Union* 18 June 1887

Brave words they should in freedom's name with voice ten thousand strong,
"Remove the landmarks ye have set between the right and the wrong,
Your courts, your judges and police, your law, a hateful thing,
And give us Freedom's Sunburst now, and see the good 'twill bring,
Three million noble Irishmen claim freedom" so they spoke,
Freedom to make two million more bow down beneath their yoke!
"What are these paltry millions worth?" they ask "and who are they,
Who make no rifles ring at night nor shout like us by day ?
They're Strongbow's men, or Cromwell's, or if native Irish some,
they're wealthy knaves and trading folk, landlords, and such like scum,
We'll crush their smaller numbers, and it were a grievous shame
If thirty million Englishmen should baulk us of our aim
A foreign race they'll call them, but how oft in ages past,
Have kindred tribes sought either Isle and mixed in peace at last.
'Twere hard to part those races now united in one name
As 't were at Windsor lock to take the Isis from the Thame...
. . . Shall we destroy the work that made our nation truly great,
And leave our land again a prey to spoil and strife and hate,
Destroy the law that nations long have copied as their rule
And learn the bitter lesson failure teaches to the fool,
Destroy the wealth that saves us when distress and famine strike,
and, as we cannot make men rich, make all men poor alike.
Destroy our Union and our strength, our fortress and our fold,
And be but weak and hostile clans as in the days of old . . . (J.F.)

We actually start to get to the crux of the matter with the lines, ' A foreign race they'll call them, but how oft in ages past/have kindred tribes sought either Isle and mixed in peace at last . . . / Shall we destroy the work that made our nation truly great . . . The point which seemed to elude both nationalist and unionist commentators and activists was that appeals to history were relative and only succeeded in reinforcing a sense of either British or Irish identity to which the individual had been previously exposed and in the majority of cases been enculturated. As part of this process of enculturation one finds the curious fact of nationalist songs being reproduced in such an

adamantly anti-nationalist journal, songs such as *A Fenian Lyric* by James Leahy French.³⁹

92

Text: '*A Fenian Lyric*' from the *Chicago Citizen* by James Leahy Roche. *Union*, 19 Feb. 1887.

Verse: 1 Sons of Erin! rise above
 The dissensions of the past;
 By your ranks united prove
 You are patriots at last!
 For fatherland,
 In column grand at last be seen;
 From overhead
 To tear the Red,
 And in its stead to raise the Green

 2 Fight no more in Albion's ranks!
 Albion's foes are not your foes!
 Draw your swords to earn the thanks
 Of your country for your blows,
 While bound in chains,
 She still remains
 And o'er her plains are tyrants seen,
 Proclaiming lust
 And serfdom just, and in the dust trampling Green!

Last verse. Rise together, one for all,
 Gird your armour tightly on!
 Hear the tocsin loudly call
 To his post each patriot son,
 To pay that debt—
 Which if we let
 Much older get, a grave, I ween,
 Will be denied
 To us beside,

At first this seems unusual until the issue of 5 March 1887 clears things up when under the headline, 'A shillingworth of sedition,' the following appears:

The rounded platitudes and mock love of the British people with which the diplomatic speeches of Nationalist speakers abound just now, when their object is to hoodwink or wheedle the English public, are notoriously insincere. To ascertain the real feelings and purposes of the agitators we would recommend a perusal of a volume called "Irish songs and Poems," by Francis A. Fahy, which had recently been published

³⁹*Union*, 19 Feb. 1887. Copied from the *Chicago Citizen*, 7 Jan. 1887.

by a firm in Upper Sackville st, the head of which is one of Mr. Parnell's Parliamentary voting units. Here are a few choice extracts from this collection of "National" poetry:–

British Manners, British ways, (Taken from *Bag and Baggage*)
All their 'blood and glory' toasting,
Boundless self-conceit and praise,
Brazen brag and shameless boasting.

The faithless Saxon, son of crime and hate,
In changeless mould of ancient savage cast . . .

The English people are called by the writer "*the God-accurst spawn of the plundering Norman.*" England is styled "*the moral Pecksniff of the globe,*" and we are told of a time "*ere hell yet spewed a Saxon Forth.*"

Again:–

The grasping Saxon, pitiless and cold,
Accurst on every shore his foot had trod.

Our race is not the Briton's race, (Taken from *We're not the Same*).
From ancient womb of darkness hurled,
To blot with tears earth's comely face,
And stalk – the footpad of the world.

"We do not love the Empire, our tastes are mighty mean,
they cling with fond affection round one little isle of green ;
And might the light of liberty but guild her emerald shore,
The British Empire might go down in ruin evermore
But strike, strike!
'Tis little they'll like
The thrust of the pike or the sweep of the sword."⁴⁰

The most obvious explanation is that its inclusion functions as a way of stirring up negative emotions, much as the way the speeches and sentiments expressed by the new purveyors of terrorism, i.e. Islamic fundamentalists, or as they are increasingly and more menacingly being called, 'Islamofascists,' are quoted in the Western media to create a sense of solidarity out of a communal feeling of fear. But the idea taken from the song *We're not the same* that, 'Our race is not the Briton's race,' merely echoes, albeit as an inversion, the general opinion of racial theory that prevailed once Darwin's theory of natural selection⁴¹ was applied across the human race and the idea of a human

⁴⁰Emphasis in the original.

⁴¹ Charles R. Darwin, *On the origin of species by means of natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life* (London, 1859).

evolutionary ladder became widespread.⁴² This opinion had it that the Roman Catholic Irish were not fully evolved, and those who agitated for Home Rule or land reform were even less so, a point I will return to later.⁴³ However, not all of the songs that were printed in the *Union* are as pompous as the *Union Paean*, or *Run up the flag*, there are a number which cater for the British or Orange perception of the atavism of the Home Rulers and the comic antics of the Irish masses in general as is described in song 91 *A Plea for Union* or like the following *A Patriot's Tale*, which uses a healthy dose of sarcasm to get its point across:

93

Text: *A Patriot's Tale. Union* 5 Mar. 1887.

- Verse: 1 Och! Mary dear, sit down a while ; a story I've to tell
Of our last Irish Parliament, and what, ochone! Befell,
When we were done with England and done with England's Queen,
And sot us down, as bold as brass, once more on College Green,
- 2 Mavrone, but 'twas a splendid sight when all our members great –
O'Briens, Moores, O'Brallaghans – sot there in glorious state,
From Cork, from Kerry and Athlone, from Limerick and Tralee,
In shoals they came, each proud as Punch of being an M. P.
- 3 'Twas mighty fine, just for a while, till some one says – says he :
“'Tis time to settle, on the nail, who our own king shall be ;
No more we stoop to English laws, nor own an English Queen,
Whoop ! here's hurrah for Ireland and the Wearin of the Green.
- 4 The Brallaghan, the Mulligan, O'Toole, O'Flynn, O' Ryan,
Each boasted royal blood, as well as an O'Brien,
They fought each round and blood was spilt and every member
glorious,
Proclaimed he'd keep the fleur until his claim was proved victorious.
- 5 Well, shure, when wanst the question rose, the fun grew fast and
furious,
to hear our patriot members speak, my dear, was mighty curious.
The Speaker rose to interpose, but Mullins from Kenmare,
Jest hot him nicely on the head an' knocked him senseless there!
- 6 They fought till only two were left – shure 'twas a cruel pity,

⁴² Michael de Nie, *The eternal Paddy: Irish identity and the British press, 1798-1882* (Wisconsin, 2004), pp 5-13; *ODNB*, xv, 177-202.

⁴³ de Nie, pp 13-17.

“Let’s fight it out ,” they nobly said, “in famed Kilkenny City.
Whoever wins shall be the King, his wife shall be the Queen,
To open Parliament in state in famous College Green.

7 To fair Kilkenny off they set, hard by the River Nore,
A jar of whiskey (Jameson’s best) along with them they bore ;
and just at sunrise they set upon a meadow green
To fight as patriots for the chance of being king or queen.

8 Well, well ‘tis sorrowful and sad – the endin’ of my story :
They fought so hard that nayther had the profit nor the glory ;
they kilt each other then an’ there, and on the grass so green,
Not e’en a bone was left behind to tell where they had been.

9 An’ when their friends came there to see, bemoanin’ and lamentin’ ,
they only found two ‘baccy pipes, of which the bowls were bent in,
An empty whiskey jar close by, in doleful guise was seen –
Last relics of the Parliament that sot in College Green.

(Signed Paddy of the + Roads).

It has become a platitude to say that humour in song can be a form of resistance to those in power and is a way of ‘reducing them to objects of ridicule’. As Fintan Vallely says:

Laughter and sarcasm have always been used by the downtrodden who had no other means of protesting against the injustice under which they lived, and so the songs were written as a means of lampooning the posturing and pomposity of those in power, quite often with devastating effect.⁴⁴

This weapon, however, is not confined to any one group as historical context and relativity belie the romantic but naive idea that it is the downtrodden (whoever this group may be at any one time) who hold some kind of preordained right to cultural resources such as humour, sarcasm, and imagination. As the previous song *A Patriot’s Tale*, which makes fun of Irish nationalism’s claims for the provenance of Gaelic Ireland’s pretensions towards aristocracy, with a predilection for the use of the definite article before the surname of a resurgent Gaelic nobility e.g., ‘The Brallaghan, The Mulligan . . .’, as well as the Irishman’s, in this case the Irish Roman Catholic’s, reputation for drinking and fighting, the loyal Protestants of Ireland, a group, that had traditionally been allied to the establishment (therefore not a group that one would immediately consider particularly downtrodden) showed that they were just as capable

⁴⁴Vallely, *Companion to Irish traditional music*, p. 366.

of producing a funny song as those who had endured the Saxon yoke for five, six, seven hundred years. It could be argued that the humour expressed in these Unionist songs are really a result of the pressure they were placed under from being, as they saw it, on the backfoot as a result of various British administrations bargaining with Protestant loyalist privilege and security, the two great sources of their collective identity, in order to garner co-operation from the suspect Irish Roman Catholic population.

In many of the songs of the *Union* the complete gamut of Irish Roman Catholic stereotypes and cliché are present ; this is the drunken, violent, imbecilic ‘other’ which provided the sounding board and antithetical mirror for the sober, law-abiding and enterprising loyal Protestant. Songs such as this, and the prejudice that they were based upon, attempted to deflate the claims for an ancient civilisation, which formed part of the Irish nationalist’s argument for the demand for recognition of its distinct identity and therefore of its claims for nationhood since at least the time of Young Ireland. If this was not enough the opinion of the former leading light of European nationalist philosophy Giuseppe Mazzini was thrown into the mix as a way of further disarming nationalist claims.⁴⁵ Similar to *A Patriot’s Tale* is the following song which deals more specifically with the Home Rule question and portrays the protagonists involved in the Kilmainham Treaty in unflattering terms as mere populist politicians willing to sacrifice the union, kingdom, protestant constitution and empire for the sake of self-aggrandisement and hatred of loyalist tory traditions. Between them, the song suggests, Gladstone and Parnell will raise up the Irish parliament on College Green⁴⁶ and populate it with ignorant, illiterate Roman Catholic’s who will pass laws abolishing rent, and push for ultimate political control of the country ; and who perhaps one day might succeed in crowning their uncrowned king:

94

⁴⁵*Union*, 5 Nov. 1887. Mazzini and the Irish Question [By Peter A. Taylor Formerly M. P. for Leicester.] Taylor had been a radical reform politician for 22 years but fell out with his radical comrades over their support for Irish Home Rule, *ODNB* vol. liii. pp 963-4; Nicholas Manseragh, *Ireland in the age of reform and revolution*, pp.55-62, gives a less biased interpretation of Mazzini’s involvement into Irish affairs.

⁴⁶The *Union* carried a recurring feature called ‘Home Rule rehearsed’ in which the paper would highlight what could be expected from a parliament on College Green. For instance 29 Jan. 1887 ‘Dublin corporation refuse to relay Grafton st.’ or 19 Mar., 1887 Dublin Corporation exclude from taking office any and all those who have any affiliation with the Orange Order.

Text: *A Rebel Jubilee Song, Anticipating Home Rule. Union 20 Aug. 1887*

Verse: 1 A glorious victory— nearly won,
Parnell and Gladstone are sure to come,
When justice to Ireland will be done—
 The King of the Emerald Island

2 The Grand old man of seventy -six,
Will never leave us in a fix,
But still go on with his clever tricks,
 The King of the Emerald Island

3 Then we'll humble the rich and the great,
The Throne, the Princes, and the State,
And leave them to their sorrowful fate,
 The King of the Emerald Island

4 The lords, and barons we will spoil,
And for their bread we'll make them toil,
While we enjoy the Irish soil,
 The King...

5 Since we have got the low franchise,
We're daily growing wondrous wise,
And all authority despise,
 The King...

6 The soldiers and the R.I.C.
Those traitor friends of the enemy,
We'll sweep them all into the sea,
 The King...

7 And we shall have our own brigade,
Sons of the soil, to give us aid,
And like ourselves of the people's grade,
 The King...

8 Oh, then we'll have in College Green,
The finest Parliament, ever has been,
For one like it, never was seen,
 The King...

9 Seats for all who write and read,
But those who can't will find no need,
Provided they be of that popular creed,
 The King...

10 Ah! then we'll have the grand debate,
Against the Saxons whom we hate,
We'll crush their Church and bother the State,
 The King...

11 At last we'll try to be content,
With money to spend and a Parliament ;
Eat and drink and pay no rent, (The King...)

As the first line in song 94 *A rebel jubilee song, anticipating home rule*, ‘A glorious victory-nearly won’⁴⁷, Gladstone lost the first Home Rule Bill in June 1886. This was as a result of an unusual combination of factors and forces. First was the outcome of natural party politics with the Conservatives seeking advantage in their efforts to destabilise Gladstone’s administration, this was allied to their sympathies for the cause of Irish Unionism. More significantly, although not unexpectedly, was the revolt among the ranks of those on the right wing of the Liberal party,⁴⁸ with the rebels forming the Liberal Unionist Association, who, alongside Tory Unionists argued, justifiably, that Home Rule, although mooted, had not formed part of the Liberal electoral platform in the run up to the general election of 1885.⁴⁹ Some of these defectors like Hartington⁵⁰ and Goschen⁵¹ became among the most outspoken and intractable opponents to the Home Rule project. But what exactly was in the Bill which animated such fierce opposition from such an array of sources? In fact the proposed Bill offered a limited measure of Home Rule which included a ‘unicameral Irish legislature . . . modelled on the general synod of the disestablished Church of Ireland’ ; Irish representation at Westminster was to end ; there were to be two ‘orders’ comprising in the first order of 103 members, made up of the 28 existing peers with an additional 75 members, elected for ten years on a highly restrictive property/wealth based franchise, this order would have been predominantly Protestant. The second order was to have either 204 or 206 members and the normal parliamentary franchise and membership (post the Franchise Extension bill 1884) was to be applied. The Lord Lieutenant remained in place and acted for the Crown, he alone could appoint or dismiss ministers and he retained the power of summoning or dissolving parliament. Also the parliament of the United Kingdom was to remain supreme in the areas of,

⁴⁷Emphasis added.

⁴⁸Hammond, pp 473-4.

⁴⁹Jackson, *Home Rule*. . . pp 61-5.

⁵⁰Spencer Compton Cavendish, marquess of Hartington and eighth duke of Devonshire (1833-1908), *ODNB* x, 638-45.

⁵¹George Joachim Goschen, 1st Viscount Goschen, (1831-1907), *ODNB* xxii, 1023-9.

among other things, legislative control over the Crown, foreign and imperial affairs, trade and navigation, customs and excise and the coinage.⁵² However, it was not the content of the bill but the whole idea of it that was repugnant to Unionists of all shades.

The very notion that, as is made clear in the *Union Paeon*, this integral whole, the United Kingdom, could somehow undergo a radical amputation of an essential organ ; that it could withstand an act of self immolation conceived in and imposed by an act of parliament and still maintain control over an empire, regions of which had burgeoning nationalist cohorts of their own, which prompted Conservatives, sections of the Liberal Party, and even Queen Victoria⁵³ to round on Gladstone's government and cause his defeat. Gladstone through his seeking accommodation with Ireland's limited nationalist ambitions then reserved a special place of vilification in the hearts of the editors and readers of the *Union* who saw him as a type of political anti-christ come to rule over the breakup of the United Kingdom and the dissolution of the empire as can be seen in the following poem:

95

Text : *The Heptarchy*. An ode after Byron by the Re. Hon. W. Ew.rt. Gl.dst.ne. *Union*
26 Nov. 1887.

- Verse: 1 The Heptarchy ! The Heptarchy!
 Root whence degenerate Britain grew !
 Era noble Anarchy,
 And all that's glorious, vague, and true!
 Methinks 'ere Britain's sun hath set I will restore its glories yet.
- 2 The Irish race, the race of Scots,
 The races twain of gallant Wales,
 The Yorkshire race, the race of Notts,
 The Cornish race (of fairy tales)
 Each race, when next in power I get,
 Shall form a separate kingdom yet.
- 3 London, which doth my sway disown,
 And the home counties – rebels too–
 Fief's of ancient Cornish throne,
 Their rash audacity shall rue,
 Yet I should grieve if London weep !

⁵²Jackson, *Home Rule* . . . pp 57-8.

⁵³Hammond, pp 436-7.

Her parliament she still may keep.

- 4 The Kings of Nottingham and York,
the rest of Britain may divide,
Twin flowerets blooming on one stalk
(Each with its proper national pride).
The Wittanageniste 'twere meet
At Hawarden should have its seat.
- 5 New dynasties my muse now sings –
Trevelyan (*Scotch*), Parnell “*the Great*,”
Morgan and Rendel (*The Welsh kings*)
“*Sage*” Morely, Harcourt “*the sedate*”
Cornish Conybeare, “*the well-known*”
“The First Bretwalds,” William Gladstone.
- 6 O, British Isles ! O, British Isles !
Birth-place of Shakespeare, Pitt, *Gladstone*,
Milton, O’Brien, Parnell, Smiles,
V. Harcourt, Nelson, Wellington,
Ye shall be glorious yet once more !
Your Heptarchy I will restore !

The *Heptarchy* as a piece of propaganda implies that the inevitable and logical outcome of home rule for Ireland was the break up of the United Kingdom into the seven local kingdoms of seventh century England. Could this ever be considered as being Gladstone’s intention, when he courted Parnell in 1885 by considering a limited measure of local self-government for Ireland in a package of local government reforms that should be afforded to other ‘portions’ of the United Kingdom?⁵⁴ In such a way he sought to outmanoeuvre his detractors.

Verse 2 of the *Heptarchy* highlights a system of categorisation that was increasingly coming to the fore in the minds of the general public in the wake of the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of species* . . . this was identification by race. Loughlin’s work on Ulster unionism and British identity has posited some interesting questions regarding the nature of change upon the basic building blocks of British identity as the nineteenth century came to a close. Perhaps most significantly for this study is the

⁵⁴ Alan O’Day, *Parnell and the first home rule episode 1884-87* (Dublin, 1986), pp 90-1.

gradual decline in excessive Protestantism, with an accompanying decline in the importance of sectarianism in mainland Britain.⁵⁵ This occurred for a number of reasons, the secularisation of society ; the growth of socialism and materialism among the working classes of Britain ; and to some degree it was due to the scientific revolution among which Darwin's theories⁵⁶ played their part in subverting a strict biblical creationist interpretation of world history, but which conversely lent weight to racial theories which reduced the Irish to a sub-human state in the eyes of the British, thus giving prejudice a scientific foundation. As L. Perry Curtis Jr. states:

The net effect of Victorian ethnology, as professed and practised in these years, was to undermine the environmentalist view that Englishmen and Irishmen were fundamentally alike and equally educable. Instead of narrowing the gap between Anglo-Saxons and Celts, the newer forms of evolutionary thought associated with Darwin, Wallace, Huxley, and their disciples, tended to polarize Englishmen and Irishmen by providing a scientific basis for assuming that such characteristics as violence, poverty, improvidence, political volatility, and drunkenness were inherently Irish and only Irish.⁵⁷

If religion as a category of differentiation was in decline on mainland Britain in the latter half of the century then the Irish Protestant was in need of another complex classification of difference in their Sisyphean struggle to carve out a place for themselves in the British consciousness. Irish nationalists and by extension Irish Catholics, due to the conflation of these over-lapping but not identical nor homogenous groups in public discourse were depicted in both the Tory press and satirical journals, such as *Punch* and *Judy*, from the 1860s onward (an particularly in the aftermath of Clarendon) as a variant on one of three dominant themes. The first and most common was to represent nationalists as some kind of ape-man, as the sought after missing link, dumb and dangerous. Secondly, was a version of Caliban, a creature which metaphorically if not pictorially, was probably closer to the popular prejudice which prevailed as among its most salient features was its ability to talk while lacking moral

⁵⁵Although Loughlin does point out that the Eucharistic Congress held in London in 1908 did generate enough anti-Catholic feeling for the Liberal prime minister Herbert Asquith to proscribe the Eucharistic procession. p. 30.

⁵⁶William Irvine, *Apes, Angels, and Victorians: a joint biography of Darwin and Huxley* (London, 1955), pp 112-20; pp 135-51.

⁵⁷L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: the Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington, 1997), p. 21.

judgement and being incapable of learning good,⁵⁸ as good a summation of the Irish character as a Victorian Englishman was likely to get in any form of popular literature.⁵⁹ Thirdly and most grotesquely was a hybrid of the two, a kind of piscatorial abomination with simian features, stretching its bestial coils from America and lumbering onto Erin's shores to wreak havoc and murder in Ireland and Britain⁶⁰ and symbolising the Fenian threat. Typical of this type of Irishman are the characters and traits that inhabit the next two songs : *Holy Dynamite* and *The Spit*:

96

Text: *Holy Dynamite*. *Union* 17 Dec. 1887

- Verse: 1 Erin as the Isle of Saints was known through all the earth,
Holy men had raised to fame the land that gave them birth,
Patrick's name was worshipped for it shone so pure and bright,
But Oh! the Saint we hear of now is holy dynamite.
- 2 Satan grieved and feared that they would always be too good,
And so to make them bad again he did everything he could,
He brewed a keg of whiskey and he thought he'd made alright.
He never yet had thought of trying holy dynamite.
- 3 But still he found he could not make old Erin bad enough,
Because amongst her sons there is some really good old stuff,
So he planted a blackthorn three, and bade them go and fight,
But blackthorn is a saint compared to 'holy dynamite'
- 4 Then he bought a musket, and he loaded it with slugs,
But the rusty lock would not go off without some tugs,
And so the shooting was not good their aim was seldom right,
Said he we'll mend our hand a bit with "holy dynamite"
- 5 First they shot the cruel man who trampled on the poor,
But then they spared the very man he wanted to secure,
"Leave off your nonsense man," he said, "don't mind the wrong or right"
we'll make a jolly bag my boys , with 'holy dynamite.
- 6 There was a worthy gentlemen who lived in goodly fame ;
A tinker came about the town who ne'er had heard his name ;

⁵⁸Rosemary Goring (ed), *Larousse Dictionary of Literary Characters* (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 115.

⁵⁹Curtis, pp 29-57.

⁶⁰This image bears an uncanny resemblance to a description that Darwin gave to Charles Lyell when he wrote 'Our ancestor was an animal which breathed water, had a swim bladder, a great swimming tail, an imperfect skull, and undoubtedly was an hermaphrodite' Francis Darwin, ed., *The life and letters of Charles Darwin*, authorised ed.(New York, 1896), vol. ii, 56 cited in Irvine, p. 139 ; Curtis, p. 136.

He gave that tinker money to blow up the house at night
With men and maidens all asleep, and gave him dynamite.

7 He's taken lodgings for his friends who make it at New York,
They live in peace and plenty while they do their masters work,
And chuckle while they're thinking how much safer than to fight,
It is to sit at home and boil the pot of dynamite.

8 They read in morning papers now of London's great alarm,
Of men and women blown to bits who never did them harm
They call themselves brave heroes and they should with great delight,
Te setane laudamus and your 'holy dynamite'

9 Mephisto in his smoking room had lit a cigarette,
And said, "what fun, I think we've done the trick this time, you bet,"
And telegraphed in cipher, for it's safer then to write,
"Bless you my sons, stick to your guns, and 'holy dynamite'. (J. F.)

In *The Spit* we find a weapon that, although it does not carry the same destructive force of dynamite, illustrates the low character of the Irish nationalist, made obvious through that badge of ignorance, the stage Irish accent, and whose baseness and absence of any sense of morality are conjured up to reaffirm the Unionist population's prejudice through the use of one word of disgust, the Spit, which might be considered a weapon of mass consumption.

97

Text: *The Spit* (words by Dr. T—— r.). *Union*, 28 Sept. 1888.

Verse: 1 The counthry's all murdthurd and gone to the dogs,
 The divil a taste of divarshion
A mimber can have wid the blackguard police,
 Removable M.s and coarshion
Ye can't shoot a man from the back of a ditch,
 You can't cut the tail of his cow, sir,
You can't crack his skull widout runnin' the chance
 Of bein' put into jail for it now sir.

Chorus But I'll lilt yea a lay
 An' I'll show yea a way,
 That'll tache thim we're not beaten yit;
 Tho' there's weapons galore
 We've one weapon more,
 So use it, boys, use it, "The Spit."

What must have been disconcerting for loyal protestants was the lack of

separation between the good Irish and the bad Irish as far as the majority of Britons were concerned and so they frequently wore their loyalty on their sleeves trying to promote the image of one big happy family for the benefit of their readers and the general public. The idea in the following song of ‘One people in two lands,’ compounds the confusion regarding who is in and who is out of the identity loop.

98

Text: *England to Ireland: Union* 16 April 1887.

Verse: 1 No hostile stranger nations we
 To war with impious hands –
 the land around, a common sea –
 One people in two lands.

2 In vain our kindred shores to part,
 Are waves between us thrown,
 the tide that warms a British heart,
 Is that which fills our own.

At times loyalism appropriated the language and the imagery of the nationalists and as can be seen in the last verse from the following song *Grannia Waile* the sentiments that were expressed were almost identical to those fostered by Davis in his efforts to create from a mixed bag of races the Irish nation, save for the fact that as they were intended they were almost polar opposites and instead of creating the Irish nation the author tried to construct a British nation:

99

Text: *Grannia Waile. Union* 8 Sept. 1888

Verse: 1 O! won't there be feasting and glorious cheer,
 In our fair Green Island through every year.
 When the loyal shall o'er the disloyal prevail
 And traitors be banished from Grannia Waile.

2 For the pinching of hunger no more will sigh,
 Nor tears, but of laughter, dim any eye,
 And the country, by Leaguers oppressed no more,
 Be fuller of music then e'er before.

3 O! would I could hasten that glorious time –
 Too fair is our land for a home of crime –
 When into the way of true liberty
 Will be drawn the feet that have turned agie !

4 Health to you! wealth to you ! Grannia Waile,
 We'll tell to the nations a different tale,
 When brother with brother, live Saxon and Gael,

And flourish together in Grannia Waile. (C. J.)

Appeals to a desired commonality and shared identity were popular in the *Union* but this had been the case for much of the century. In Edward Lysaght's (1763-1811)⁶¹ *The Sprig of Shillelah and Shamrock so green*, a very popular song throughout the century the theme of the Shamrock, Rose and Thistle entwined can be seen as an attempt to aid an identity forming project imposed from the outside :

100

Text: *The Sprig of Shillelah and Shamrock so green*, in *100 Songs of Ireland Music and Words the Popular Edition Price one Shilling* (London, 1857). NLI song books, excerpt:

- Verse: 1 O love is the soul of a nate Irishman,
 he loves all the lovely loves all that he can,
 With a sprig of shillelah, and shamrock so green,
 His heart is good humoured, 'tis honest and sound,
 No malice or hatred is there to be found;
 He courts and he marries, he drinks and he fights,
 For love, all for love, for in that he delights,
 With his sprig of shillelah and shamrock so green,
- 5 Bless the country, say I, that gave Patrick his birth,
 Bless the land of the oak and its neighbouring earth,
 Where grows the shillelah, and shamrock so green,
 May the sons of the Thames, and the Tweed and the Shannon,
 Drub the foes, who dare plant at our confines a cannon:
 United and happy at loyalty's shrine,
 May the rose and the thistle, long flourish and twine
 Round a sprig of shillelah and shamrock so green.

These next series of songs exemplify this stubborn effort at conflation.

101

Text : *Hail to the Oak the Irish Tree* by W. Kertland in Thomas Crofton Croker, *Popular songs of Ireland* (London, 1839), pp. 119-20. excerpt.

- Verse: 3 Our Druid rites have spread its fame;
 Our bards have sung the noble tree;
 Our sailors gain a deathless name,
 Borne, on its planks, to victory
 Hail to the oak the Irish tree,
 And British Tars, with three times three
- 4 Still may its circling arms extend,
 To guard our isles from foreign foes

⁶¹Robert Hogan (ed.), *Dictionary of Irish Literature*, revised edition (Connecticut, 1996), pp 733-4. As the author of such an optimistic song of union it would at first glance appear incongruous that Lysaght was vehemently opposed to the Act of Union.

Its branching green head long defend
The Shamrock, Thistle, and the Rose.
Hail to the oak, the Irish Tree,
And British hearts, with three times three!

102

Text: *Paddy Loves a Shamrock* .: Printed and sold at the Wholesale and Retail Book Warehouse 45- Capel st. Dublin. NLI Irish Chap Books c1830 Call No. LO P140.

Verse: 1 Paddy loves a shamrock;
 Johnny Bull a rose,
 Sandy loves a thistle,
 And Taffy, we suppose, Cot pless (sic) her, loves a leek;
 and yet, the truth to speak,
 Our honour and our pretty girl,
 We all love more than those.
 Fol lol de rol de lol de fol de rol de ra,
 Fol lol de rol de lol lol tol de rol de ra

2 Show us but the spalpeen
 Would our rights oppose,
 Johnny, Sandy, Pat and Taff,
 Would take him by the nose;
 Together in a lump,
 We the universe would thump,
 Should they venture to canoodle us,
 As ev'ry body knows
 Fol lol lol, etc.

There are many more examples of this type of song or verses tacked onto songs which seek to elide difference and claim a common purpose and identity, such as *Prince Thady O'Toole* who claims that:

103

Text: *Prince Thady O'Toole* : NLI Irish Chap Books c1830 Call No. LO P140.

Verse: 9 The fair Queen of England is now my ally,
 'Twould give me new life in her service to die,
 With the rose may the shamrock for ever entwine,
 The foe who would part them is no friend of mine,
 May England and Erin – sweet nations–
 Shake hands, like two loving relations,
 Forgetting their old botherations,
 Is the prayer of Prince Thady O'Toole.

104

Text: *The Land of Sweet Erin*, in *The Songs of Ould Ireland*. Pat Feeney's⁶² *Songs of Success to the Shamrock Green, and Hagan's Raffle*. subtitle *A collection of Favourite*

⁶²Pat Feeney was a popular music hall actor who played in Dan Lowery's Star of Erin established in 1879.

Songs (W.S. Fortey London, n.d.) NLI:

Verse: 1 The land of sweet Erin's the land of delight,
The women can love and the men can all fight,
We have hearts for the girls, and we've arms for our foes
They both are triumphant as all the world knows
They talk of politeness, we beat them at that:
For when Monsieur came a courting, a rival to Pat,
He cried, my dear jewel, you're quite at a stand,
So pray take a foot just to lend you a hand.

Chorus Then let us be frisky,
And tiddle the whiskey:
Life to the land of sweet liberty's joys,
No country whatever,
Has power to sever,
The Shamrock, the rose and the thistle my boys.

3 They may talk of their wonders as long as they please,
By Saint Patrick, their swans are all nothing but geese,
They say they can fight, but 'tis all they can say,
For as soon as they charge, they as soon run away,
Then, oh, may the land that grows out of the sea!
Flourish long in prosperity, happy, and free;
For England, and Ireland, and Scotland can prove
They outshine them in courage and beauty and love,
Then let us be frisky . . .

The *Union* chimed in with the following which seemed to coincide with Mathew Arnold's⁶³ opinion regarding the effective compatibility of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic races promoting the idea that the United Kingdom due to the make up of its three principal peoples was the best of all possible worlds:

105

Text: *My Three Neighbours*. *Union* 12 May. 1888.

Verse: 1 As I happen to be Manx,
And unencumbered with the cranks
That divide your honoured ranks,
People Three:
Be it Shamrock, Rose, or Thistle,
Wants a partisan epistle,
She may just as well go whistle,
For a wee.

2 Though I'm very fond of 'Arry,
(When he's not about to marry)
Somehow time appears to tarry,
When he's by :

⁶³Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and other writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge, 1993 [1869]).

No one doubts his foemen fear him ;
For his truth we all revere him ;
Yet for once I'd like to hear him,
Tell a lie.

3 Then anent the bonnie Scot,
P'r'aps I might be waxing hot,
In his praises were he not
Such a Rad :
Were his sermons not so long,
His "convictions" not so strong,
His Blue Ribbons at Hong Kong,
I'd be glad.

4 While I needn't say of Pat,
Whom I love from heel to hat,
(How I wonder what he's at
All Along !)
That like any other poet
Pat can break a law, – but, blow it !
'Tis because he doesn't know it,
To be wrong !

5 So John Bull's the toughest – rinded,
Donald Scot's the toughest – winded,
But it's Pat's the highest– minded
Of the three :
And you've just to cut the tether,
Binding you and him together,
and he's off like any feather,
Out to sea. (A. Manxman)

However, when appeals to the absence of difference, harmony, and commonality failed, then recourse to its opposite, to the demonizing of the Irish supporters of Parnell's parliamentary party and the National League as dynamitards and sub-human brutal murderers became the natural fall back position for the editors of the *Union*. If death and sacrifice were held up as noble characteristics for the Fenian hero in nationalist mythology and its developing discourse as the century progressed as we have seen in T. D. Sullivan's *God Save Ireland* then the reverse was true from a loyalist perspective. The executions of O'Brien, Larkin and Allen over the bungled Manchester rescue⁶⁴ or the introduction of numerous coercion acts brought in to try to suppress

⁶⁴Comerford claims that the execution of Allen, Larkin and O'Brien was undertaken by the authorities as an illustration of the state's resolve in quelling unrest not only to the Irish rebels but to the English working classes engaged in trades unionism which had been implicated in a series of murders, *Fenians* . . . p. 148.

agrarian violence was, as far as the loyalist community was concerned, merely justice being carried out. What better way to convey the sense of outrage and defiance felt by the loyalist population than to twist what had become the unofficial anthem of nationalist Ireland and present it as a rallying cry for Unionism:

106

Text: *God Save Ireland ! A New Version*. "I don't see why the devil should have all the good tunes." Roland Hill. *Union* 30 April, 1887.

Verse : 1 From the true and sturdy North,
 Rings a voice of warning forth,
 To the hearts of ev' re loyal Irishman :
 Must we yield to Stuart Parnell,
 And his bloodstained "league of hell?"
 No! we mean to overcome them and we can!
 God Save Ireland and the Union,
 God Save Ireland and the Queen,
 Let us stand together all,
 Or together let us fall,
 But we never will be ruled from College Green,

Chorus God Save Ireland and the Union!
 God grant all may yet be well,
 Let us stand together all,
 Or together let us fall,
 But we never will be governed by Parnell.

2 We can honour men of old,
 though their deeds were overbold,
 Since they died for the cause they deem'd the right ;
 but we loathe the bloody work,
 Of the fiends that murdered Burke
 Craven traitors, shrinking still from open fight,
 God Save Ireland and the Union.
 God Save Ireland and the Queen,
 May Gladstone and Parnell,
 Soon hear the traitors knell,
 For the shame they've wrought the Wearing o' the Green.
 (Chorus.)

3 Do they think us to affright
 to their devilish dynamite
 their revolvers and their amputating knives?
 No! with heart and hand we'll join,
 From Valentia to the Boyne,
 And if need be, in the breach lay down our lives !
 God Save Ireland and the Union,
 God Save Ireland and the Queen !
 May we soon have nought to fear,
 From the Yankee buccaneer,

And in peace enjoy our own immortal green
(Chorus.)

Songs such as this version of *God Save Ireland*, with its references to the Phoenix Park murders, along with *Holy Dynamite* and *The Spit* highlight a momentous change in the discourse that had come over Irish nationalism and its base of Roman Catholic agitation since at least the death of O'Connell. The martial aspect that the Young Ireland coterie wanted to infuse in Irish cultural nationalism, as expressed most explicitly by J. S. O'Callaghan,⁶⁵ outgrew the abstract spheres of poetry, balladry and music and found its way into influencing considerations of the political equation, through physical force. This development only seemed to confirm loyalist warnings as to the inherent disloyalty and untrustworthiness of the Catholics. Thus the characteristics of the 'other' coalesced around violence, ignorance, superstition and the deliberate rupturing of the ideal of unity. The economic success of the north eastern region of the island was a telling indicator of the rightness of the Unionist's argument. To distance oneself from the industrial powerhouse of the world was to the rational mind illogical and could only be understood as sheer bloody-mindedness and stupidity. The arguments adopted for and against the Act of Union by the respective parties and their reasons for adopting such positions had completely reversed. In one sense the contest as the century came to a close, was to see which would triumph over the other, the Green or the Red. However, perhaps in a more profound way it was the fact that the contest could be phrased, and leaving aside Hyde's Connacht peasants, could be understood in such a way by the majority of people that demonstrates the influence of the ideologues in conducting the discourse of Irish identity throughout the nineteenth century.

⁶⁵Davis papers NLI Ms. 2644.– P 367

Conclusion

This dissertation set out to analyse the discourses surrounding the construction of a nationalist sense of Irish identity through the medium of popular culture specifically song lyrics throughout the nineteenth century. The relevance of the question lies in the contradiction of a developing sense of political identity while the process of Anglicisation was gathering impetus. As D. P. Moran caustically pronounced what is the use of legislative independence when there are no cultural differences to create international misunderstandings. The expansion of the English language throughout the country, it was feared, would be accompanied by the corruption of Irish culture and the gradual debasement into what Moran in the *Leader* termed the 'English Mind in Ireland'. To counter this, apparently inescapable historical drift, Moran, Hyde and the Gaelic League sought to create and define moments of authenticity and purity. However, Hyde was candid enough to admit that for many of the 'real' Irish, those along the Western seaboard, this drift was neither problematic nor even recognised. The goal then, to be achieved by the nation builders, was the recognition of a distinctive sense of political and cultural identity. This would be added to, and in the cases of Davis and Hyde, hopefully supersede the destructive sectarian identity that Roman Catholic and Protestants of all sects, felt towards each other.

Moore was not, and never intended to be, a nation builder, he was proud to be Irish but was untroubled in the court of conscience to seek advancement within the British establishment, which after all, was his establishment too. The commissioning of Moore by the Powers brothers was a happy accident which profited both parties and the publication of the *Melodies* was a business opportunity tailor made to fit the *zeitgeist* and the author. Bunting's collection of the harpers music, and Stevenson's arrangement of those airs, provided an artistic foundation upon which even a mediocre talent could not fail to impress and Moore's talent was much greater than this. The *Melodies* brought an idealised romanticised version of Irish music into the homes of the middle and upper classes all over Europe and America, making a case for a sad and woe-begotten land haunted by the ghosts of lovers, drinkers and heroes.

On the other hand the goal that Thomas Davis set himself, to create a non-sectarian sense of Irishness out of disparate regionalised identities, was hampered by the identification of the masses with the supranational corporate identity of the Roman Catholic church. Meanwhile the minority were drawn to identify more closely with a political device, the union, once their religion could no longer secure their traditional favourable position. Loyalty to one's education rather than any particular soil was Gellner's criterion for nationalism and by extension this education incorporates the processes of socialisation and enculturation. In other words, one's 'culture'. The values and norms, those less than tangible social forces or 'realities' which govern all our lives were shared to a great degree by all the inhabitants of the island but barriers and boundaries were erected to support the arguments put forward by all sides for the moral authority which underpinned their adopted position.

The actual cross-over of the sectarian divide was there in the songs of the street. Here the concerns of the masses were recorded, love, sex, marriage, fidelity or the lack of; songs that censured particular behaviour; songs fuelled by drink or the righteousness of abstinence; songs that sang of labour or fecklessness; or the mere mundanities of everyday life. These ragbag concerns were derided by those who had a higher purpose to fulfil. These coarse songs, full of life and ribaldry and were bowdlerised, sanitised or obliterated only to be replaced by the morally uplifting songs of the nation. However, the concerns of the people who owned these songs remained and informed the music hall image and to a great extent still inform the stereotypical view of the Irish or Orish, replete with Irish bulls, and the clichéd use of the brogue. While early depictions of the Roman Catholic Irish in many songs that were published in chapbooks and garlands for sale in Britain as well as Ireland show them to be irrational they have not yet morphed into the grotesque simian creatures that they later become. Stupid, drunken, crude and violent towards each other the negative images that develop later in the century built upon the taken for granted stereotypes. It can be argued that these stereotypes persisted not because of any malice aforethought but through sheer laziness and cynicism. The use of stock expressions, formulae and concepts that are easily recognisable is something that all popular media use even today, popular entertainment does not lend itself readily to rigorous intellectual expression. Appealing to the masses has to be done in a language that the masses can understand. Also the object of this appeal is in fact not to the individual but to the

social. Street singers, and balladeers sold the songs of everyman philosophers but they also sang and sold the work of stock-jobbers. The songwriter wrote in a language that the audience would understand, the audience dictated the outcome, and the language. What ever the contemporary prejudice would be reflected in the lyric, whatever attempts at rapprochement would also be reflected in the lyrics. The songs of the *Nation* and the *Spirit of the Nation* were deliberate attempts to reconstruct a positive Irish image in a language that was still only being acquired by a large number of the population. Could one say that this was not their language therefore not their experience? It becomes obvious as to why the nationalists had to try to re-invent the Irish people by cornering the market in the ‘making of the ballads’ as Fletcher of Saltoun put it.

As has been alluded to religious identity was, perhaps, the most relevant and tangible for all sections of the Irish population. The religious settlement imposed upon the country left a disgruntled Roman Catholic majority who had recourse to a developing mythology through which they could interpret their place in the world. ‘To Hell or Connacht’ supplanted by the trope of the ‘coffin ship’ provided a *rationale* for feelings of animosity towards the privileged ‘Other’ who had chosen the path opened by Luther and renounced the true teachings of Christ. Or so one side would have it. From the other perspective a population in thrall to superstition and irrationality needed salvation through reformation in the first instance and wholesale refinement (which naturally would accompany such reform) before they could be trusted as equals. The sincerity of the ‘jumper’; ‘cathbrack’ or ‘souper’ was always in question and, as has been shown, many of those who opted for meat on Friday one week were just as apt to relish fish the next. In the fight for body and soul, body won out as often as not.

Allied to the stereotype of the Roman Catholic Irish there was the overwhelming assumption that this population was morally and intellectually unable to govern itself, an assumption borne out of a time and a culture when politics was the domain of an elite educated class, such as it was early in the century when politics still paid dues to a British version of the *ancien regime* mentality. As the idea of democracy gradually took hold in Britain through the rise of Chartism and the growth of the trades unions, with calls for the expansion of the franchise towards universal

male suffrage, the denial of a voice to a bourgeois educated political class who felt thwarted in their attempts to fulfil their aspirations to power and to represent a section of the community which imagined itself and was imagined of as being somehow different, became less and less justifiable. Gladstone understood the impetus of these movements and forces and tried to conduct the drift to a recognizably modern democratic political culture. The land acts of the 1870s and 80s, the household franchise act, and the Home Rule Bills of 1886 and 1893 were too radical for Tory, Unionist and even some Liberal interests not to balk as they recalled a time when certainty regarding who you were and therefore your place in the order of the world was assured. The gradual erosion of this certainty about religion, property rights, political and economic hegemony was gathering momentum not only due to the efforts from the enemy outside the gates which had begun with O'Connell and was continued by Young Ireland, the Fenians, and the Irish Parliamentary Party but by a Gladstonian fifth column. For Irish unionism and loyalism especially, despite the connection to the conservative party and the apparent teleology of the imperial project the very principles of the English Republican tradition shorn of its puritanical religious aspect reverberated down the centuries and undermined the settlement which the Glorious Revolution had put in place. An unerring sense of self defined unionism and loyalism based upon the suspicion of their nearest 'other' which became manifest in the debates that were taking place in parliament, on the streets through parades, protests and riots, in the pages of newspapers like the *Union*. As the nineteenth century progressed Irish nationalists knew who they were and the interests of a country called Ireland came first over considerations of the Three Kingdoms, Britain, empire or any other possible locus of affection. It was the spread of this sense of nationhood, of the 'green triumphant over the red' taking on a specific meaning for the population at large which indicates the success of the nation builders from Davis to Hyde and beyond. It is, however, also the fact that for many Irish people interest in anglocentric popular culture, as evidenced by the huge support for premiership football, British television soap operas and talent competitions and the success of U2, WestLife and Boyzone in an Anglo-American musical idiom which indicates the failure of the same project.

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