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Newfoundland and Irish Music: Synonymous or Similar?

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The connections which Newfoundland has with Ireland, especially in terms of music, are often presumed and taken for granted. The Irish diaspora scholar Brian McGinn expresses that Newfoundland is “the most Irish place outside of Ireland,” and the historical writer Tim Coogan claims that “Newfoundland music’ is unmistakably Irish in influence...”¹ The claims of both these men are not unfounded, for Newfoundland has strong historical ties with Ireland and there are characteristics of Irish music which can be found in Newfoundland music. Yet even though there are similarities, it is incorrect to claim that Newfoundland is synonymous with Ireland in any regard. While Newfoundland and its music has ties with Ireland, the island also has an important history with England which cannot be ignored. As well, the music which was brought to Newfoundland from Ireland and England was adapted by those who lived on the island. Therefore, while Newfoundland music was influenced by other music, it has a life of its own and cannot be thought of as the same as either English or Irish music. Although Newfoundland music is often thought to be synonymous with Irish music, Newfoundland folk music is a synthesis of English music, Irish music, and Newfoundland culture.

Various factors caused people from Ireland to become associated with and settle in Newfoundland. At least one Irishman lived on the island as early as 1662, although this man’s motives for settling here are unknown.² One of the first reasons the Irish came to Newfoundland was to trade with the French colony at Placentia, and there is evidence of this trade relationship existing from 1676 through at least 1681. As well, when conflict between England and Ireland began to rise in Ireland after 1690, some Irishmen were keen on leaving the country. Therefore, to escape the war ensuing between England and Ireland, some Irish decided to flee the country and settle in Newfoundland.³

More people from Ireland settled in Newfoundland because they were brought in for employment. For example, in 1713 the Lieutenant Governor of Placentia brought to the island four Irish regiments to

¹ Quoted in Evelyn Osborne, “The Most Irish Place in the World? ‘Irishness’ in the Recorded Folk Music of Newfoundland and Labrador,” *MUSICultures* 42, no. 2 (2015): 80, <https://illiad.augustana.edu/illiad/pdf/669928.pdf>.

² Michael J. McCarthy, *The Irish in Newfoundland, 1600-1900: Their Trials, Tribulations, and Triumphs* (St. John’s: Creative Book Publishing, 1999), 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 4.

protect its fort. Yet once their job was done, instead of leaving the island, many of these men remained in Newfoundland and established themselves both in Placentia Bay and along the Southern Shore.⁴ Another reason the Irish population continued to increase was the trade of dairy products from Ireland to Newfoundland. Since Irish dairy products were so much less expensive than those from England, a thriving trade relationship developed. When the Irish came to deliver these dairy products, many remained on the island instead of returning to Ireland.⁵

Yet one of the most important reasons why both the English and Irish immigrated to Newfoundland was due to the large supply of cod off its shores.⁶ Men from England and Ireland would travel to Newfoundland to fish for cod to sell later.⁷ However, it was not until the eighteenth century that these fishermen began to settle along the coasts of Newfoundland instead of returning to their home country after the fishing season was over.⁸ Many of the men who immigrated to Newfoundland due to their involvement with the fishing industry were recruited when, as mentioned previously, dairy products were imported from Ireland. Therefore, between 1713 and 1756 the Irish population increased fourfold in Newfoundland.⁹ A large portion of the Irish fishermen who remained on the island established themselves on the southeast coast in the Avalon peninsula.¹⁰

As the Irish population continued to grow over the decades, the Irish were met with much hostility from the English population on the island. Many of the Irish in Newfoundland were servants, a large portion of whom were treated as slaves; therefore, it is unsurprising that some of the Irish helped the French attack various English settlements. While not all Irish servants fought for the French, this did not prevent the English from making this presumption. There is a written account from 1705 from a naval officer who

⁴ McCarthy, 6.

⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

⁶ The Irish who immigrated to Newfoundland due to this reason largely came from the Irish ports of Waterford and Wexford. This information can be found in the following article: Evelyn Osborne, "The Most Irish Place in the World?" 81.

⁷ Colin Neilands, "A Drop of the Irish: The Influence of Irish Folksong on Newfoundland's Song Tradition," *Canadian Folklore* 14, no. 2 (1992): 46-47, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=5fa880d6-5dd5-488b-8f5e-ded569313c09%40sessionmgr4008&hid=4112&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=A31635&db=ri> h.

⁸ Neilands, "A Drop of the Irish: The Influence of Irish Folksong on Newfoundland's Song Tradition," 46-47.

⁹ McCarthy, 7-8.

¹⁰ Neilands, 46-47.

worked in St. John's who warned the citizens of Newfoundland of the rising Irish population. The officer cautioned in a Certificate of Occupancy that the Irish "...doe take up armes and informe our Enemy And prove very treacherous and our greatest enemy."¹¹

To continue their campaign against the Irish, the English needed to provide more evidence that the Irish were a threat to the English. An opportunity arose in 1720 when an Irish servant murdered his master, Thomas Ford, in the town of Petty Harbour. Ford, as the nineteenth century Newfoundland historian Judge Prowse described, was "a violent man and the 'self-appointed governor' of Petty Harbour." This murder was an isolated incident which likely occurred because the servant did not care for the way Ford was treating him. However, one Captain Percy used this incident as an opportunity to warn the English of the increasing Irish population on the island in his report.¹² The officer depicted the Irish as murderers based on one man, in effect stereotyping the Irish in a way which negatively impacted them.

There was conflict between the Irish and English not only due to the servant-master relationship, but also because of the religious tension which was present between these two groups. In 1745, the Irish were asked to sign an oath of allegiance to the House of Hanover. However, the Roman Catholic Irish disagreed with the part of the oath which read "I...do declare that I do not believe there is any transubstantiation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper..." Many of the Irish refused to sign the oath because they did not want to deny their belief in transubstantiation. However, the English viewed not signing this oath as refusing English rule, thereby making the Irish population an even larger threat in the eyes of the English.¹³

Since there was tension between the Irish and the English, it would make sense that these two groups would not interact with each other often and remain separated. Two different song collectors of Newfoundland folk music, Maud Karpeles and Elisabeth Greenleaf, found this trend when they collected their songs. Although not all the communities explored by these song collectors consisted of a single ethnic group, "other outports were clearly the product of either Irish or English immigration, and had remained

¹¹ McCarthy, 5.

¹² Ibid., 6-7.

¹³ McCarthy, 9.

culturally quite distinct.”¹⁴ Even though Karpeles and Greenleaf visited the island during the nineteenth century, their findings are still important to the settlement history of Newfoundland. If these song collectors found that many communities were segregated, it stands to reason that these towns were segregated for decades before Karpeles and Greenleaf came to these communities. Considering the communities were culturally segregated, it would make sense that the music of the English and Irish would remain fairly distinct as well.

Before delving into the differences between English and Irish music, it is worth noting the similarities these two types of music have in common. One of the characteristics is that English and Irish folk music are usually syllabic, meaning that only one note is assigned to each syllable.¹⁵ Although there are sometimes a few words assigned more than one syllable, the tune can still largely be thought of as syllabic. As well, the intervals of a fourth and a seventh are rarely used in these tunes, and the seventh scale degree is rarely raised.¹⁶ These characteristics are worth mentioning because they can and will be observed in the tunes of these two countries.

Yet in order to properly convey the complexities of Newfoundland music, a context for this music must first be established. The characteristics of both English and Irish music must be explored to obtain an understanding of these intricate types of music. Next, the history which Newfoundland has with these two countries must be addressed to comprehend why this island would have adopted musical characteristics from England and Ireland in the first place. Only once this background has been provided can the similarities between Newfoundland, Irish, and English music be determined. This musical analysis will allow a conclusion to be made as to how Irish Newfoundland music truly is.

The Essentials of English Music

Several defining characteristics of English music can help identify whether a composition can be

¹⁴ David E. Gregory, “Vernacular Song, Cultural Identity, and Nationalism in Newfoundland, 1920-1955,” *Canadian Folk Music* 40, no. 2 (2006): 7.

¹⁵ Cecil J. Sharp and Lucy E. Broadwood, “Some Characteristics of English Folk-Music,” *Taylor & Francis, Ltd.* 19, no. 2 (1908): 145, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1253839>.

¹⁶ Annie W. Patterson, “The Folk-Music of Ireland: Its Past, Present, and Future Aspects,” *The Musical Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1920): 462-463, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/737973>.

described as English or not. One of these characteristics is that the melody of the song is usually centered on one note. The note which is the most pertinent to the composition is known as the tonic, and most of the time the song ends on this note.¹⁷ This is a characteristic which is illustrated in the English tune “Green Bushes:”



(Example 1)¹⁸

This is a tune which revolves around the note of G; this can be inferred by observing that the downbeat of the first measure begins on this note and that the composition ends on this note. Sometimes, to reinforce the idea of a tonic, a drone, or a constant note, is played throughout the piece; the drone can be found in either the accompaniment or the melody itself.¹⁹ The modes of these compositions are another characteristic of English music. The modes most commonly used in English music are the Dorian, Mixolydian, and Aeolian mode.²⁰ The Dorian mode corresponds to the modern day minor scale with a raised sixth (imagine D to D played on the piano), the Aeolian mode-which is used in Example 2 and 3-is the equivalent of the natural minor scale (imagine the notes A to A played on the piano), and the Mixolydian mode-which is utilized in Example 1-is the same as a major scale with a flat seventh (imagine G to G played on the piano).

A further characteristic of English folk music is that often it does not remain in one time signature, making the composition irregular in time and rhythm. The reason this is the case is because this music was not written down but was rather passed down orally. Therefore, the composer was more concerned with the

¹⁷ Sharp and Broadwood, 136.

¹⁸ Ibid., 137.

¹⁹ Ibid., 136.

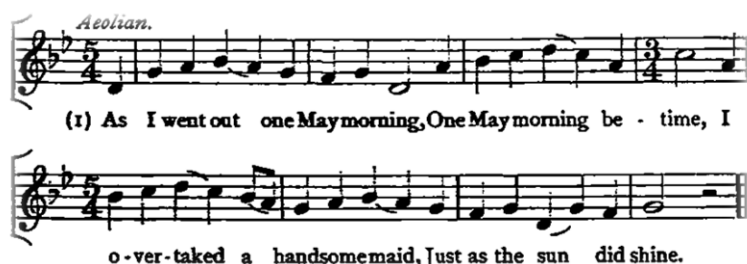
²⁰ Ibid., 141.

flow of the text rather than remaining in one time signature.²¹ To illustrate this point, look at the English tune “Sweet Lovely Joan:”



(Example 2)²²

Although the tune may look complex on the page, it would have flowed naturally to the singer, making it easier to sing than one might expect solely based on looking at the composition.²³ It was also characteristic of a piece of English music which was composed of two phrases to be broken by a 3/4 bar.²⁴ The tune “Searching for Lambs” features this characteristic:



(Example 3)²⁵

The function of this break in time signatures was, as mentioned already, to allow the text to flow freely and sound aesthetically pleasing. As well, the use of non-harmonic passing notes is a characteristic feature of English folk music.²⁶ This means that there are notes which do not conform to the harmony being played in a given measure; these passing notes are used as a means to reach a note which fits the desired harmony. For example, if a measure had a D minor triad (comprised of the notes D, F, and A,) as its intended harmony, the melody might flow from D to an E up to an F, as is the case in the sixth measure of Example 2. It should be

²¹ Sharp and Broadwood, 141-142.

²² Ibid., 142.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 144.

²⁵ Ibid., 143.

²⁶ Ibid., 144.

noted that both Examples 2 and 3 utilize the time signature of 5/4. Although this time signature is not found in all English music, it can often be found in compositions which change time signature. 5/4 is less commonly used in tunes without a text as well, indicating that it is probable 5/4 was used in Examples 2 and 3 to allow the text to be sung freely. Therefore, this time signature can be thought of as another characteristic of English music which also has a text.

The Intricacies of Irish Music

There are also defining characteristics of Irish music which can help determine whether a composition can be described as Irish or not. There are two different sources from which traditional Irish music emerged; the first were the bards who played the harp and passed their music down to other bards across the generations. When these tunes were passed down, they were kept fairly intact and did not change much even though they were passed down orally. The other source traditional Irish music emerged from was music utilizing the voice, the fiddle, or sometimes both. This music came in the form of dances such as jigs, reels, and hornpipes. While this music was passed down orally just as the bards' music was, this music was not passed down as strictly and therefore multiple versions of the same song exist.²⁷ What can help explain this difference is that the harp-bards played for the aristocracy, while the music which was sung and played on the fiddle were mainly performed for the public.²⁸ While the aristocracy would have expected perfect performances of a tune, the music which was played for the public would not have had such strict rules.

Yet another factor which can be attributed to this difference is the extinction of the bard. The bards often played for the aristocracy, yet when the aristocracy became less stable, these bards became strolling minstrels. This caused the harpists to travel around the country and play in different communities to survive.²⁹ When these minstrels traveled, peasants would hear these tunes and learn them by ear; these songs would then be heard and passed throughout the community.³⁰ Since the music was not written down, variations on a tune likely occurred when people tried to remember the tune but omitted or added a note

²⁷ Patterson, 460.

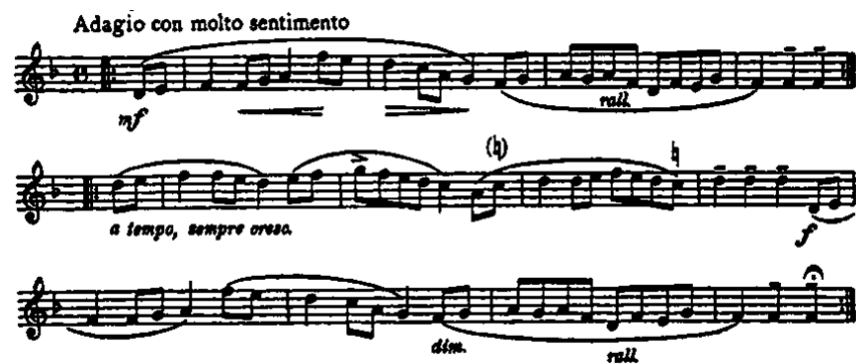
²⁸ Ibid., 457.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 461.

which was not originally there.

However, these two different sources of Irish music share many common characteristics. Therefore, the musical characteristics which are used to describe the music of the harp-bards can also be applied to the vocal and fiddle music. One characteristic of the harp music is that it was often composed in an ABA form, in which the first few bars (or A) would be repeated at the end of the song after a middle section (or B); in this middle section, the fifth scale degree, or dominant, was often emphasized. Another feature of this music was that when a piece of music was composed in the key of G Major, the only accidentals which were used were C sharp and F natural. The key of G was a common one to compose in since the thirty-stringed harp was tuned to the intervals necessary to create the key of G. Another characteristic of Irish music is that the tonic is repeated at the end of the song, a feature which is “suggestive of the plagal, or Amen cadence.”³¹ This is a characteristic which is present in the tune “The Foggy Dew:”



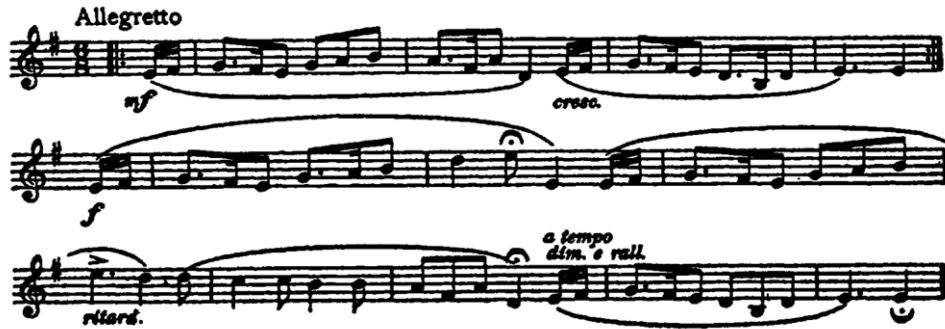
(Example 4)³²

As can be observed, the first four bars are repeated at the end of the song, indicating that this tune is in an ABA form. It is also worth mentioning that at the end of the B section, the D is also repeated three times, foreshadowing the cadence at the end of the tune.

While Example 4 was from the harp-bard repertoire, a version of the tune “The Brink of the White Rock” from the repertoire of the countryside features many of the characteristics previously mentioned:

³¹ Patterson, 461.

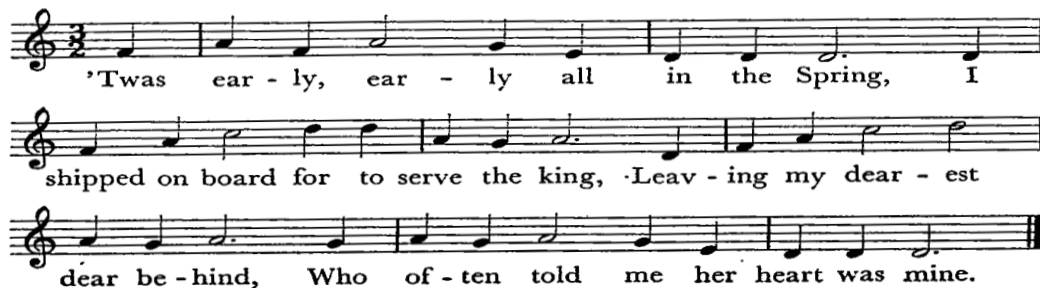
³² Ibid., 463.



(Example 5)³³

This tune is in a dance-form, as fiddle and vocal music often was; however, there are other features of this music which indicates its relation to the harp-bard music. There is a reiteration of the tonic in the last measure, and the form of this tune is ABA, even if the B section is only two bars.³⁴ The similarities between these tunes from different sources indicates that there are established musical characteristics which can help determine whether a tune can be considered Irish or not.

The music of Newfoundland can be described as Irish because many of the characteristics of Irish music can be found in these tunes. One tune which illustrates the repeated note at the end of the tune is “Early, Early in the Spring:”



(Example 6)³⁵

Another song which displays characteristics of Irish music is one without lyrics called “The Self:”

³³ Patterson, 464.

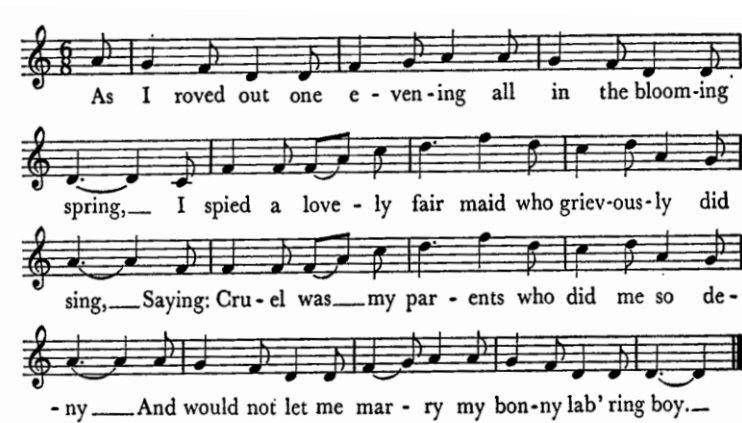
³⁴ Ibid., 462-464.

³⁵ Maud Karpeles, ed., *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1970), 203.



(Example 7)³⁶

This song can be considered a jig, a dance-form which was commonly used in the fiddle and vocal music of Ireland. The tonic is reiterated at the end of the song, and this tune is in ABA form, with the middle section centering more around D than the first section. Another song which is composed in a dance-form but also has text is “The Bonny Labouring Boy:”



(Example 8)³⁷

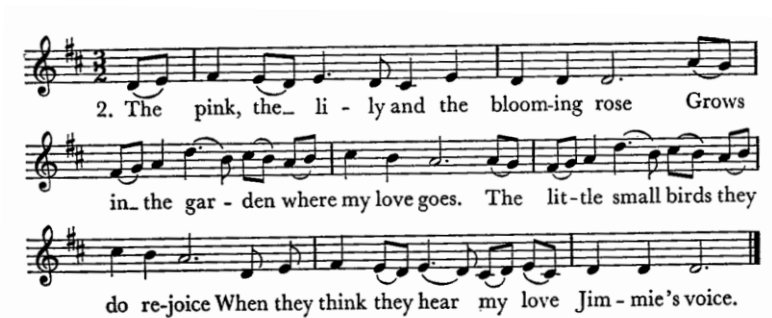
The tonic is reiterated at the end of the song, and the tune can be considered a jig. This tune is also in an ABA form, with the B section being repeated twice. Based on these examples, it is clear the Irish had an impact on the music in Newfoundland.

There are also Newfoundland songs with Irish characteristics that contain other musical features

³⁶ Karpeles, 258.

³⁷ Ibid., 216.

which must have been added by residents of the island. For example, the tune “The Morning Dew” indicates a synthesis of Irish music and musical elements added by Newfoundlanders:



(Example 9)³⁸

As can be observed, the tonic is repeated multiple times at the end of the song, just as it was in Examples 4 through 8. As well, this tune is composed in an ABA form, with the B section being repeated twice, as it was in Example 8. In this B section, the tune emphasizes the note of A more so than in section A, another characteristic of Irish music. However, the seventh scale degree is raised, something which would not have normally been present in an Irish tune, indicating that there is a synthesis of musical ideas in this song.

Interconnections Between Islands

The idea that Newfoundland music sounds Irish is not surprising given the fact that, as mentioned previously, many Irishmen immigrated to the island. In 1752 there were roughly 3,000 Irishmen in Newfoundland, this number making up half of the population. A census from 1753 illustrates that in almost every community which was accounted for there were more Irish than English inhabitants. In St. John's, Quidi Vidi, and Torbay, there were 454 English and 669 Irish; in Carbonear and Musquito there were 222 English and 400 Irish; Trinity Bay and Bonavista had 513 English and 700 Irish; and Bay Bulls Willey Bay Toad's Cove had 206 English and 395 Irish.³⁹ The communities in Newfoundland were home to many Irishmen, and one can imagine that the Irishmen who immigrated to the island continued to sing the songs they knew from home. This would allow people on the island to learn new songs from the Irish and adopt the musical characteristics of Irish music into their own music.

³⁸ Karpeles, 246.

³⁹ McCarthy, 8.

Yet it is not accurate to claim that Newfoundland music is synonymous with Irish music. An important idea to keep in mind when discussing folk music is that, as Evelyn Osborne points out, “Folk and traditional musics are particularly associated with place, community, and identity.” With folk music especially, people want to tie this music to a specific place, and people who are unfamiliar with Newfoundland music might listen to it, think that it sounds similar to Irish music, and describe it as such.⁴⁰ However, this simplifies the matter, and it can be argued that Newfoundland music is not nearly as Irish as most people tend to believe. Something which supports this argument is that in 1951 only 14.8% of the residents of Newfoundland claimed Irish heritage, a number which rose to 25% in 2001. This rise in the amount of people who identified as Irish cannot be explained through a large influx of people from Ireland between 1951 and 2001 because it did not occur. Therefore, there must have been a “shift in personal, cultural, and historical identification” that caused more Newfoundlanders to identify with an Irish heritage. One way this shift can be explained is through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 1996 between Ireland and Newfoundland. This resulted in more economic and cultural aspects of these two islands being shared than before the memorandum was signed.⁴¹

To fully understand the musical culture of Newfoundland, it is essential to comprehend why Newfoundlanders would identify with Ireland in the first place. Newfoundland only became a province of Canada in 1949; before this, it was considered part of England until the early twentieth century, when the province governed itself. Yet from 1933 through 1949, Newfoundland came under English rule again due to the unfortunate economic state it was in after World War I. Once Newfoundland became a Canadian province, there were resettlement programs which occurred between 1954 and 1972. This caused 27,000 people in Newfoundland to be moved from more rural to urban communities. The purpose of the resettlement was to help make Newfoundland more like the rest of Canada in terms of culture, but these programs were seen as a “destroyer of culture.” Due to the negative acceptance of the resettlement programs, in the 1970s the people of Newfoundland began to idealize an old, rustic Newfoundland. Thinking of

⁴⁰ Osborne, 85.

⁴¹ Ibid., 82.

Newfoundland in this way was essential because “This vision of the ‘true’ NL aligned with popular concepts of Ireland as another rural, hard-working, friendly, culturally rich, economically marginalized island.”⁴² Based on this notion, people in Newfoundland began to identify with Ireland not because there was a pre-existing tie with the island, but because Ireland was viewed as sharing many characteristics with Newfoundland. This history helps explain why Newfoundlanders began to identify with Ireland and why people became increasingly interested in Irish music.

The musical ties which Newfoundland has with Ireland might be more synthetic than one would initially believe. There were recordings of different Irish groups played over the radio in Newfoundland, such as the McNulty Family, which influenced the musical repertoire of Newfoundland. This group was not from Ireland, but rather was an Irish-American vaudeville group from New York. The McNulty Family had a strong presence on the musical repertoire of Newfoundland, something which can be illustrated through this group’s recording of the song “Star of Logy Bay.” The McNulty Family version of this song took the lyrics to this local song and set them to the Irish melody “The Hills of Glenshee.” This is the version, of the three which exist, which is the most well-known.⁴³ As well, other songs which the McNulty Family recorded were redone by other musicians, and “Many of these re-recorded McNulty songs have subsequently been naturalized as NL traditional music and are assumed to have been brought by Irish immigrants.”⁴⁴ Therefore, there are a number of songs in the musical repertoire of Newfoundland which, although presumed to be from Ireland, are truly a product which was made from an Irish-American group.

As Newfoundlanders were beginning to idealize a more rural Newfoundland after the resettlement programs, the group Ryan’s Fancy became popular and influenced the music scene in Newfoundland. The group was made of three Irishmen: Denis Ryan, Fergus O’Byrne, and Dermot O’Reilly. Like the McNulty Family, this group recorded Irish tunes which were later recorded by local musicians, resulting in these songs becoming part of the local repertoire. Although Ryan’s Fancy did promote Newfoundland culture through its

⁴² Osborne., 82-83.

⁴³ Ibid., 86-87.

Philip Hiscock, “Ten Things to Consider about “The Star of Logy Bay,”” *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* 37, no. 2 (2003): 9, <http://www.canfolkmusic.ca/index.php/cfmb/article/viewFile/274/268>.

⁴⁴ Osborne, 87.

television show by exploring “rural outport culture by combining folklore fieldwork and documentary-style television,” this group still influenced Newfoundland culture by, even if unintentionally, promoting Irish culture and music as well.⁴⁵

A feeling of embarrassment in regards to Newfoundland culture amongst young musicians from the 1980s through the 1990s also influenced the musical repertoire on the island. The culture of Newfoundland was not perceived well by this younger generation in part because the economy was not doing well, which resulted in outmigration; the negative outlook on the culture of Newfoundland extended to the traditional music of the island as well. Turning from accordion music and the recorded traditional music of Newfoundland, these musicians “turned to more virtuosic and readily available Irish music recordings.” As the economy continued to do poorly in the 1990s, these musicians continued to be more interested in and listened to recordings of Irish music rather than Newfoundland music.⁴⁶

Not only did some Newfoundland musicians go to Ireland to learn more about the culture and music there, but some Irishmen also came to Newfoundland to share their culture and learn about the culture of Newfoundland. Two specific musicians who came from Ireland, the fiddler Séamus Creagh and the flutist Rob Murphy, had a large impact on establishing strong ties between Irish and Newfoundland culture and music. Murphy helped establish a chapter of an Irish cultural association in St. John’s called *Combaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*. Creagh helped musicians from Newfoundland establish themselves in the musical scene in Ireland when he returned to Ireland; he later moved back to St. John’s and recorded Irish and Newfoundland music.⁴⁷ Both of these men helped Ireland establish musical ties with Newfoundland and vice versa. The cultural and musical ties which were made between these islands did not stem from an interest rooted in historical ties. Rather, this exchange came about because these young musicians did not want to identify with Newfoundland music. This exchange can be seen as an artificial way which Irish music worked its way into the culture of Newfoundland, music which was not originally part of the musical scene.

Despite this counter-argument, it is wrong to claim that the ties which Newfoundland music has with

⁴⁵ Osborne, 89-90.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 91-92.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 93.

Ireland are fictitious. There were a large amount of Irish who immigrated to Newfoundland throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and by 1836 half of the population in Newfoundland was Irish.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is clear that Newfoundland and many of its citizens have a tie with Ireland. It is possible that many Newfoundlanders did not identify as Irish until later because they were not particularly interested in trying to find this connection. However, after the Memorandum of Understanding was signed, perhaps more people were interested in not only the culture of Ireland but whether they had ties to this island themselves. As well, it has been shown through numerous examples that defining characteristics of Irish music are utilized in Newfoundland music. Although Newfoundland music cannot be described as synonymous with Irish music, it most indefinitely has musical features which can be tied back to Ireland.

Established Ties with England

Even though much of Newfoundland music can be described as Irish, there are other Newfoundland tunes which can be better described as English. Based on the census already discussed, it makes sense that the music in Newfoundland would have been heavily influenced by the English. Although there were many Irish who lived in Newfoundland, in most communities there were almost as many English as there were Irish. In Bay Verde there were actually more English than Irish, with there being 69 English residents and 59 Irish. In Fermeuse there were 50 English and 68 Irish; in Ferryland there were 120 English and 130 Irish; and in Renewes there were 82 English and 100 Irish.⁴⁹ Although the Irish did outnumber the English in most of these communities, they did not outnumber the English by a large amount. Therefore, the English had just as much influence over the music culture in Newfoundland as the Irish did in many of the communities on the island.

One Newfoundland tune which features some characteristic of English music is “Young M’Tyre:”

⁴⁸ Gregory, 1.

⁴⁹ McCarthy, 8.

There was a man lived in the East, He had one
on - ly daugh-ter, And she fell a - court-ing with young M—
- Tyre, Who was ser-vant to her fa-ther.

(Example 10)⁵⁰

The use of irregular time, as depicted by the various time signatures, is a characteristic of English music. Not only are multiple time signatures used, but 5/4 is prominent in this composition, as was observed previously in Examples 2 and 3. As well, the text is set to the music syllabically, meaning that only one note is set to each syllable. In the fifth bar there is a cadence on the dominant of the tonic D, yet another characteristic of English music. Another tune which utilizes a musical feature which is present in a fair amount of English tunes is “The Maiden’s Lament:”

As I roved out one_eve-ning in Spring Down by a
si - lent sweet sha-dy grove, I heard a maid-en mak-ing
sad la-ment, She cried: A - las, I have lost my love.

(Example 11)⁵¹

This is a tune comprised of two phrases which is broken in the middle by a 2/2 measure; although it would be more characteristic of English music if the phrase was broken by a 3/4 measure, this break indicates that this tune was influenced by English music. Another tune which contains many features of English music is “The Bold Lieutenant:”

⁵⁰ Karpeles, 220.

⁵¹ Ibid., 241.

'Twas near St. Giles there dwelled a lady And
 she was beau-ti-ful and fair, 'Twas near St. Giles there dwelled a
 la - dy With thir - ty thou-sand pounds a year.

(Example 12)⁵²

As with the previous song, the rhythm is irregular, as displayed through the continuously changing time signatures, one of which is the characteristic 5/4. As well, the passing notes used in this tune are a characteristic of English music. However, the fact that these tunes are tonal rather than modal indicates that there is a synthesis of musical features, that the people of Newfoundland adopted some aspects of English music and rejected others.

As well, there is at least one song which combines the characteristics of English and Irish music, a song titled “The Baffled Knight:”

It's of a jol - ly farm - er Who lived on yon - der
 hill, As he roved out one May morning To see what he could
 kill. While he had his too ter rer num. Right be lits a tits I
 tired With me die rer loo-dle a lit I die.

(Example 13)⁵³

This tune is in the form of a jig and the tonic is repeated at the end, both of which are characteristics of Irish music, while the mixed meter displays a characteristic of English music.

A Reflection on Musical Relationships

It has already been established that Newfoundland music is more complex than one might originally

⁵² Karpeles, 140.

⁵³ Ibid., 80.

expect by demonstrating that both English and Irish music characteristics can be found in this music. However, the story becomes more intriguing when one learns that one of the pinnacle songs of Newfoundland culture was influenced by American music. The popular Newfoundland song “Jack was every Inch the Sailor” was not based on Irish music, but rather a popular American tune from the 1880s.⁵⁴ This song can be heard throughout St. John’s, the capital of Newfoundland, to this day. Therefore, it is interesting to find that this tune can be described as American more so than it can be described as Irish. This further demonstrates that Newfoundland music, even the more popular songs, are not as Irish as one might initially believe.

Even though Newfoundland music is often thought to be synonymous with Irish music, Newfoundland folk music is a synthesis of English music, Irish music, and Newfoundland culture. While Newfoundland has both historical and musical connections with Ireland, the same is true for England. Through various tunes, it has been demonstrated that characteristics of both English and Irish music have been utilized in and incorporated into Newfoundland music. This exploration of different music indicates that Newfoundland music is more complex than one might presume. While presumptions can be helpful to guide one’s expectations of something such as a culture’s music, it is unfair to label the music of a culture based on these simplified notions. The history of a culture’s music such as Newfoundland is rather fascinating, if one only takes the time to investigate it.

⁵⁴ Gregory, 9.

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