

**IRELAND INTO THE MYSTIC:
THE POETIC SPIRIT AND CULTURAL CONTENT
OF IRISH ROCK MUSIC, 1970-2020**

ELENA CANIDO MUIÑO

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Director: David Clark Mitchell

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Abstract

Music and literature have always played a central role in the social and cultural life of Ireland, not only as a source of entertainment, but also as an effective way of recording Ireland's own history and culture and communicating these widely throughout the world, defining the identity of a nation and its people in a unique way. The main aim of this doctoral thesis, then, will be to extend the concerns of Irish Studies by bringing to light the intellectual and cultural profundity of Irish rock music from an interdisciplinary perspective, which might also represent an innovative approach to the analysis of songs as a literary phenomenon.

Thus, analytical investigation of the formative links among music, literature and culture in Ireland will be based on a detailed examination of songs and representative material by a range of Irish rock artists in their cultural and historical contexts, in an attempt to convey the ways in which Irish culture and identity have become embedded within rock music through the power of narratives. By assessing the developments undergone in Irish rock music over five decades, this thesis will also explore the story of Ireland from the perspective of the rock music produced throughout the island during a period of rapid, decisive change at many levels.

Keywords: music; rock songs; poetry; arts integration; art-making processes; Comparative Literature; Cultural Studies; Irish Studies; Popular Music Studies.

Resumen

La música y la literatura han desempeñado siempre un papel central en la sociedad y la vida cultural de Irlanda, no sólo como fuentes de entretenimiento, sino también como medios para dejar constancia de la historia e identidad propias del país y transmitir tales características por el mundo de una forma ciertamente única. El objetivo principal de esta tesis doctoral será por tanto desarrollar un tema de estudio de interés y relevancia para los Estudios Irlandeses al tratar la profundidad cultural e intelectual de la música rock irlandesa desde una perspectiva interdisciplinar, lo que también supondrá un enfoque innovador del análisis de canciones como fenómeno literario.

Así, se investigarán las relaciones entre la música, la literatura y la cultura en Irlanda a partir de la presentación, análisis, comparación y estudio de canciones y material artístico representativo de artistas rock irlandeses en su contexto musical, cultural e histórico, para exponer las formas en las que se han interrelacionado diferentes ideas literarias, musicales y culturales en el rock irlandés. Finalmente, al estudiar el desarrollo de la música rock en Irlanda a lo largo de cinco décadas, también se indagará en la historia de la isla desde el punto de vista de la música rock producida durante una etapa de cambios decisiva a varios niveles.

Palabras clave: música; canciones rock; poesía; integración de artes; procesos artísticos; Literatura Comparada; Estudios Culturales; Estudios Irlandeses; Estudios de Música Popular.

Resumo

A música e a literatura tiveron sempre un papel central na vida cultural e mais na sociedade de Irlanda, non só como fontes de entretemento senón tamén como unha maneira efectiva de deixar constancia da historia e identidade propias do país e transmitir esas características polo mundo dunha maneira única. O obxectivo principal desta tese doutoral será polo tanto desenvolver un tema de estudio de interese e relevancia para os Estudos Irlandeses ao tratar a profundidade cultural e intelectual da música rock irlandesa dende unha perspectiva interdisciplinaria, o que tamén supoñerá un enfoque innovador da análise de cancións como fenómeno literario.

Así pois, investigaranse as relacións entre a música, a literatura e a cultura en Irlanda a partires da presentación, análise, comparación e estudo de cancións e de material artístico representativo de artistas rock irlandeses no seu contexto cultural e histórico para mostrar as formas nas que se relacionan diferentes ideas literarias, musicais e culturais no rock irlandés. Finalmente, ao investigar o desenvolvemento da música rock en Irlanda ao longo de cinco décadas, esta tese tamén indagará na historia da illa dende o punto de vista da música rock producida na illa nunha etapa de cambios decisiva en varios niveis.

Palabras chave: música; cancións rock; poesía; integración das artes; procesos artísticos; Literatura Comparada; Musicoloxía; Estudos Culturais; Estudos Irlandeses; Estudos da Música Popular.

1. Introduction

Music has played an immensely important role in Ireland since ancient times, and continues to represent one of the principal cultural avenues for the expression and exploration of modern Irish culture and contemporary Irish identities. As a result, Irish music appears throughout Irish cultural studies as a site of interaction between culture and society. This has been examined in John O'Flynn's *The Irishness of Irish Music* (2009), a work which proves useful in terms of illustrating the connection between a range of different music traditions and the notion of "Irish national identity." On the other hand, Seán Crosson looks at the relationship between Irish music and literature in *The Given Note: Traditional Music and Modern Irish Poetry* (2008), a study where he claims that the former resides at the heart of the latter, whether as a metaphor, as formal example, or as a desired model of communication, given that a number of Irish poets have emphasised different elements of such a relationship throughout their careers. However, Gerry Smyth's *Noisy Island: A Short History of Irish Popular Music* (2005) was actually the first work which acknowledged rock and popular music as a serious element within the evolving Irish cultural imagination, helping to establish it as a legitimate field of study for further scholarship. After that, McLaughlin and McLoone's book *Rock and Popular Music in Ireland: Before and After U2* (2012), and Matteo Cullen's doctoral thesis *Vagabonds of the Western World(s): Continuities, Tensions and the Development of Irish Rock Music, 1968-78* (2012), both addressed the importance of considering Irish rock music as an academic practice outside of—but in relation to—the mass reception with which it is commonly associated. Consequently, it was in response to this recent development and under the influence of writers and academics such as

those quoted above that I was encouraged to write about the role of Irish rock music in the cultural history of Ireland.

In fact, the previously published volumes on the subject are so thorough that the job seems to be already done, but, notwithstanding the thoroughness and accuracy with which they all examine Irish music, their emphasis differs slightly from that of my core concern. While much has been written about the sociological significance of rock and/or popular music, a full analysis of the songs themselves is still rare, both within the growing academic field of Popular Music Studies and that of English Literature. In addition, analyses of local music-making emerging from the field of Popular Music Studies tend to be concerned only with issues of socialisation, authenticity and national identity—that is, sharing the same concerns with contemporary Irish cultural studies. Still, among all these issues, a principal, and apparently very simple, one persists: what does a particular song say, and how does it say it? Similarly, in what ways have Irish culture and literature become embedded within rock music? Moreover, the arts, humanities and cultural studies play an incredibly important role in tracing the genealogy of a country, inviting here questions such as how Irish culture replicates itself (or critically engage itself) in society and in the arts, and what are the roles and responsibilities of the artist as writer, artist, social scientist and community member. Consequently, how did the rock music produced in Ireland generate meanings, what were those meanings and which of them were consumed by listeners to the music and in what way?

This thesis, therefore, aims to supply some answers but also and effectively raise new questions by bringing to light the poetic essence and cultural relevance of Irish rock—its history, its structure, its content and its distinctiveness—from an interdisciplinary perspective, which will also provide means through which to avoid the

difficulties encountered frequently by a purely musical or a purely linguistic analysis of song lyrics as a literary phenomenon.

1.1.1. Methodology

This is a research with a soundtrack. It will take songs by Irish rock artists as the main subject of analysis and use a descriptive approach in order to obtain information concerning the issues above in each and every song and artist examined.¹ Analytical investigation will be based on the examination of the hybrid nature of key texts, for it will be argued that these texts simultaneously combine a range of literary, musical and cultural ideas. It will thus be directed towards two main types of question: firstly, asking of a musical text questions like what, how and why; and secondly, asking questions of value, effectively analysing whether a particular aesthetic or cultural goal is achieved.

Artists from David Bowie to Marianne Faithfull to Elvis Costello have quoted Martin Mull's maxim that "writing about music is like dancing about architecture," meaning that any artistic or musical appreciation is simply subjective. Yet, when we like or love something—as so many of us do when it comes to music, books or films—talking about it, debating it and writing about it all add to the appreciation. Determining the aesthetic of a given song, however, needs to be based on explicit criteria in order for it not to be subjective, because we can imagine mutually exclusive criteria of value: structural coherence, emotional impact, commercial potential, etc. We must also have some previous knowledge of the style of a piece of music in order to experience

¹ Inevitably there are omissions. In my enthusiasm, I compiled far more excellent material than I could possibly ever use, and a difficult process of sifting and selecting ensued.

inherent meanings as distinct from non-musically meaningful sound, at all. Such knowledge is by no means acquired only through study, but is learnt through repeated experience of music (Green 33-34). Inspired by my own artistic journey, I discuss these issues not only from an academic point of view (my approach to the subject will definitely be influenced by my studies in both English Literature and Music Performance), but there is also an element here where my own practice as a singer and a songwriter has informed an understanding of the importance of song lyrics. Although I am a musician too, there is for me a greater value to compositions which have lyrics, a sense that the material that contains the greatest level of emotional commitment is always that where words are employed: in a straightforward sense, when using words in a song, the singer is declaring himself or herself in the sense that words are usually understood as a more actual, concrete expression of feeling; similarly, words—as opposed to sound—have also a sense of the personal for the listener, the idea of someone addressing them. Still, in order to support my analysis, alongside this material I will also work with secondary sources such as scholarly books, dissertations, essays, journals and researches in such diverse fields as literature, musicology, sociology, art analysis, education and cultural theory(see, for example, Smyth 2005, 2009; McLaughlin and McLoone 2000; Moore 2001; Whiteley 2000; and White 1998, 2008).

Moreover, a historical approach will concentrate on what happened in historical terms during the era in which the song was created, commenting on why the writer wrote the lyrics or how the performer interpreted the situation and the event at that time. Thus, while the approach of classical semiology tends to isolate the production of meaning from specific contexts, the present work will place semiology and history together. By assessing the developments in Irish rock music over five decades, from the 1970s to the present times, it will tell the story of modern Ireland from the perspective

of the rock music produced across the island during this key stage of its political and cultural history. It will thus provide a bridge between the semiological and the historical aspects of the treatment of Irish rock, which is, in Hartley's words, the place where "language-systems and social conditions meet" (6). This study, therefore, signals the intellectual and cultural profundity of Irish rock songs in the hope of reaching an understanding which would itself be the synthesised product of a variety of insights derived from cultural, historical, literary, musicological and philosophical discourses. Ultimately, it aims to be accessible, practical, and inspiring to do further research, reading, listening and creating.

1.1.2. Thesis Structure

The broad structure of the study divides our subject into two major areas, the first being the roots of Irish rock, that is, the places and ideas of Ireland, with an assessment of how they have exerted an influence over rock music. This section also addresses matters of Irish identity, such as how the spirit of place is explored and revealed in these artists' songs by looking at the idea of exile and restlessness. Some themes, however, are not spotlighted, but run throughout all the sections—time, place and memory, for example—while some of the key themes do indeed have their own slot. The different chapters of the thesis will be determined by the different key motifs and references, both literary and cultural, within the songs. Songs, therefore, will be treated not simply as a melody to be sung or a text to be read, but as "an instrument of cultural force, a central tool in the creation of national and social identities" (Mitchell 1). Next, the second section examines the albums which seem to me to best illustrate this methodology, which is absolutely central to the works. It is thus divided up more thematically than it is chronologically (although time periods are taken very much into

account throughout as I try to show how songs can be used as a form of historical evidence). Thus, there are songs from, for example, Van Morrison's album *Astral Weeks*, created in 1968, considered alongside material from Hozier's *Wasteland, Baby!*, which was released in 2019. Likewise, we connect Horslips' use of Celtic myths in the '70s with that of Gary Moore's in the '80s. This is not to suggest that there is no difference between the music or the artist making it in 1972, 1985 and 2020, but to try and seek out connections and continuities over time and circumstance. In fact, it is part of my contention that the works in Irish rock both bear and reveal these continuities even while clearly, and by necessity, embracing rapid change. Similarly, this thesis looks at how the Irishness of rock performers and bands such as Thin Lizzy, U2 or The Cranberries has been expressed in other less obvious ways, but these can still be understood to be "Irish artists." As for the choice of songs upon which the study concentrates, this is not subjective, but there is an emphasis upon the recordings which best illustrate and exemplify certain creative tendencies that are in my view central to the work overall. At the same time, through these songs I also assess the formative influences that constitute the "Irishness" of such artists.

Furthermore, this thesis asks what is "literary" or poetic about these songs and what, if anything, is distinctively "Irish" about these qualities. In other words, from which traditions do Irish rock musicians come and to which do they belong? How have they redefined these traditions? Hence, we focus on these artists as songwriters and think about how their respective works fit into the accepted methodologies via a focus on some of their most important recordings. Similarly, we look at their connections with several writers, as the theme of literary comparison runs through the study as a whole. In the light of this thought, this analysis offers close focus on certain songs and albums that seem to best illustrate and illuminate such creative tendencies. To achieve this

particular goal, the study is organised into five main chapters. Each individual chapter tends to break down between contextual background, significant theory and close scrutiny of the song, so that typically there is a theoretically-based opening section followed by close analysis of relevant recordings.

Therefore, the first part of the study suggests that, as I try to prove, the songs I am about to explore include honest views of each given period, proving that factors such as cultural background or society in which artists live do actually make a considerable difference when it comes to expressing cultural identity through song and music. Thus, specified song analysis ideas and observations are highlighted in the introductory chapter, "Historical and Theoretical Introduction to Irish rock," which has four subchapters. The first and second subchapters are concerned with the importance of rock as a tool for both cultural and personal expression since its origin. The third and fourth subchapters deal with the challenges of defining Irish rock and its features within the texts analysed, as well as how different authors suggest their approach. The importance of this chapter relies on the fact that these aspects are all reflected in one way or another in every song, album and artist I have chosen for the analysis, and thus, form the basis of this thesis' thematic choice.

The second part of the thesis (chapters 2 to 5) draws parallels between certain given topics and how they influenced or are treated in the chosen songs and/or records. Consequently, chapter 2, "Mythology and the Celtic in Irish rock Music," refers to the personal and artistic revolution of Horslips, Thin Lizzy and Gary Moore, whose use of Irish and Celtic myth and folklore in their musical legacy guaranteed them a special place in both the rock scene and the artistic sphere of Ireland in the 1970s and the 1980s, respectively. Next, in chapter 3, titled "Sociopolitical Awareness in Irish Rock," I explore how Irish musicians have been able to use rock music as a means of putting

forward their political ideas and beliefs, creating links in a chains of songs that extend across the decades. Thus, it also provides a good way of exploring how rock music and political ideas combine. In chapter 4, "The Cultural and Artistic Impact of Women in Irish Rock Music," I emphasise Irish women artists' transgression of social and cultural boundaries as lived and portrayed by Sinéad O'Connor and Dolores O'Riordan, in particular. My interest is in the work of these artists rather than their lives, although of course one is entirely aware that there is a connection between the two. However, they speak most eloquently of their experience of the world via songs and performances, meaning that, in practice, biography in the traditional sense is beside the point. Lastly, in chapter 5, "Still Looking for the Mystic: Singer-Songwriters in Irish Rock, Then and Now," I consider some of the theoretical and methodological issues pertaining to the study of songwriting in Irish rock music while looking at Van Morrison and Hozier, two of the most renowned Irish lyricists in which such songwriting techniques feature. However, as they belong to different music eras, this chapter is also about artistic connections and how things carry on through time.

2. Historical and Theoretical Introduction to Irish Rock

2.1.1. Introduction

This is a thesis which is intended to examine the story of Irish rock music, considering some of the issues that arise from it and interrogating some of the assumptions that have emerged in relation to it. Individual chapters combine historical, cultural, literary and musicological analysis in no particular ratio. All of the chapters are contextualised, but each picks up on a particular feature or trend. This first chapter, therefore, functions as a general introduction to the history of Irish rock music, as the intention, on the one hand, is to indicate how the rock music made by Irish artists, and the ways in which they thought about it, engaged with some of the issues that will be introduced in the main chapters of the thesis. On the other hand, I aim to describe the practices and sounds that characterised rock music in its origin, so that those which followed on in Irish rock may be more fully appreciated when we come to address them. Last but not least, it explores how historical and social coordinates tend to introduce a change in cultural and artistic forms, such as in the creation and evolution of rock styles, in this case.

2.1.2. The Origins of Rock

Rock is only one among many types of popular music to circulate in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, how was the rock phenomenon born? How, when, and why did the generation of the mid-fifties generate and consolidate the rock movement and then turn it into one of the most influential music genres of the second half of the twentieth century? Sometimes, questions about the origin of a phenomenon are subject to different answers, mainly because they depend on the vision

of critics and historians and on the approach that they want to give it, but there is no common pattern, nor is there any exact and universal criterion. In what that follows, we assume that, as Charles Hamm notes, "rock' n' roll, rock and other kinds of music, mostly derived from the music of one of the minority cultures in America, that have become part of and revolutionized the popular music scene in America" (53). In fact, rock and roll was originally an almost violent rupture because of its proposals and the repression to which it was subject. However, it was not an isolated event that occurred within its time, but the sum of an evolution which in the music sphere is always more vertiginous. Creative speed and improvement, trends and consumption, were thus the real basis that made rock music a mass phenomenon in the last decades of the twentieth century. As a consequence, there has been from the beginning a certain ambiguity of language and much debate about the meanings of terms like "rock," "popular music" and "Irish rock," an issue which is examined next.

At this early stage of the thesis, I adopt a relatively broad and open categorisation of rock music. Thus, we could say that this research focuses indeed on the rock era, the period beginning in the mid-1950s (around 1954), when different segregated styles of music became entwined as "rock' n' roll," the idiom formally used in much academic and journalistic writing to distinguish politically and artistically informed popular music from a chart-orientated, usually softer and less direct music, normally called "pop." Within popular music especially, scholars have distinguished pop songs from the rock ones by, on the one hand, considering these to be more fierce, louder and stronger, and on the other, just more personal and "authentic" to both the artist and the listener.² Still, I do not believe in the hierarchising of individualised styles

² In this sense, Theodore Gracyk claims that "[r]ock authenticity posits an absolute dichotomy between the inner and the outer, between the true elf and the socially constructed mask" (*Rhythm* 226).

of music, and embrace instead the idea that artists from other popular genres—from pop to R' n' B to dance, and so on—are just as important to musical history and evolution as those from rock.³ What is clear, however, is that, on the contrary to some of those styles, rock would never be considered an ultra-processed music created for commercial appeal almost exclusively, but one which arose from the mixing of other genres.

To begin with, there was a traditional music among the black community in the southern states of America which derived from the evolution of different rhythms which had been brought over from Africa. Various genres were included in this black southern music, the main ones of which were soul, gospel or religious spiritual, and blues. All this, by and large, was music made and heard by black people. On the other hand, there was in the USA another type of popular music: that of the Anglo-Saxon or Celtic ballads from England, Scotland and Ireland that the white immigrants had brought with them. This music was transformed to give rise to what would be called "country and western," or simply "country." That way, American folk, country and blues form the umbilical cord that joins the prehistory of popular music with the youthful first outburst of rock' n' roll. Moreover, the Second World War served somehow as a trigger for many cultural forms that used to be hidden because of racism, indifference or contempt, and were now starting to see the light, quite timidly first and then, in the sixties, together

³ Sometimes what we need is to free ourselves, evade ourselves, and forget about what hurts us, even just for a little while. Some other times, however, we "need" artists to explain the world to us—that is, the artist's gaze placed where others withdraw it. In that sense, any art and any music genre is good for both creativity and culture, because we find in our favourite artists common sensibilities and topics of intellectual and emotional interest.

with the full force of the struggle for racial rights. Since then, rock, as well as being a musical phenomenon, is a cultural phenomenon, with its own beginning and evolution. Consequently, we can see it as a "living laboratory" of what cultural transformations are, which in their own way, serve to understand historical changes. This is usually based on a simple verification: there is not just one single type but many types of rock styles, and at the same time, all have a radical similarity which comes indeed from their common origins. These origins were, as is often the case, groundbreaking: rock was presented as a novelty, and for that reason precisely, went against what used to be the dominant general music taste. Still, we should bear in mind that what was considered unconventional then had, in fact, ancient roots in Africa and Europe.

At this point, three main elements characterised rock 'n' roll, the first one being the thrilling rhythm (a characteristic of much primitive music). As for the dissident lyrics, the precedents were also many (for instance, in almost all folk traditions, there were "accepted" picaresque songs that everyone knew). However, the novelty of rock, in that sense, lay in a more general phenomenon which it, as a new genre, was using: mass communication. Through rock songs, it was the first time in modern history that any message of any kind could be disseminated throughout many countries, all at once and in a relatively short time. Something similar can be said about rock's social intention. The protest song was not an invention of rock but of folk, which took ideas and even ballad texts from fifty or even a hundred years before. Therefore, rock's same social intention—which was revolutionary all the same—had happened in British and American folklore before. Even more, according to Simon Frith, rock functioned like folk music in that it "articulate[d] communal values [and] comment[ed] on shared social problems" ("Magic" 159). However, such community building properties were not inherent to the music itself but rather resulted from the way it was perceived and

responded to by audiences. Thus, "music (whether folk or pop or rock) is not made *by* a community, but provides particular sorts of communal *experience*" (Frith "Magic" 164). Therefore, rock music was from the beginning almost a social manifesto, a genre which was searching for spaces of personal and collective freedom through music and lyrics. Thus, it would be within repressive communities, homogeneous, full of hypocrisy, and with a dominant religion, in which countercultural movements like rock would rise. Rock music became then a modern cult and served as a new religion for many.

In fact, from about 1970 or 1971, rock was considered to be only one aspect of a larger social transformation that was taking place in many countries such as the US, the UK or Ireland. From the mid-70s, however, the apparent unity of the rock phenomenon was to break: from then on, there is no longer only one or two undisputed artists or groups but many at the same time, and as a consequence, the audience of rock music became diversified by age and, sometimes, even by social class too. Similarly, when in the early 1980s the social and economic situation changed again, there was a new style in rock music, or rather, a myriad of styles. Later, the expansion of media in the 1990s multiplied the phenomenon, until rock was revealed as a musical and social kaleidoscope from the early 2000s onwards. In fact, rock, like rock 'n' roll before, has always embraced a range of musical styles appealing to distinct audiences and subcultures, evoking a rich lineage of musical motions, from the deepest emotion of blues to the sexual feel of hard rock, or from the sonic speed of punk to the noisy angst of grunge, and so on. Even nowadays, rock crosses so many genres: it is blues, jazz, pop, also electronic... It is all those things compassed into one, but really the ethic of it, what makes it "rock," is that mentality or the attitude of just drivenly and straightforwardly doing things in a different, unique way.

Consequently, in this study, we perceive rock not as an outdated term nor a static entity, defined only by loud guitars and a 4/4 beat. Likewise, we do not offer a strict definition of rock music itself, do not isolate features unique to rock, and never claim that any specific features are necessary or sufficient for a piece of music to be "rock". What we try to do, however, is to identify and theorise about key features that are common to many of the instances that we consider to be paradigm cases of Irish rock music. Therefore, after tracing rock's historical links between the language of folk and that of the black genres, I find that its creative and cultural links are worth examining here, too.

2.1.3. Rock as Music and Culture

A large part of any musical genre relates to the environment in which it is made, on the culture of which it is a part. This, which is true for almost any genre, can be clearly verified in rock. In other words, music can be valued as music (and only music), as well as for something else—this is an idea that will appear frequently within this thesis. In this sense, rock is both music and culture, which makes its evolution in a country like Ireland an exciting story to explore. Moreover, learning about rock cannot be considered a marginal phenomenon; quite the opposite, learning about rock is, indeed, to learn about one of the fundamental artistic expressions of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries.

However, we should bear in mind that music is born, first and foremost, from someone's (even a community's) need for expressiveness. Folk music had always been, in this regard, a real link with what a community was and how it felt, and rock picked up that idea and has since then developed it constantly. As a result, rock found its own language, its own artistic means of communication. Thus, just as in any language, in rock there is not only the denotation (what the words directly express), but also the

connotation (the meanings involved), and that is just where we find one of rock's greatest values. I am talking here about the "oraliture" of songs, that is, the use of music and the voice as a literary vehicle, which together with the connotative interpretation of the text, help us reach the expression of emotions or self-expression. As Simon Frith writes: "Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experience it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives" ("Music" 124). Moreover, aside from their role in signifying ideas, lyrics also play an important role in enabling listeners to construct an image of the persona embodied by the singer. Still, Alan Durant argues that one of the most important differences between the sung speech of rock and the spoken speech of conversation is the anomaly in communication resulting from "shifters":

What is most extraordinary about first- and second-person pronouns in rock songs is the possibility of identification they evidently establish: the possibility to superimpose the person of a listener on the 'I' of the singer, an identification which creates the effect of the rock singer speaking out on an audience's behalf; or, alternatively, the possibility of the listener occupying the position of second-person addressed by that 'I' of the singer. (Durant 203)

Thus, the meaning of the lyrics cannot be fixedly encoded in them by the singer, but they represent a ground for negotiation, the listener ultimately construing them relatively freely. This means that the listeners are involved in actually constructing that persona, for themselves, on the basis of the sounds heard and their competence in the style employed (Cone 29-33). On the other side, what sort of meanings can the music have? Some theories suggest that there is meaning only in the music's cultural/social setting (Cutler), while others suggest that the music not so much "has" but "generates" meaning. Sean Cubitt, for example, argues that "since it is not referential, we cannot say

that the song has meaning, but rather that it means, that it produces meaning" (215). In other words, we should not expect to be able to "translate" the meaning of an individual song. Still, it is not necessary to decode the text 100% to be able to understand its meaning, because even in what we cannot decode there is still communication, as the communicative links are established all the same. As Walter Ong notes:

The oral song (or other narrative) is the result of interaction between the singer, the present audience, and the singer's memories of songs sung. In working with this interaction, the bard is original and creative on rather different grounds from those of the writer. (Ong 146)

Finally, this thesis is an extended scholarly engagement with Irish rock music because, in a time when trends last for such a short time, the development and survival of rock music in Ireland allows us to study not only a somewhat relevant historical detail, but a powerful example of the artistic, cultural and social consciousness of the country in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. Such an analysis encompasses many complex issues concerning identity, cultural nationalism and various related matters which we shall be encountering in due course.

2.1.4. The Cultural Identity of Irish Rock

Music historian Marie McCarthy said in her study *Passing It On: The Transmission of Music in Irish Culture* that "[w]hat is common across all time and cultures is the fact that the transmission of music is an integral part of the generational transmission of culture, occurring primarily during childhood and adolescence" (McCarthy 2). At the same time, as Martin Stokes writes: "Music is very clearly very much a part of modern life and our understanding of it, articulating our knowledge of other peoples, places, times and things, and ourselves in relation to them" (*Ethnicity* 3).

These are, indeed, methods of oral history, and as such constitute the best way of hearing the voice of Ireland's popular culture. In fact, if Ireland underwent a musical revolution during the 1960s, this was just a reflection of the wider cultural and political situation. From then on, the period between 1970 and 2020 in Ireland has been one of accelerating social, political and personal change, and the changing nature of this five-decade period is captured and transmitted in the lyrics of rock songs. This resonates clearly with my understanding of what modern cultural criticism is supposed to encompass: the construction of social difference, the role of cultural activity in the formation of society, the intersection of art with discourses of class, race and gender, and the impact of tradition on contemporary artistic practices. In this way, the Irish cultural tradition, be it musical or literary, and even if it has been acquired in an unconscious manner, runs through a band's or an artist's music without necessarily being obvious, and has had a very special influence on Irish artists from different generations, from Van Morrison in the 1970s, to The Cranberries in the 1990s, to Hozier in the 2010s. Similarly, Gerry Smyth points out that:

The quality of Irishness, for instance, was extremely strained in the period leading up to and overlapping with the emergence of rock 'n' roll; indeed, it had been a site of intense cultural battles during the island's revolutionary phase, with ideologues such as Pearse, Yeats and de Valera producing interventions that set the agenda for the consideration of modern Irish identity, north and south, at home and abroad. (Smyth *Noisy* 5)

Thus, the main points to be noted at this stage is that music and Irishness are locked together, and this relationship has become "more and more self-consciously political" as time has passed—however, according to Smyth, the modern field of Irish Studies has by and large failed to engage with either of these facts (*Music* 5). On a different note, the

influence of Irish literature and of the storytelling tradition is one of the cultural effects that many Irish rock music artists have also integrated in the creative process. As a result, the words of some of their songs have an undeniably poetic aspect that can only come from a strong literary and poetic tradition, like that of the Irish. The Irish rock journalist Bill Graham claimed that this literary link to Irish rock and the fact that the antecedents of Irish rock music are more likely to be rooted in a literary than in a musical tradition are actually very unusual:

Elsewhere in the western world, no band would say that they were inspired by literature, as a rock tradition already existed. In Ireland, however, that tradition was non-existent and therefore, rock artists relied on different influences than those of a rock 'n' roll tradition which did not belong to them. You'll see Van Morrison relating himself to Yeats, you see it in [The Pogues] Shane MacGowan also. You'll see a lot of people identifying with Flann O'Brien. You'll see it in the Radiators, Philip Chevron has all sorts of references to Joyce and O'Casey and Behan and so forth. There is that sense: if you are Irish you measure yourself a little bit against those people. You will never see an English musician taking anything from T.S. Eliot or Auden. (Graham qtd. in Waters 58)

Moreover, Irish writers do seem to have a permanent influence on rock musicians. Poets and writers are present throughout the lyrics, sometimes not in an obvious way, but still there is the definite impression that this influence remains hidden within these only to appear in the lyrics and the music. Either way, all these musicians' and bands' cultural identity has undoubtedly benefitted from that tradition to create a model for Irish rock, because, as Robin Denselow notes,

culture is one means by which such identities are established and maintained. It is difficult not to see popular music as part of this process of cultural production and, therefore, as part of the business of creating a sense of community, even when the music's delight in rebellion and freedom seems itself to challenge or deny the existence of any community. (Denselow 158)

"In other words," Smyth claims, "music has emerged as perhaps the central element of modern Irish culture, supporting historical interpretations of a supposedly unproblematic 'Irish' identity and modern creative initiatives which attempt to trade thereon" (*Music* 148). Consequently, as he also says, "music is not simply the other side of the rich coin of Irish writing; it *is* part of Irish writing at its most penetrating and most open. By being open in itself, it opens up the entire literature in a ruthless and revealing way" (Smyth *Music* 148). Therefore, this thesis will examine a variety of songs in Irish rock music in order to define and to clarify the scope of each major theme and the related sub-themes.

2.1.5. Theoretical Approaches on How to "Read" Lyrics

Simon Frith, in his essay "Why Do Songs Have Words?", speaks about the importance of the lyrics as words that are open to interpretation by the listener, because words in poetry work, "not just by the singers, but by their listeners too" (123). However, as Dave Laing says, attention to individual words as an indicator of difference in song lyrics can be misleading since the centre of meaning of the word is dependent on its context. Such a context is both that of the immediate statement of which it is a part, and the larger discourses (of a song and a genre) of which the statement in its turns forms a part (Laing 92). That is, the kind of analysis which traces networks of connotations and those deriving from similar usages in other places within a culture, and most particularly, in the texts proceeding from popular culture, is based on the

principle of "intertextuality." Literary critic Terry Eagleton offers a definition of the process of literary intertextuality which can be used to describe that of popular music if we substitute "literary" for "music" or "lyric":

All literary texts are woven out of other literary texts, not in the conventional sense that they bear the traces of "influence," but in the more radical sense that every word, phrase or segment is a reworking of other writings which precede or surround the original work. There is no such thing as literary 'originality', no such thing as the 'first' literary work: all literature is "intertextual." A specific piece of writing thus has no clearly defined boundaries: it spills over constantly into the works clustered around it, generating a hundred different perspectives which dwindle to vanishing point. (Eagleton 138)

Thus, Eagleton rightly points out that any text (in this case, any song lyric) has no clearly defined boundaries, still there are several levels at which boundaries are imposed on that text—places where the "reworking" of other texts is limited. For instance, Richard Middleton notes that songs do not only work as words, "not only as verbal texts but as sung words" (2), because music is the second element of the song. In fact, the juxtaposition of music and lyrics creates a subtle relationship between the two of them which provides another layer of meaning to the song which must also be analysed in order to understand the song's text fully (Middleton 7). Following this idea, Umberto Fiori says that the main requirement in order to "read" a song is to have listened to the recording, which he calls "the original text" (Fiori qtd. in Middleton 183). This includes not only the lyrics and music but also the way a song is performed (in both recordings

and live) and the song's persona.⁴ As David Brackett says, song personas work as the "poetic voice" in the song, since "the notion of a strict identity between lived experiences and a song's meaning eliminates the effect of a song as a musical persona" (Brackett 15). Conclusively, the elements of a song, which are words, music, song performance and song persona, all interact with one another.

On a different note, despite the collective creative process behind virtually all music, listening to an artist's song as his or hers involves hearing it as grounded in a time and cultural moment (Gracyk *I Wanna* 159). In other words: a text will always be presented in a context, within a discursive formation, which will attempt to impose a way of reading or listening on the consumer. However, Gracyk also says that "[t]he source of a piece of music is relevant to interpreting it without being the only relevant factor," and similarly, that "the place and time of a song's composition is relevant without being conclusive" (*I Wanna* 130). For Eagleton's literary texts, for example, the distinction between reading inside the educational formation or inside a leisure context will produce different effects. For Gracyk, the fact that a song was written at the height of the war in Vietnam does not make it a song about the war, but gives us a reason to listen for such messages in the lyrics, while the fact that a specific album was made in 1968 or 1969 is also a reason to listen for statements about the Vietnam war.

Finally, Stephen Davies reminds us that musical understanding cannot be simply an act of intellectual appreciation and must be integrated into the very process of listening (325). Similarly, it had been mentioned when discussing Frith's essay on song

⁴ While a song's most basic meaning lies in the interplay of lyrics and music, it is further interpreted in performance and as featured in different recordings. This thesis will only be concerned with the studio versions of the songs by the original artist.

lyrics that lyrics should be open to interpretation by the listeners. As Theodore Gracyk says:

One implication for song lyrics is that the audience has considerable flexibility in "reading" anything that the author does not make explicit. (...) [W]hatever the original meanings might be for a song, such meanings may demand many distinct and even conflicting readings when, as mass art, the song makes its way into other contexts for interpretations. (Gracyk *I Wanna* 40)

Furthermore, many writers propose that the meanings of rock songs are rich and multiple because they consider the popular text to be polysemic or multiple in meaning (see, for example, Fiske 126-27);⁵ many others propose that a more enlightened and critical perspective will reveal previously hidden meanings. This is because the artist's intention is open-ended and includes "an intention to communicate effectively in the future," sanctioning its adjustment to the situations of different future audiences (Hirsch 205). The listener is thus a mediating agent that will make sense out of the song's text, and as such, generate other discourses, which will be "informed by a variety of class-, gender- and culturally based attitudes" (Brackett 17), basing themselves on what they listen to and interpret. However, if we equate meaning with the interpretations or "decoding" of the music's different audiences, there can be no presumption that other readings might emerge from a historical or author-centered perspective on the music. In this regard, as Lisa Lewis says, we would get a model of audience response that recognises "a complex and dynamic interaction of decoding *and* encoding practices".

⁵ More particularly, John Fiske distinguishes between a text's polysemic quality (polysemy as "structured into the text") and additional polysemic potential resulting from its intertextual relations. Yet no text is inherently polysemic, for all meaning of this sort is present or absent only through intertextual relations brought into play by the audience.

Where the words create a narrative, listeners would anticipate that a moral or political message will dominate, and when a lyric relates to something concrete, describing particular events without explicitly moralising, its message must be found in "implied" concepts (Lewis 220). In that way, rock songs have been a forum for spiritual issues, political issues, revolutionary issues, and, of course, great fun too: rock encompasses it all. For all the above reasons, it is important to make use of an interdisciplinary and hybrid approach to the reading of songs, and that is the kind of analysis that will take place in this thesis.

3. Mythology and the Celtic in Irish Rock Music

3.1.1. Historical Context

In Ireland, the 1960s had been a decade of change and relative prosperity, with the sweeping away of many of the attitudes left over from the Civil War and the opening up to international influences. However, as nationalism and Catholicism became more and more intrinsically linked, debate continued around Irish identity in a free state. Moreover, civil unrest in Northern Ireland and the fragility of the economic recovery were indications of the way things eventually did turn. Thus, Ireland underwent some rapid pivotal changes in the 1970s. On the one hand, the country's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 was followed by a welcome boost in regional development, new levels of Irish tourism and improved educational standards, while new laws and sanctions brought respite from the government and its guidance by the church. Yet the upturn in Irish economic fortunes that had characterised the 1960s was followed by two decades of uncertainty and underachievement (Brown 326-55; Lee 511). Despite the overall improvement in general standards of living, the island suffered badly in the aftermath of the international oil crisis of 1974-75, with the country's poor performance being reflected over the coming years in rises in both emigration and unemployment. It was during this same period that Ireland became synonymous with the Troubles.

On the other hand, however, the youth of the nation was being absorbed into the slipstreams of British and American popular culture. Irish youth was heavily influenced by the contemporary art and glam rock practiced by British artists such as Marc Bolan, David Bowie and Roxy Music, and thus, the generation of late 70s and early 80s musicians would acknowledge their debt to their youthful obsession with glam rock. At

the same time, Anglo-American rock and Irish traditional music had been developing alongside each other in Ireland throughout the 1960s, until they occasionally met and overlapped in the neutral space of the folk boom of the late 1960s/early 1970s. Before that, however, Irish traditional music had been associated with the countryside, and although widespread throughout Ireland, was for many centuries a marginal discourse in a country that was itself on the edge of Europe, both geographically and politically. Still, during the 1960s, Irish traditional music became an object of interest for folklorists, anthropologists and musicologists as part of a European-wide Pan-Celtic movement (Snyder). Since Ireland had kept alive a tradition, a living folk culture, and both sides had songs that reinforced their sense of history and identity, traditional music started to be considered a significant object of interest not just for what it could reveal about the island's cultural history, but also (and more importantly) for what it could contribute to a developing sense of what it meant to be Irish, because it embodied what was peculiar about such an identity.⁶ It was in term of these responses that a new nationalist mood started being echoed in the 1970s by a new style which attempted to revive and update old styles.

Thus, the legends of Irish heroes represented one aspect of the intrusion of the fantastic into a new sub-genre known as "Celtic rock." Mythology was the style's most important non-musical source, and in many ways, the most widely influential. Still, rock and traditional music had distinctive sonic qualities and ideological resonances in contemporary Irish culture, to each of which musicians were sentimentally and

⁶ By then, Irish traditional music had developed in two general directions: the slow air or ballad on the one hand, reflecting the plaintive aspects of life, and the more rumbustious jigs and reels on the other, usually associated with dancing. These have been preserved by musicians and people in different regions of the country (Prendergast 58).

politically drawn. Nonetheless, as with any artistic movement, both cultural and artistic factors can and should be cited to account for this sub-genre's existence: in this sense, Celtic rock was initially dependent on the existence of an "underground" culture. Besides, after Ireland's live music scene had been dominated by showbands for years, a certain "rock sensibility" (which refers to the idea of composing, recording and performing original music as a means of self-expression) had finally imprinted itself upon the Irish youth and was beginning to exert some serious influence over the nation's entertainment and cultural trends, as well.⁷ In this way, Dublin would have quietly thriving progressive rock and folk scenes, which provided a backdrop to the emergence of bands like Horslips and Thin Lizzy.

3.1.2. The "Celtic Revival" of Irish Rock

It is a commonplace that the most significant event in modern Irish cultural history is the literary movement which stemmed directly from the Celtic revival of the 1890s. Before folklorists took an interest in the native Celtic tradition, however, this interest was fomented by an imported model, that of Macpherson's *Ossian* (Rafroidi 150-160). Yet, the Celtic myths of the Revival were not merely the imposition of a late romantic exoticism, and not simply a reworking of the stories and legends of ancient Ireland. Rather, it is a manifest trait of Celtic culture that what is truly valuable passes

⁷ Originally, showbands were groups of musicians who toured the island playing a range of popular musical and dance styles. These musicians did not compose their own music; rather, they attempted to reproduce the music they played as accurately as possible (Campbell and Smyth 2). Still, they have been considered "a highly popular set of cultural practices that first anticipated, and then accompanied, a period of significant social change in modern Irish history" (Smyth *Noisy* 17). In stories about contemporary Irish popular music, therefore, the showbands invariably function as a point of departure (Prendergast 11-12; Smyth *Noisy* 14-18). Such is the function they serve in this thesis too.

through the generations, being adapted to fit a contemporary audience accordingly. In fact, according to Kearney,

[m]any of the major works of contemporary Irish culture may be viewed as attempts to narrate the problematic relationship between tradition and modernity (...) one might say that cultural narratives represent a dialogue of sorts, however conflictual, between various Irish minds and the tradition from which they derive, and which they often seek to transform or transcend. (Kearney 79)

In Kearney's reading, these paradigms of literary culture patently derive from extra-literary considerations. My argument is that they are also validated by the history of music in Ireland. Therefore, as the unpredictable climate of the country was leading to certain superstitions and myths, the future of Irish rock music in the 1970s was seen to be in recourse to the ethnic past. In fact, Anne MacCarthy notes that:

What the artist suffers from is the paucity of models in the repertoire, but not necessarily from a lack of tradition, in the standard sense, which will tell him who he is. His search for an identity that he cannot find in tradition will lead him to (...) look for the answer in nationalism. (MacCarthy 30)

Moreover, as we have previously argued, music is usually in a dynamic relationship with society. In this way, the works of Simon Frith, author of *The Sociology of Rock*, stress the relevance of historical context when analysing popular music: "From a sociological point of view the history of music must be understood as an aspect of social history; musical changes reflect changes in society" ("Écrire" 50). Such a statement can easily be applied to bands like Thin Lizzy and Horslips, whose musical works, in my view, need to be considered alongside their historical context. These artists were committed to bringing an Irish cultural dimension to the raw material of rock 'n' roll

music by rediscovering the past through a study of folklore. Not only this was a consequence of the tendency among later cultural nationalists to rediscover the Gaelic past in a mystical light—the romantic revelation of racial origins in literature—but also the beginnings of a new musical hybrid formed by a sound and content that was clearly Irish, a contemporary rock style that would be recognisable for its conscious use of Irish musical and mythical motifs.

Consequently, as musicians attempted to apply the use of traditional and electric music to their own cultural context, it was in Ireland that Celtic rock was first clearly evident. As Horslips' Jim Lockhart says: "It was a matter of trying to hold out for a more integrated culture as opposed to something second-hand (...) which meant forging a new idiom. (...) It was an attempt to create something indigenous and new, but essentially indigenous" (qtd. in O'Connor 122). Usually, it is precisely this self-questioning attitude that leads the artist to try to open new ground in the developing music scene, as it was the case. However, just as the validity of the term "Celtic" in general and as a musical label is disputed, it is important to clarify here that the term "Celtic rock" does not mean that there was a unified rock musical culture between the Celtic nations (from Galicia to Ireland, from Brittany to Cornwall to Scotland). Rather, it is used as a means of describing the spread, adaptation and further development of such musical form in different but related contexts.⁸

⁸ "Especially in relation to Ireland, Celtic music in fact serves to reconfirm certain ideological assumptions regarding an essential national recalcitrance towards modernity, and an innate (indeed, often a biological) difference from other musical formations. (...) At the same time, Celtic music is invariably figured (both in commercial and in critical terms) as a marginal or peripheral discourse, the articulation of a culture that is somehow at a tangent to 'the real world'" (Smyth *Music in Irish Cultural* 84).

3.1.3. Use of Myth and the Celtic in Celtic Rock

In the resulting search for a new musical identity, Irish rock musicians made use of the Celtic myths in the wish to rediscover their Gaelic past in a mystical light. Yet Celtic heroes, folklore and myths had already been used systematically in the past to emphasise the heroic culture of Ireland in order to mobilise the people (Hezel). For instance, the cultural nationalism in the wake of the Independence movement of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century led to the establishment of the Celtic as an integral part of the cultural identity of the Irish, and was used since then in the process of sharing cultural identity on the one hand, and as a distinguishing element on the other. In a similar way, Celtic rock was composed, performed and received in terms of long-established discourses which emphasised "Celtic" difference from mainstream experience. The opening pages of June Skinner Sawyers' book *Complete Guide to Celtic Music: From the Highland Bagpipe and Riverdance to U2 and Enya*, introduce a similar description to the wider discourse of "Celtic" music:

When all the techniques are checked off, the element that the music of the Celtic lands most commonly shares is something a lot more intangible and certainly less quantifiable—a feeling or quality that evokes emotions of sadness or joy, sorrow or delight. (...) All share, for lack of a better word, a Celtic spirit, a unique bond with one another that transcends time, distance, and political units.
(Sawyers 5)

Therefore, when it comes to the question of what exactly it is that makes the Celtic so important in Ireland, it is mostly felt that it gives a sense of common heritage and something "to be proud of." However, such stereotypical notions have their bases in the work of two nineteenth-century figures dislocated in time and space from the modern world of rock music, the French cultural historian Ernest Renan, and the English poet

and social critic Matthew Arnold. In his 1867 study of Celtic literature, Arnold produced a critical model in which the Celt contributed a range of identifiable tendencies to the English poetic tradition. He deployed an array of pseudo-scientific and cultural discourses to characterise "Celticness" as a wistful, melancholy, sentimental, passionate category. In his view, Celts are "keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow," yet at the same time, they are "always ready to react against the despotism of fact"—qualities that have haunted Irish cultural production ever since (Arnold 82). Such an understanding of the Celt was itself based on that of the French cultural historian Ernest Renan, who just a few years earlier had described "Celticness" in this way:

Its history is itself only one long lament. (...) It at times appears to be cheerful, a tear is not slow to glisten behind its smile; it does not know that strange forgetfulness of human conditions and destinies which is called gaiety. Its songs of joy end as elegies; there is nothing to equal the delicious sadness of its national melodies. (...) Never have men feasted so long upon these solitary delights of the spirit, these poetic memories which simultaneously intercross all the sensations of life, so vague, so deep, so penetrative, that one might die from them, without being able to say whether it was from bitterness or sweetness. (Renan 54-60)

Seemingly, these Celtic qualities described by Renan and Arnolds were the ones that have since then come to characterise Irishness in a range of highly effective discourses. In this way, for example, the names of mythological heroes are more than just a means of identification, evoking the great acts they accomplished and the values they exhibited instead.

The focus of this chapter is, thus, to reveal the use of Irish and Celtic myths and folklore by Horslips, Thin Lizzy and Gary Moore in their musical legacy, and to examine how their use of myths through fantastic imagery might modify our perception of the rock music produced in Ireland.⁹ Indeed, I consider that to read their lyrics without acknowledging the elements of Irish and Celtic myth in their texts might limit our understanding of the songs themselves. Therefore, I will isolate specific elements of Irish and Celtic myth and folklore, building on suggestions from other critics, in order to offer a more complete understanding of the effects of the author's use of those particular myths in each case.

3.2. Horslips: "The Mythologising of Irish Rock"

3.2.1. Introduction

By 1972, when the creatively stifling Irish showband era was waning, Horslips' debut attempted, as Harper and Hodget note, "to bring an awareness of long-neglected Irish traditional music to a younger generation raised on rock, if largely starved of local access to it" (218). Before that, however, Horslips had merged together as a meeting of like spirits and minds, being a real fusion of literary and musical abilities.¹⁰ In 1969, having picked up on poetry and literature, Horslips founder and drummer Eamon Carr

⁹ "Celtic and Irish myth and folklore" is a blanket phrase that accounts for the various sources which I examine in this chapter: on the one hand, I use the term "Celtic" because many of the myths and folklore that I examine are common to the Irish, Welsh, and Scottish peoples; and on the other hand, I include the term "Irish" because the focus of the chapter is to reveal the myth and folklore in songs that are specifically about Ireland and deal with its myth and folklore. Finally, the phrase "Celtic and Irish myth and folklore" is used to include a wide range of sources, from traditional music to literature.

¹⁰ See Appendix I, figure 1.

and his friend Peter Fallon decided to set up a poetry-reading workshop in Dublin. Basically, their wish was to stimulate literary activities through readings, magazines and other publications. In fact, the workshop would produce a quarterly broadsheet, *The Book of Invasions*, which dipped into the old Irish myths.¹¹ Then, they met Barry Devlin, who, like them, came from a literary background (he studied a Master's degree in English in Northern Ireland), and was interested in songwriting and playing the bass guitar, too. Together with other musicians, these young men would eventually become Horslips.¹² Spanning the decade from 1970 to 1980, when they released twelve albums and a multitude of singles, their success and decline followed the trajectory of the countercultural movement, which came late to Ireland.

Horslips are thus a very good example that the meanings attributed to musical texts are contingent upon the social and political circumstances of their production and consumption. In fact, their achievements are all the more impressive in retrospect, when it became evident that the defining terms of the fields in which they were attempting to intervene, namely those of "Irish" and "rock," were undergoing massive changes throughout the period in which the band was active. As their Irish identity deeply informed the band's creation, Horslips had decided to combine progressive and hard rock with Irish traditional motifs, together with Celtic characters and narratives, in a never-heard-before blend. As John L. Murphy claims:

While critics repeat how Horslips stirs folk with rock, observers neglect to find the recipe for this blend. [However,] I trace their ingredients to the post-conciliar

¹¹ Indeed, the subsequent title of a Horslips album from 1976.

¹² Horslips were Barry Devlin (bass, vocals), Charles O'Connor (fiddle, mandolin, vocals), Eamon Carr (drums, bodhran), Jim Lockhart (keyboards, whistles, uilleann pipes) and guitarist Johnny Feanm (the last member to join the band and the only one not to come from an art school environment).

decline of Catholicism in the later 1960s, the loss of patriotism in the guise of its 1916 martyrs, and the significant groundswell of opposition to compulsory Irish. Horslips whirls at an urbanrural crossroads: *au courant* with media, pop, and international fads, manipulating their presentation under a Celtic guise, which would seem to tug backwards. Yet, the band resists romanticism. They favor subversion. (Murphy 136)

Before going on to consider the music itself, we should acknowledge the fact that Horslips broke new ground in Irish music in at least two ways. On the one hand, it was the first Irish rock band to remain based in Ireland, and then, the first to form its own record label, OATS. With its background in professional media, the band had soon realised from the outset that popular music-making was a business as well as an art form, and that forming their own label was the best way to maintain the greater financial and artistic control that so many artists, then and since, craved. Thus, they always owned and exercised complete artistic freedom over their own recordings, licensing to labels in the UK, US and Europe rather than selling out to the corporate labels. At the same time, and as we have just mentioned, they were the first major rock band to enjoy success without having to leave their native Ireland. Collectively, on the other hand, the band maintained a deep interest in Irish cultural history, in its legends and heroes, and in rock music they found the opportunity to experiment with both the literary and musical discourses that constituted their collective cultural inheritance. Consequently, Horslips was the first Irish group to have the terms "Celtic rock" applied to them, meaning the sub-genre or style which consisted of Irish traditional music placed in the context of rock music.

In fact, the band's desire, according to Eamon Carr, "was to provide an essentially Irish rock music, something distinctly our own, to galvanise each style with

the other" (Prendergast 81). To achieve that, Horslips' artistic strength drew not only from music but also from tales and myths of the Celtic mythology, because Eamon Carr (who was the main lyricist) would research archives for his narratives that structured the band's concept albums.¹³ In addition, Horslips were part of a younger generation who understood both the communicative power of the electric music and the potency of their Celtic ancestry. As Carr puts it: "Since our work had the rock context, most young people could relate to it immediately and learn a lot about Irish folklore as well" (qtd. in Smyth *Noisy Island* 80). Surprisingly, their revival of mythic characters and historical events attracted fans from all over the island and from the diaspora, who began to appreciate their Irish heritage for the first time. In what follows, therefore, I will examine how Horslips' artistic legacy conveyed Irishness and contributed greatly to Irish culture through a musical-narrative combination which overall attempted to awaken Irish youth to their own identity and heritage.

3.2.2. *The Táin* (1973)

In 1972, Horslips released their debut album *Happy to Meet, Sorry to Part*, the first record ever to explore the then uncharted territory between British progressive rock, Irish traditional music and Irish mythology. In this album, the band included traditional dance tunes and songs (two of them, in Irish), and played a wide variety of instruments, from electric and acoustic guitars to fiddles, boadhrán, keyboards, tin whistle, mandolin and concertina. As a result, they achieved a very special synthesis and a pointer to what could be expected on their next album, *The Táin*. The roots of this second album would tap into a 1972 proposal to back a production of the *Táin Bó*

¹³ A concept album is an album whose recordings are unified by some theme (instrumental or lyrical or narrative or compositional), or tell a single story. See *Collins Dictionary online*, www.collinsdictionary.com/es/diccionario/ingles/concept-album.

Cuailnge ("Cattle Raid of Cooley") at the Abbey Theatre.¹⁴ However, it remained a stillborn project until they eventually wove the myth into their music, and generated an interlinked sequence of instrumental and sung passages about a cycle of Ulster heroic tales.¹⁵ If the myth was a watershed in Irish history, the album would become one in terms of Irish rock.

To begin with, Horslips' sophomore record is a concept album in which each of the fifteen songs recounts a passage from the myth of the *Táin Bo Cuailgne*, the centrepiece of the Ulster cycle myth.¹⁶ More particularly, the Cuchulainn saga is a collection of poems from ancient Ireland, written out by monastic scribes in the Middle Ages, but dating from a much earlier pre-Christian Celtic culture. Often considered an epic (although it is written primarily in prose rather than verse), the central theme of this Irish myth is the life and death of the hero and the battle over the possession of a prized bull—and that of the land of Ireland—between the royal houses of Ulster and Connaught. Thus, the story centres on Maeve, the queen of Connaught, who wants to own the famed brown bull or "Donn Cuailnge" to outmatch her husband Ailill's magnificent white bull, and who is opposed only by the young Ulaid hero,

¹⁴ The *Táin Bó*, or cattle raid (literally "driving-off of cows"), is one of the genres of early Irish literature.

¹⁵ The *Táin Bó Cuailgne* has survived in two main recensions: the first one is a compilation largely written in Old Irish, and the second, a more consistent work in Middle Irish. The first consists of a partial text in the *Lebor na hUidre* (the "Book of the Dun Cow"), a late eleventh/early twelfth century manuscript compiled in the monastery of Clonmacnoise. Before this the story was kept alive by storytellers. Two other manuscript versions are also available: the twelfth century Book of Leinster and the fourteenth century Yellow Book of Lecan. A complete text can be reconstructed by combining them. See "Táin Bó Cuailgne."

¹⁶ See Appendix I, figure 2.

Cúchulainn.¹⁷ Consequently, a war starts between Queen Maeve and the cattle owner, Cooley. The story's entry into the 20th century is due primarily to Lady Gregory, who published a translation from the ancient Gaelic into English entitled *Cuchulainn of Muithemne*, and to W.B. Yeats, who scattered references to Cuchulainn throughout his works and also completed a series of one-act plays, commonly grouped together under the term "The Cuchulain Plays."¹⁸

As Horslips connected up to traditions of storytelling, where the narratives were "owned" by everybody, folk tales were a good place to take a look. Thus, the album includes both traditional and original songs which tell the story from the points of view of Cúchulainn and Queen Maeve, among others, and moves between traditional reels and jigs and rock music to explore the different phases and textures of the epic story. Captivated by the rich imagery in the lyrics, we follow the band on a journey through an interwoven mix of rock and Irish mythic literature. In this way, the most successful track on the work is "Dearg Doom,"¹⁹ a song with a tight rock beat and uilleann pipes being used as the lead instrument. It is based on a traditional folk standard entitled "Marshlua Uí Néill" ("O'Neill's Cavalry March") which had been previously performed in a quasi-traditional arrangement by O'Riada and Ceoltóirí Cualann at the Gaiety concert in 1969 (Ó Riada 2005). The Horslips version, however, sets the recognisably folk melody played on a electric guitar within a typical rock arrangement that

¹⁷ In the manuscripts the Bull is referred to as "Donn Cuailgne". While the word "Donn" means "brown" it is also the name of the ancient Irish God of the Dead.

¹⁸ Yeats always spelled the name with a single "n."

¹⁹ A rough translation would be "The Red Destroyer."

incorporates electric bass, drums and keyboards. Thematically, the song glorifies Cúchulainn's deeds,²⁰ and like the Celtic warrior himself, has a transcendental aura:

You speak in whispers of the devils I have slain,

By the fire of my silver Devil's Blade,

And still you dare to flaunt yourself at me.

I don't want you, I don't need you,

I don't love you, can't you see

I'm Dearg Doom.

[. . .]

I'm a boy who was born blind to pain

And, like a hawk, I'll swoop and swoop again.

I am the flash of hawk eye in the sun.

When you see me coming you had better

Run... run... run...

From Dearg Doom. (7-12; 18-23)

Thus, the line "like a hawk, I'll swoop and swoop again" refers to his practice of picking off the invading Connacht armies one at a time, and it was probably inspired by Yeats, who in *The Hour-Glass* (1914) wrote: " (...) it is like a hawk, a hawk of the air / It has

²⁰ In fact, the title of the song makes reference to both Cuchulainn's red hair and to the fact that he was a warrior of the Red Branch Knights.

swooped down—and this swoop makes the third" (line 7). Yet, because the lyrics are quite vague, the song does not appear to immediately explore any identifiable emotional condition. Within the wider context of the Celtic rock style, however, "Dearg Doom," as Gerry Smyth puts it, "begins to take on a tragic resonance which once again draws upon, even as it contributes to, the emotional economy of modern Ireland" (*Music* 57). For instance, with only the first line, "My love is colder than black marble by the sea," Irish listeners might know immediately what they are talking about: "My love is colder than black marble by the Sea / My heart is older than the cold oak tree / I am the flash of silver in the sun" (lines 1-3). The "black marble by the sea" is basalt, thus they are talking about the Giants' causeway, about Ulster and Ireland. Consequently, a song like "Dearg Doom" is able to remind Irish listeners of Cuchulainn and Fionn MacCumhail, as well as of all those stories they might have read as children and are actually part of their cultural identity. In fact, this song is (like the rest of the tracks on this record) an example of Horslips' own "Celtic Revival," because all the lyrics in *The Táin* try to bring an awareness of Irish art and culture as being grand. Similarly, the sleeve notes quote Yeats' view on the characters of the Irish mythology, and summarise the content inside: "We Irish should keep these personages much in our hearts, for they lived in the places where we ride and go marketing, and sometimes they have met one another on the hills that cast their shadows upon our doors at evening (W.B. Yeats, March 1902)."²¹

It seemed clear, therefore, that with their second album, Horslips was ready to conquer the world. Yet exhausting tours of Europe followed, and the strain of this period was apparent on their next work, *Dancehall Sweethearts*, the album that marked a change of emphasis for them.

²¹ From the Preface to Lady Gregory's *Cuchulainn of Murthemne* (1902).

3.2.3. *Dancehall Sweethearts* (1974)

Still maintaining a conceptual approach, the songs that made up *Dancehall Sweethearts* are loosely based on the travels of Turlough O'Carolan, the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century blind Irish harper. We are first introduced to this new character in the song "Mad Pat":

There was a country fiddler,

A jester, a riddler, a joker,

A singer of songs,

In every town he passed

He'd stop to help the dancing master. (1-5)²²

²² According to Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, Arthur Young was the first observer in eighteenth-century Ireland to mention the travelling dancing masters. It is likely that they emerged on the Irish scene shortly before Young arrived. They appear to have originated in Munster and were extremely popular in Kerry, where they worked in tandem with hedge schoolmasters. Besides teaching dancing to all social classes, he also taught fencing and deportment to the children of the gentry. His arrival in a village or rural clachán was usually met with great delight. He stayed in a community for a six week "quarter." Generally, he would lodge in a farmer's house and have the use of a barn or kitchen to teach his steps. In return for the use of the facilities, he would not charge the children of the host farmer. Alternatively, pupils brought the dancing master home with them for the night, and vied with each other for the honour. At the end of the eighteenth century, the fee for a quarter was sixpence. A half century later, the fee had risen to ten shillings a quarter in Kerry—five shillings for the dancing master and five shillings for the musician who travelled with him. See Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin, *A Short History of Irish Traditional Music* (The O'Brien Press Ltd, 2017).

"Mad Pat" sequels into "Blindman," again a song about this character, which was originally intended for inclusion in *The Táin*:

Man of straw

Shuffling down the night

Going to visit little girls

Who never do things right

Scarecrow wooden heart

Finds it hard to love

Dressing up in deadmen's clothes

To charm the stars above

Do you ever feel like dancing

When the evening turns to gold

Or does life's simple melody

Make you blood run cold? (1-12)

Eamon Carr said he was first inspired by the bronze cast of Cuchulainn by sculptor Oliver Sheppard in which the hero is bound to a rock with a raven (Morrigan) perched above his lifeless body.²³ However, the "scarecrow" image is actually borrowed from Yeats' iconography, as he claims:

²³ It is situated in the GPO on O'Connell Street in Dublin.

My reading of the Blind Man character in Yeats is of complex, mysterious and ironic presence. In the plays, it's his evidence that Cuchulainn had killed his own son that drove the hero mad (*On Baile's Strand*). And he's also an ominous figure presiding over Cu Chulainn's final moments (*The Death of Cu Chulainn*). (...) His Fool became my Scarecrow (it is a Joycean-style pun on the Morrigan).²⁴

On the musical aspect, the addition of blues elements in this album adds a new element to Horslips' Celtic rock sound, particularly in songs like "Nighttown Boy" and "Sunburst." On the latter, Carr used his knowledge of Japanese poetry to create the lyrics as a "mutant renga" (linked verse in the Japanese style) in different syllabic patterns:

I come down like an eagle

An eagle from far on the sea

Won't you set me free.

Time spins down to a standstill

My hands fill with all I desire

I can feel your fire.

I steal into your cities

And pity the sleepers who say

²⁴ Quoted in an interview to *Come Back Horslips* (9 September 2010). See also Clark 2001.

Time can't slip away.

Light streams out from your doorway

Your stairway is waiting to climb

Then your sunburst's mine. (1-12)

These lyrics paint an aural picture that moves from wide sweeping views suggesting encompassing heights ("from far on the sea," "steal into your cities") to a narrowing focus ("your doorway," "your stairway" and "your window"). Moreover, the movement of the verses convey an appropriate sense of a bird circling its prey, just as the song starts with the singer comparing himself to an eagle (lines 1-3). On a different note, there are several pairs of opposites running throughout the lyrics of the songs on this album, such as day and night; light and darkness; sight and blindness; and time/motion and stasis. In this sense, we might hear a wry echo of the "Sunburst's" line "Daylight creeps in your window" (line 25), which promises a morning dawn, in the later "Lonely Hearts": "Night has fallen again / And I hardly even saw the day" (lines 1-2). Eventually, Barry Devlin added a middle section to Carr's original composition to create a proper song structure:

Sun is shining on her wings

Keeps her happy, makes her sing.

But her talons flash upon the things

She needs to keep her smiling.

Prey is sighted from above

It's moving fast but not quite fast enough

Deathly grip - cruel love

Take me to your sunburst. (13-21)

"With their roots in a deep longing, I had hoped that each three line verse would be robust enough to stand alone if necessary," says Carr, "but as a looped verse structure might carry an added emotional impact."²⁵ Indeed, the last triplet tidies up the piece by suggesting an ending to the beautiful story:

You wait for me to take you

And make you a hunter like me

When we're flying free. (28-30)

By 1976, the time was right for another highly conceptual album in the spirit of *The Táin*. Horslips called this new ambitious project *The Book of Invasions: A Celtic Symphony*, because Eamon Carr (again the main lyricist of the band) was obsessing over the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* ("The Book of Invasions"), a twelfth-century manuscript which, part history, part mythology and huge part allegory, documented/mythologised the settlement of Ireland.^{26 27}

²⁵ See Eamon Carr, email to *Come Back Horslips* (5 October 2010).

²⁶ The story itself is long and imaginative: something about the original descendants being the one of the tribes that escaped the Biblical flood, only to have one man (Fintan) surviving, who then in turn turns into a salmon, then a hawk, only to turn back into a man 5,500 years later to relate this history (as he saw it).

²⁷ See Appendix I, figure 3.

3.2.4. *The Book of Invasions: A Celtic Symphony (1976)*

The Book of Invasions is Horslips' second concept album based on a Celtic myth and told in the rock idiom. This time, however, as Eamon Carr said, "the project was to embrace the birth of Celtic consciousness in Ireland" (qtd. in Smyth *Noisy Island* 84). In the original *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* saga, the pre-Christian colonisation of Ireland is a mixture of actual events, legends, mythology and Christian interpretation. It tells the story of the race who first inhabited the country, known as the Tuatha da Danann ("the Peoples of the Goddess Danann"), which were reputed to have mystical powers and be learned in all things, but after a long occupation, they were banished from the land.²⁸ Thus, Horslips created this vision on record, playing around with rock and traditional tunes, to present aspects of Irish legend within "A Celtic Symphony." More particularly, their ambitious desire was to try to represent selected aspects of that history within the structure of the three principal categories of the ancient Irish song tradition—geantraí,

²⁸ The main gist is what Horslips relates in the liner notes: "The Book of Invasions is a twelfth century chronicle of the various pre-Christian colonisations of Ireland. The race who occupied the country before our Gaelic ancestors were the Tuatha De Danann—the Peoples of the Goddess Danann. While their origins are unclear, we do know that the Tuatha were a mystical race, handsome and learned, elegantly dressed, expert in every art and science and supreme masters of wizardry. In the Mythological Cycle their place is among the traditions of Immortals. In fact the Tuatha were so magnificent their existence embarrassed scholars who, when transcribing the legends centuries later did not know whether to regard them as men, demons or fallen angels. Bravest of all peoples their leaders were wizards first and warriors second whose victories were gained more by superior knowledge and magic than by warfare. The Agatha De Danann occupied the country and lived in relative peace from 3303 Age of the World until the coming of the Milesian warriors in 3500 Age of the World. After their defeat at the Battle of Tailteann the Tuatha simply vanished from these islands. Tradition and popular belief has it that the Tuatha, through their esoteric powers, became the Sluagh Sidhe (The Fairy Host) and, taking their secrets and mysterious arts with them, entered an occult realm where they remain till this day." (qtd. in Horslips *Book*)

goltraí and suantraí (roughly translated as the joyous, lamenting and sleeping strains)—all in one record. Consequently, the whole album comprises the three movements: the geantraí or joyful music of the Tuatha De Danann's triumph over Fir Bolg, the goltraí or lament/sad songs of Diarmaid and Grainne, and the suantraí or sleeping/lullaby music after the Tuatha's Tailteann defeat. Even more, the songs are essentially an allegory of heroic Ireland with multiple levels of meaning in which the realistic and mythological levels do not cohere, still they achieve a thematic unity by relying on Irish folklore. Interestingly enough, Horslips ended up tackling the allegorical three sections this way: the first tells of the Tuatha De Danaan, the second represents the nineteenth century Gaelic migration and, finally, the third deals with current Irish diaspora.

After hearing the beginning of the first movement Geantraí/Joy, titled "When Gods Walked the Earth" and which sets the mood with the Celtic folk opening tracks "Daybreak" and "March into Trouble," we are led to "Trouble (with a Capital T)," which transforms "Brian Boru's March" into a war rock song. Using this mythical tale, they transform a pieced-together fantasy into a piece of art—and the Irish hit best representative of 1976, according to Seán Campbell and Gerry Smyth. In the album, this song sets the tone for the remainder of the Geantraí section:

High on the mountain stands a boat

But are they gods or real folk?

We can't see the fire but we smell the smoke

Who'll take the plough? Who'll be the yoke?

Night after night I don't believe

We are the ones you won't deceive

Not a thing will you achieve

'cos we belong and we won't leave. (1-8)

Although "Horslips were not concerned with (...) deploying some specious heroic language" (Campbell and Smyth 58), the epic imagery of the lyrics, such as "High on a mountain stands a boat" (line1), is set here against a level of quotidian experience ("We can't see the fire but we smell the smoke," line 3), which attempts to render the essence of the narrative. Moreover, the lines "High on the mountain stands a boat" (line 29) and "It's got so dark can't see the sky" (line 18) describe the fantastical story of a "ship" landing on high ground as if from the sky, very similar way to the one on this text found in *A Celtic Miscellany*:

138. The Air Ship

One day the monks of Clonmacnoise were holding a meeting on the floor of the church, and as they were at their deliberations there they saw a ship sailing over them in the air, going as if it were on the sea. When the crew of the ship saw the meeting and the inhabited place below them, they dropped anchor, and the anchor came right down on to the floor of the church, and the priests seized it. A man came down out of the ship after the anchor, and he was swimming as if he were in the water, till he reached the anchor; and they were dragging him down then. 'For God's sake let me go!' said he, 'for you are drowning me.' Then he left them, swimming in the air as before, taking his anchor with him. (165)

Even more, those first lines on the song make explicit reference to the Tuatha De Danann exactly as described in the original *Lebor Gabala Érenn*:

55. So that they were the Tuatha De Danann who came to Ireland. In this wise they came, in dark clouds. They landed on the mountains of Conmaicne Rein in Connachta; and they brought a darkness over the sun for three days and three nights.²⁹

Likewise, the singer asks whether they are "gods or real folk?", which receives a reply in the original text:

56. They demanded battle of kingship of the Fir Bolg. A battle was fought between them, to wit the first battle of Mag Tuired, in which a hundred thousand of the Fir Bolg fell. Thereafter they took the kingship of Ireland. Those are the Tuatha Dea—gods were their men of arts, non-gods their husbandmen. They knew the incantations of druids, and charioteers, and trappers, and cupbearers.

The first section culminates with the ballad "The Rocks Remain," in which Horslips describe how all the precious stones and stolen thrones that have vanished with time, and how the love between two people survives through the hardest times:

Precious stones and stolen thrones vanish in a day

And your golden rings, your silver rings will crumble and decay

Silks and satins and crimson velvet will someday fade away

But the stones will stand across the land and love will have its day

Change will come to everyone, never question why

Sticks and stones will break your bones and words will make you cry

²⁹ See "Lebor Gabala Érenn: The Book of Invasions. Part 4."

The sun will shiver, the moon will crumble and vanish from the sky

But the hills remain, love's the same, love will never die. (1-8)

Certainly, *The Book of Invasions*, as a concept album, can be considered in every sense of the word a "translation" of one world and the mindset which sustained it into another, a sort of artistic dialogue between one possible Ireland from the past and the late-twentieth century Ireland. In fact, as Paul Muldoon hints in his essay, since the songs featured imperialism, resistance and betrayal, the whole album meant The Troubles, too (135-140). The parallels are obvious whilst the narrative remains far within the past: Fir Bolg or Tuatha, British or Irish, Republican or Loyalist, native or settler. However, many critics failed to notice the songs' allusions because they did not read the story within its defining context. On the contrary, John L. Murphy claims that,

the removal in time *from* the contentions of the Knights of the Red Branch or the Tuatha de Danaan allows Horslips to comment upon their fellow Irish men and women locked in mortal combat as if epic heroes mirroring ourselves. Horslips does not praise such struggle, but they evoke its strife. (Murphy 136)

It seems clear, then, that Horslips acknowledged the importance of using new ways, including the fairy tale and myth, to deal with present, contemporary situations and also to project into the listener's consciousness certain timeless issues. In this way, for example, the elegiac "Sideways to the Sun," which is written around the slow air "Slan Cois Maigh" and begins the Suantraí/Lullaby ("The Living End") section, is a plea for taking care of our current land or history, because our ancestors sacrificed much to let us live in it:

We're the mystery of the lake when the water's still.

We're the laughter in the twilight

You can hear behind the hill.

We'll stay around to watch you laugh,

Destroy yourselves for fun.

But, you won't see us, we've grown sideways to the sun. (8-13)

Eamon Carr explained that the lyrics were a reference to the fairies, the "sluagh sidhe," a race we only know from lore and legend and the inhabitants of another psychic dimension or spiritual plane where the normal rules of physics do not apply, as they surmised that "when threatened or insulted, they would render themselves invisible to the coarse gaze of lesser mortals by turning sideways to the sun" (Carr 2007).³⁰ Conclusively, *The Book of Invasions* was an allegory, an artistic representation of an ancient Ireland undergoing change from the point of view of a modern Ireland undergoing its own set of troubles and transformations. Horslips just reported these as would a herald, a chronicler or a bard, with rock music being the key component because of its power to communicate. This represented a highly significant development in the history of the Irish rock music.

³⁰ Yeats had referenced the "sluagh sidhe" fairies in *The Wind Among the Reeds*: "The powerful and the wealthy called the gods of ancient Ireland the Tuatha De Danaan, or the Tribes of the goddess Danu, but the poor called them, and sometimes still call them, the Sidhe, from Aes Sidhe or Sluagh Sidhe, the people of the Faery Hills, as these words are usually explained. Sidhe is also Gaelic for wind, and certainly the Sidhe have much to do with the wind." See W. B. Yeats, notes in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, p. 43.

3.2.5. Conclusion

We can conclude that, by alluding to archetypal heroes in their lyrics, Horslips were actually challenging cultural narratives about Irishness. Similarly, they used mythological allusions and the sense of culture they evoke in an attempt to balance negative impressions of Ireland by celebrating the country's own legends. Consequently, as the band pioneered in the 1970s this modern Celtic Revival, the introduction of Irish mythology in their songs became an indication of literacy among Irish rock performers, and a distinctive quality of Irish rock. Furthermore, in sonic terms, Horslips contributed to an idea of musical crossover (that of rock and folk) that has since then remained an important aspect of Irish popular musical discourse. Still, they offered a model of creative hybridity in the face of cultural change which very few other artists had imagined before, and it is a credit to the group that nobody has really emulated its unique contribution to Irish rock.

Curiously enough, although the band achieved cult status in some parts of America and was briefly popular in Britain during the folk era, they never quite succeeded in breaking into the international field of rock. No matter how popular a band or an artist may be at home, and no matter how challenging or inventive a musical vision they may have, an international recording deal is always the key to greater success. One band that did rise to international prominence was, however, Thin Lizzy, led by Phil Lynott.

3.3. Thin Lizzy: "Telling the Legends of Long Ago, Playing the Melodies So We Might Know"

3.3.1. Introduction

In 1970, at the age of twenty, Phil Lynott formed Thin Lizzy, an innovative three-piece band.³¹ Lynott, already a gifted songwriter and charismatic performer, found in Eric Bell's sensitive guitar playing and Brian Downey's bright drumming the perfect background for his intensely emotional lyrics that embodied so much of the contemporary Irish culture he was so fond of. In fact, he would frequently quote, reference and synthesise Irish literary and musical traditions into rock music by, for example, taking ancient legends and mixing them with the ideas represented by the nineteenth and twentieth-century Irish writers, harbouring a genuine respect for their legacy. This ran parallel with a passionate desire to give expression to a more modern voice which would move the story forward. At the peak of their career, Thin Lizzy was a band which conveyed an innovative mix of melody, poetry and mischief in songs that were both powerful and beautiful. Since the band's growth and career during the 1970s and early 1980s mirrored the different impulses that informed Irish popular music-making practices during this period, Thin Lizzy demands special attention in this study as the first Irish rock band whose career was long enough to warrant a number of different songwriting and musical emphases over a period of time.

3.3.2. Phil Lynott: Rock 'n' Roll Bard

Philip Lynott was born in the English West Midlands of Brazilian/Irish parents, but was raised and educated in a working-class community in suburban Dublin during

³¹ The name of the band was coined by Eric Bell from a children's comic.

the 1950s and 60s.³² He could be expected to conform to many of the values that characterised such a community at that time, but his unorthodox background made him an individualist from the beginning. Thus, Gerry Smyth describes him as "a contradiction, an insider who was also an outsider, someone in whom the most basic of human experiences (such as belonging and exclusion) and emotions (such as identification and alienation) were in conflict" (*Noisy Island* 39). "The Irish are the niggers of Europe, lads," Jimmy Rabbitte tells his band of white soul singers in Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments*. "An' Dubliners are the niggers of Ireland. (...) Say it loud, I'm black an' I'm proud" (Doyle 9). If Dubliners were "the blacks of Ireland," then being an actual black boy from Dublin was a double take on otherness, but it also meant he could be whatever he wanted.

Furthermore, Irish history and mythology made a big impact on him as a child, and eventually, the storytelling power of those legends and fables influenced every part of his own writing. However, he became steeped in the tradition because he also wanted to emphasise his Irishness as much as he could in order to fit in. Then, in his early teens, he discovered a medium which he could express the contradictions in his own life through: rock music. As a hybrid of various popular musical styles, it was natural that rock music would come to connote different values for, and indeed within, someone like him. In fact, he would later acknowledge that, "Anybody can be anybody in rock and roll. It allows for all these people to exist within it and live out their fantasies. I mean, I certainly do" (Lynott qtd. in Salewicz). Luckily for him, Dublin in the 1960s was a very creative city, a real hang-out for writers, musicians and poets, and Lynott was drawn to this arts and creative scene. However, although all artists and musicians would get together and play (especially in the folk and blues scenes), he wanted to do his own

³² See Appendix I, figure 4.

thing, speak his own words and sing about his own personal experiences in the city.³³ Similarly, he was not interested in the showband scene at all. Rather, he wrote beautiful poetry and lyrical evocations of 60s and 70s Ireland, attempting to haunt the smaller venues with his own imagery.³⁴

While trying to find his own place and voice, he was also dipping into the rich well-spring of Irish writers such as Brendan Behan, Flann O'Brien, W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, Patrick Kavanagh and James Joyce, because he was genuinely interested in, and influenced by, the poetic heritage of Dublin authors. Lyrically, however, his songwriting tried to marry the values and practices of two very different traditions: one (the ballad), old and established; the other (rock), new and evolving. Moreover, as Henionn notes, "[Phil Lynott's] real life story is the source of the meaningfulness of his voice and his image. But, just like them, it is reconstructed according to the way is projected visually, verbally and musically in his songs" (200). Thus, while Horslips recreated the stories of old Irish myths as "rock operas" in concept albums, Thin Lizzy brought together an idea of "modern Irishness" in his songs. The following section will thus examine the unique blend of cultural influences which informed Phil Lynott's writing, connecting Ireland's rich tradition of music, myth and poetry to hard rock. Throughout, I will explore a selection of Thin Lizzy's albums and songs to show how these offer "an instructive example of both the benefits and the limits of hybridity as a deliberate cultural strategy" (Smyth *Noisy Island* 41), a concept that future Irish bands, like U2 and The Pogues, would later riff upon and extend.

³³ At that time, Dublin was a hive of live-music venues, such as the Countdown Club, the Club A Go Go, the Moulin Rouge, Flamingo and Dublin's own answer to Liverpool's The Cavern, Number Five.

³⁴ Indeed, most of his songs are set in contemporary Ireland, particularly in the Dublin of his childhood.

3.3.3. *Thin Lizzy (1971), New Day (1971) and Shades of a Blue Orphanage (1972)*

All songs in Thin Lizzy's first album (released in April 1971) were written by Phil Lynott, a young gifted songwriter who drew on a Celtic culture and teenage experiences with a vivid imagination. Songs like "Eire" and "The Friendly Ranger at Clontarf Castle," for example, draw on scenes from local history. "Eire," on the one hand, is full of legend and Celtic history. Interestingly enough, the original lyrics were written and sung in Irish, but Decca asked Lynott to record the vocals in English. The song is a strong and original tale of Celtic heroism. Distant echoing guitars open as the first stanza recounts first the exploits of the "high king" Brian Boru, who in 1014 vanquished 10,000 Viking invaders at Clonfard:

In the land of Eireann

Sat the high king

Faced with the problems

The dreaded vikings

Gather all the men folk

Speaking the Celtic tongue

The land is Eireann

The land is young. (1-8)

However, in its final verses, the song speaks of the heroism of Red Hugh O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill, two Irish lords who fought against the English in the Nine Years War, at the end of the 1500s:

Stands Red O'Donnell

Fighting the Saxon foe

With Hugh O'Neil

All along the north land

They fight bitterly. (9-13)

Both events would have been taught and offered up uncritically to young Phil Lynott as heroic examples of the Irish ridding themselves of foreign domination. At the end of the song, he concludes, dramatically: "The land is Eireann / The land is free" (lines 15-16). "The Friendly Ranger at Clontarf Castle," on the other hand, carries some beat influence as the music accompanies Lynott's half-spoken singing rather than focusing on a actual melody, similar to a long spoken poem. Throughout, a particular lyrical sensibility adds depth and dimension to the music, as the famous castle is mentioned along with pastoral Irish themes:

The friendly ranger paused

And scooping a bowl of beans

Spreading them like stars

Falling like justice on different scenes. (1-4)

Finally, the concluding verse is written as a poem which captures feelings of joy and sadness:

To feel the goodness glowing inside

To walk down a street with my arms about your hips, side by side

To play with a sad eyed child till he smiles

To look at a starry sky at night, realize the miles. (17-20)

Furthermore, in the early days of the band, Phil Lynott was also striving to create a music that combined the dream-like lyricism of Van Morrison's pull of memory and place in *Astral Weeks*, and the open-endedness and flow of progressive rock. "Remembering" and "Diddy Levine" are the two most striking examples of this attempted fusion. On closer inspection, these songs directly question the extent to which Lynott might have agonised over his childhood. In fact, most of his earliest songs wrestle again and again with issues of family and identity: from "Shades of a Blue Orphanage" and "Saga of the Ageing Orphan," to "Diddy Levine" and "Philomena," they are but complex triangulations involving mothers, fathers and sons. "And I keep on remembering the old days / I keep on remembering the old ways," sings Lynott in "Remembering," lending the song its theme. Thus, he remembers the lost girl in the "pretty dress with the zip up the back," recalls the days at "a happy home" or the image of "father and I waving goodbye." As usual, Lynott's lyrics are characterised by an aching awareness of absence. It is such quality, indeed, which still snags the listener after all these years: the ache of nostalgia and acute sense of loss felt for one so young. It is the same quality previously evoked by, for example, Seamus Heaney in "Glanmore Revisited": "It felt remembered even then, an old / Rightness half-imagined or foretold" (*Seeing Things* 31).³⁵ Similarly, "Diddy Levine" begins in the "later Forties" and spans twenty years. The female protagonist has a young child and is living with a man whom she then leaves—"and with the child in her arms she went looking for a fling" (lines 13-14). She turns down two marriage proposals, so "[t]hrough all her mother's lovers," the

³⁵ In fact, "Glanmore Sonnets" and "Glanmore Revisited" are both obvious products of Dublin in the early 70s and an appropriate testimony to it.

child keeps the maternal surname, but "inheritance, you see, runs through every family," (line 37), concludes Lynott.

In a similar way, "Saga of the Ageing Orphan" is another patchwork of images pulled from the family scrapbook. It is an acoustic ballad where Lynott's voice is pitched low to sing about an intimate experience. In the lyrics, the sadness is allowed the space it deserves and flows through as he sings:

We had come in search of one

Who evades us all

Never heeds the call

If only someone could stall this ageing. (5-8)

Definitely, these are very personal words coming directly from the author's physical and mental states. Thus, after writing and recording the songs for Thin Lizzy's first album, Lynott realised that both his thoughts and experiences could be turned into the poetic. He successfully used this songwriting trick again on a new song, "Dublin," included in Thin Lizzy's EP from 1971, *New Day*. This song, Lynott's ode to his hometown, casts a richly melancholy spell over it:

How can I leave the town that brings me down

That has no jobs

Is blessed by god

And makes me cry

Dublin. (11-15)

Thus, "Dublin" is Lynott's beautiful, sad and conflicted reflection on the city that formed him as a person. In fact, although all his early lyrics have a poetic flourish, this short song was actually written as a poem which captured the essence of the place, exile and memory from the first lines:

After our affair
I swore that I'd leave Dublin
And in that line I'd left behind
The years, the tears, the memories and you
In Dublin. (1-5)

Once released, "Dublin" became an important song not just for Lynott but for Ireland itself. Paul Scully remembers that,

[a]side from things like "Molly Malone" and "The Auld Triangle," nobody really said straight up in a lyric: Dublin. It was quite a revelation, and quite an intimate thing. We suddenly heard Dublin mentioned in a song with a strong Dublin accent, as opposed to Ray Davies singing about London. It was ours. Ireland always had an inferiority complex about England, we were always held down, so when Philip sang proudly and poetically about Dublin, that was quite an amazing moment. (Scully qtd. in Thomson 130)

Moreover, through a song like this one, listeners could empathise with Lynott's feelings of frustration and love for his hometown at a time when he was running from the past and sailing towards the future, at the same time. In fact, just a decade before, Ireland still was echoing Joyce's description of a "priest-ridden country" (*Portrait* 27), where the Catholic Church was imbued in every single thing from the government down. In

the 1970s, however, the old orders which shaped outdated attitudes to sex, work, family and religion were up for question, and without being explicitly political, Phil Lynott and his circle of artists started questioning the orthodoxies of the time with every show they played, every song they wrote and every poem they produce: art was finally breaking down barriers in Ireland.

Next year, in 1972, Thin Lizzy released their second album, *Shades of a Blue Orphanage*.³⁶ This time, Lynott's lyrics are less abstract, but his romanticism remains still, while the songs become a historical testament to the early 70s' Ireland. For example, in the title song, "Shades of a Blue Orphanage," words overflow with emotion: thus, the line "And it's true, true blue and sometimes it reminds me of you" recounts childhood with a sense of melancholic loss, while "We used to go over the brick wall and into old Dan's scrap-yard" conveys happier memories. He also compares his situations to that of an older generation of Irishmen who never had the opportunity to travel outside their small island:

There's an old photograph of Dan that I wish you could-a seen

Of him and the boys posed, standing in St. Stephen's Green

Ya see, they were a part of the great freedom dream

But they were caught and detained and are locked inside the frame of the
photograph. (16-20)

Certainly, these songs form a body of work quite distinct from anything else ever done in Ireland before. Indeed, many of them were written while Lynott was still living in the

³⁶ The album title is reputed to combine the name of Eric Bell's former band, Shades of Blue, with Lynott's, Orphanage.

country, but once he left to London, he looked back with an even increasingly romantic eye, falling upon clichéd representations of Irish archetypes: for him, Ireland was a sentimental construct full of working-class characters and mythical heroes, warriors, outlaws and wild women. Similarly, his idea of Ireland was that of a romantic struggle against Britain, an approach that would actually become a means of affirming his own identity, too.

3.3.4. *Vagabonds of the Western World* (1973)

By the time Thin Lizzy released their fourth album, *Vagabonds of the Western World*, they had quickly become famous in Ireland, and were the most prominent, cool and individualistic band in the country. For the first time, Jim Fitzpatrick creates the cover artwork: a painting of the group in quasi-mythological setting, a remarkable space-rock sci-fi picture equally influenced by Marvel comics and ancient Celtic art.³⁷

This was due to the fact that,

in the early 1970s, the iconography prevalent in rock culture through a wide range of poster art, songs, album covers, and so on, was seen as the development of certain tendencies emergent within psychedelia, which were in part responsible for the popularisation of types of fantasy and science fiction literature and illustration. (Frith and Goodwin 89)

³⁷ Jim Fitzpatrick is a famous Irish artist who established himself during the 70s for his Celtic art work. In his hands, Phil Lynott's vision of Celtic warrior-cowboy-rockers became tangible reality. Before that, he had already made his mark in 1968 designing *Viva Che*, the iconic red-and-black poster image of a bearded Che Guevara. Fitzpatrick creates elaborate work incorporating Celtic knotwork and mythical and historical figures: "I started my Celtic Irish artworks in the early 1970s at a time when very little attention was paid to our distinctive and unique ancient histories, myths and legends, and they were certainly not cool" (see FitzPatrick). See Appendix I, figure 5.

Such fantastic motifs in hard-rock and heavy metal iconography often accompanied the musical invocation of early British or Irish history and mythology, as it was the case of Thin Lizzy.³⁸ Nonetheless, Lynott's favourite theme of lost love is reiterated in this album on "A Song for While I'm Away,"³⁹ an intimate love letter from a travelling musician, tired of life on the road but still leaving his loved one a promise of devotion:

These words I wrote, play and sing to you
Do not convey the love I brought and bring to you
For this is a song for while I'm away
To say all the things I'd love to say
You are my life, my everything, you're all I have
You are my hopes, my dreams, my world come true
You're all I have. (1-7)

Definitely, many of Lynott's visions as an artist were already well established by 1973. The tough-but-sensitive image which fuelled Lynott's artistic persona emerged as much in response to the "niceness" of the showbands and his own status as both insider and outsider, as it did to the invocation of popular American iconography. Actually, he was clearly and intentionally related to well-established icons of outlawed masculinity who

³⁸ For instance, printed on the sleeve of the record is "The Legend of the Vagabond," a fairly suspect reworking of the old Irish legend of *Oisín and the Land of Youth*.

³⁹ Indeed, this is the title of Phil Lynott's first book of poetry, published on his twenty-fifth birthday in 1974. Thus, *Songs for While I'm Away* was a compendium of lyrics to twenty-one Thin Lizzy compositions, plus an unpublished song-poem, "Holy Encounter." The short introduction was written by Peter Fallon, who in 1970 had set up the Galley Press in Dublin, which by 1974 had published dozens of elegantly designed volumes of poetry, and would later put out work by such eminent Irish voices as Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon, as well as publishing Fallon's own verse.

figure so strongly in American culture. As an example, a song like "The Rocker" makes clear intertextual reference to one of the most iconic characters of post-war American culture, such as those portrayed by Marlon Brando in *The Wild Ones* (1954) and Elvis Presley in *Roustabout* (1964), who also possess an ambivalent attitude towards women which goes to the heart of rock 'n' roll mythology. In this case, the temporal and geographical displacement seems to mitigate the track's overt sexism: we could say that in the song, it is not Lynott himself who professes these values and thoughts, but the character he is borrowing from America's recent past. Still, his own identity was similarly dispersed, and his unique life experiences traced through the persona that he developed. As Gerry Smyth points out:

It was Lynott's status as an "outsider" within his own community that facilitated his close identification with such anti-heroes. (...) His response was to fetishize masculinity in some of its most extreme forms, and the results of this may be heard in both the songs he wrote and the sounds he and the band produced.
(Noisy Island 40)

Not only is the image supposed to convey some feature of the music, but underlying this is the assumption that the sound is intertwined with the style. At the same time, men in rock have also been bound by conventions, because often the male performer is expected to act as a rootless, free and promiscuous man.

In this way, Thin Lizzy's version of "Whiskey in the Jar," with its anonymous narrator, its story of violence and crime, and its celebration of masculinity and concomitant mistrust of women, is certainly related to many of the band's compositions. A traditional Irish standard dating back to the seventeenth century, this song was practically ingrained in the national consciousness, yet as with many traditional songs,

the words were subject to change and revisions in differing versions.⁴⁰ In its broad outline, "Whiskey in the Jar" might have appealed to Lynott for its bold imagery and its fatalistic account of a highwayman roaming the mountains of southern Ireland. Moreover, the roots of romantic nationalism and anti-establishment heroism that would run through much of his writing are already present here in the theme of an outlaw robbing a military man (Captain Farrell) of his money:

As I was goin' over the Cork and Kerry mountains.

I saw Captain Farrell and his money he was countin'.

I first produced my pistol and then produced my rapier.

I said stand o'er and deliver or the devil he may take ya. (1-4)

The twist comes later, when his lover, Molly, betrays him. The protagonist ends up shooting Farrell and is sent to prison:

Now some men like the fishin' and some men like the fowlin',

And some men like ta hear a cannon ball a roarin'.

Me? I like sleepin' specially in my Molly's chamber.

But here I am in prison, here I am with a ball and chain. (25-28)

Although the song connected to a version of Ireland that the band respected and appreciated, Lynott wanted to create a new Celtic folklore rather than re-writing an old one—"We don't want people to get the impression that we are a folk rock band who do nothing but up-date old Irish drinking songs," he would say (qtd. in Altham).

⁴⁰ The Dubliners had recorded it three times in the late 1960s, and more populist folk groups from around the world had also reinterpreted it.

Eventually, however, this was not just one of the band's massive hits, but the definitive version of a traditional song which had been sung for more than three hundred years. In fact, the tempo, melody and lyrics on the Thin Lizzy version have become the standard which has been covered by very different bands across the board, from Simple Minds to Pulp to Metallica.

Clearly, Lynott's lyricism on this record had become considerably more character-driven, as if he wanted these songs to stand as bold assertions of Ireland's historic power. The next one, however, was going to be a change within Thin Lizzy's career in many ways, as Phil Lynott made the conscious decision not to let the guitarists compose any songs for the album: all the songs would have the control of the singer in every step of the songwriting process, instead.

3.3.5. *Jailbreak* (1976)

Wrapped in a futuristic cover, *Jailbreak* is Thin Lizzy's most successful record. This time, Jim Fitzpatrick depicted the band on the cover image breaking loose from a video game gripped by the sinister Overmaster character.⁴¹ "That warrior aspect fell into the concept of the whole *Jailbreak* album, of people constantly trying to escape and being held down by this Overmaster figure," said Lynott when the album came out, adding that:

The jailbreak thing is about youth and oppression. When you reach the age of fourteen or eighteen, you suddenly find strength that you've never had before. There's aggression, power and rebelliousness (...) It can be put to good use in the right position, where there is an oppressor (...) The whole point was that the

⁴¹ See Appendix I, figure 6.

Overmaster was bad and we were busting out for the right of freedom of speech,
for all that freedom stands for. (qtd. in Doherty "Thin Man")

Uplifting, heroic and poetic, *Jailbreak* became a quintessential 70s' album, full of timeless hard-rock anthems. Thus, we find a connective thread of rebel songs ("Cowboy Song," "Angel from the Coast," "Emerald," "Fight or Fall" and "The Boys Are Back in Town"), in which the protagonists rise up against moral restrictions and social boundaries. In this way, "Jailbreak" is an exciting start to the album. The lyrics refer to a riot in a prison, something that connects immediately with Thin Lizzy's style:

I can hear the hound dogs on my trail
All hell breaks loose, alarm and sirens wail
Like the game if you lose
Go to jail. (18-21)

Similarly, the lyrics to "The Boys Are Back in Town" (the band's signature track in many ways) tell us about a kind of mythic male friendship, with young boys who just want to break free and have fun on the city streets.⁴² In the final verse, Lynott captures the glorious ache of the loves to be loved during the endless summer nights to come: "That jukebox in the corner blasting out my favorite song / The nights are getting warmer, it won't be long / It won't be long till summer comes" (line 25-27). Many critics have claimed that Thin Lizzy's success was predicated not only on the enigmatic

⁴² As a single, it reached the highest positions in Ireland, reached the Top 8 in the UK, and the Top 12 in the USA. However, "It almost did not get into the album," says Scott now. "At the beginning, it was a sort of war song, but Phil kept working on it and one day I came up with the sentence: the boys are back in town. In a way, that gave us new hopes. Robbo put his groove and Brian and I got that riff that wraps it all" (Scott qtd. in Wall "La Balada" 33).

"rocker-romantic" persona developed by Lynott in songs like this one, but also on "softer" personal meditations such "Little Girl in Bloom." Both songs encapsulate the classic stand-off between the "tough" and the "tender" in which rock 'n' roll used to rely, but they also represent the tendencies around which Lynott organised his artistic persona. It was, indeed, his ability to express these tendencies vocally, in a variety of forms and combinations, that made him more of a compelling figure than most of his contemporaries on the rock music landscape.⁴³ Therefore, a large part of Thin Lizzy's success, as well as the band's subsequent place in rock history, depended in large part on the complex interplay between those two archetypes (Campbell and Smyth 45).

A song like "Warriors," on the other hand, is a tribute to the heroism that Lynott saw in those musicians who "gave up everything to make music and live life to the full" (Lynott qtd. in Doherty "Deutschland"). It is, thus, one of the deepest songs of the album because of its meaning:

I am the warrior

I serve the death machine

Losers or conquerors

All flash past on my silver screen

Death is no easy answer

⁴³ See Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelia, and Other Satisfactions* (U of Illinois P, 1999, pp. 1-11), for an analysis of what he means by the "against-the-grain of the voice": the development during the 1960s of particular ways of articulating "tough" and "tender" personae in rock vocalization, and more interestingly, of creating tension between them, occasionally within the same song.

For those who wish to know

Ask those who have been before you

What fate the future holds

I am a messenger

The message here, you must know

I am the warrior

I deliver the fatal blow. (1-12)

The main topic is inspired, once again, on the Irish myth of Cuchulainn: "'A lone warrior approacheth us here," cried Laeg to Cuchulainn. "What manner of man?" asked Cuchulainn. "A dark, black man, strong, bull-like, and he unarmed" (*The Táin* 211). Musically, it is one of the darkest compositions on the album, too. With sharp and repetitive riffs, Lynott's voice acquires threatening and even apocalyptic tones. In the middle, a rhythmic and melodic change takes place, starring a guitar solo to make way for a softer instrumental part, right before the guitars lead the song to a sudden end. Since he would write lyrics that are open to multiple interpretations, Phil Lynott normally preferred people to make their own interpretation, but this time, he gave some straight clues about this song:

The main concept that surrounds "Warriors" is death. In the world of rock there are many famous and admired people who are dead. From my point of view, the best way to explain what they were is to say that they were warriors. They fought, they did not sit in their houses to read about themselves. They gave

everything to live music and their own lives. That concept of the warrior impregnates the whole album *Jailbreak*, in the sense of people trying to escape and being captured by the Overmaster or some other similar figure. Wherever there is oppression, symbolised by the Overmaster on the album, there will be warriors to fight against it. The warriors are the real leaders. (qtd. in García 34)

Finally, "Emerald" is the ultimate Celtic epic song about Irish history that gives full lyrical and musical rein to Phil Lynott's warrior imagination. In the lyrics, he explores a story of terrible but righteous vengeance, describing a harrowing Viking raid upon an idyllic Irish village.⁴⁴ Thus, his words echo those Nordic raids which came without warning and endangered lives and property:

To the town where there was plenty
They brought plunder, swords and flame
When they left the town was empty
Children would never play again

From their graves I heard the fallen
Above the battle cry
By that bridge near the border
There were many more to die. (5-12)

The last verse refers to the song's namesake, a metaphor for Ireland herself:

⁴⁴ The first recorded Viking attack on Ireland was in 795 on Rathlin Island.

Then onward over the mountain

And outward towards the sea

They had come to claim the Emerald

Without it they could not leave. (13-16)⁴⁵

In a similar way, and after the successful *Johnny the Fox* (1976),⁴⁶ Thin Lizzy's 1978 album, *Black Rose: A Rock Legend*, told again of the band leader's love of Irish history, legends, folklore, music and the pastoral elements of the tradition.⁴⁷ The album is, thus, an interesting blend of historical romanticism with nods to the folk tradition, lifting the airs of "Danny Boy," "Wild Mountain Thyme," "March of the Kings of Laois" and "Shanandoah," among others. *Black Rose* also hints to Lynott's other musical interests, as well as his poetic bent. From a Celtic roots viewpoint, his use of ancient Irish myths and his extrapolation of them for a contemporary audience makes this work suitable for another interesting case study.

3.3.6. *Black Rose: A Rock Legend* (1978)

Like his poem/song "Dublin" from 1971, the album's title track, "Róisín Dubh (Black Rose): A Rock Legend," is one of Phil Lynott's most personal evocations of his homeland. More importantly, it was his final stand as "the greatest Celtic rock romantic." This epic seven-minute song, which picks up where "Emerald's" grandiosity

⁴⁵ Vikings eventually did settle in what is today Northern Ireland and the Ulster Province in the Irish Republic.

⁴⁶ This album is a bit disjointed, but it included songs that talk about both 1970s and nineteenth century Ireland, at the same time. The protagonist of most songs, Johnny, is a drug addict living on Dublin's streets, and like Phil Lynott, he is a black man in a white society.

⁴⁷ See Appendix I, figure 7.

left off, speaks of a wider, bigger and longer lasting historical perspective. It begins with a blustering Celtic riff, the singer beseeching the spirits to "tell me the legends of long ago." The music is warlike, as Lynott summons up the ancient kings and queens of Ireland, and the mythic hero Cuchulainn, who would "fight and always won":

Tell me the legends of long ago

When the kings and queens would dance in the realm of the Black Rose

Play me the melodies I want to know

So I can teach my children, oh

Pray tell me the story of young Cúchulainn

How his eyes were dark his expression sullen

And how he'd fight and always won

And how they cried when he was fallen. (1-8)

Halfway through its seven minutes, the song switches to an energetic ceilidh, stitching together parts of the traditional melodies "Shenandoah," "Wild Mountain Thyme," "Danny Boy" and "The Mason's Apron." It also includes some clichéd references, and great Irish literary figures and artists, from Van Morrison to Queen Maeve to Cuchulainn, are woven into the folklore-influenced melody:

My Roisin Dubh is my one and only true love

It was a joy that Joyce brought to me

While William Butler waits

And Oscar, he's going Wilde

Ah sure, Brendan where have you Behan?

Looking for a girl with green eyes

My dark Rosaleen is my only colleen

That Georgie knows Best

But Van is the man

Starvation once again

Drinking whiskey in the jar-o

Synge's Playboy of the Western World. (24-35)

Ultimately, it is another song about songs, a story about stories, that also reads like a who's-who of Irish folklore and culture. Indeed, Phil Lynott would later say in an interview in 1983 that:

What I love about the Irish writers, is that they all had their own degrees of being unique. They weren't just men with pens: they were living the lives of artists, whether that meant getting drunk and brawling in Dublin pubs, like Brendan Behan. Or Samuel Beckett or James Joyce, fookin' off to Paris and being a bit weird. Or occult-dabblers like Yeats. I love them because they are all

a bit out there. And for me it's the power of the word that I love. (Lynott qtd. in Davies 90)⁴⁸

Moreover, the song was obviously inspired by the poetic symbol of the *róisín dubh* or black rose, a nationalist symbol of resistance dating back to the sixteenth century. Thus, "Róisín Dubh," "Dark Rosaleen," or "Little Dark Rose," is one of Ireland's most famous political ballads, in which the "dark rosaleen" becomes the female figure that personifies the Irish nation in the times of need against its oppressors:

The Erne will be strong in flood, the hills be torn

The ocean will be all red waves, the sky all blood,

Every mountain and bog in Ireland will shake

One day, before she shall perish, my Roisin Dubh. (21-24)⁴⁹

There is also a fairy-tale aspect to the black rose we should keep in mind: it appears in mythology across many cultures and hidden histories as a symbol of death and mourning, of fond farewells, or death as new beginnings and transformation, of transition. Often, the deep, dark purple of the "black" rose reminds us of the mystical journey from one world to the next. Either way, Lynott saw it this rose as uniquely Irish, a blood-oath of defiance, of the choice between freedom and death at war.

⁴⁸ In fact, a book of the singer's lyrics, *A Collected Works Of Philip Lynott*, had been published in 1979. He adored how the book elevated his status, drawing attention to his excellent words, and he dreamt of being part of a literary tradition.

⁴⁹ This song is traditionally sung in the Irish language, with only a few recordings of the English existing. It has been translated from the Irish language by James Clarence Mangan and Patrick Pearse. The translation here written is by Thomas Kinsella in the *The New Oxford Book of Irish Verse*, published on 1986.

Finally, while *Black Rose* was considered not the best work in Thin Lizzy's catalogue, it would be a decent epitaph for a band then tearing on the brink of self-destruction. Always a band on the edge of burnout, they had managed to pull through guided by Lynott's unstoppable passion and immense drive, but now he had hit a steep descent that would finish them off only four years later: in 1986, he tragically passed away at the age of thirty-seven, and has been missed since then by fans and artists alike. Thus, we should agree with Ferdia MacAnna's conclusion on Phil Lynott:

[His] blend of Celtic mysticism with rock and roll, as well as his street-smart attitude, influenced many of the rock bands but also some of the poets, writers and critics of the 80s. He was the first (...) Dublin literary rock superstar. (MacAnna 16)

3.3.7. Conclusion

In just a decade, Thin Lizzy remoulded the whole essence of Irish rock. In fact, they became world ambassadors of that style, having previously gained admission to the American and British rock circuit, and finally achieving the status of music superstars. However, their idea of playing rock music had come from a willingness to change the Irish cultural dynamic in the first place. Eventually, Phil Lynott's biggest achievement was to bring an poetic sensibility to hard-rock music when few rock bands had a poet to lead them and fewer could offer such heartened inspiration worldwide. However, he stitched himself into Ireland's rich cultural tapestry that mixed music and poetry, art and literature, the traditional and the contemporary, old and new, and in doing so, he became part of something as revolutionary as Celtic rock. Such imagery set Thin Lizzy apart from the "commercial" end of the market, with their concentration on mythic Irish matters and their clear attempt to provide an alternative way of looking at things in Ireland. Similarly, Phil Lynott signalled the possibility for a new kind of "Irishness":

confident, swaggering and unbowed. In reality, however, it was his status as both insider and outsider, and his ability to formulate a local artistic response to a global cultural phenomenon, that made him such a seminal character within the history of Irish music. Conclusively, Phil Lynott's career is another great example that we should praise the legacy of those brave artists and musicians who once broke all the rules in order to change and grow, no matter how hard or difficult it was.

3.4. Gary Moore: "The Darkest Son of Ireland"

3.4.1. Introduction

Born in Belfast in 1952, Gary Moore was a constant leading spirit in Irish rock.⁵⁰ He was not only a good vocalist and excellent guitarist, but a fantastic songwriter and musician.⁵¹ Thus, he had a prolific career, releasing numerous solo albums as well as multiple projects with other groups. His music career in fact began in the band Skid Row, with whom he released two albums in the late 60s. He then went on to become a solo artist with works such as *Grinding Stone* (1973). In 1978, he released *Back on the Streets*, the album which includes "Parisienne Walkaways," a superlative meeting of Moore's crying guitar with Phil Lynott's emotive vocals that became the guitarist's first solo British hit single the following year. However, as a musician who was surrounded by political strife from a young age, Gary Moore was also quick to engage politics in his songwriting. He was anti-military and spoke out against the Cold War, and although he had already moved to England by the time Bloody Sunday hit Northern Ireland, the violent conflict still struck him deeply. He also spent his youth listening to bluesmen

⁵⁰ See Appendix I, figure 8.

⁵¹ He could also play harmonium, mandolin, bass and fiddle.

such as Albert King and Peter Green, and learnt the impact lyrics could have on the listener. Similarly, he was seeking to bring this same thoughtful messaging to his own work, and to impact others in doing so—that is the role of poetry and music, after all.⁵² Therefore, this chapter is about Gary Moore and his very distinctive talents as writer, composer, performer and musician. It is also about the music, where it came from and where he took it to, and how he innovated with tradition to make something new, sometimes by going back to the ancient source.

3.4.2. Early Albums

Gary Moore's greatest impact in Irish rock and heavy metal was achieved with solo albums released in the 1980s, such as *Corridors of Power* (1982), *Victims of The Future* (1984) and *Run For Cover* (1985). In the latter, calling on his many friends to record in the studio, Moore obtained fantastic vocal performances from former Deep Purple vocalist Glenn Hughes on "Reach for the Sky" and "All Messed Up," and Thin Lizzy's Phil Lynott on "Military Man." Lynott also trades vocals with Moore on "Out in the Fields," which turned out to be his final recorded performance before tragically passing away in January 1986. Written about the religious turmoil in their native Ireland, this anti-war, anti-conflict song concentrates on the violence of Northern Ireland, and points out that killing is a pointless act under any conditions:

It doesn't matter if you're wrong or if you're right

It makes no difference if you're black or if you're white

All men are equal till the victory is won

⁵² In the years since his death in 2011, artists like Metallica's Kirk Hammett and blues guitarist Joe Bonamassa have praised Moore's style, while Bob Geldof positioned him as part of a "golden triangle" of Irish blues including Van Morrison and Rory Gallagher.

No color or religion ever stopped a bullet from a gun

[. . .]

It doesn't matter if you're left or to the right

Don't try to hide behind the cause for which you fight

There'll be no prisollers taken, well the day is done

No flag or uniform ever stopped a bullet from a gun

Out in the fields the fighting has begun

Out on the streets, they're falling one by one

Out from the skies a thousand more will die each day

Death is just a heartbeat away. (1-4; 9-16)

The end includes a few bars of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" (or its Irish precursor, "Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye," which has the same melody). Thus, "Out in the Fields" presaged both the musical and lyrical Irish themes which would dominate Moore's following projects, *Wild Frontier* and *After the War*.

3.4.3. *Wild Frontier* (1987)

In keeping with the spirit of Phil Lynott, who had passed away only a year previously, Gary Moore's album *Wild Frontier* was a tribute to Ireland and his own Irish roots in a new fusion of technology, Irish folk and hard rock, which also adopted traditional melodies and Celtic narrative references.⁵³ It is, indeed, the first album that

⁵³ See Appendix I, figure 9.

he recorded in Ireland after having lived in England since adolescence. Tributes aside, *Wild Frontier* was the work that catapulted him to fame, secured his spot among the best guitarists of the 80s, and landed him a dedicated fanbase throughout the world. More importantly, though, it includes some of his most memorable lyrics, those to be considered a metaphor of the Troubles and the extremely difficult political situation in his native Northern Ireland at that time.

To begin with, the album opens up with "Over the Hills and Far Away," an epic song which from the striking percussion intro, shows the Celtic influences of the album, as Moore's guitar matches Paddy Maloney's uilleann pipes and the fiddles of Sean Keane and Martin Fay of The Chieftains. The result is a fast-paced driving song featuring Moore's big-sounding guitar work blended with traditional Irish elements in the main melody, making it a triumphant ode to Celtic music that still retains the singer/guitarist's signature style. This is indeed an essential element in all Gary Moore's creations because his main instrument, the electric guitar, as Bennett and Dawe claim,

is a globally mobile instrument whose form, tonal textures and associated playing techniques are the product of its appropriation and use in a variety of locally specific musical contexts (...) yet at the same time it is the object of assimilation, appropriation and change in local settings by quite specific means and in quite specific ways. (1)

Moreover, "notions of cultural identity and difference are in a constant state of flux due to the dynamic interplay of the local and the global" (Robertson 2). The performance and reception of guitar music, therefore, exemplifies this interplay between local and global cultures, since the guitar is in every respect a global phenomenon which has helped to define and explore musical genres worldwide. At the same time, however,

"stylistic terms reflect back on and provide a crucial situating role for musicians and their audiences in a variety of ways." At one level this can be conceptualised as imagined connections between music and place, or even more, as "a series of powerful narratives of urban and rural spaces grounded in feelings, ideas and sensations drawn from the music itself" (Bennett and Dawe 4). Consequently, the power of such narratives of sound and place work both without and within those cultures with which they are associated, as it is with Gary Moore's music.

On the other hand, "Over the Hills..." is also in the lyrical aspect a brilliant tribute to the Irish folk songs that both he and Phil Lynott used to adapt and translate into rock so well. This song tells the story of a man who is wrongly accused of robbery, in what many consider a metaphor about the political situation suffered by Northern Ireland during the first half of the twentieth century. Thus, in the first verse, the main protagonist is picked up by the police at night, after his weapon has been found at the scene of a crime:

They came for him one winter's night.

Arrested, he was bound.

They said there'd been a robbery,

His pistol had been found. (1-4)

The song goes on to tell us that this person is worried because he has no alibi for the evening in question, but then:

He knew that it would cost him dear,

But yet he dare not say.

Just where he'd been that fateful night,

A secret it must stay.

He had to fight back tears of rage.

His heart beat like a drum.

For with the wife of his best friend,

He spent his final night of freedom. (17-24)

It seems that the man will not reveal that he spent the night of the robbery with his best friend's wife, probably because adultery was still a crime back then. Although he prefers protecting the cheating wife from persecution, he is still sentenced to ten years in prison:

Over the hills and far away,

For ten long years he'll count the days.

Over the mountains and the seas,

A prisoner's life for him there'll be. (13-16)

Thus, the protagonist decides to remain in prison and await the future:

Over the hills and far away,

He swears he will return one day.

Far from the mountains and the seas,

Back in her arms again he'll be.

Over the hills and far away. (25-29)

In the last stanza, we learn that during his time in prison, the woman sends him love letters and continues her loveless marriage, so when he is eventually freed, he will go back to her in the hope of running away together:

Each night within his prison cell,

He looks out through the bars.

He reads the letters that she wrote.

One day he'll know the taste of freedom. (30-33)

Throughout, the references to Nature, not only to the mountains and the sea, but also and especially the "over the hills and far way" image, are what give the song its mythical value, as they relate directly to the protagonist's feelings of loneliness and strength. Conclusively, in both its structure and its content, there is nothing left but to describe this song as brilliant, epic and dramatic; an immortal, emotionally charged song that remains a classic of Irish rock.

The album continues with the title track, "Wild Frontier," which Phil Lynott was supposed to sing originally just as he had done before in "Out in the Fields," but unfortunately, he died before Gary Moore finished the record.⁵⁴ The lyrics of this song are emotional and show Moore talking about restoring the beauty and joy of Ireland, "the Emerald land," after being crushed by the war, clearly alluding to the ethnic and religious conflicts that had plagued his country:

I remember the old country

They call the Emerald Land

⁵⁴ That is why on the sleeve's back cover there is the dedication "For Philip."

And I remember my home town

Before the wars began

Now we're riding on a sea of rage

The victims you have seen

You'll never hear them sing again

The Forty Shades Of Green

[...]

I remember my city streets

Before the soldiers came

Now armoured cars and barricades

Remind us of our shame

We are drowning in a sea of blood

The victims you have seen

Never more to sing again

The Forty Shades Of Green. (1-8; 14-21)

Moore's melancholy passion while singing these lines is overwhelming, making the song an undeniable and emotional ode to Ireland, which, according to the chorus, must be restored to get its former "emerald appearance" back:

We're goin' back to the wild frontier

Back to the wild frontier, it's calling

Back to the wild frontier

Back to the wild frontier, it's calling.

The song also includes what would have been a perfect middle part for Phil Lynnot to sing, with a melancholic yet hopeful message to his homeland:

Those are the days I will remember

Those are the days I most recall

We count the cost of those we lost

And pray it's not in vain

The bitter tears of all those years

I hope we live to see those days again. (26-31)

In general, the album's sound had a typical 80s metal style to it, but "Thunder Rising" is probably the heaviest track. It is, indeed, another powerful song that brings listeners back to epic lands, with aggressive lyrics that tell about the great deeds of the Irish mythological hero Cúchulainn:

They looked out from the fortress on the hill

There came a single warrior returning from the kill

The spoils of war hung from his horses mane

The bloody heads of enemies that he had freshly slayed

They saw the face, the eyes so sullen

Could only be the young Cúchulainn

Thunder rising, thunder rising

Thunder rising early in the morning

Cities burning, the world keeps turning

Thunder rising early in the morning

The son of Lugh MacEithleen knew no fear

For just one blow at any foe to tell his end was near

So many tried to mock this Celtic son

They taunted and they teased him till

He slayed them one by one

And so they came, and so they've fallen

At the hands of young Cúchulainn

Thunder rising, thunder rising

Thunder rising early in the morning

Cities burning, the world keeps turning

Thunder rising early in the morning. (1-21)

Interestingly enough, "Thunder Rising" was recorded in 2010 by Galician hard-rock band Los Suaves, after the band's singer and main lyricist, José Manuel Domínguez Álvarez, also known as Yosi, translated it as "Se Alza el Trueno." Including this song in their eleventh studio album, *Adiós, Adiós* (2010), turned out to be a wise choice for the band. On the one hand, in the musical aspect, the guitars are as striking as in Moore's original version, but they are also given a powerful "Celtic heavy touch" by Galician guitar virtuoso, Alberto Cereijo. On the other hand, Yosi's great vocal performance also stands out. Nicknamed "the poet of rock," the lyrics of Yosi—one of the most veteran singers and songwriters in the Spanish rock scene—are always deep, raw and full of literary devices, and revolve around topics such as love and loss, life and death, and the eternal failure of the loser. In this song, however, there is a slight thematic change from the rest of his catalogue, as the lyrics of "Se Alza el Trueno" relate to Celtic myths, legendary battles and a strong ruthless warrior, who becomes in Yosi's adaptation an image of the singer himself.⁵⁵

Therefore, it can also be argued that, beyond mere coincidence or simple personal taste, the fact that a band like Los Suaves, who have always vindicated their Galician roots and identity, adapted this Gary Moore's song in particular to include it

⁵⁵ As a matter of fact, in the official live performance of the song, Los Suaves' frontman, Yosi, puts up his fist with energy when singing the line "a este hijo de los celtas." Watch "Se Alza el Trueno - Los Suaves - 29 Años, 9 Meses y 1 Día," www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIaMe_00nNY (00:01:52).

into their repertoire, corresponds to ideological and cultural reasons.⁵⁶ As researcher Jesús Calleja points out: "Knowing our legends and our myths serves to remember our past and identify with the present" (qtd. in Cortés). In this way, there is, undoubtedly, a connection between Galician oral tradition and Celtic legends. In fact, during the nineteenth century up until the traumatic irruption of the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent Franco dictatorship, Celtic myths were used in Galicia to provide nationalism with a historical foundation. Thus, the thesis of the Celtic origins of Galicia appear for the first time in the first half of the nineteenth century in the works of historians such as Vereá Aguiar or Faraldo. Then, Manuel Murguía in *Historia de Galicia* (1886) contributed to the Celtic myths by unveiling the figure of Breogán, founder of Brigantia, and his son Ith, said to have discovered the island of Ireland and set sail there on an expeditionary voyage. Later, Eduardo Pondal gave Murguía's Celtic theories a mythical-literary treatment influenced by the work of the Scottish poet James Macpherson, who in the eighteenth century published the poems attributed to an ancient bard, Ossian, supposedly collected from the oral tradition in Gaelic language. In the poetry of Pondal, Ossianism appears as the artistic and literary manifestation of Celtism, and as such, it expresses its ideological background.⁵⁷ Consequently, Pondal created a

⁵⁶ Not only do they perform songs in Galician such as "O Afiador" (2002), but they have always played the Galician national hymn on guitar in every live show, usually taking the Galician flag with them at that particular moment.

⁵⁷ Generally, it consists on the idealization of the poet who considers himself a "poet of freedom" who wants to raise his people. Similarly, Pondal imagined a past of freedom and independence, which he tried to recover with his poetry, to renew History.

fragmentary mythology using "o Heroe" (the hero) and "o Bardo (the bard)" as his archetypes.⁵⁸

All in all, the persistence of the Celtic, according to writer and historian Suso De Toro, is closely related to the search for origins and the fascination with the primitive: "Faced with the order of Roman civilization, the Celts represent chaos. [While] Rome embodies the law and the written word, the Celts represent the oral and the libertarian" (qtd. in Hermida). These stereotypes shaped the image of the "Celtic identity," indeed a powerful identity to claim, since people who claim it often regard themselves as the last defenders of a marginalised culture that needs to be safeguarded by them—somewhat similar to what most rock artists are supposed to do, also. Certainly, the statement "we are what they are not" plays a significant role in the construction and maintenance of cultural identity. In this regard, the Celticness of the Irish people was important in order to "distinguish them from England" (Celtic/not Celtic), while it also helped Ireland to "stand out among the European countries." Yet, what is it that makes the Irish stand out? They were described by antique writers as "one of the six barbarian warlike peoples" (Tierney 194), who fought "in rage and spirit like wild beasts without reason," having "reckless courage" and a will to "self-sacrifice in battle" (196). In "Se Alza el Trueno," this is described in the chorus and the last stanza of the song:

Hace tiempo que esta historia

⁵⁸ In his books, he would also include historic characters, like the hero "Ourens" (whose name would become the basis for the city of Ourense), and an evocation of the lonely rural spaces of Galicia populated by the ghosts of Celtic ancestors whose remains are so evident in the "castros," or iron age hill forts, that dot the Galician countryside. In addition, in Pondal's poetry, the Hellenism of Romantic poets is connected to Ossianism, thus uniting the telluric feeling for the country with the epic display of those who vindicate the heroic nature of the land.

es otra leyenda más
de unos hombres que se matan
por el gusto de matar,
unos dicen que traiciones,
otros que por beber de más.

La verdad es que sus padres
les mintieron:
otro engaño más.

Nace el trueno, nace el trueno
Se alza el trueno cuando llega el día
Arde el pueblo, el mundo gira
con la madrugada el trueno brilla.

Viudas que lloran, hombres sin vida
Se alza el trueno cuando llega el día
Arde el pueblo, el mundo gira
con la madrugada el trueno brilla. (27-43)

Moreover, some of the characteristics which are still regarded as features that distinguish them from other people are, indeed, that "[t]he Irish are the only group that managed to fight for their freedom and actually gain it. That is because they are descendants of the Celts and inherited their bravery and skills in fight" (Tierney 196). It is also noted that the "unwillingness to lie down and be beaten, no matter how often we fail, is probably the most typically Irish trait imaginable" that derives from being of Celtic ancestry (Tierney 196). This confirms Peake's and Kobayashi's opinion that "invoking Celtic identities provides a powerful way for many people to claim an ethnic identity that is associated with resistance to any kind of oppression" (qtd. Hezel 145). In a similar way, the defense of the Celtic origin of Galicia meant defending Galicia as a nation compared to the rest of the Hispanic peoples, and helped support the beginning of a nationalistic ideology. In this regard, a relationship with the Celtic past and its heroes is established in "Se Alza el Trueno" to bind the Irish and the Galician people to their alleged common origin and shared history, and do so around an idealised mythology of the primitive Celtic warrior: strength, bravery, insubordination and rebellion (characteristics also and often associated with the rock musician), as in the following verses:

Apostados en la torre

sobre un castro erguida

ven al guerrero volver

después de matar otra vez.

De la crin de su caballo

cuelga el botín de guerra

cabezas goteando sangre
de hombres muertos ayer.

Ver su rostro es ver la muerte
y en sus ojos al Infierno arder.

[. . .]

Ha nacido en una tierra
que desconoce el miedo
cada vez que golpea,
un enemigo menos.

Por querer asoballar⁵⁹

a este hijo de los celtas

por intentarse burlar

sus risas ahora son muecas.

Ver su rostro es ver la muerte

y en sus ojos al Infierno arder. (1-22)

From the above analysis, it is clear that just as music is a cultural manifestation close to the poetry and to the collective life of the people, one of the main aims of Gary Moore's

⁵⁹ "Asoballar" is the Galician word for "tease" in English.

album *Wild Frontier* was to follow that Celtic spirit of culture, of exchange and brotherhood, entangled in the myth eternally rooted in all cultures of Celtic ancestry, from which Galicia and Ireland share many common roots. In fact, with their emphasis on Celtic legends and heroes, Moore's songs inevitably lead him to declare separation and difference. Consequently, the potent mix of celebration and outrage in songs like "Thunder Rising" struck a chord not only with Irish people but with Galician too. Therefore, by adapting this song into Spanish, Los Suaves collected the inheritance of the Galician Celticism and shaped it in an artistic form through song and music to get a mythical view of the Celtic origin of Galician culture and identity and its relationship to Irish legends. In their re-working of the lyrics, "Se Alza el Trueno" ultimately became a symbolic text for Galician people.

Finally, *Wild Frontier* ends with the emotional "Johnny Boy," a beautiful ballad with soothing keyboards and bagpipes, which shows once again the Celtic influences of the album. which shows once again the Celtic influences of the album. Moreover, the nostalgic lyrics evoke bittersweet sensations approached with a unique sensibility. They also offer an example of toponymy in poetry and songs, since the presence of many place names throughout indicate the artist's close relationship with the country and his search for the real notion of "homeland":

When I hear that wind blow
All across the Wicklow mountains
Is it you I hear a calling?
Johnny boy, oh Johnny boy

When I look to the west
Out across the River Shannon

I can still see you smiling
Johnny boy, oh Johnny boy

When the leaves have turned to brown
And winter's due
As I watch the sun go down
I'll think of you

When I hear that wind blow
All across the Wicklow mountains
Sure it's you, I'll hear a calling
Johnny boy, oh Johnny boy

By 1988, Gary Moore had released seven solo albums in which the power of rock and metal was further enhanced by the political messages uttered in response to the Troubles, and he continued composing along that path for his next album. In 1989, he released *After the War*, the last metal album of his career and, more importantly, the one in which his political conscience completely rose to the surface.⁶⁰

3.4.4. *After the War* (1989)

To begin with, the two instrumental songs that bookend the album's release, "Dunluce (Part 1)" and "Dunluce (Part 2)," bring Celtic elements into focus. However, Moore then alludes to Northern Ireland's complicated history again on "Running from the Storm" ("Wonder if we'll ever see tomorrow / Ride with our backs to the wind /

⁶⁰ See Appendix I, figure 9.

Don't know if I'll make home again," lines 5-7), which directly engages with on "Blood of Emeralds":

I was down and out on Skid Row

But I held on to my pride

The darkest son of Ireland

He was standin' by my side

We would sail the stormy seas

Never looking back

We were afraid of what we'd see

Through the thunder and the rain

The deepest blood of emeralds

Was running through our veins. (12-21)

Another song, "Led Clones," also deals with current events in Northern Ireland. With Ozzy Osbourne's guest vocals supporting, Moore hints at propaganda spreading through radio and television announcements ("The time has come to talk about tomorrow / You should be a careful one tomorrow / I heard them on the radio / I saw them on the video"), ending each stanza with the warning "I don't think I can take much more." In fact, despite his international success from the mid-1980s, he was not happy with the path his career had taken lately. As journalist Mick Wall later reported in a 2014 article, he started to feel trapped by expectations and "sick of his own music" when working on *After the War* (Moore qtd. in Wall "How The Blues"). Although he had been

experimenting with Celtic music and other new sounds, while constantly bringing deeper messages into his lyrics, there was a certain creative itch that was starting to bother him. By the end of the '80s, Moore had already played in all manner of musical settings (beat groups, country ballads, psychedelic folk music, jazz fusion, blues, Celtic rock, etc), so he just needed to feel creatively free again. From this album on, he would experiment with a greater variety of musical styles, radically but successfully shifting creative gears every few years, from blues to jazz to pop to metal, and back to hard rock again. Luckily, however, Moore's political conscience of the '80s found a way to keep its valued artistic integrity intact through the rest of his career.

3.4.5. Conclusion

Analysis of the lyrics not only of Gary Moore, but many of the songs we have discussed above, leads us towards a single element which can be held to underpin "Celtic rock": Moore's songwriting was explicitly informed by a cultural understanding of Irish music and myth that would speak to those themes of recent political history which had informed it in the first place. The understanding of Ireland and Irishness that Gary Moore purveyed in his songs was, therefore, one which gained admission to the contemporary British and European minds through an arch-romantic synthesis of legend, political allusion, Celticism and personal sentiment (very similar, indeed, to that of Horslips and Thin Lizzy). Furthermore, his musical understanding was reinforced by his own responsibilities as a musician, thus through all his work, his playing and compositions, he demonstrated the myriad possibilities of Irish music, both rock and traditional. Consequently, Gary Moore remained all the way unto his untimely death in 2011 one of the world's best respected musicians, someone who consistently gave his best to his songs. Songs in which there always was, and always will remain, a unique Gaelic spirit coming through to make it all much more worthwhile.

3.5. Chapter Conclusions

Since rock music is always adapting, remembering, suggesting and metamorphosing (that in large part constitutes its timeless fascination), it should come as no surprise that it provided a crucial site for the contention between tradition and modernity which came to characterise Irish life during and after the 1970s. Consequently, bands like Horslips subverted the attitudes towards the genre by subtly using traditional roots to make people realise that rock music could and indeed had its own identity in Ireland. In a similar way, Phil Lynott and Gary Moore created startlingly innovative hard-rock songs underpinned by subtle Irish traditional nuances and references that still had commercial success. As a result, Celtic rock was connected to the nature of the artist's creativity and to their restless exploration of the links between tradition and innovation, upon the realisation (both subconscious and consciously discovered) that the tradition to which they belonged was their own: they were, indeed, "Irish artists." Ultimately, we have shown how Celtic rock was in many ways the starting point of the development of future successful Irish rock bands and performers, and also created important derivatives through further fusions.⁶¹ In this sense, Celtic rock acted as a general spur to the cultural and musical creativity of 1970s' Ireland, playing a major role in the maintenance and definition of a national identity which they helped communicate to external audiences.

⁶¹ Curiously enough, the real legacy of Celtic rock was to be encountered in the Irish diaspora, as it later morphed in London (The Pogues) and in Boston (The Dropkick Murphys).

4. Sociopolitical Awareness in Irish Rock Music

4.1.1. Introduction

Music is an object that is socially relevant to many and that forms part of a cultural identity. Consequently, rock has had a variety of political positions, powers and effects since its emergence in the 1950s, and from this point onwards, it has struggled to articulate particular sounds, texts, genres and styles to certain social positions and ideologies. In the 1960s and the 1970s, for instance, it was widely believed that rock music could change the world. Rock music was supposed to have the power of creating the possibility of an ideal world, and for some time, it actually seemed to help the struggle towards that ideal world. As years went by, however, people realised that it could not, because "[a] song, however powerful its performance, cannot win an argument. The song is a mixture of sounds, references and images; its meaning cannot be stated in the same way that a political view can be articulated" (Street 60). Thus, the constraints and limits involved in the relationship between rock and politics should be acknowledged; otherwise, we are likely to assume that rock has always meant to be resistant, oppositional or somehow located outside the cultural mainstream. It was against the idea of social conservatism that this romantic vision of rock as an inherent statement of political resistance, or just as an expression of alienation, was formed.

Yet, probably the biggest, most real challenge of rock music—or of any art with a certain social and/or political dimension—was not to "change the world" *per se*, but to change people's opinions and perspectives on a particular topic or situation, because as transformative learning theory suggests, once a personal transformation has taken place, people seldom return to their old perspectives. It was also to say something about the times in which the artist lived, and more importantly, to find that what they have said

speaks to another moment in history. However, as it is concluded from the foregoing discussion in this thesis, a song does not always and exclusively mean what it says, and there might be no definitive interpretation because of the ambiguity in the words or the way the sounds are interpreted. In a similar way, Rachel Seiler claims:

The meaning and impact of music are contingent on listener constructions. Songs have no absolute meaning or value and can't be assessed according to what the lyrics say or what the performer believes; rather, a song's influence on a listener is a matter of what the music represents and expresses and how it is received. Only then does the music take on meaning, and only then might its social and political aspects become evident. (Seiler 40)

Consequently, the links between rock music and politics clearly vary according to the political context and the nature of the cause. The point is thus to recognise the way a song encourages divergent interpretations depending on how ideas, lyrics and sounds are communicated or delivered by the artist. However, as Gerry Smyth notes,

there's no way to resolve the issue of 'political music', as the two words belong to different orders of discourse; judgments in relation to the one will not necessarily hold in relation to the other. Music is in fact always already 'political'. (...) What the music 'means', above and beyond that, depends upon your own political persuasions. (Smyth "Ireland Unplugged" 95)

In other words, the understanding of a song as "political" will usually emerge, first and foremost, from one's circumstances, such as our own sense of political disillusionment. In this way, Elvis Costello once explained what is that he wanted from his songs: "What you really want is not songs that tell you what to think but songs that teach you to think

for yourself" (Costello qtd. in Hoskyns). Still, at the same time, Dave Harker claims that,

[w]hether we like it or not, songs do have ideological tendencies (...) Those tendencies might not manifest themselves openly in the lyrics; but the politics will be built in. It is the job of the cultural critic (as well of the historian) to tease them out; because to try to ignore them is itself a highly political act. (Harker 15)

The answer lies in the way the personal feelings tapped by the song are linked to the world experienced by the listener. Thus, in rock music, an artist's talent is usually measured by their ability to "take the community beyond itself": to show what is possible as well as reflecting what already existed. In this sense, Ron Sakolsky, coeditor of *Sounding Off! Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution*, explains that what he calls "rebel music" has "nurtured [his] critical consciousness, sparked fresh intellectual insights, uplifted [his] spirits, reinforced [his] anger at injustice, and fueled utopian dreams for a better world" (67). Similarly, John Street argues that,

[g]ood rock is the music of a community: it is the sound of a movement. The idea of a movement applies to both art and politics. It does not just refer to shared tastes and styles, but also to a common cause and a collective political identity. (Street 86)

However, as music-making is judged both aesthetically and politically, musicians in rock are also judged by their creativity and their commitment. Thus, ideas of authenticity, integrity and honesty have both an artistic and a political meaning in rock, captured in the decision not to "sell out." In this sense, an "authentic" work must be a mixture of originality, sincerity, integrity, hard work and self-sacrifice—without these,

it cannot pretend to hold a higher place in the rock field. The idea of authenticity is thus not far when we discuss the particular point of art versus commerce: for example, independent artists too often consider artistic integrity as being incompatible with the sale of millions of records and commercial success. However, since a form of entertainment like rock is a means of communication too, it is suitable to delivering an artistic as well as a political message, because millions of people can have access to it. In fact, as Richard Kearney puts forward, creativity can be out to the service of others through an "ethical-poetical imagination" (*Wake* 387) capable of seeing and understanding the other, an ethical imagination which is "a call of the other to be heard, and to be respected in his/her otherness" (*Wake* 361), and a poetical imagination which is "inventive making and creating. (...) The imagination, no matter how ethical, needs to play" (*Wake* 366). Rock music has applied this ethical-poetical imagination through the creative process in raising awareness of social and political causes. Consequently, it easily steps through the songs into the real world, allowing the vision the artist has of it to come through.

On the other hand, John Street notes that "[r]ock is only political when it speaks with an 'authentic' voice, when it expresses the anger of an oppressed group" (86), but in order to achieve this, a community has to have an identity first: only then can its members know who they are and what they belong to. It is precisely in such a community where rock can also play the role of a social link and, through music, help people (especially, young people) create a real "community way of life" that allows them "to create a new and diverse social link which encompasses notions such as ethics, affects and aesthetics" (Ricard 7). Rock music in Ireland is no way different. Especially after the cultural revival of the 1890s, culture and politics were assumed to be intimately associated realms in Ireland, and this relationship came to constitute one of the island's

dominant self-formative images (Smyth *Decolonisation* 36). Therefore, for the Irish rock artists, Ireland acts as an "invisible thread" running throughout their songs (even those which apparently do not have anything to do with Ireland), as they all have talked about Ireland, both politically and personally, at different moments and times in their career. However, north and south of the border have been dealt with in rock songs differently, and while songs about Northern Ireland had definitely more of a political tinge, the Republic was often dealt with in a more personal way. Either way, for some musicians, the desire to subvert norms and expectations has stemmed from the fact that, as rock artists, the whole point is subverting the system and subverting an expected outcome. That might as well be related to the Irish concept of "craic," which translates roughly to "fun," but which is really about subverting the expectation of social norms. This leads us to a more general difficulty: the impossibility of keeping politics out of the discussion of Irish culture. In fact, as Gerry Smyth says, "in an historical formation in which it figures so prominently as an index of identity, it becomes imperative to understand music's role in the formation of discourses of power and subversion" ("Isle Full of Noises" 6).

Therefore, in this chapter, I will explore how Irish musicians have been able to use rock music as a means to put forward their political ideas and beliefs, creating links in a chains of songs that extend across the decades. As the lyrics here analysed deal with political and social struggles, they will provide a good way of exploring how rock music and political ideas combine. Thus, there will be times when this chapter will read like social history, others when it will be pure musical and literary criticism, and so on. I hope, however, that this chapter sparks more questions than answers—questions, that is, that will keep us discussing the sociopolitical awareness and civics of rock music.

4.2. "On The Dole Queue Too Long": The Outburst of Irish Punk

4.2.1. Introduction

In the late 1970s, punk rock, a new subgenre with its own musical vocabulary, was introduced in a relatively short period of time. Very soon, punk rock began to compete with other musical styles that had been established over the previous years. From that moment on, punks began in their own way a sharp interrogation of existing contexts. On the one hand, the punk attitude led to independence on all fronts: more groups wanted to play music, more studios opened up to facilitate the growing demand for recording, and independent record labels developed to offer an alternative means of distribution. On the other hand, through their music, lyrics and stylistic commitment, punks enlarged the spaces for subversive cultural manifestations. In this way, for example, while the male-centredness of rock had effectively limited the opportunities for women, punk provided a new space for women as active protagonists within the production of the music and the different cultural artifacts (performances, exhibitions, fanzines, etc).

The origins of punk rock lay outside Ireland, as it is often regarded as a phenomenon which began and ended almost exclusively in the UK. The concept of the British punk rock scene was, however, heavily shaped by earlier developments in the US—most notably, by the Ramones, Iggy Pop & The Stooges, and The New York Dolls. Still, the way in which punk manifested itself in Britain since its explosive entry in the national music scene in 1976, was totally different from the original New York scene. On the one hand, bands in England such as The Sex Pistols and The Clash had a much more aggressive image and sound than their American counterparts, and on the

other hand, the lyrical content of their songs was often much more provocative in its tone. Moreover, although many critics saw British punk as a response to the increasing elitism and virtuosity of the biggest rock groups of the decade (such as Led Zeppelin, Genesis, Queen and Pink Floyd, to name a few), punk in England was a working-class subculture, especially from the moment when the punk image and style became intertwined with local cultural and political sensibilities, like the economic decline. According to Phil Cohen, these practices are, indeed, modes of symbolic construction through which style is generated in a subculture (mods, skinheads or teddy boys). In fact, English punk was more than just another form of rock: it transgressed the idea of music as a form of entertainment and became socially and politically vital. Thus, it served as rallying call to a bored and frustrated youth who held out only a future of dead-end jobs, or worse, permanent unemployment. Moreover, punk's visual and sonic attack on the sensibilities of the British public was, in a sense, instructing them to "wake up" and take action: "There is no future in England's dreaming," sang second-generation Irish Johnny Rotten, singer of the Sex Pistols, in "Anarchy in the UK." According to Ian Chambers, this very much summed up the feelings of the punk scene as a whole:

Punk proclaimed the necessity of violating the quiet, everyday script of common sense. It proposed a macabre parody of the underlying idealism of 'Englishness' —that dour pragmatism that sees no future beyond the present, and no present except that inherited, apparently unmodified, from the past. (Chambers 185)

Such a view of punk has been enhanced through its treatment in academic texts which have also, until quite recently, emphasised the British-centredness of punk rock music and the whole punk subculture. However, "No Future" was a slogan that resonated as strongly in Dublin as it did in London in 1977. In Ireland, social conditions were supposedly less severe than in post-war London (with its high unemployment, industrial

unrest and increasing racism), but Irish youth had a right to feel similarly disaffected: although the mass emigration of the 1950s and 1960s was beginning to slow down, the unemployment prospects remained scarce, and Catholic conservatism meant the absence of any institutional rock media.⁶² Such conditions were ripe for an Irish punk intervention, but as Gerry Smith notes,

[i]n Ireland, punk's new vocabulary (which was derived for the most part from the aggressive cultural formations of Britain and the US) was not simply learned and reproduced verbatim. The challenge presented by punk to established practices was overdetermined, and as a result modified, by a range of local influences and concerns. (Smyth *Noisy Island* 52)

Besides, by the mid-70s, the time when the punk era started in the US and England, Northern Ireland had been experiencing the Troubles for nearly a decade, and bands like Stiff Little Fingers (from the Protestant community in Belfast) and the Undertones (from Catholic Derry) emerged amid all the gloominess and division. During the course of this section, therefore, I will consider the relevance of punk rock in the context of locally situated youth cultures. After considering the origins of punk as part of the New York and London underground scenes of the 1970s, I will now look at how punk was subsequently adopted and adapted by Irish punk bands in the Republic and Northern Ireland, respectively, and what implied at the time.

4.2.2. "Television Screen" and the Emergence of Irish Punk

In contrast to British punk's highly targeted selection of authoritarian enemies in songs against the monarchy ("God Save the Queen"), the police ("White Riot") or the major record labels ("EMI"), Ireland's first punk single in 1977, "Television Screen" by

⁶² At least until the late 1970s.

The Radiators from Space, sets itself up against the "man in a shiny suit" who moves kids "off the street and into the schools," the mass media ("network news") and rock dinosaurs ("the rock and roll heroes with the rich man's blues").⁶³ Fuelled by adolescent rage ("he could never understand what's going on in my head") and shortage of cash ("I never see more than a tenner a week"), in the chorus an electric guitar becomes the means by which teenage angst can be finally unleashed:

I'll get him tonight, I'll teach him a lesson alright

I'm gonna smash my Telecaster

Through the television screen

'Cos I don't like what's going down. (1-4)

The Radiators' singer and songwriter Philip Chevron has explained that:

While we shared many of the characteristics of the UK punk bands—the energy and the attitudes—, we had nothing to say about tower-blocks or anarchy. Our best songs came from our experience of growing up in an Ireland still paralysed by political and religious hypocrisies but which, we believed, was in its heart youthful and forward-thinking. (Chevron qtd. in *Punk77*)

While punk took the United Kingdom by surprise and challenged many of the cultural and social assumptions of British society, in Ireland people were preoccupied with other problems.⁶⁴ Thus, Irish punk consisted mainly on songs which attempted to reflect the country in a time of unemployment, emigration, conflict and recession. The punk rock

⁶³ See Appendix I, figure 10.

⁶⁴ In 1976, the same year punk officially emerged in the UK, in Northern Ireland a total of 297 people lost their lives because of the conflict.

movement made a strong impression particularly in Northern Ireland, where political and religious intolerance among its divided Catholic/Protestant population developed into insurrection and continual violence throughout the '70s, in a phase of extreme complex social and political conflict, in which society was in fact divided into two opposing hegemonic blocs, and often referred to as "the Troubles."⁶⁵ This also meant that punk was seen as a way out for the young, and the only way that a lot of people could indeed be heard. In addition, the Northern Irish artists had more in common, in terms of its prevailing social and political structures, and some cultural traditions too, with their counterparts on the British mainland. However, although fired by the same punk spirit to some extent, Northern Irish punk rock bands functioned quite differently from those in London and Dublin, and from each other indeed.⁶⁶

4.2.3. Stiff Little Fingers and The Undertones

On the one hand, Stiff Little Fingers belonged to the "social realist" wing of punk, a term coined by punk rock critic Jon Savage: "self-consciously in and of the world, deliberately looking to confront the negative energy of political injustice with the positive energy of rock music" (qtd. in Smyth "Place, Noise, Nation" 82). In fact, their second single, "Alternative Ulster," became an immediate classic in Irish rock (just as much of their powerful 1978's record, *Inflammable Material*)⁶⁷ by using the sonic

⁶⁵ With political and religious roots which reached far back in time, it involved paramilitaries, politicians, members of the British security forces and ordinary citizens. It continued well into the 1990s, claiming over 3,500 lives and bitterly dividing the Catholic and Protestant communities.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Timothy Heron, "Alternative Ulster: How Punk Took on The Troubles" (*The Irish Times*, 2 Dec. 2016); and Sean O'Neill and Guy Trelford, *It Makes You Want to Spit! The Definitive Guide to Punk in Northern Ireland* (Reekus Music, 2003).

⁶⁷ See Appendix I, figure 11.

violence of punk to confront the real violence of sectarianism in Northern Ireland.⁶⁸

The song immediately became an anthem, and historically ranks as the first musical expression of how the youth of Ulster felt about their traumatic situation:

We ain't got nothin' but they don't really care

They don't even know you know

They just want money, we can take it or leave it. (5-7)

Thus, the lyrics turn on a classic "us and them" scenario in which an undifferentiated "they" conspire to deny "us" (young people on both sides of the divide) basic freedoms, from freedom to enjoy music to the freedom of lifestyle choice that was available elsewhere.⁶⁹ However, Northern Irish teenagers were not only faced with the same boredom and joblessness as British youth overseas, but had also to deal with sectarianism, violence and lack of opportunities, as well as a severely underdeveloped cultural infrastructure:

Take a look where you're livin'

You got the army on the street

And the R-U-C dog of repression

Is barking at your feet

⁶⁸ The song's title was inspired by *Alternative London*, a book that gave outsiders a view on the hippy scene in London in the 1960s (about the same time when the Troubles started in Northern Ireland).

⁶⁹ Due to the breakdown in law and order, the entertainment scene became controlled by the paramilitary organisations on both sides of the divide (IRA, UDA, UVF), and international bands were scared to go to the North in their music tours. Up until 1977, Rory Gallagher and Horslips were the only musicians from outside the region to include Belfast in their annual tours of Ireland.

Is this the kind of place you want to live?

Is this where you want to be?

Is this the only life we're gonna have? (17-23)

Consequently, the only "alternative" is the supposedly "radical" one that would change the meaning of Ulster:

What we need

Is an Alternative Ulster

Grab it and change it, it's yours

Get an Alternative Ulster

Ignore the bores and their laws

Get an Alternative Ulster

Be an anti-security force

Alter your native Ulster

Alter your native land. (lines 24-32)

The song is thus "a definitive statement in the context of Northern Ireland on the ability of rock to represent reality" (Smyth *Noisy Island* 60), and a protest against the fact that there was "no future" for Northern Irish youth. Certainly, Stiff Little Fingers broke a taboo with "Alternative Ulster" because, up until that point, artists and groups from Northern Ireland had drawn a discreet veil over the Troubles, but on the contrary, the controversy this song caused was quite significant. The band's intentions were simple: to communicate the fact that people could live their own reality without having to

subsume their personalities to a mass politics. The song's message, therefore, proves to be relevant still: do not just accept where you live as a place where nothing ever happens and try make it better instead ("alter your native land").

Over in Derry, on the other hand, The Undertones became the most popular punk rock band to emerge from the Catholic community. They seemed, however, to avoid commenting on the Troubles, writing instead about love, the vicissitudes of everyday life, rejection and break-ups, that is, about the day-to-day experiences of young male adolescents. Still, they mustered a heavily concealed allusion to current events. The band's singer Feargal Sharkey says that there was political comment in their songs indeed, "though we were probably too subtle for our own good. I never believed in blatantly trying to shout at people because I don't believe it does any good. (...) It's better to make people aware and then let them make their own decisions" (qtd. in Denselow 161). Thus, as Gerry Smyth states, their most famous song, "Teenage Kicks,"⁷⁰ reiterates the teenage love scenario from early rock 'n' roll rather than commenting on the band's contemporary socio-political context (*Noisy Island* 59), with lines that say the following:

Are teenage dreams so hard to beat?

Everytime she walks down the street

Another girl in the neighbourhood

Wish she was mine, she looks so good. (1-4)

Nonetheless, a song like "Teenage Kicks" offered "an escape" to young people in the North, giving voice to the idea that there was a different reality beyond the

⁷⁰ See Appendix I, figure 12.

community.⁷¹ In fact, as Heron notes, singing about girls, love and the woes of adolescence rather than about the conflict, and doing so in spaces shared by young Catholics and Protestants alike, "was seen as a way of resisting or at least of delegitimising the process of cultural reproduction of both communities."

Although Jon Savage has referred to The Undertones as "the missing link between The Stooges and Irish traditional music" (596), the group's quick bursts of three-chord melodic punk rock and fast lyrics about real adolescent life owed far more to the Ramones. Meanwhile, Stiff Little Fingers would be "the Irish Clash," writing loud, abrasive songs about a different kind of real life in a society such as the Northern Irish, in which violence was always a possibility. In short, "[the] dilemma facing punk groups [within Northern Ireland] was whether or not to sing about the Troubles" (Rolston 59). However, as Simon Frith and Charlie Gillet wrote:

Songs and musical styles do not simply "reflect," "speak to" or "express" the lives of audience members or musicians. A sense of identity is created out of and across the processes whereby people are connected together through and with music. (Frith and Gillet 133)

That is one way for a group of people to expand what is called "their musical and otherwise cultural capital," a concept developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in which social classes in capitalist societies are defined not only by their economic status or capital but also by the access they have to culture, which is as unequal as the economic capital. In this way, people would identify with a particular type of music, build part of their identity on that style, and show others that they belong to particular

⁷¹ Feargal Sharkey of The Undertones said: "People used to ask early on why we didn't write songs about the Troubles: we were doing our best to escape from it" (Sharkey qtd. in Heron).

groups because of their musical tastes. The fact is that, as with most other areas of culture (including, most centrally, literature), Northern Irish punk music occupied an "ambivalent space between Irish and British traditions," and its aesthetics was one best described as "fractured" (Smyth *Noisy Island* 58). We can conclude, then, that punk rock, with its focus on contradiction and conflict, emerged in Northern Ireland because it enabled musicians to articulate that particular sense of fracture.

4.2.4. The Boomtown Rats

Furthermore, although punk's impact proved somewhat limited in the Irish context (especially compared to those in England and the US), it did succeed in opening different paths that other Irish musicians were keen to explore during the years that followed. In fact, Gerry Smyth says that:

As a socially salient form of popular music, rock both *reflects* the social order and *anticipates* its metamorphosis; [in this way,] Irish rock music of the 1980s is (...) the foremost contributor to the imagination of change. Therein lies its power and its importance. (Smyth *Noisy Island* 79)

Thus, a new generation of Irish performers and bands began to surface in the 1980s which, while taking much of their energy and attitude from punk, blended such characteristics with the rock and pop sensibilities of previous eras. They were involved in creating original, local responses to both the musical and the ideological ideals instigated by punk rock before because their anger derived from the repression and the conservative forces that still were dominating Ireland, where there was also recession, unemployment and some of the highest rates of emigration since the 1950s. One of those bands which would expand the boundaries of what Irish rock and popular music could be about while being synonymous with southern Irish punk was The Boomtown

Rats.⁷² Thus, their first single in 1977, "Lookin' After No.1," sounded energetic and loud, with singer and songwriter Bob Geldof performing in a defiant, threatening persona already adopted by early punk performers Johnny Rotten (Sex Pistols) and Joe Strummer (The Clash), and the lyrics speaking of alienation and disaffection:

The world owes me a living

I've waited on this dole queue too long

I've been standin' in the rain for fifteen minutes

That's a quarter of an hour too long.

I'll take all they can give me

And then I'm gonna ask for more

Cos the money's buried deep in the Bank of England

And I want the key to the vault. (1-8)

Following the punk ethos, Geldof shows a great dose of individualism, and his ambition is evident, even radical in this context, but he will not conform nor be told:

Don't wanna be like you.

Don't wanna live like you.

Don't wanna talk like you, at all

⁷² They took their name from a gang called "The Boomtown Rats" mentioned in the autobiography of American protest folk singer Woody Guthrie, *Bound for Glory* (1943), whose film adaptation was released in 1976. See Appendix I, figure 13.

I'm gonna be like

I'm gonna be like

I'm gonna be like ME! (36-41)

The band's most popular and successful song is, however, "I Don't Like Mondays." Included on their third album, *The Fine Art of Surfacing* (1979), it tells the story of a young girl who shot several of her school mates on an apparent whim:

The silicon chip inside her head

Gets switched to overload

And nobody's gonna go to school today

She's going to make them stay at home

And daddy doesn't understand it

He always said she was as good as gold

And he can see no reason 'cause there are no reasons

What reason do you need to be shown? (1-8)

With its delineation of a true case of random death-dealing violence, this bittersweet song, despite its apparent non-judgmental stance, can be interpreted as a plea for reconciliation between the institutional forces that have called forth violence and the young murderess who has turned a violent society's logic back on itself:

And then the bullhorn crackles and the captain tackles

With the problems and the hows and whys

And he can see no reasons 'cause there are no reasons

What reason do you need to die, die? (32-36)

Similarly, in their 1978's album *A Tonic For the Troops*,⁷³ they included the song "Rat Trap," which tells the story of young Billy and Judy, who are caught in a cycle on urban poverty and violence, and feel the depressing town they live in is a "rat trap":

Billy don't like it living here in this town

He says the traps have been sprung long before he was born

He says "hope bites the dust behind all the closed doors"

And pus and grime ooze from its scab crusted sores

There's screaming and crying in the high-rise blocks"

It's a rat trap Billy, but you're already caught

And you can make it if you wanna or you need it bad enough

You're young and good-looking and you're acting kind of tough. (9-16)

The lyrics are intended to speak to alienated youth everywhere:

In this town Billy says "everybody's trying to tell you what to do"

In this town Billy says "everybody says you gotta follow rules"

⁷³ See Appendix I, figure 14.

You walk up to those traffic lights

You switch from your left to right

You push in that button and that button comes alight

And hits you. (23-28)

Curiously enough, "Rat Trap" remains a landmark in Irish music history in as much as it was the first song by an Irish band to get to the top of the British charts. More importantly, although in both the musical and the lyrical aspects this song is extremely complex and far removed from the three-chord, "Do-It-Yourself" (DIY) basis of punk rock, it reminds us that one of the best values of the punk years to Irish culture was, in the long run, all the new performers, new aesthetics and general new directions that occurred to Irish rock music as a result of punk.

4.2.5. Conclusion

All in all, punk bands emerged in Ireland through an interaction of various forces—economic, aesthetic and ideological—which were determined by society's fractured context of politically motivated violence. Consequently, the rawness, anger and frustration at being brought up during the Troubles were channelled brilliantly in songs which negated the discourses of either unionist exceptionalism or republican idealism. As a result, punk music not only articulated a rejection of violence and repression, but in Northern Ireland, it also created a non-sectarian common ground for young people. The significance of sharing space and time through music-making and playing in a context like this should not be underestimated, because "music, as a generic human capacity, can be best interpreted as a communicative medium that is optimal for the management of situations of social uncertainty," and thus, "convey[s] the impression that each participant is (...) laying the ground for the emergence of a sense of mutual

affiliation" (Cross 147). Therefore, the fact that punk music and culture provided a bridge (at least figuratively) between Catholic and Protestant youth from both sides during the darkest, most difficult decade of the conflict,⁷⁴ while also being a highly significant political statement in 1970s' Northern Ireland, should remain a reminder that, sometimes, music can foster unity despite political and cultural differences.

4.3. "Flowers of Fire": Sociopolitical Issues in U2's *War* and *The Joshua Tree*

4.3.1. Introduction

Irish historian Roy Foster points out that much of the story of Ireland in the late 20th century "concerned the breaking down of boundaries in notions of Irishness, and in identity politics, manifested through globalization, feminization, and other changes in economics, politics and religion" (147). Woven through these questions was another kind of expansion: the altering and extending of forms of Irish cultural expression. At the same time, these phenomena intersected with Irish politics and economics, sometimes in unexpected ways. As he says:

[t]here is something symbolic about this bizarre coincidence, occurring at a moment when Ireland was about to become "globalized". And there is something symbolic about Bono, the new-model Irish cultural icon, occupying an

⁷⁴ Initially, this happened because of a shared passion for punk rock and the feeling of being despised or rejected by the rest of the community because of participation in the subculture. See Timothy Heron, "Alternative Ulster: How Punk Took on The Troubles."

international space while representing a new-Irish intersection of money, art and politics. (Foster 148)

However, U2 have always managed to hold the narrow line between social awareness and partisan political allegiance, belonging to a broad category of music that Rachel Seiler calls "contemporary conscious popular music," which includes "music of any genre that focuses on social issues and perceived problems in society and may or may not include music that carries an overtly political message" (40). At the beginning of their career, they would sing about social and political situations, relate events and talk often about surrender and non-violence, but had never intended to represent a political party or a strong political opinion in their music, like most punk bands at that time were doing. In fact, as Keuss and Koenig point out, in a 1981 interview for *Rolling Stone*, Bono identified the goal of the band as "moving beyond punk" and "reestablishing rock music as a vehicle for people to think about their actions in relation to one another" (58). Moreover, on that same interview, he said that:

The idea of punk at first was, "Look, you're an individual, express yourself how you want, do what you want to do." (...) But that's not the way it came out in the end. (...) We want our audience to think about their actions and where they are going, to realize the pressures that are on them, but at the same time, not to give up. (Bono qtd. in Henke)

However, in order to understand why U2 became the voice of a whole generation in the 1980s, and why the band is important to later generations still, it is essential to understand the U2 phenomenon first.

Part of U2's attitude comes from the fact that they are, as Bono puts it, "appreciative of our background." The group formed in Dublin in 1976 at an

experimental school, which was "multidenominational," he explains, and that in terms of Dublin and Ireland, "is quite unique. It was also coeducational, which was unusual too. We were given freedom, and when you're given freedom, you don't rebel by getting drunk" (Bono qtd. in Henke). U2 were also atypical from the beginning because they did not want to be part of the London or New York punk rock scene; rather, they wanted to stay and play rock in Ireland first, and later, all over the world. In fact, John Waters points out that the band emerged "from a place and a time—Ireland in the '70s—which was the product of a historical and evolutionary process," and thus, "they are as faithful a representation of that place and time as it is possible to conceive of" (121). In other words, the sociopolitical and philosophical context shaped U2's view of the world and its own identity from the start. Still the musical genesis of U2 cannot be detached, however, from "a desire to escape a place that they did not feel comfortable in, that prevented them from being themselves" (Cogan 64). Consequently, while much of the analysis of their songs claim that these are only a mere description of the terrible situation countries such as Ireland and the US were facing at that time, I am, however, encouraged to examine the sociopolitical significance of U2's songs as an observer and appreciator of their cultural contribution, showing that the events which formed the backdrop to some of U2's most explicitly political songs in the '80s—especially those included in *War* and *The Joshua Tree*—are etched indelibly into the text of both Ireland's and America's troubled colonial and political history. In fact, both countries have long been debatable lands, both literally and metaphorically, anomalous spaces open to multiple readings and conflicting interpretations, in which identity appears as adaptive and contestatory, continually reiterated, endlessly argued over. Therefore, as the lyrics here analysed deal with social and political struggles, they will also provide a good way of exploring how rock music, identity issues and political ideas combine.

4.3.2. *War* (1983)

After two albums that dealt with the band members' coming of age, as well as with family, religion and identity issues, U2 thought that their third album would rather be a document of the times.⁷⁵ Paramilitary activity and ceaseless killings in Northern Ireland, Israeli forces in Lebanon, the British-Argentinean conflict in the Falklands, the Christian-Moslem slaughter in the Middle East, revolutions and counterrevolutions against American corruption in Central America, and so on and so forth: in 1983, everything pointed towards war, everywhere. *War* was, therefore, the chosen title of a record which rallied the coldness of the 1980s, an era that had seen the increasing influence of right-wing governments, the worsening of East-West relations, the threat of nuclear destruction, and international terrorist acts becoming commonplace. Meanwhile, the four members of U2 (Bono, The Edge, Larry Mullen Jr. and Adam Clayton) had grown up in a country, Ireland, that had become more stable economically, but which was still extremely conservative. The underlying reality was, however, that the young people had begun to move on, and the seeds of a more tolerant and liberal society were beginning to take root. In the 1970s, when they reached adolescence, the country had grown culturally and changed dramatically, and the youth that were growing up to the sound of punk rock were also growing up with more knowledge of how close the world was to self-detonation and how much power rested in the hands of the few.

In those early days, U2 already avoided any classic formulas such as those adopted by many other rock bands, and sought instead a unique sound described by Bono as "atmosphere," "bigger," and "grand" (qtd. in Mattingly). In addition, as there was much unrest on TV and in the media, they focused the lyrical content more on these issues. This was made obvious in the album's first single, "New Year's Day." By then,

⁷⁵ See Appendix I, figure 15.

the U2 sound had become aggressive, more controlled and pointed. Still, the opening line is beautifully arresting, and what emerges in the first stanza is a haunting love song:

All is quiet on New Year's Day.

A world in white gets underway.

I want to be with you, be with you night and day.

Nothing changes on New Year's Day. (1-4)

However, it is the political backdrop which infused the song with a real sense of separation and longing that gives it its distinctive resonance:

Under a blood-red sky

A crowd has gathered in black and white

Arms entwined, the chosen few

The newspaper says, says

Say it's true, it's true...

And we can break through

Though torn in two

We can be one. (8-15)

Consequently, the song ended up connecting with the mood of the time in an unexpected way:

And so we are told this is the golden age

And gold is the reason for the wars we wage

Though I want to be with you

Be with you night and day

Nothing changes

On New Year's Day. (22-27)

The record's opening track is, however, the controversial "Sunday Bloody Sunday," the source of its title being in Ireland's blood-soaked history.⁷⁶ Yet, surprisingly as it may seem, in 1983 U2 found it hard to make audiences understand the political stance expressed in their songs because their views on the North were vastly different from those of either side.⁷⁷ This exemplifies that, as Jean-Jacques Nattiez notes, no matter how a song appears to those who made it ("poietics"), it is impossible to predict how it will translate aesthetically to each and every potential listener (11-14). However, by focusing on what is imminent in the music, we can perhaps hazard a guess at what was intended by its producers. Thus, while many analysis of the song, such as that of Barbara Bradby, claim that the song "is merely another attempt to impose unity at the level of ideology on the different cultural traditions" (114), I suggest that a song is never black nor white, and there are, in fact, many layers of meaning behind it. "Sunday

⁷⁶ There are two incidents called "Bloody Sunday" documented. The first occurred during the British-Irish War of Independence, when in 1920 English soldiers gunned down several people indiscriminately at a football match in Dublin's Croke Park. The second had been incorporated already into songs by both Paul McCartney and John Lennon, and was the January 1972 massacre of thirteen civilians by British troops in Northern Ireland.

⁷⁷ Knowing U2's members' backgrounds is a crucial aspect that could help explain the band's political views. In this sense, even their own religious mix might explain their open mindedness and a more conciliatory view of their country and of the situation in Northern Ireland.

Bloody Sunday" cannot thus be considered a partisan statement, but a militant pacifism which matches a martial drumbeat to a non-violent sentiment. Still, it does articulate the band's own sense of bewilderment at the Northern conflict: "I can't believe the news today / I can't close my eyes and make it go away / How long, how long must we sing this song?" (lines 1-3). The song was also an emotional response to what, from any perspective, was a terrifying political reality:

The trenches dug within our hearts,
And mothers, children, brothers, sisters
Torn apart.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Sunday, bloody Sunday. (18-22)

In this stanza, for example, all the pain and suffering and frustration come through palpably—an emotion that would prove universal. Next, the somewhat rhetorical question "How long, how long must we sing this song?" referring to how long must the situation go, is indeed a statement, and "[i]t's not even saying there's an answer" (Bono qtd. in Stokes *Into the Heart* 38). Similarly, the first appeal of the "We can be as one" line on the chorus is across the divisions of Irish society, to Catholics and Protestants, nationalists and loyalists, Northerners and Southerners, which shows that this is a protest song not against any one act of violence, but against that particular terrifying cycle of violence into which all of the protagonists in the Northern conflict were locked. In the next stanza, however, "we" is opposed to "they," who are now apparently "the starving millions":

And it's true we are immune

When fact is fiction and TV reality.

And today the millions cry

We eat and drink while tomorrow they die. (36-39)

Here, while the line "When fact is fiction and TV reality" clearly points to the numbing and corrupting effect of television on our minds, the ones that immediately follow expose a double meaning in our "eating and drinking": certainly, the band is linking what was happening in Northern Ireland back to the original Christian sacrifice and subsequent resurrection on Easter Sunday. This idea is further reinforced in the final stanza of the song, in which Bono sings that: "The real battle just begun / To claim the victory Jesus won / On Sunday, bloody Sunday" (lines 40-42). Much has been written about these lines, but I suggest that they are not an inducement to convert people to Christianity but an attempt to lift oppressed people up the way that the Bible says Jesus did. This impulse to lift people up is evident not just in the lyrics but also in Bono's cathartic, emotional vocal performance and in the musicians' restless, urgent playing. Therefore, we can conclude that, although later it would bring up its message beyond Irish-only connotations and into an international context, in the early '80s, "Sunday Bloody Sunday" effectively reflected the anger of so many Irish men and women at senseless brutal acts of violence, which articulated for a whole younger generation the terrible pointlessness of sectarian hatred and violence taking place in the country. In fact, given the international circumstances and the need for young people to have songs they could believe in, the official release of *War* on February 1983 saw U2's third record make Irish music history by dropping into the n°1 position on the British album charts. Nonetheless, the band was determined to continue the search for answers to the questions that had first animated it.

By the mid-80s, there was in Ireland an awareness of the need to look outwards, to learn from other cultures and other societies; there was also a growing rejection of repressive religious and political orthodoxies. In this context, U2 developed more and more, especially in their songwriting. Bono in particular had been reading the work of Paul Celan,⁷⁸ one of the major German-language poets of the post-World War II era and an intensely spiritual writer. Celan said in his "Meridian" speech that "Poetry is a sort of homecoming," something which any musician constantly away from home and on the move like Bono may resonate with.⁷⁹ Consequently, if Celan's influence on Bono's writing was already present in the lyrics of the record that followed *War* in 1985, *The Unforgettable Fire* (which includes a song explicitly titled "A Sort of Homecoming"), it was also obvious in the next one, *The Joshua Tree*. In this album, Bono's lyrics range from political and social issues, such as American imperialism, human rights violations, drug addiction and war, to more personal songs of love and bittersweet relationships between characters who feel lost and are eager for spiritual growth, struggling to remain faithful to their values and to their desire to fulfill their potential. Bill Graham and Caroline van Oosten de Boer point this out when describing the album as "concise and (...) politically specific (...) [Bono's] lyrics would become far less vague and he would start to write in narrative idioms (...) often harsh, daylight realities" (27-29). Therefore, in what follows, I will argue that U2's lyrics and imagery on this record not only reflected the alienation and striving of a whole generation—which was waking up to a new perspective about Irish identity, too—but also of those in a migrant or exilic situation who struggle to find their place in a given society.

⁷⁸ German-language Romanian-Jewish poet and translator.

⁷⁹ "The Meridian" was delivered on the occasion of Celan's receiving the Georg Büchner Prize, Darmstadt, on the 22 October 1960. See Paul Celan, "The Meridian," pp. 37-55.

4.3.3. *The Joshua Tree* (1987)

By 1987, rock music had been decimated by the MTV video age and the quick sell. Yet, on the contrary, with its gatefold monochromatic sleeve, complex music, impressive production and wealth of social and political perspectives, *The Joshua Tree* was specifically created as a "cinematic record," in which every song would conjure up a physical location.⁸⁰ The Edge outlined this in more detail as the search for "music that can actually evoke a landscape and a place, and can really bring you there" (King and O'Connor 00:26:40-00:26:47). As a result, *The Joshua Tree* is a highly contextualised album, with every song defined by a specific context. Thematically, the songs re-iterate a fair amount of the subject matter of previous albums, such as the mysteries of love and death and the paradoxes of the modern world. Still, there is the fact that this album was mainly inspired by the band's experience of America, both as a real place and as a "mythic" idea. In fact, U2 differed from other contemporary Irish rock bands in that it set its sights on America rather than Britain. Moreover, Bono was drawing from American musical and lyrical inspiration, and out of this involvement it was that he actually discovered his Irish identity. He said: "[U2] didn't really discover our Irishness until we travelled out of Ireland. And then you go to America and find yourself totally alienated by it" (Bono qtd. in Irwin 63). However, this Irish identity the band created would also be the result of a country, Ireland, undergoing deep socio-cultural changes. Thus, according to Waters:

⁸⁰ On the 17th March 1987 (that is, St Patrick's Day), *The Joshua Tree* hit the n°1 position in the British charts, making it the third U2 album to do so. Granted in Ireland and the UK, *The Joshua Tree* sold more copies in its early weeks of release than any other rock or pop album in history before, including those of The Beatles.

U2 came to hold a mirror up to their own generation because in many ways their experience was a kind of topsy-turvy version of the generality of their generation's experiences. They represented a mix of backgrounds and sensibilities which belies the conventional insistence that we are all the same. These Children of Limbo, born in the blank space between a thousand different versions of their country, grew up with a need to express dissent from everything we had taken from granted. (Waters *Race of Angels* 121)

Furthermore, after a visit to Africa, the singer would connect the images of the African desert to his ideas of America as a "political desert"—something that is embodied in the album's title and artwork, too.⁸¹ Thus, a certain sobriety pervades the sleeve photographs of the band, which were taken in Joshua Tree National Park (California). The photograph of the back cover highlights the prickly contours of one of the oldest types of American flora, the Joshua tree itself, a giant cactus and which has spiritual connotations: named by early Mormon settlers, it symbolised for them the struggle of Old Testament prophet Joshua, as he led the people of Israel into the Promised Land. In a similar way, U2 saw America as a sort of modern Promised Land, where thousands of Irishmen and women before them, since the Great Famine in the 19th century, had gone for better or for worse. For them, America also became the place where "Irishness" could be rediscovered, redeveloped, even reinvented from. In this regard, Bono thinks that:

It was never about where you come from, it's always about where you're going.
And people accept that beginning again is at the heart of the American dream.
The Irish came over from a death culture, of famine and of colonisation, which

⁸¹ See Appendix I, figure 16.

of course was emasculation. (...) They began a new life in America. (Bono qtd. in Assayas 65)

However, this desert location also reflects an emptiness, inviting (at least metaphorically) to re-evaluate one's life in terms of an empty or deserted reality. In fact, Gerry Smyth focuses in his book *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* on the band's "desert music," noting that the image of the American desert evoked by U2's music in this album becomes the link of U2's "American album" with Ireland, because "the image of the desert in American culture derives in large part from emigrant European sources, and more especially, from the response of Irish emigrants to American geography" (177-178). In that way, *The Joshua Tree* reveals a through-compositional songwriting method. "Through-composition" is a term used by Peter Mills to mean "how a collection of songs, or album, possesses a unity which runs more deeply than the fact of their being gathered together under one title. The connections may be musical or thematic or both" (*Hymns* 275). This is not the same, however, as "concept albums" where a narrative framework might be fixed in advance of completion or composition. In through-composition, it is the familiarity of certain connections between a group of songs that makes the songs feel as though they belong to each other. Therefore, in what follows, I will argue that various songs on *The Joshua Tree* deal, in one way or another, with the challenges of acculturation when in displacement and other similar issues of identity and hybridity, especially "Where the Streets Have No Name" and "Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For."

To begin with, "Where the Streets Have No Name" (the opening track) sounds like the sun coming up over the desert landscape; it is growing light and a slow awakening. Then, the lyrics plead for an escape as Bono, sounding restless and agitated, launches into confession:

I wanna run, I want to hide

I wanna tear down the walls

That hold me inside.

I wanna reach out

And touch the flame

Where the streets have no name. (1-6)

Certainly, the symbol is full of meaning: it refers to the place where the two sides of the country separate, but it is also where the two sides meet. Thus, the song creates, out of words and music, a big, open image of what the country could sound and feel like at its best. Moreover, as much as these lines capture the desperate need for anonymity that someone in Bono's position frequently feels ("run," "hide"), when he sings "I wanna tear down the walls that hold me inside," he also seeks to destroy barriers between human beings, which brings us to the subject of migrants, immigrants and refugees: people on the move, in a constant state of exile, all to find freedom, somewhere else. These lines also connect to the idea of what a "typical identity in migration" is or should be. According to Wolfgang Welsch, "every culture is supposed to mould the whole life of the people concerned and of its individuals" (195), but there are two main conflicts to this. On the one hand, while most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting and one home, a person who migrates adopts characteristics of that new culture, which combined with the old ones create a new hybrid identity. In this way, the symbolism of the streets without a name speaks directly to the part of a person that innately recognises it as a charged metaphoric space, because it can represent for them "a locality where realms touch, a liminal place, a place literally neither here nor there,

betwixt and between, where strong forces are met and decision are made" (Seiler 38). The song becomes next a seemingly desperate wish to get away from physical burdens and boundaries, and reach out for a simpler, more authentic and meaningful existence instead:

The city's a flood, and our love turns to rust.

We're beaten and blown by the wind

Trampled in dust.

I'll show you a place

High on a desert plain

Where the streets have no name. (20-25)

Normally, technical features associated with the blues have been used in rock to imply the authenticity of experience undergone by many artists, as it is in its association with such open spaces that the blues acquires one important strand of its authenticity.⁸² In this way, as Martin Stokes puts it, "migrants and refugees might identify with the popular genres produced by the dominant group [such as African American blues or gospel], especially if these have sentimental points of connection with an imagined rural world and uncorrupted moral order" (18). At the same time, through its production, music and lyrics, the song creates a sense of space, a metaphor for escaping from the industrialised, urban spaces. Curiously enough, that, in a way, connects the song to the American ballads of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which chimed with the

⁸² According to the musicologist Allan F. Moore: "The authentic is what we trust because it issues from integrity, sincerity, honesty. Intertextuality, however, foregrounds borrowing, the use of material from other sources. As such, it implies fakery and simulation" (*Primary* 199).

emotional needs of both immigrants and the dispossessed rural dwellers of newly urbanised America. As William H. A. Williams argues in his seminal study of American popular song lyrics:

For many Irish Americans, Ireland had become a mythical place, the Emerald Isle, an ideal within which various vaguely defined but deeply felt needs could be met. (...) A very different place, this imagined Ireland, from the gritty, crowded, multi-ethnic urban cities where most of Irish Americans lived. The Eden-like quality of this mythical Ireland of popular song was reinforced by the fact that this was a 'lost' land. Its beauties and joys, like the childhood of the singers, were gone, lost in time or inaccessible across the miles of the gray Atlantic. Thus, the Emerald Isle was drenched in nostalgic yearning for the unattainable. (Williams 230)

That way, while the song is rooted in U2's Irish identity,⁸³ we can make a link between the band's "authenticity" and the imagery of open spaces present in the lyrics.⁸⁴ I therefore suggest that in this particular song, the creation of a sense of space within which escape to a pre-modern communitarian ideal carries connotations of removal from cities and industrial areas, and hence, symbolises a nostalgic return to the

⁸³ The title, indeed, refers to certain areas and streets of Belfast where only by the street in which a house is located can one guess the religion and the social position of its inhabitants, sometimes literally by which side of the road they live on.

⁸⁴ Following Allan F. Moore, there are two types of authenticity in music: on the one hand, authenticity of execution arises when a performer succeeds in conveying the impression of accurately representing the ideas of another; on the other hand, authenticity of experience occurs when a performance succeeds in conveying the impression to a listener that that listener's experience of life is being validated, that the music is "telling it like it is" for them ("Analysing Rock" 7).

romanticised idea of life in the countryside, which, of course, is closely related to the concept of the Celtic ideal.⁸⁵

The motif of existential dissatisfaction established in "Where The Streets..." is further reinforced in "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," a song about uncertainty and doubt in which there is again a restless spirit at work—one which could never be satisfied with conventional or clichéd answers to the important questions that also provide the base from which great art is cast. Throughout, Bono's voice is again the primary instrument, yearning and hungry for what he has searched so hard for:

I have climbed the highest mountains

I have run through the fields

Only to be with you

Only to be with you.

I have run, I have crawled

I have scaled these city walls

⁸⁵ Throughout the nineteenth century, but particularly in post-famine Ireland, there was an increasing interest in the rural customs and stories of the Irish country people. This interest deeply intensified during the early years of the Irish Literary Revival. By placing the romanticised rural lifestyle at the heart of their enterprises, key Revival writers such as Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory and Hyde were participating in a complex cultural discourse motivated by crucial economic, social and political needs, as well as by pressing cultural concerns, far removed from the changing realities of rural life. They also established the terms of an argument that has affected virtually all subsequent Irish literature: from James Joyce to Patrick Kavanagh to Seamus Heaney, the glorification of the countryside has been a nearly endless intertextual regress in Irish literature, and a set of discourses of great relevance to popular understandings of Irish nationalism.

These city walls

Only to be with you. (1-8)

This time, the narrator goes off in search of something else, but he does not know what because he appears to be searching in the same old material world, mistakenly. Given that the lyrics are written in the first person definitely brands this as Bono's own search, and whatever he is searching and yearning for is clearly desperately personal. From the first chorus, however, more voices join in, softly singing with the same phrasing and the same timing as him, which might suggest that his unattainable goal is shared by countless others. In the musical aspect, the bass and drum combined keep a constant rhythm without ever changing tempo, reinforcing the meaning inferred from the lyrics that this song is about something that might never be definitively found. In fact, the lyrics could refer either to a search for spiritual enlightenment or a search for love, as Bono is singing about God and about a woman simultaneously, going from "I have kissed honey lips / Felt the healing in her fingertips" (lines 13-14), clearly evoking a lover, to "[You] carried the cross of my shame" (line 30), blending the sacred and the profane. Similarly, the line "I still haven't found what I'm looking for" is an expression of spiritual joy and disappointment, both at the same time. However, is it true that we can never find what we are looking for in life? Perhaps, it depends more on where and how we look than what we are actually looking for, or as William Blake wrote: "To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And Heaven in a Wild Flower / Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand / And Eternity in an hour" (490).

Furthermore, music critic Jon Pareles believes much of the song's power comes from the way Bono lingers on one word: "still." He explains that "[t]he genius of the chorus is in its first two words. There's the leap from 'I still' and 'haven't found.' That

'still' emphasized in the melody tells you he's been looking for a long time. It's a simple thing. But it's a profound thing" (Pareles qtd. in Blair). Either way, the yearning the lyrics describe is eternal—something is missing, so we despair:

I have spoke with the tongue of angels

I have held the hand of a devil

It was warm in the night

I was cold as a stone.

But I still haven't found

What I'm looking for. (17-22)

Thus, the song touches on a deep sense of longing and a desire for something that the present world cannot fully satisfy that most of us feel at some point in our lives. American Southern novelist Walker Percy, commenting on the search in his classic novel *The Moviegoer* (1961), touched similarly on this idea: "The search is what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life. To become aware of the possibility of the search is to be on to something. Not to be onto something is to be in despair" (13). In my view, this also relates to the peculiar condition of the transient and the state of restlessness that afflicts those whose migrant condition makes them uncertain of their own roots and their identity ("internal exile"). When in displacement, if "our identities are indeed hybrid," it becomes "increasingly difficult to describe something as entirely foreign or entirely our own" (Welsch 200). Consequently, this "state of exile" is to be neither in one place nor the other, but to be

"in-between": not only "'in-between' different nations, 'of, and not of' each place, feeling neither here nor there" (McLeod 247), but also in-between two different cultures, in-between two languages, in-between two visions of the world, in-between past and future. In addition, as McLeod defines it, "to be a migrant, or to be in a diasporic location, is to live without or beyond old notions of being 'at home' or securely 'in a place'. It is to embrace movement, motion and fragmentariness as key forms of existence and being" (244). It is actually this sort of conflated fulfillment that "I Still Haven't Found..." describes: a place that will make the searcher whole, and the love and understanding that he or she will find there.

It is clear, then, that in both these songs there is a sense of constant movement and travelling throughout, a shift of places that never quite become home. This sense of being of one place but feeling uprooted in many ways has come to characterise the Irish identity, because the ghost of emigration is still a wound that can never quite heal in the Irish psyche. Nonetheless, while the lyrics expose the inner conflicts that exiled people have to confront during the process of displacement, the protagonist's feelings of frustration and identity crises are feelings relatable to all immigrant and non-immigrant people alike. In this sense, the songs analysed above not only are connected to each other through the shared experience of displacement and acculturation, but also through the reminding that sometimes we must find a way to escape from the oppressive world around us to find our own voice and purpose, and thus, create our own identity where the streets nor the boundaries have no name.

On a different note, by the time they released *The Joshua Tree*, U2 had also developed an interest in international political issues. Thus, through the sensibility of its songs, they aimed to describe and show listeners the ugly face of apparently "perfect" or "exemplary" countries, such as the US, the UK, and even Ireland, too. In this way, *The*

Joshua Tree was not a mere celebration of American culture: it was also an exploration of some of the ugliest American by-products. Nowhere was this more evident than on the fourth track, "Bullet the Blue Sky." The song was initially inspired by Bono's visit to El Salvador in 1985. Upon his arrival, the singer was not only disturbed by the poverty and the violence that he was learning about, but also by the American economic blockade and the fact that the US Army was aiding and funding one of the sides as an attack on communism. It was this particular context that would shape the song, as Bono recalled, upon his return from El Salvador: "I described what I had been through, what I had seen, some of the stories of people I had met, and I said to The Edge: 'Could you put that through your amplifier?' I even got pictures and stuck them on the wall [of the studio]" (Bono qtd. in McCormick 179). The song was therefore inspired by a personal journey to a particular context and created to describe that specific context (a civil war in Central America), but Bono was also aiming to draw attention to the damage the US was doing in other countries (which most Americans probably did not know the extent of). Thus, the song howls with anger and fear from the very beginning:

In the howlin' wind

Comes a stingin' rain

See it drivin' nails

Into the souls on the tree of pain.

From the firefly

A red orange glow

See the face of fear

Runnin' scared in the valley below.

Bullet the blue sky.

In the locust wind

Comes a rattle and hum.

Jacob wrestled the angel

And the angel was overcome. (1-13)

These stanzas refer to the fact that in El Salvador, Bono was witness to the US government fighter planes flying overhead on a mission, and tried to render that sound and feeling. The musical result is impressive, as are the lyrics, notably the improvised spoken lines the singer came up with during the recording:

Suit and tie comes up to me

His face red like a rose on a thorn bush

Like all the colours of a royal flush

And he's peelin' off those dollar bills

Slappin' 'em down

One hundred, two hundred. (25-30)

As the song builds, the brutality of the lyrics possesses the playing. The guitar writhes and flares, while Bono murmurs like some hallucinating prophet:

And I can see those fighter planes

Across the tin huts as children sleep

Through the alleys of a quiet city street.

Up the staircase to the first floor

We turn the key and slowly unlock the door

As a man breathes into his saxophone

And through the walls you hear the city groan.

Outside, is America.

Outside, is America. (31-40)

In these lines, the burning crosses (like those of the Ku Klux Klan) are contrasted with the liberating sound of a saxophone breathing into the New York night—this is America, after all: land of paradoxes. Similarly, the singer criticises the country's thirst for war and political corruption:

You plant a demon seed

You raise a flower of fire.

We see them burnin' crosses

See the flames, higher and higher. (17-20)

At this point, the music screams tension as various guitars resound in chaos behind the lyrics' stark images like, for example, that of raising "a flower of fire," which means that everything beautiful and everything dangerously repulsive about the world are rolled into one in America—this is, in fact, what the song is about. Lyrically, the singer had never painted a picture so penetrating: the burning crosses of the Ku Klux Klan, the gambling men, the pseudo-morality of corrupted America... All these elements run together as the song climaxes with Bono recalling again his trip to El Salvador:

See across the field

See the sky ripped open

See the rain comin' through the gapin' wound

Howlin' the women and children

Who run... who run... (42-46)

Finally, the music stops dead, and in a deliberately American accent, Bono speaks the chilling words: "into the arms of America." We can conclude, therefore, that "Bullet The Blue Sky" is a really strong statement against nationalism and militarism, lyrically connected to a deeply conservative and anti-liberal period of time in the USA and the UK particularly. However, when bringing back a song from the past, performers may modify and update the song somehow so that it continues to speak to the audience, and as Gracyk notes, "[w]eak iterability encourages the performer to recast the song to bring out its relevance in a specific context and a specific audience. In contrast, strong iterability simply delivers the same text, highlighting its increasingly random juxtaposition with all other texts" (57). In this way, U2 has continued to play the song live over the years, tailoring its original political message to new additional struggles

such as consumerism, gun control or the refugee crisis in Europe, thus proving that, while wars might end and new conflicts begin, a song like "Bullet the Blue Sky" should and will still be played.

4.3.4. Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, it becomes clear that U2's lyrics can be interpreted in multiple and equally valid ways. Most of all, however, songs like those explored above were originally aimed to give people back a sense of values, as well as remind them they can rage against the world—at least artistically—if this is not what they wanted it to be, in a unique artistic marriage of "critical consciousness and action for social justice and change" (Livergood 2005). This idea of U2 "holding up a mirror" to their generation is equivalent to James Joyce asking the Dublin of his time to look at itself on his "nicely-polished looking glass" ("Letter" 90). In that way, their songs were socially relevant. That is why songs like those included in both *War* and *The Joshua Tree* can actually be considered protest songs which have not lost their power and meaning, nor their relevance, over the past decades, as they fit into this era as much as they did more than three decades ago, and can still be reinvented for different causes. Ultimately, the analysis of such songs has provided us an outline of the band's sociopolitical ideology, which was, in turn, fulfilled by a sometimes "controversial" activism (especially that of Bono). However, this analysis has shown that if U2 was ever defined as an "activist band" was not really (or only) due to the personal political commitment of its members, but to the lyrical output in their songs, which provided a way for their audience to get acquainted with sociopolitical issues. That way, U2 did an excellent job at finding a balance to interpret life, identity and politics through songs, and in these terms alone, their place in music history—Irish and elsewhere's—is assured.

4.4. Chapter Conclusions

This analysis has aimed to show that rock music has held a certain socio-political meaning, whether on a collective or individual basis, among those Irish performers who would use the genre as a springboard for politics, humanism and/or social consciousness. As a consequence, these songs have been meaningful and relatable to many people on a deeper personal level. For instance, for Irish youth growing up in the 1980s, rock and punk became the primary mode of meaning-making for them over more traditional sources such as school, parents and church. Thus, bands so different, from Stiff Little Fingers to Boomtown Rats to U2, touched and connected with their audience through their music and artistic passion, but if there was a truth in them that could be found anywhere, it was in their lyrics. Ultimately, the artists here included (like many others who followed) have given each their generation, in their own different ways, songs which have also inspired and created a framework for raising people's consciousness when it came to society, Irish and worldwide. In other words, these songs opened people up politically with their lyrics and creatively with their music, at the same time.

Interestingly enough, the present times do not feel too different to when all the songs above were created. We are in a period of tumult: protest, helplessness, reality. Our society has been turned upside down. For many decades now, rock has been a chronicle of bravery, celebrating and holding up those who chose to assert themselves through music and art. It just tells us to think, to shift, to act. However, it certainly takes an unrivalled bravery to formulate a public facing expression of helplessness, of reality, of escape, and this in particular is something to take note of when feeling the strains of the political climate. Finally, I do not see any such songs as a rarefied thing but as being involved with the world, especially because rock has always been about making sense

of the everyday, examining the soiled underside of things, the mess of life, seeing, understanding it at an odd angle, and putting words and music to it all.

5. The Cultural and Artistic Impact of Women in Irish Rock Music

5.1.1. Introduction

As we noted in the previous chapter, the way Ireland was seen internationally changed with the success of U2 in the 1980s, as they placed Ireland "in the window of the world" (Esquivel). Consequently, in the economic boom years of the "Celtic Tiger" (that is, the explosive growth during the 1980s and 1990s), and after the triumphs of the political peace process and the boost of creative confidence, Irish music gained more audibility and visibility in both Ireland and the rest of the world. At the same time, while clubbing and the singer-songwriter genre succeeded worldwide, rock music was still thriving in Ireland. But there was still one missing piece to the Irish rock scene: female rock-stars. Although in the 1960s and the 1970s Ireland had a tradition of strong female singers on the folk and blues scene particularly,⁸⁶ for the most part they were only interpreters, singing songs written by others or those that were part of the canon. Moreover, given the role that music critics played in elevating the artistic status of rock and/or popular music (Regev), in sustaining nascent musical careers (Brennan), and in determining which musicians achieved longstanding reputation within the field (Schmutz), the gender stereotypes that circulated in their discourse de-legitimated female musicians.⁸⁷ Most of these issues slowly started to change in Ireland, however,

⁸⁶ Like Mary Black, Moya Ní Bhraonáin, Maura O'Connell and Dolores Keane, among others.

⁸⁷ In fact, the discourse used to praise or disparage popular music has been implicitly gendered, with the music of female musicians, whatever the genre, more often pejoratively described as "vapid," "unoriginal" or "sentimental" (McLeod 93-113).

when Sinéad O'Connor and Dolores O'Riordan started using rock to confront male domination in Irish music—and in the country itself.

The aim of this chapter is, therefore, straightforward: to examine the unique contribution of O'Connor and O'Riordan to Irish rock and to popular music in general, in an attempt to understand them in new ways through a feminist critique of the role of Irish women as artists, social commentators and leaders. In order to do this, I will analyse their songwriting and performance practices in various contexts, especially within a conservative, Catholic matrix and a deeply-held personal belief system. My selection of songs will give a taste of the varied spectrum, from women's declarations of outrage against church and national conflict to their celebrations of female independence, love and motherhood. Still, to appreciate fully both the nature and the force of Sinéad O'Connor's and Dolores O'Riordan's impact upon Irish musical and cultural discourse, it is necessary to consider first the ways in which women traditionally figured in that same discourse.

5.1.2. The Position of Women in Irish Popular Music: Recent History

To begin with, it is important to acknowledge the fact that Irish popular music emerged in a society that was deeply conservative with regard to traditional gender roles. As Gerry Smyth notes,

island culture was predicated on a core male/female binary division and its many stereotypical connotations: public, active, intellectual / private, passive, body-oriented. Such a division was indeed famously inscribed in the southern Constitution of 1937, in which document Irish women were encouraged to

embrace their "natural" roles as child-bearers and housewives.⁸⁸ (*Noisy Island* 104)

The feminine ideal encoded within the Constitution was enormously influential on life in the Irish Republic in the ensuing decades (Nash 1996, 1997). Despite the advent of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, that ideal (constructed from a combination of orthodox Catholicism and bourgeois nationalism) represented the "reality": the ideal setting for the ideal woman was the house, and as wife, mother and home-maker, she was the rock upon which the family (and hence the state and "the common good") was built. Attempting to step outside that domestic domain—for purposes of salaried work, education or public life, for example—was, at best, "unusual," and at worst, an assault upon the "natural order of things" (Daly 1997; Harford 2008). This meant that the scope for female engagement with any aspect of popular culture was extremely limited in Ireland. This was not only related to the fact that "[women] had different leisure opportunities from those of young men and more domestic commitments, and often lacked the access, encouragement, and freedom to indulge in a world of music-making" (Bennet 202), but also, "women and domesticity were associated with convention," claimed Sara Cohen, "and thus seen to threaten men's creativity and independence" (221). Indeed, gender stereotypes have always played a role in the multiple mechanisms

⁸⁸ The relevant clauses from *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (Constitution of Ireland) runs: "(1.1) The State recognises the family as the natural primary and fundamental unit of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, anterior and superior to all positive... (2.1) In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved (2.2) The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home. (3.1) The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack." See "Constitution and Education."

that contribute to female disadvantage in all arts in general and the popular music field in particular (O'Dair *Stars* 245-53).

Moreover, while Irish women had been key planners and participants in the cultural and political revolutions that swept through Ireland in the period from 1884 until 1923, they were mostly out of public and political life during the first fifty years of Irish independence. By the 1970s, however, the women's movement, economic progress, educational opportunities, and the impact of British and American popular culture (dispersed mainly through TV) coalesced to change the lives of women in Ireland, including women music makers.⁸⁹ Yet, as Brendan Kennelly points out, "[t]he history, or herstory, of Irish women is rather like that of the Irish language—much talked about but little heard" (*Ireland's Women* xxi). In this way, the idea of female musicians was more or less totally unknown during the 1950s and early 1960s, and they remained extremely rare on the showband scene throughout the '60s and '70s, with their role being based around the provision of "glamour" rather than of any peculiar musical effect or element. Women singers became more common on the folk and blues scene of the '60s and the '70s, but the material they sang more or less exclusively concerned fulfilling themselves through marriage and children. Thus, most of these women were, indeed, projecting fairly traditional images of Irish womanhood. The same cannot be said of the rock scene, in which the major figures in its development all articulated strongly male-centred perspectives, in a variety of forms. As Gerry Smyth says:

⁸⁹ From the 1960s, the worldwide movement querying the position of women began to make itself felt in Ireland too. In 1972, for example, the Commission on the Status of Women presented a report tackling the stereotyping of women's roles in Ireland, discrimination in employment, inequities in taxation and pension schemes, and so on (Fanning and McNamara 2003).

The mystic soul music of Van Morrison, Rory Gallagher's bluesman persona, Lynott's bifurcated rocker-romantic, the evolving hero of the U2 canon—all these depended to a greater or a lesser extent upon that traditional model of gender relations (...) in which male desire is predicated upon a range of stereotypical female characteristics and attributes. (*Noisy Island* 105)

At the same time, women artists in particular would be forced into established stereotypes which are defined in conjunction with male "needs," namely those of good-time girl, lover, mother and goddess. Finally, from the songs' protagonists to intended consumers, from label producers to road managers, "Irish popular music was—as elsewhere—almost exclusively a male domain" (Smyth *Noisy Island* 105), and as a rule, women artists had to work harder and perform better to prove themselves in an industry geared towards either their exclusion or their exploitation.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, independent-minded, artistically-autonomous women began infiltrating the rock and popular music scenes as the social and economic forces that had worked to diminish the role of women in the music business throughout several decades started weakening. The first cracks in the male monopoly of Irish rock began to appear during and after punk's somewhat belated impact upon the Irish scene. All-female band The Boy Scoutz appeared in 1977, and although they left no recordings for posterity, their importance lay as much in what they represented as in what they sounded like, because punk music and iconography has been used by women to question the stereotypes which have previously confined their images and their interests. Nonetheless, despite the widening opportunities created by the appearance of a range of commercially successful female artists, most notably in the UK (such as Chrissie Hynde, Kate Bush and Annie Lennox) and the US (namely Joan Jett, Patti Smith, Debbie Harry and Pat Benatar), the immediate post-punk era failed to

produce a credible Irish female rock music figure, even though there were now a greater variety of images of femininity available to them. In fact, in the 1980s and the 1990s, more and more female artists appeared at clubs and festivals as women started to reclaim their rightful place in the rock spotlight. Consequently, the field of popular music, and of rock culture in particular, took a sudden interest in female subjectivity and began to regard women as the ultimate outsiders. As "the exception," women musicians started to be treated with a little bit more respect in British and Irish music magazines such as *New Musical Express* or *Hot Press*—still, they were often dealt with in the gossip column on the back page as the wives or girlfriends of male rock figures.⁹⁰ Indeed, the persistence of such stereotypes were nowhere more evident than in the discourse of music critics who would reinforce the male domination of the music industry by giving less attention to female performers (Faupel and Schmutz 21-22), overlooking the female audience's experiences and interests (Faupel and Schmutz 22; O'Dair *Stars* 245-53), and by reinforcing gender stereotypes in their discourse, where women artists were largely ignored and excluded from (McLeod 93-113). As a consequence, the same period witnessed—for most part in the US—the emergence of an underground phenomenon known as "Riot Grrrl," a subcultural affiliation of young women playing a style of music that took its sonic references from punk rock and its ideological references from a form of "radical" second wave feminism (Kearney 207-29; Miles 52). "Riot Grrrl" was, therefore, an important and influential response to the continued male hegemony of the music industry and business, a cultural movement that should be approached a chapter of an ever-evolving history of gender relations in life and art.

⁹⁰ Also, female rock singers and performers were becoming more visible at the time thanks to the MTV (especially American rockstars such as Joan Jett, Hole's Courtney Love and No Doubt's Gwen Stefani).

In fact, the very existence of all the artists above was made possible by feminism. However, of all the many factors which informed women's engagement with rock music, one was quite clearly the politics of a cultural form that throughout its history had (with a few notable exceptions) systematically deferred to a range of received, stereotypical gender identities.⁹¹ Thus, for many women, rock was a source of gender rebellion, as it offered girls and women a vision of power that was capable of bringing the possibility of change to established cultural and societal attitudes revolving around music, sexuality and politics. Girls attraction to rock had initially a lot to do with gender transgression, but increasingly, this rebellious spirit was reflected in the music itself too. Still, many brilliant women artists would not get to make a career in music because of issues such as the socio-cultural context where they were living in, because they would not be allowed to take risks in the careers, and similar other factors that would often silenced up their voices. As Gillian Gaar notes:

Women in all areas of the music industry have consistently faced opposition from both the outside world and the music industry itself as they have questioned and challenged assumptions regarding a woman's "proper" position in the industry. (Gaar 435)

Furthermore, women have been sung and written about, but they have not always been portrayed in a complimentary way. For instance, when female artists did receive media attention, they would be more likely to have their physical appearance or personal relationships discussed (Johnson-Grau). Such limited opportunities for women used to

⁹¹ The subject of women's relation to, and representation in, popular music has exploded in recent years, but for extended treatments see, for example: Bayton (1999); Burns and Lafranc (2001); Evans (1994); O'Dair (1999); Raphael (1995); Reynolds and Press (1995); and Whiteley (1997, 2000).

be—and often still are—the result of broad generalisations about women and men regarding which characteristics and activities are appropriate to engage in.

On a different note, however, the ancient mythology of Ireland features many powerful, aggressive women who "take the sexual initiative, run the show and dictate the fun. These are strong pagan women" (Kennelly *Ireland's Women* xxi). Such strong Irish women have sometimes been female artists who, still victims of men's language and criticism and "the clever, often unconscious tyrannies and urbane manipulations effectively implanted in its uses" (Kennelly *Ireland's Women* xxi), started creating their own songs, a proper vehicle for their feelings and ideas, singing with passion and conviction from their own perspective. Back then, however, there was little in the way of direct engagement with the real condition of contemporary femininity, Irish or otherwise. In spite of so many obstacles, women's involvement in music has always helped them to not only find their own voices as entertainers, but to also find how to use their voices as a force for creating positive social and political change, because, while such changes are particularly meaningful for women, they also benefit society as a whole. In this regard, two of the most independently-minded women to emerge during the 1980s in Ireland were Cait O'Riordan (bass player and occasional singer with The Pogues), and Galway-based blues singer Mary Coughlan. Indeed, Coughlan's debut album, *Tired and Emotional* (1985), made play with generic and personal boundaries. Espousing strong feminist views at a time when more and more Irish women were joining the fight for rights, Coughlan sang a form of "Irish blues," a genre adopted to suit her own circumstances and experiences.⁹² Thus, taking the careers of O'Riordan and Coughlan together, we see how they forged the path to probably the two most important

⁹² Coughlan's music paved the way for future interventions that would also draw on the blurring of textual and autobiographical discourses.

female figures to ever emerge from the Irish rock music scene: Sinéad O'Connor and Dolores O'Riordan.

5.1.3. Case 1: Sinéad O'Connor

Arriving in the latter half of the 1980s, Sinéad O'Connor was the first female artist not only to indisputably and definitively break through the musical glass ceiling in Ireland—the stereotyped view of what a female Irish singer should sound like, that is, all fiddles and reverb—but also to create the blueprint in the rock context, which provided women "with a space in which to play with the discursive connotations of the genre, and with their own "meaning" in relation both to the music and to the society from which the music emerged" (Smyth *Noisy Island* 125). Consequently, her music, as remarked above, did not conform in either its recording practices or its performance values to established discourses of Irish womanhood.

In musical terms, on the one hand, she deliberately mixed traditional "feminine" qualities—such as melody, the sweetness of voice and an extraordinary purity of tone—with what used to be considered "unfeminine" associations at that time—for example, the uncompromising power encoded into early tracks such as "Mandinka," or the assertive sexuality of "I Want (Your Hands on Me)." On the other hand, on tracks such as "I Am Stretched on Your Grave" and "You Have Made Me the Thief of Your Heart," she blended traditional notions of femininity with different music styles possessed of different gender imagery. In fact, right from the beginning of her career, O'Connor fostered a close identification between her personal image and the music she made. Her look, fragile and impressive at the same time, became an extension of her identity, yet she has also lived up to her image as an outspoken and aggressive protagonist. Thus, O'Connor has always been a woman full of contradictions, but they are indeed her strength, for in her resolutions of those the spirit of her art lies. Added to this has been

her public criticism of the role and representation of women in Irish society and her willingness to engage in public controversy, especially with regard to religion and politics. In this way, she would explain that "[God] gave my voice, and I have to use my voice in every way, not just singing. (...) I've only ever had one thing to say, and I've created the circumstances where I can say it" (O'Connor qtd. in Reynolds and Press 252). However, what really marks Sinéad O'Connor out as a significant artist has been her consistent attempts to incorporate these issues into the main body of her work, once again, exploding many of the dominant myths of Irish womanhood.

At the same time, female songwriters were also breaking through in other popular music genres at the end of the '80s and the beginning of the '90s, notably including Enya, whose *Watermark* album was an international bestseller in 1988, as well as Eleanor McEvoy, around whose original song "A Woman's Heart" a hugely successful album was created in 1992.⁹³ Still, there were very few precedents for what Dolores O'Riordan was about to do, only a few years later: to be a woman fronting a rock band, who just happens to be the primary songwriter, too.

5.1.4. Case 2: Dolores O'Riordan

Hot Press editor Niall Stokes notes that The Cranberries' frontwoman, Dolores O'Riordan, "went on to scale extraordinary heights by offering Ireland another role model: that there was no need for anyone to argue or apologise. Far from it. Irish women were more than capable of doing it for themselves." She actually did it, just like

⁹³ The album *A Woman's Heart* compiles twelve tracks performed by six female Irish artists: Eleanor McEvoy, Mary Black, Dolores Keane, Sharon Shannon, Frances Black, and Maura O'Connell. Originally launched in 1992, this album has since gone on to become one of the biggest selling traditional albums of all time on the Irish music market. More importantly, it generated much debate over the role and representation of women in contemporary Ireland, especially within the music industry.

Sinéad O'Connor before her, and in doing so, they both helped to break down many barriers that had, until then, restricted women artists in Ireland. To describe that as a vital contribution to Ireland and Irish music in particular is to understate it, because for ambitious female musicians all over Ireland, this truly was a vindication. As writer and RTÉ broadcaster Sinead Crowley tells:

[O'Riordan's] success, alongside that of Sinead O'Connor's, really mattered to me. I was a big fan of Irish rock music, but when I started going to gigs in the late 1980s almost all of the musicians people talked about were male. It was just how things were, boys joined bands and girls went to see them. (...) It's only now I realise how astute my friend's older brother was when he shut down one such conversation with the observation that the 'next U2' would most likely be Sinéad O'Connor. A couple of years later the only real challenger to her title, and indeed U2's, were The Cranberries themselves.

Certainly, the fact that Dolores O'Riordan was fronting an otherwise all-male band, singing songs that came straight from her heart and mind, which were hailed across the world and played constantly on the radio, was exactly the kind of inspiration that younger Irish female musicians were in need of back then. That is one of the reasons why it is important to highlight the fact that, even though the strength of her voice could almost overshadow her compositional skills, O'Riordan actually wrote all the lyrics, and together with Cranberries' guitarist Noel Hogan, the music as well. Still, she would complain:

In the band (...) I write the lyrics and structures, but most journalists in Ireland seem to get it wrong when they comment on that, so people think I write the

words and the band writes the music. That's not how it is. (O'Riordan qtd. in Clark "Remembering")

There seems, indeed, to be something extraordinary and very unique about the way she approached the whole process: in interviews, O'Riordan came as open, straight-forward and honest, and apparently, she approached the task of lyric writing in the same way, because, as far as she was concerned, that lack of artifice really was a strength (the songs' massive success worldwide would only prove her right).

5.1.5. The "Confessional Songwriting" Myth

At the same time, the "confessional songwriting" approach to songwriting in rock was undergoing a revival in the mid-1990s, especially among female songwriters,⁹⁴ who began to share with fans their social and political views, and even intimate aspects of their personal lives, through songs, while their visibility kept growing. In doing so, they were expanding on an already rich history of women as confessional writers and performers, proving that they had the confidence to reveal themselves in life as well as art. In this regard, Dolores O'Riordan commented that, "I have a tendency to write about negative things. (...) I'm just more inspired when I'm negative" (qtd. in Bailie 52). In fact, her work with The Cranberries is described as "an archaeology of self-knowledge" in which she seems to "excavate through the strata to uncover the primal wound that compels her to be an artist" (Reynolds and Press 257). However, why is "confessional songwriting," more often than not, relegated almost exclusively to female artists? For example, this term has been attached to Joni Mitchell since she began making music in the 1960s. She however explained that:

⁹⁴ In the 1990s, artists such as PJ Harvey, Alanis Morissette, Fiona Apple, Tori Amos and Björk, among others, were all considered "confessional female singer-songwriters."

When I think of confession, two things come to mind. (...) Confession is somebody trying to beat something out of you externally. You're imprisoned. You're captured. They're trying to get you to admit something. To humiliate and degrade yourself and put yourself in a bad position. Then there's the voluntary confession of Catholicism, where you go to this window, and you talk to this priest (...) That's the only two kinds of confession I know—voluntary and under duress—and I am not confessing. (Mitchell qtd. in Pollard)

We might wonder how a term that in any other context, be it legal or religious, is imbued with a sense of guilt and shame, has been attached to most female artists in her wake, and not just in music, but in literature as well. In fact, in a similar way to songwriting, the confessional poetry of the mid-twentieth century is known as "the poetry of the personal or 'I,'" since it addresses "private experiences with and feelings about death, trauma, depression and relationships, often in an autobiographical manner" (see "A Brief Guide to Confessional Poetry").⁹⁵ However, when poets such as Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton began writing poetry that turned the personal into the political, some male critics were shocked and reacted to their works with a sort of wounded revulsion.⁹⁶ Thus, the term seems to presuppose—in a sexist way—the idea that women lack the imagination to write about anything other than their exact literal lives. Yet, it is true that women have traditionally operated within a private, domestic sphere, and as

⁹⁵ This style of writing emerged in America in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

⁹⁶ "I feel that I have, without right or desire, been made a third party to her conversations with her psychiatrist. It is painful, embarrassing and irritating," wrote the reviewer Charles Gullans of Sexton's 1966 collection *Live or Die*. He also said that "[t]he personal character of the confessional detail is embarrassing, and the tone of hysterical melodrama which pervades most of the writing is finally irritating" (Gullans qtd. in Pollard).

such, they have had to work harder to externalise their thoughts and to prove them worthy of public consumption. As Camille Fantasia points out:

Historically confined to the domestic sphere of life, there still remains the misconception that women aren't qualified to make statements about society or the state of affairs. (...) But even that narrow of a critique of cisheteronormative patriarchy is problematic, (...) the underlying presumption being that success and ambition are interchangeable and the foundation for what we define as success still being established by patriarchal values.

The subtlety of the word "confessional" is, indeed, important, because what it undermines is not inherently anything, but it is the word's patriarchal conditioning that has us seeing it as negative. Therefore, the issue is not with the word itself, but the way it has been used by (mostly male) critics and writers to categorise female artists and make assumptions about both their goals and works. On the other side, it is not only feminists who have been concerned with questions of "authenticity" and "naturalness." The roots of this discourse go back to the nineteenth century in art. Then, in the post-war period, beat musicians pursued authenticity (Frith and Horne 1987) and hippies valued "naturalness," while punks promoted attacked conventional notions of sexuality. However, as Mavis Bayton points out, unlike beat poets, hippies and male rockers and punks, "feminists were directly and explicitly attacking dominant gender ideology" (183). Still, at this point we should also acknowledge the fact that the myth of confessional songwriting or poetry as "the truth," pure and unmediated, is, of course, just that: myth. Confession is just a narrative, for even in our most private journals, we always interpret, select, and frame our lives like a painting. In fact, the confessional poets were not merely recording their emotions on paper, as craft and reconstruction

were extremely important to their work (see "A Brief Guide to Confessional Poetry"). Nonetheless, writer Jacqueline Rose does claim that:

Writing may be a revelation of character, it may even be a form of madness, but for the one who writes, it can equally be a way of staying sane. (...) It is a truism to say that writing something very nasty can be a way of keeping nice. (4)

Moreover, "confessional" singers and songwriters like Sinéad O'Connor and Dolores O'Riordan, as Reynolds and Press note,

build a burning bridge between rock's roots in the testifying traditions of gospel and blues and contemporary self-realisation discourse, with its notions of opening-u, getting in touch with your anger, "owning" your negative feelings. (266)

Therefore, although the concept of confession may be all muddied up with guilt and sin, it also implies a freedom and wholeness unto oneself that becomes universal. Joni Mitchell, Sinéad O'Connor, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton or Dolores O'Riordan were all women who accessed the universal through art from their own subjective experience, and there is definitely an element of release and of freedom in that.

On the other hand, Antoine Henionn claims that "[i]t isn't the song which must give the singer personality but the singer who must give personality to the song" (201). Without risk there is no creation, and in this aspect, both O'Connor and O'Riordan are considered versatile, dominant singers and brilliant performers, as well, with an immaculate power to turn basic, sad words into life-changing creations—especially when their voices give expression to their ever intense emotional life. This might be due to the fact that, as Paul Zumthor states,

voice constitutes an archetypal form in the human unconscious: a primordial and creative image, both an energy and a configuration of features that predetermine, activate and structure our first experiences, feelings and thoughts [because] [t]he image of voice reaches deep into a region of lived experience. Such a link may intimate a latent understanding in the language of the primordial nature of the human voice itself (...) as an incentive or catalyst in transmission and performance. (Zumthor 5-6)

At the same time, they resisted the notion that women should sing quieter, gentler music which is based on the sexist stereotype of conventional femininity. In this way, both singers were also able to produce a "natural fierceness" that can be occasionally heard in the angularity and robust intonation of their voices by a slight hoarseness that hints faintly at inner anger, which has its roots in traditional *séan-nos* or unaccompanied singing. Indeed, O'Riordan's voice, like O'Connor's, was some way removed from most contemporary popular Irish female singers who tend to perform their material with reference only to a more or less universal, international singing style,⁹⁷ yet their round tones and nuanced yodels bespoke Irish tradition instead. Therefore, I will next argue that these two singers can in fact be linked as examples of a distinctive "Irish female rock singing style," one that has its roots in earlier cultural traditions and strains of ancient Irish practices, such as *sean-nós* and keening.

⁹⁷ "The rock aesthetic is fundamentally a mass art aesthetic: its products are created for mass distribution, the musicians themselves rely on mass art for their models, and the audience understands these products in light of other mass art" (Gracyk *I Wanna* 30).

5.1.6. Female Vocal Technique in Irish Rock

As we have previously argued, when exploring Irish rock music, we find singers who use vocal techniques reminiscent of keening.⁹⁸ One such performer is Sinéad O'Connor, who constantly manipulates her voice to produce a stark, hard quality, using emphasis on consonants and the glottal stop for dramatic effect. In fact, her voice has been described as a "Banshee wail" by many music writers, referring to the singer's ability to *crescendo* from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* in a very short space of time.⁹⁹ This definitely has a certain aspect of keening, with the voice wailing in an ululating cry, reminiscent of the Irish ghoul. When performing the song "I Am Stretched On Your Grave," for example, her vocal qualities reveal distinct elements of the keen such as the voiced inhalation or gasp of breath, the harsh nasal tone and the creaky voice (see McCoy). Of course, O'Connor is also aided by studio techniques, still the effect is originally grounded in tradition.

Furthermore, Dolores O'Riordan is the other artist whose voice also had characteristics similar to those found in keening. O'Riordan's unique sound had, indeed, a hallmark cry break and nasal tone which is aptly demonstrated in tracks such as "So Cold in Ireland" and "Zombie." In this latter one, for example, her vocal quality serves as the perfect tool to convey her anger and sorrow at the senseless loss of lives, like old keeners would do. At the same time, her strong Irish accent, which could be heard straight away, became a sign of artistic self-confidence that really distinguished her

⁹⁸ "Keening" is an Irish word normally used to describe the lament that women would do over the body of a deceased person to ward off evil spirits.

⁹⁹ *Banshee* means "faerie woman." A Banshee is known in Ireland as a female spirit who wails outside a home to warn of an imminent death in a family. Her chilling, high pitched, long and melancholy scream is also called *caoine*, which is the Irish word for "keening."

throughout her career, as her native accent never drifted into a mid-Atlantic, dislocated and anonymous twang. Finally, like the practitioners of Irish folk songs, especially those who sang in the old unaccompanied style or *séan-nos* way, she also would use ornamentation in her singing, such as swooping around an important word, hitting a series of related notes, or jumping up an octave in mid-syllable (a technique known as *melisma*, which Sinéad O'Connor has also used).

Ultimately, the singing style of both Dolores O'Riordan and Sinéad O'Connor incorporated local traditional factors along a range of more modern influences at large in the soundscape, all unconsciously adapted to suit their own physiological capabilities. This is, indeed, another reason why they used to be constantly compared to each other as vocalists. However, music critics often missed the fact that, as we have argued, they were not copying from each other, but actually getting their ideas from the same sources.

5.2. "The Phoenix from The Flame": Sinéad O'Connor as an Example of an Uncompromisingly Transgressive Irish Female Artist

5.2.1. Introduction

A fire has always burnt inside rock singer, composer and musician Sinéad O'Connor that is fuelled by her emotions, her experiences and her art.¹⁰⁰ That is why she has been described as "an enigmatic Irish genius" who is "riddled and blessed by the contradictions of her appearance and style, her life and the life of her own people, the

¹⁰⁰ See Appendix I, figure 17.

Irish" (Hayes 5). Born in Dublin in 1966, she grew up in a troubled, abusive household, and she would thus see music as a kind of refuge, and a focus for her own individual creative energies: "It wasn't that I wanted to be a singer," she said in *Rolling Stone*, "it was just that I could actually express the pain that I felt with my voice" (O'Connor qtd. in Hayes 61).¹⁰¹ Still, an understanding of a strong Irish Catholic upbringing and of the powerful forces that informed her life and education first, and her music career then, is imperative to understanding Sinéad O'Connor as an artist.

According to Dermott Hayes, she left school for Dublin's music scene at fifteen, putting behind a troubled, abusive childhood. Before that, her education had been largely conducted by religious orders, and once an adult, she lashed out at the repressive guilt-ridden regime that pervaded a convent education, particularly for girls: "The religion there (in Ireland) is riddled with hypocrisy. Illegitimacy is still so shameful and lots of country girls go through agonies of guilt because they're not allowed contraception or abortion" (O'Connor qtd. in Hayes 12). Therefore, themes of abuse and victimization (both social and interpersonal) lie at the heart of her artistic message, frequently interwoven with commentary about Ireland and the Catholic Church. Notwithstanding the obvious myth-making potential of such controversies, O'Connor's attack on the Church, together with her revelations of child abuse, abortion and her parents' divorce, served to illuminate aspects of Irish society often rendered invisible in official accounts of the country. Since then, she has always been proud to have such a

¹⁰¹ She further explained: "I think that's how music helped me. I also think that's why it's the most powerful medium: because it expresses for other people feelings that they can't express but that need to be expressed. If you don't express those feelings—whether you're aggressive or loving or whatever—they will blow you up one day" (O'Connor qtd. in Hayes 61).

confrontational, nonconformist image, which has led interviewers and music journalists to discuss her personal life, lyrics and politics in more or less detail.

5.2.1.1. Image and Gender Identity

However, not only did Sinéad O'Connor think and sound different from any other singer, but she also looked like no other female artist ever had before. In fact, at the beginning of her career, her label wanted her to dress in short skirts and grow her hair long in order to market her sexuality, but she told them that "I didn't want to sell myself on my physicality" (O'Connor qtd. in Wawzenek). She further explained to *Melody Maker*:

These people from a record company were telling me how to look more feminine, giving me all this advice. [But] I just thought, 'Fuck you' and had it all shaved. It was good for me because it lets me play around with conventional ideas of masculinity and femininity. (O'Connor qtd. in Hayes 61)

If she had been defying authority figures for most of her life, she was definitely not going to let the record business tell her what to do now. Mavis Bayton claims that "[f]eminist musicians have been acutely concerned with the political implications of their appearance and stage presentation. They have chosen to disrupt, subvert or challenge the hegemonic discourse of female rock sexuality" (181). Therefore, Sinéad O'Connor's refusal to be an archetype of femininity confronted her with aesthetic challenges virtually unprecedented in Irish culture. Added to this was her public criticism of the role and representation of women in Irish society, and her willingness to constantly engage in public controversy.

In fact, it is essential to acknowledge the fact that Ireland was a different place when Sinéad O'Connor broke onto the popular music scene towards the end of the

1980s, with more restraints on intellectual freedom and fewer opportunities to explore and/or express one's sexual identity. Yet, on the contrary, she was always straightforward and upfront in interviews, speaking frankly about sexism in the music industry and what it meant to be a feminist. It is unclear the extent to which this self-elected public role derived from her personal experience as daughter, partner and mother, or from the inheritance provided by pioneering Irish feminists from the 1960s and 1970s, but in April 1990, she told Legs McNeil in *SPIN*:

I think now I understand [my mother] because I am a woman and I am a mother and the frustration that she must have gone through being in Ireland and the age, the generation that she was. There's no divorce and there's no abortion—no contraception—and now I can look and I can say, poor woman. (...) As a woman, as an Irish woman, I feel that she should have been able to go out with somebody else. She should have been able to remarry. (O'Connor qtd. in Hayes 61)

Thus, if her embrace of rock was at least partly a revolt against her mother, it was also a revolt against the gender system that had trapped her. Conclusively, Sinéad O' Connor has been an artist who has written from and about her personal experiences, about herself, her emotions and her life, all with a startling and painful honesty. Still, why she sings about such things in the way she does is, indeed, a legitimate subject to discuss next.

5.2.1.2. Songwriting and Composition

In her lyrics, Sinéad O'Connor mixes history, spirituality and emotions which come from a very personal place. However, she has consistently refused to talk in any

detail about her own songs and, curiously enough, when we got a glimpse of her thoughts on composing, her own focus has been aural:

Texture is probably the most important aspect of my songwriting. I'm trying to achieve texture. (...) I know other writers think of it the same way, the way that you see music and songs is in shapes and textures and colors. You don't see them in terms of the words or the music. You see the shape of it, the texture of it, the color of it. (O'Connor qtd. in Flanagan 46)

Often cryptic, her songs have, nonetheless, universal resonance, because "she has made music that is in some essential way about the terrible hunger for a home that can only really be reached internally" (Powers qtd. in O'Dair *Trouble Girls* 377). Such spiritual wandering is the affliction and the gift that has inspired many Irish artists before her (from from Joyce and Yeats, to Van Morrison and U2). However, even though she tapped into that tradition with great pride, she has indeed challenged it while immersing herself in it. Thus, as Gerry Smyth notes, "O'Connor's challenge lay not in the outright rejection of traditional narratives, but in unsettling and reworking them in new contexts and in new combinations" (*Noisy Island* 107). In this way, she has always blended traditional and contemporary sources, especially in the riskiness and drama of her vocal style, which will be explored next.¹⁰²

5.2.1.3. Performance and Singing Style

As a singer, Sinéad O'Connor constantly manipulates her voice to produce a stark, hard quality, using vocal techniques reminiscent of keening such as the emphasis

¹⁰² O'Connor's father, who was a good Irish tenor, taught her Irish songs and ballads to sing when she was a child. Then, in her music career, the folk and Celtic elements are still there, but mixed with rap, funk and all the other elements that go into contemporary popular music.

on consonants and the glottal stop for dramatic effect. Moreover, her voice has been described as a "Banshee wail" by music journalists, referring to the singer's ability to do a *crescendo* from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* in a very short space of time.¹⁰³ This too has a certain aspect of keening, with the voice wailing in an ululating cry reminiscent of the Irish ghoul. Thus, although she is aided by studio techniques, the effect is definitely grounded in tradition.¹⁰⁴ On the other side, singing in Ireland was traditionally a storytelling technique used by small communities to record history and legend, in which the singer, usually accompanied, would have to encompass a whole range of characters—living and ghostly—within a performance (see Ó hAllmhuráin). From this heritage, O'Connor learnt to emote beyond words and to embellish her vocal lines with improvisation, while conveying intimacy with her words and expressions (like jazz singers would also do). However, her material was profoundly affected by her aggressive approach to singing, because where most Irish folk female singers trilled and very occasionally wailed, power was O'Connor's main goal—power, indeed, to communicate radical, fearless, convincing messages. About this matter, Holly Kruse points out:

[Female] singers who transgress the boundaries of what is considered 'nice' singing often encounter hostility from the male-dominated music industry and music press. Powerful, unconventional female voices evoke profoundly negative and, not incidentally, gendered reactions because of what they signify, both to the singers and to the audience: the visceral expression of female pain, rage, and

¹⁰³ *Banshee* means "faerie woman." A Banshee is known in Ireland as a female spirit who wails outside a home to warn of an imminent death in a family. Her chilling, high pitched, long and melancholy scream is also called *caoine*, which is the Irish word for "keening."

¹⁰⁴ See pages 155 and 156 of the present chapter.

frustration. This scream of female anger poses a direct threat to patriarchy, which attempts to cover over both the existence of such anger and the structures which engender it. (Kruse 90-1)

Still at that time, O'Connor was not really inclined to being seen as part of any category, whether the focus was on feminism or being Irish—"I also hate being asked, 'How do I feel being a *woman* in rock'", she said in a *Musician* sidebar entitled "Questions Sinéad O'Connor Hates" (qtd. in Gaar 395)—but her candor in the face of opposition was refreshing, especially when honesty seemed an increasingly risky and uncommercial stance to take. With her first and her second albums in particular (released in 1987 and 1990, respectively), Sinéad O'Connor would join the ranks of all women artists who were shattering the boundaries of the music industry. In fact, both albums are still today considered two of the most politically, socially and spiritually-charged albums of the 1990s. They are, then, the albums on which Sinéad O'Connor's reputation as an artist was constructed, and this chapter examines the work within them.

5.2.2. *The Lion and the Cobra* (1987)

When her debut album, *The Lion and the Cobra*, was released in late 1987, Sinéad O'Connor was only twenty-one, but she had written most of the songs at seventeen (a prodigious achievement for such a young singer-songwriter).¹⁰⁵ Still, this album is a tightly constructed set of songs filled with powerful images and intense emotion. Even more, it becomes clear that, right from the beginning of her career, O'Connor filled her lyrics with references to Ireland and the Irish condition. That way, some of the tracks are distinctly Celtic, like, for example, "Drink Before the War" (a strong anti-war song), or the opening song, "Jackie." The latter—in which O'Connor

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix I, figure 18.

sings from the perspective of a dead woman who returns to wander the shores where her lover allegedly drowned—though disguised behind a grunge-like distorted guitar, is unmistakably written in the Gaelic ballad style.

Similarly, O'Connor's first single ever, "Troy," is marked by a second yet less explicit reference to Irishness, since both the title and the chorus evoke W. B. Yeats' poem "No Second Troy," particularly its concluding line ("Was there another Troy for her to burn?"). In fact, the song starts by announcing the singer's place in Ireland in the opening verse already: "I'll remember it /And Dublin in a rainstorm /And sitting in the long grass in summer keeping warm" (lines 1-3). Then, the story on young love and betrayal is imbued with surrounding violence, as she equates her crumbling romance with the burning of the mythical Greek city. On the music side, the song offers a slow and steady buildup of intensity and pain, layer upon layer, until the music cannot contain the singer's emotion any longer. Therefore, although the album is an eclectic mix of genres, "Troy" is definitely the album's defining moment which exhibits all of the traits Sinéad O'Connor would become known for in the years that followed (vulnerability, fury, conviction, theatricality).¹⁰⁶ In fact, much of *The Lion and The Cobra* actually provided a highly ingenious blend of musical and literary influences that ended up sounding like nothing but O'Connor herself. The Irish aura in some of her music is most notably, for instance, in "Never Get Old," a track which opens with the voice of Enya speaking the words of the ninety-first Psalm of the Bible, in which God promises to protect his people from the lion and the snake (symbols of bold and sly danger, respectively) in her native Gaelic:

Óir thug sé ordú dá aingil i do thaobh:

¹⁰⁶ See further analysis of "Troy" from pages 210 to 216.

Tú a chosaint i do shlite go léir

Iompróidh siad thú lena lámha

Sula mbuailfeá do chos in aghaidh cloiche

Satlóidh tú ar an leon is ar an nathair

Gheobhaidh tú de chosa sa leon óg is sa dragan. (qtd. in *The Lion and the Cobra*)¹⁰⁷

In this song, O'Connor recounts the little ways in which humans attempt to find solace in the seeming absence of such divine protection. Consequently, this psalm, as well as the song itself, become a prayer in the face of adversity, struggle and confrontation.

Furthermore, while her music has always been intensely personal and spiritual, it has also been consistently informed by the political unrest of her homeland. For example, she laments on "Just Like U Said It Would B" that "I can see too many mouths open / Too many eyes closed, ears closed / Not enough minds open / Too many legs open" (lines 14-15). She then explores a different sort of injustice and fear in "Mandinka," which would become the record's first big hit.¹⁰⁸ In this song, she drew inspiration again from many different sources, from the Irish tradition to Leonard Cohen, punk rock and the rap scene. However, in an interview in *The Tech* in April 1988, she explained that, in fact, "Mandinkas are an African tribe (...) mentioned in a

¹⁰⁷ This psalm is quoted on the sleeve of the album too. The translation would be as follows: "God commanded His angels concerning you / To guard you in all your ways. / They will lift you up in their arms / To keep you from striking your foot against a stone. / You will tread upon the lion and the cobra / You will trample the great lion and the serpent."

¹⁰⁸ The single went Top 40 in many countries around the world, including No. 6 in Ireland.

book called *Roots* by Alex Haley, which is what the song is about. In order to understand it you must read the book" (O'Connor qtd. in Parsons). She was thus inspired by the West African coming-of-age ritual that includes male and female genital circumcision, as described in Haley's novel. Interestingly enough, although the song was originally about someone else's pain, the singer seems to find a parallel to her own circumstances, singing "I don't know no shame, I feel no pain / I can't see the flame" (in the chorus), and "I have refused to take part" (in line 15), which we can interpret into how she would not participate within the music industry's sexist practices.

We can conclude that O'Connor's first album is, therefore, a strong statement of identity from an intensely creative singer and songwriter. Indeed, while she soon would have greater success with the follow-up *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*, *The Lion and the Cobra* still remains as one of the most captivating and promising debuts in popular music history, and the one that established Sinéad O'Connor as a true Irish musical force. By 1990, however, her spiritual awakening at that time had given her a new confidence in her own art—an art that had often been interpreted as extremely emotional and intense in its expression. Therefore, while the new album would be, again, a collection of intensely personal songs, she would also introduce a more reflective note which would play an important part in her subsequent career.

5.2.3. *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got* (1990)

As in the previous work, the material on Sinéad O'Connor's second album, *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got*, is marked by the self-confessional intimacy associated with the singer-songwriter tradition.¹⁰⁹ However, in these songs, she struggles with personal tribulations amid the oppression of the world around her. Thus, if punks' anger

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix I, figure 19.

was a weapon against fascism, O'Connor believed grief could be one too, while sadness, love and hope are resources against social injustice. As a result, she is now able to translate personal experience into universal experience, as best demonstrated on the opening track "Feel So Different," whose title already signals her apparently new-found identity. Opening with the singer reciting, once again, the passage from "The Serenity Prayer" over elongated strings, the lyrics touch upon the universal story of overcoming any self-generated obstacles to real growth, which comes from the usually painful process of self-reflection:

I am not like I was before

I thought that nothing would change me

I was not listening anymore

Still you continued to affect me. (4-7)

We can interpret the "you" on this last line as a new lover or even her own conscience, but either interpretation would work here because personal growth can be spurred from without or within. The price of real growth, however, is the feeling of disconnection from what we knew as normal, especially the disconnection from people we considered our friends:

I started off with many friends

And we spent a long time talking

Thought they meant every word they said

But like everyone else they were stalling

And now they seem so different

They seem so different

They seem so different. (19-25)

Finally, the epiphany in the climax, "The whole time I'd never seen / All I'd need was inside me" (lines 32-33), is an acknowledgement of one's power to overcome the self-generated obstacles to growth. This song represents, therefore, a liberating experience which clearly identifies the artist as a different person than the one who recorded *The Lion and the Cobra*. Ann Powers likens such gift to "method acting," the method by which actors draw on emotions related to their personal experiences and apply them to the roles they play, each time. As an example, she cites two of the songs that "Feel So Different" is followed by on the album, and which are not credited to O'Connor herself: "I Am Stretched on Your Grave" and "Nothing Compares 2 U" (O'Dair *Trouble Girls* 379). In fact, her treatment of the latter's painful lament struck a universal chord, but the key to its success—and consequently, to the album itself—was the remarkable video that accompanied it, which only served to accentuate the emotional drama of the lyrics. The apparently genuine tears O'Connor shed during the performance not only challenged the established boundaries between art and real life, but also exposed the contradictory values upon which her image was built at that time: she is alone (with connotations of strength and independence) but also tearful (showing her vulnerability and weakness), looking unconventional with her shaved head and her black turtleneck sweater, still she is a woman apparently crying because of a man.¹¹⁰ Therefore, this famous video performance, which has been linked since its release to O'Connor's iconography and career, can also be linked at a deeper level to her inheritance as an Irish woman and musician.

¹¹⁰ Watch Sinéad O'Connor, "Nothing Compares 2U (Official Music Video)," www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-EF60neguk.

Similarly, while she disavowed any idea of Ireland as anything other than a modern twentieth-century society, some of her choice of material and singing style on this album belied this. For example, the song "I Am Stretched on Your Grave" was drawn from the anonymous seventeenth-century Gaelic poem "Táim Sínte Ar Do Thuama," and celebrates the traditional Gaelic practice of "keening" or mourning.¹¹¹ This poem was translated into English from the original Gaelic several times, most notably by the short story writer and playwright Frank O'Connor, who included it in a collection of his translations originally published in 1962,¹¹² and was then put to music by Philip King.¹¹³ While the translation and the tune had existed before to its first recording in various versions of both lyrics and melody, the popular and current versions are influenced by the adapted version by King, which he recorded with Scullion in 1979. Moreover, while King wrote the music as a true *seán-nós* style,¹¹⁴ O'Connor's rendition of the medieval keening poem is characterised by a haunting vocal performance throughout, which also suggests the *seán-nós* style in its phrasing and use of grace notes. Her treatment of the song is all the more remarkable for the use of a beat box launched by a looping, mid-paced hip-hop groove, and the remarkable traditional fiddle solo at the end by Steve Wickham of The Waterboys. *Hot Press*' Bill Graham

¹¹¹ When a widow would sit on the grave of her dead husband or lover for a proscribed time.

¹¹² See Frank O'Connor, "I Am Stretched on Your Grave," *The Best of Frank O'Connor* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), p. 333.

¹¹³ Philip King is an Irish musician, film maker and TV broadcaster, also known as the founding member of the folk-rock band Scullion.

¹¹⁴ *Seán-nós* is a unique Irish traditional a cappella style that translated means "old style or way." According to Philip King, "Sinéad O' Connor sings that song the way she does and only Sinéad O'Connor can sing it that way because she is Irish and because she knows how to sing it in this style" (qtd. in Hayes 91).

also spotted how she had merged the Gaelic *seán-nos* with hip hop in a marriage that could have sounded forced and unnatural, but which worked here because "its bleak setting ridded it of any sentimental trad associations" (Graham qtd. in Hayes 96).

On the lyrical aspect, "I Am Stretched on Your Grave" is originally a love poem about a man who has lost his most treasured love and cannot bare life without her, so every day he lies on her grave, from morning till night, desperate to be with her once again. In O'Connor's song, however, the Irish Gothic imagery typical of mourning is re-gendered, and the original medieval lyric is restated as a postmodern gender-play in an Irish female context. As a result, while the lyrics describe the grief of a man for her deceased lover and an intensely emotional commitment to her, they also evoke the desires of a young girl or woman:

When my family thinks

That I'm safe in my bed

From night until morning

I am stretched at your head. (9-12)

Thus, O'Connor's rendition of "I Am Stretched on Your Grave" might be read as an unusual re-appropriation of the female lament or ballad from a male history of performance. This gender reversal is all the more significant because it reverses many of the conventions of older modes of ballad-singing. Firstly, that the ballad has historically been the domain of the male tenor voice, which expresses a sense of loss associated with a departed female figure (usually used as a metonym for the land, Ireland). The male singer also expresses the idea that a greater happiness may be hinted at in a space and time beyond the grave. Then, the fact that most of the surviving ballads are in the

English language recalls a history of colonialism, even if many of those introduced by English settlers were adapted by the native Irish. Thus, they can also purvey a historical sense of loss that connects to the country's history of exile (Munnelly 35-48). Consequently, O'Connor's performance not only lends historical and contemporary resonances to the connections between past and present Ireland, but also retrieves the articulation of loss for female vocalisation. Ultimately, since the song is a unique weaving of the new and the old, of the hip-hop and the *seán-nos*, it just sums up in many ways, from its evocative story to the unusual mixture of styles and traditions, the artistic genius of Sinéad O'Connor.

On a different note, although this record contains some of her most self-centered, autobiographical songs, it also features two of her strongest political ones: "Black Boys on Mopeds" and "Three Babies." On the one hand, "Black Boys on Mopeds" is the only song on the album that seems not to be inspired by a personal experience, but it is the first indication that her mind was opening up to events that shocked her. In this case, the lyrics tell about the police-involved death of a black youth in London, taking on British racism and the hypocrisy of Margaret Thatcher's government.¹¹⁵ The analogy she works within the song is the use of massed force against innocent civilians: "England's not the mythical land of Madame George and

¹¹⁵ More particularly, the lyrics refer to an incident in England on 17 May 1989 where the police were pursuing a youth called Nicholas Bramble, who was riding a moped, in the mistaken belief that he had stolen the moped. Bramble lost control of the moped (which it turns out was his) in the chase, and crashed it, killing himself. His death was ruled accidental, but O'Connor felt that the police, a "representative of state authority", caused his death, and the incident (re)sparked accusations of racism in the police force, on the grounds that the police would not have assumed that the youth had stolen the bike, or pursued him so aggressively, had he been white. See John C. Mullen, "Antiracism and British Popular Song Since the 1960s."

roses,"¹¹⁶ she says, bitterly referencing Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*,¹¹⁷ "It's the home of police / who kill black boys on mopeds" (lines 9-10). Then, with the key line, "These are dangerous days / To say what you feel is to dig your own grave" (lines 18-19), she expresses her absolute rejection of any restrictions on freedom as it does of the tragic events. That way, when she repeats the chorus, half-singing and half-moaning in multi-tracked harmony, the connection to our own time seems almost unbearable. By the song's end, O'Connor envisions leaving a country that is willing to sanction such brutality: "And I love my boy, and that's why I'm leaving / I don't want him to be aware that there's / Any such thing as grieving" (lines 24-26). Therefore, in a record about inner personal suffering and transcendence, "Black Boys on Mopeds" is the song that serves as a crucial reminder of the ongoing struggles of the outside world. In fact, in an interview with *Rolling Stone* she admitted that,

[a]n understanding of sorrow and pain is an important thing to have because if nothing else, it gives you an appreciation for happiness. People who've been brought up happy and normal often don't have an understanding of what life might be for other people. (...) [I]t's important to understand pain and what life is like for other people—and I never take that knowledge for granted. (O'Connor qtd. in Gilmore)

¹¹⁶ Roses are closely associated with England via Henry VII and the War of the Roses, among other sources.

¹¹⁷ While the location of the rather impressionistic events in Morrison's "Madame George" is firmly around Belfast (Morrison's birthplace), with its mentions of Cyprus Avenue, Ford and Fitzroy and Sandy Row, O'Connor associates Madam George with England or Englishness (roses).

Conclusively, through this song it becomes perfectly clear that O'Connor was attuned to damage and pain and the ways in which particular groups—black people, women, the young, the Irish—were and might continue to be singled out.

"Three Babies," on the other hand, signals a different key theme in O'Connor's work, and that is mother love. Back in 1990, the complexities of motherhood were hardly the topics of which stereotypical rock songs were made, and this connects to the biggest problem O'Connor would pose to the rock world: she was transgressive, but not in the ways that men would often like women to transgress, but her compulsion to utter the unspoken, unspeakable truth, usually had a deep autobiographical origin. This time, however, she refused to explain the real meaning of "Three Babies" in any detail, saying that it was not her policy to explain her songs in such detail. To the British music magazine *NME*, her reference to the song was even more cryptic: "It sounds like a painful song, but it's just thinking about emotional things that happen to you from a spiritual point of view. Seeing that there was a good thing in it because you learned from it" (O'Connor qtd. in Hayes 68). The lyrics just affirm that interpretation, and the first stanza, which begins with gentle chords and O'Connor singing in a breathy, angelic, tranquil tone, is about acceptance:

I'm like a wild horse

But there's no other way I could be

Water and feed

Are not tools that I need

For the thing that I've chosen to be. (7-10)

She then begins to break while remembering the babies: "I have wrapped your cold bodies around me / The face on you / The smell of you / Will always be with me" (lines 14-16). On the second verse, the vocals burst out for a moment in the lines "No longer made like a horse / I'm still wild but not lost" (lines 25-26). After she holds one long note on "Proved things I never believed" (line 31), the grief is there for us to hear: "The face of you / The smell of you / Will always be with me" (lines 32-34). Finally, the last stanza begins with a tone of serene acceptance, but it again breaks for a moment: "For myself / I ask no one else will be / Mother to these three" (lines 37-39). O'Connor's ability to enter into the suffering of another, and to imagine and convey that misery so vividly, is staggering here.

Interestingly enough, the song was created at a pivotal point in a dialogue about gender politics in Ireland, especially in relation to abortion, divorce and Church-State Ireland. In that way, "Three Babies" appears to respond directly to Seamus Heaney's poem "Limbo" from 1966. In *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet* (1993), Michael Parker sets forth the cultural context of this poem, drawing an accurate picture of the plight of a young woman in a sexually repressive Ireland, where "tribal taboos" can easily undermine "civilized human values" (114-5). Thus, "Limbo" would dramatise the political and emotional traumas wrought on Irish womanhood by a conservative Catholic ideology. Parker is also right when he describes the opening lines of the poem as "journalistic" (112), since it tells the story of a baby's body dredged up by fishermen: "Fishermen at Ballyshannon / Netted an infant last night / Along with the salmon" (lines 1-3). Then, Heaney goes on to describe the emotional, religious and spiritual sides of infanticide from within the mother's experience:

A small one thrown back

To the waters. But I'm sure

As she stood in the shallows

Ducking him tenderly

Till the frozen knobs of her wrists

Were dead as the gravel,

He was a minnow with hooks

Tearing her open. (5-12)

The tension created by Heaney's sentences suggests a build-up and release of emotion that leads in the third stanza to the phrase "tearing her open." Having reached that painful image, the poem unpacks its emotional swipe in four short, emotionally charged sentences:

She waded in under

The sign of the cross.

He was hauled in with the fish.

Now limbo will be. (13-16)¹¹⁸

Finally, the poem's fourth and last stanza is fast, emotionally charged, even violent:

A cold glitter of souls

Through some far briny zone.

Even Christ's palms, unhealed,

Smart and cannot fish there. (17-20)

¹¹⁸ As in the poem, in Catholic doctrine, children's limbo is specifically set aside for those who die without being baptised, and thus, cannot enter heaven.

These four lines are not so much a second release of emotion as a further increase of it, because there is no catharsis here, only pain. Therefore, from the foregoing analysis, it becomes clear that "Three Babies" does offer a response to "Limbo" but, while the song shares the poem's feminist politics, it also reverses its pessimistic conclusion, especially in the first verse:

Each of these my three babies

I will carry with me

For myself

I ask no one else will be

Mother to these three. (1-5)

In other words, although O'Connor implies in "Three Babies" that the woman protagonist has aborted her babies as also does Heaney in "Limbo," the singer's assumptions about the babies' ultimate fate are radically different, because in the song, the mother actually asserts that she will hold on to them forever (at least figuratively). In addition, while the lyrics are very powerful indeed, it is O'Connor's capacity for empathy, and her complete command of the conflicting and lingering emotions that go with trauma, that make "Three Babies" such a moving creation. Ultimately, this analysis has also shown that Heaney's canonical poems and O'Connor's transgressive lyrics are not mere examples of "high vs. popular culture" but equally important artistic events on the Irish cultural and social landscape.

5.2.4. Conclusion

From the analysis above, it is clear that Sinéad O'Connor's relationship to Irish culture has been tumultuous because both in her songs and in public political statements, she would consistently make pro-abortion and pro-choice statements, while

also becoming infamous for her vehement anti-Catholic Church rhetoric. Such issues, which formed centre-stage debates in late twentieth-century Ireland, were also crystallised in her persona, as she brought her anger, her energy and her public profile to fight for rights that next generations have come to regard as obvious. In this way, as Noel McLaughlin and Martin McLoone point out, "what makes [Sinéad O'Connor] challenging is the way she employs a range of performance strategies deliberately to unsettle and disturb traditional notions of Irishness" (*Rock and Popular Music* 193). At the start of her career, this challenge aroused from combining image and sound, that is, the way she looked, the way she sang, and the way she acted in media context. However, what really marks Sinéad O'Connor out as a significant Irish artist has been her consistent attempts to incorporate controversial issues into the main body of her work, eradicating, that is, many of the dominant myths of Irish womanhood. Finally, it was with these two albums in which she uncompromisingly merged politics, her own thoughts and emotions, that she forged a path for many other women artists to follow—and nothing compares to that.

5.3. "A Different Way to Be": The Artistic Individuality of The Cranberries' Dolores O'Riordan

5.3.1. Introduction

During the 1990s, The Cranberries scaled unprecedented heights in the music world, and together with her talented bandmates (Fergal Lawler and brothers Noel and Mike Hogan), it was Dolores O'Riordan who made it all happen with her unique voice

and lyrics.¹¹⁹ As the band's vocalist and primary songwriter, she turned her struggles into art from the very beginning, notably in The Cranberries' first and second album, *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* (1993) and *No Need to Argue* (1994). These two records in particular are as heavily influenced by Irish traditional music and Gregorian chants as they are by Irish poetry and alternative rock music. However, while on the first album O'Riordan wrote from an introspective place, her songs on the second one dealt with different issues and social concerns, from heartache and pain to national terrorism and war. In this chapter, I therefore analyse both these albums to show some of the ways in which her songs helped bring to light what the culture of Ireland was in the early 1990s. On the other hand, I will also argue that those Cranberries songs which music critics would see as lyrical "aberrations" because they deal with familial love, youth and motherhood can and should in fact be properly understood and sensitively reappraised through a feminist critique.

5.3.2. *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* (1993)

Released on the 1st March 1993, the title of The Cranberries' first album, *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* signalled the band's readiness to go public at last with a number of top-quality songs that illustrated the changes they were going through at that time: namely, moving from the rural countryside to a cosmopolitan city, from adolescence to the world of adults, and from a private life to public exposure. In fact, some of the songs are marked out by a certain feeling of repressed anger, probably as a result of how O'Riordan was feeling back then, especially being constantly ridiculed by the British press.¹²⁰ Also, on the album's cover picture, the

¹¹⁹ See Appendix I, figure 20.

¹²⁰ O'Riordan actually said that "[i]t seemed as though we were being ridiculed by some very small-minded Englishmen" (qtd. in Bailie 37).

band is sitting on a brown sofa against a dark background, but what really catches our attention is the singer's affected expression, which attempts to show the feelings of pain and disappointment expressed lyrically and musically on the songs.¹²¹

On the musical aspect, the album is a perfect mixture between the pop and rock influences absorbed by the Hogan brothers in their formative years and Dolores O'Riordan's knowledge of Gregorian chant and Irish traditional singing, such as the particular attack on syllables, the grace notes on the key words, and the glottal ornamentation. This allowed her to use a number of vocal styles that had been rarely used in rock music, but which marked her sound as indelibly Irish. At the same time, the band's producer, Stephen Street, emphasised this inherent "Celtic spirit" by adding ghostly choirs and darker sound effects which created a dreamy, floating soundscape throughout the album.¹²² For example, in "Not Sorry," the dark sounds in the background make us feel as if a storm is slowly but surely getting near. The same goes for "How," a song where Lawler's percussive, African-like rhythm and Noel Hogan's unusual guitar arrangements create an almost hypnotic base or trance in which O'Riordan's heavily accented vocals spill out her inner demons ("How you said you never would leave me alone? How?") over and over again. She, like Elizabeth Frazer of Cocteau Twins or Björk, belonged to a line of female rock singers who sacrifice the melodic vocal rules for the sake of freedom when they sing. As a result, the album displays an unmistakably indie aesthetic based on fey vocals and introspective lyrics, all the more evident on the group's debut single, "Dreams."

¹²¹ See Appendix I, figure 21.

¹²² Street was also the producer of Irish-Mancunian band The Smiths, whom The Cranberries admired.

Released as a single in November 1992, "Dreams" is a hymn to both the present and the future, written from the perspective of someone who knows already that life "is changing every day in every possible way" (lines 1-2). The track has an immediate epic sweep from the beginning: a remarkably tight rhythm section punctuates the song's simple chord changes, before the band shifts seamlessly into the low-key opening verse, in which O'Riordan's high-register vocals powerfully evoke the song's adolescent ache: "Oh, my life / Is changing everyday..." The rush of a newly experienced romance is effortlessly encapsulated by the next lines: "I know I felt like this before / But now I'm feeling it even more / Because it came from you" (lines 6-7). This eventually leads to an abrupt and relatively shapeless middle eight, with O'Riordan's falsetto of non-linguistic sounds ("La, la...") evoking the subconscious atmosphere of the song's title. Curiously enough, the word title itself does not appear until the very last line, which is just a repeat of the song's opening until O'Riordan swaps out, unexpectedly, the final "Never quite as it seems" for the closing sentiment "'Cause you're a dream to me" (line 27). This line is quite simplistic, but due to the ecstasy of O'Riordan's breathy delivery, it helps to put an end to the tension by proclaiming the conclusion of the action and by leading up to the final verse. It is clear, then, that both the verbal and musical components of "Dreams" show fundamental links between transmission, performance and meaning of the song. It is, thus, a song which really and wonderfully captures the combination of ecstasy, fear, confusion and excitement intrinsic to youth. However, what makes this song so timeless is the way it earns it from the beginning, with a number of smaller, more lightly shaded moments throughout that ensure the song connects with the listeners on a personal, almost private, level.

A second song, "Linger," was released as a single before the album in February 1993. Influenced as it is by Irish folk melodies, it was considered the song that best

defined the band's sound at that time. In the lyrical aspect, "Linger" is a beautiful and thought provoking song written from the point of view of someone who feels disappointed in a relationship ("I thought that nothing could go wrong / But I was wrong," lines 21-22), but who still feels infatuated by that person ("But you always really knew / I just want to be with you," lines 27-28). Thus, the song touches on universal feelings of love and heartbreak, yet as obvious as that meaning may seem, the band managed to use the entire song and arrangements (instruments, voice and words) to convey it the way they wanted to. The combination of the background music and the singer's beautiful voice results in an almost ethereal beauty that remains long after it ends, making "Linger" still considered today one of The Cranberries' most beautiful songs. More importantly, however, it set a precedent for O'Riordan's simple but brutally honest confession lyrics in which she was able to exorcise her most hidden feelings—and those of the listener, too—such as anger, pain and betrayal in, for example, "Still Can't..." and "Not Sorry". Similarly, in the songs "Pretty" and "Put Me Down," she might refer to someone in particular or might be rather criticising the music industry she felt so suspicious about, but either way, they are attacks on people who had tried to put her and the band down as much as they are simmering diatribes directed at those who would presume that women cannot exert their own agency. In fact, in what follows, I will argue that "Pretty" was O'Riordan's particular way of externalising her anger against people who objectify women and/or who only judge a woman's physical appearance and personality through gender stereotypes. The method used in this analysis will thus be discourse analysis from a gender perspective.

5.3.2.1. Gender, Body and Image in "Pretty"

Many scholars have pointed to the continuous sexual objectification of women that exist within a variety of male-dominated domains, including the field of popular

music.¹²³ As Alison Faupel and Vaughn Schmutz write, the male dominance of the music industry has been evident, for example, "in the packaging and promoting of female artists who are pressured into conventional stereotypes that emphasise their sex appeal and domesticity" (27). Similarly, the sexual objectification of female musicians also takes many forms in the discourse of music criticism, ranging from "scrutiny of their physical attractiveness" to "discussion of their sexual permissiveness." By contrast, "critics are less likely to describe male artists in sexual terms," and when they do, "they accord men a greater deal of agency and control of their sexuality" (Faupel and Schmutz 27). Thus, by the time they were trying to develop their music careers, there was too much of a focus on what female artists like Sinead O'Connor and Dolores O'Riordan wore and how they looked. Still, they both undoubtedly challenged stereotypes when it comes to concepts of female beauty in the music business—and they did so not only through their outfits and looks but with their songs, as well. In fact, Dolores O'Riordan said in an interview to *The Guardian* in 2017 that she wrote the song "Pretty" about being rejected, especially by "somebody on the business side of things who always made me feel less than I was" (qtd. in Simpson). Yet, once we read more into the lyrics, we notice that the meaning of the song goes much deeper.

In a similar way to Eavan Boland's poems "Anorexia" and "Making Up," in which the Irish poet shows how within a masculine socio-cultural environment, accepted definitions can touch tragically upon women, shaping their ideas of themselves and their relation to their bodies,¹²⁴ O'Riordan's song "Pretty" exposes the

¹²³ See, for example, Sheila Whiteley, *Sexing the Groove* (Routledge, 1997).

¹²⁴ Both poems are included in Boland's collection of 1980's, *In Her Own Image*. She was the Irish author who first and most overtly reflected in her work the dangers of female stereotyping and the contesting of them through the use of strong imagery and a feminist view of history.

objectification of women and the fact that "a girl's or woman's self-evaluation is assumed to depend on the degree to which her body and sexuality are publicly assessed as valuable" (McRobbie 77).¹²⁵ Thus, the first line of the song, "You're so pretty the way you are," directly addresses this issue of ideal body image that is tainting and manipulating girls from a young age, but it also proposes that there is no reason for any woman to deny herself. Moreover, the following line, "And you have no reason / To be so insolent to me," highlights the fact that women are not required to live up to men's expectations or any false standards within a hetero-patriarchal society. Similarly, the chorus "You can say what you want / But you won't change me" promotes individuality, and acts as a reply to society's standards of external perfection and physical critique. In addition, Dolores O'Riordan—a vocalist who always excelled at using dynamics—uses here a muted restraint which amplifies the song's ominous, warning-shot lyrics, creating an ashamed vibe for the song: "Be who you are, regardless of what others may feel" would be its main message.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Objectification theory posits that as a result of being objectified, women begin to treat themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated, leading to various mental health risks: on the one hand, women begin to view their physical appearance as their self worth, that is, as though their bodies and sexuality represent their entire being; and on the other hand, beauty becomes power—just as long as it is the right kind of beauty. Thus, the objectification of beauty teaches women that if she is not able to reach that kind of beauty, she would not be able to reach the level of social acceptance. This continuous pressure for women to meet an unrealistic standard of beauty is agonising, as we are pressured in many ways to reach that narrow-minded perception of "perfection." See Barbara L. Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts, "Objectification Theory: Toward Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks" (*Psychology of Women Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 2, Jun. 1997), pp. 173-206.

¹²⁶ In fact, when asked about "Pretty," The Cranberries' singer would say that, "this song is all about how messed up some women are by following ideas of 'ideal' beauty, (...) and all I'm saying to those women is 'accept how you are'" (O'Riordan qtd. in Stokes 2018).

From the analysis above, it becomes clear that "Pretty" shows, simply but beautifully, the objectification that arises from the discriminating nature of society's beauty standards. However, it also conveys a message about self-worth and empowerment, because Dolores O'Riordan provides "pretty" and "beautiful" as a level of acceptance among girls and women. We can conclude, then, that Irish female artists such as Dolores O'Riordan and Eavan Boland, each in their own field and with their own style, came to blows over gender stereotypes by exerting themselves to meet the ultimate goal of poetry and song: to change a belief, to alter a stereotype. Therefore, their artistic works still are great examples that if more and more women choose to voice their opinions and experiences through art, society would likely come closer to true equality.

In the end, *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* finished 1993 as the best-selling debut of any British or Irish band in that year. What is more important, however, is that this album helped to highlight the fact that "The Cranberries based its own potential in Dolores O'Riordan's highly personal lyrics, unique voice and charismatic performance, which represented the band's 'identity' to a great extent" (Smyth *Noisy Island* 128). However, it is their second album, *No Need to Argue*, the one that was and still is considered their best ever. Written mostly on the road in 1993 while the band toured America, it kept The Cranberries' own distinctive style,¹²⁷ although touring the US had changed their way of thinking. As Dolores O'Riordan told *NME* back then: "Going from being nineteen years old to being a star in the US is a big

¹²⁷ In fact, O'Riordan explained that "[t]here were a lot of bands around that were part of the grunge thing (...) We couldn't have really fitted in with grunge, because we were just a different type of band. We were Irish and from Limerick, and we had a lot of our own ideas. A lot of the grunge bands were very similar to each other" (qtd. in Johnston 138).

change. I could not imagine going back to Ireland to live that safe and complacent life, I cannot think small ever again" (qtd. in Berenguer 46). This last idea defines very well, indeed, the new stage where The Cranberries found themselves both on a personal and an artistic level.

5.3.3. *No Need to Argue* (1994)

Released in October 1994, *No Need to Argue* was harder and darker than its predecessor, an impressive departure that helped the band shot to global recognition and propel to the status of 1990's "alternative U2."¹²⁸ Sonically, the great protagonist of the album is Dolores O'Riordan's voice, heavily emphasised because of its unique "grain" being salient.¹²⁹ Lyrically, the songs are more obscure and pessimistic. O'Riordan keeps her traditional (and highly effective) style of writing but, while in the previous album her concerns were directed towards her own individuality, from this album on, she will also write from the perspective of solidarity and social conscience. As with Sinéad O'Connor, O'Riordan's participation in the anguish of others was probably grounded in the pain that she had known and experienced, and thus, retained a sense of herself when she empathised with others. There is also a deep feeling of pain, and the bitterness of failed romantic relationships still was a constant theme in the lyrics of O'Riordan. In terms of themes, the nature of evil was a recurrent one in this record, especially in reference to or against childhood (also a constant in all future Cranberries' albums). With "The Icicle Melts," for instance, O'Riordan tries to articulate the horror surrounding the death of two-year-old Jamie Bulger, an issue that shocked the British press as much as the singer herself, who could not help but showing her outrage at the

¹²⁸ See Appendix I, figure 22.

¹²⁹ See Roland Barthes, "The Grain of The Voice," *On Record: Rock, Pop, And The Written Word* (Routledge, 1994), pp. 293-300.

events.¹³⁰ Between anger and lament, she asks herself, "When will the icicle melt?", wondering when will all this pain end (melt).¹³¹ She further deploys her fury in the chorus:

I don't know what's

Happening to people today

When a child, child, child, child

He was taken away

There's a place for the baby that died

And there's a time for the mother who cried

And she will hold him in her arms sometime

'Cause nine months is too long, too long, too long. (18-25)

However, O'Riordan's outpouring of emotion does not stop with the boy, for she also burrows inside the hurt of the mother, lifting up and, if just for the moment, redeeming the guilt and helplessness that the woman feels. With the lines "There's a place for the baby that died / And there's a time for the mother who cried / And she will hold him in her arms sometime," the singer is expressing the belief (mainly Catholic) that mother and child will meet in heaven again. Finally, the singer wonders how can we, as human beings, could possibly inflict so much hurt on others, and how is that people are becoming more desensitised to other people's pain: "How could you hurt a child? / Now does this make you satisfied, satisfied, satisfied? / I don't know what's happening to

¹³⁰ On the 12th February 1993, Bulger was two years and eleven months old when he got abducted in Liverpool's The Strand shopping centre and then tortured and killed by two ten-year-olds.

¹³¹ See Appendix I, figure 23.

people today" (lines 14-19). As we have discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, some artists throughout history (poets as well as songwriters) have felt a moral necessity to act as witnesses to events like war, racism, dictatorial tyranny, and acts of injustice. In that way, "The Icicle Melts" is a song that comes from a very human reaction to a very inhumane event, but it perfectly captures all the pain and anger the author was trying to release.

Similarly, Dolores O'Riordan wrote "Zombie" as a direct attack on the warlords and the supporters of the IRA in Ireland, when the news broke on March 20 1993 that a bomb planted by the IRA in the city centre of Warrington, Cheshire, had exploded, killing twelve-year-old Tim Parry and three-year-old Jonathan Bal, and injuring dozens of people, in an attack that both shocked and appalled the public in the UK and Ireland. However, this did not imply that the song necessarily became political. "Zombie" is, rather, an exhortation against despair, and while its main themes contain both resistance and defiance, they do not make an active political statement as such, for it is not a celebration of solidarity in the name of a class or common enemy, and it is not partisan in any accepted sense. Consequently, this song is less an ideological statement than an effort to generate historical awareness. Still, "Zombie" might as well be seen as a death song which eulogises two distinct historical moments: on the one hand, it memorialises the Warrington bombing of 1993; on the other, it recalls the Easter Rising in 1916. Thus, in what follows, I will explore how the song's elegiac tone offers a lyrical evocation of the quelled surges of history that these two distinct moments of history represent. I will also argue that the lyrics provide "images and analogies" that "ease the strain of the present troubles" in Northern Ireland (Heaney *Finders Keepers* 60), as they also "discover a field of force" that "encompass the perspectives of humane reason" and

"grant the intensity of the violence its deplorable authenticity and complexity" (Heaney *Preoccupations* 56-7).

5.3.3.1. Sectarian Violence and Hatred in "Zombie"

"Zombie" can be described as Dolores O'Riordan's commentary on how conflicts are kept alive through identity and blood, and how they just perpetuate suffering even for those completely innocent, such as children. In the lyrics, the singer just cannot begin to understand the mindset of people who cause the death of children and leave behind broken-hearted, grieving mothers, anytime anywhere. In fact, as the song opens and the line "Another head hangs lowly / Child is slowly taken" is sung out, these words throw the image of a child being ripped from their mother's arms. This relates directly to the Warrington bombing and the two young boys being torn from their families, killed at such young ages; yet, it can also relate to what was happening in Bosnia or Rwanda at that time, or simply to any violent conflict or situation happening at all.¹³² Moreover, by creating such a strong visual impression from the opening lines, she endeavours to facilitate greater empathy and understanding in the listener. O'Riordan's role in "Zombie" is, thus, what Seamus Heaney called "[t]he poet as witness," the artist which represents "solidarity with the doomed, the deprived, the victimized, the under-privileged" (*Government* xvi). Since younger and younger generations were still being affected by the pain and conflict of the past, it was the constant reality of 1916 and the

¹³² In 1992, Bosnian independence was declared by referendum. However, the newly-formed state was rife with ethnic diversity and tension, stemming from differences in religious belief. The young state quickly devolved into civil war with fighting erupting from ethnic Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian classes of the population. Meanwhile, 3200 miles away, an ethnic conflict in Rwanda between Hutus and Tutsis was growing fiercer by the day. Thus, for most of the 1990s, Bosnia and Rwanda were embroiled in brutal civil wars which included genocidal violence. Moreover, both cases include comparable instances of ethnic cleansing stemming from a struggle for power.

frustration with a never-ending cycle of violence running through Irish people's lives that O'Riordan wished to express in her song. Both aspects are made specific in the line "It's the same old theme since nineteen-sixteen" (line 21), as this was the date of the Easter Rising. In this regard, Heaney thought that "writing at the time of the Troubles meant that the problem of poetry moved from a matter of finding the satisfactory verbal icon to being a search for images and symbols adequate to predicament" (*Preoccupations* 56). He, for instance, used bog bodies and Iron Age atrocities as a means of symbolising (as well as highlighting and diagnosing) the conflicts in Ireland (Dix 40). Likewise, O'Riordan uses images which resonate with the listener's emotions and thoughts, as when she sings desperately of the men "With tanks, and their bombs / and their bombs, and their guns" (lines 9-11).¹³³ Such imagery is the strongest within the song, because a tone of urgency and harshness is created when the names of weapons associated with war are repeated. At the same time, allusion to the main theme is continued when the word "bombs" is repeated twice, referring directly to the two Warrington bombings. Thus, O'Riordan seems to be aware of her cultural history and origins, and through this awareness, she is able to uncover in her song the complexities

¹³³ This echoes the sad old anti-war folk song "Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye" which includes the line "With your drums and guns and guns and drums, hurroo, hurroo" in its chorus. This popular traditional song has often been supposed to be an anti-recruiting song. Originally, except for an initial framing stanza, the song is a monologue by an Irish woman who meets her former lover on the road to Athy, County Kildare. After their illegitimate child was born, the lover ran away and became a soldier, but he was badly disfigured at war. Written in Ireland in the late 18th or early 19th century, it remained popular in Britain and Ireland and the US into the early years of the 20th century. However, in 1961, the song was recorded by The Clancy Brothers & Tommy Makem on their eponymous album, leading to a renewal of its popularity. Moreover, American folk singer Joan Baez often included the song in her concert sets during the early to mid-1970s as a statement against the Vietnam War and all wars in general. Therefore, it is still considered a powerful anti-war song today.

of social hatred and violence, the byproducts of cultural identity in fractured societies like the Irish. Still, by using a poetic methodology on the different meanings of its title, allusions and repetitions, and by employing striking imagery to portray such devastating times, the song has a sense of beauty to it that sharply contrasts to the horror of violence that causes death.

Certainly, O'Riordan's creative act of writing appears to occur through looking into the wounds of the past. Particularly in "Zombie" this connection to the past allows the singer to comment on the present in an oblique yet forceful way, for she does not commemorate old battles nor condones the patriot game, but deals with and reflects on the collective memory concerning the atrocities that have been committed in Ireland. The song sets its collective tone clearly as the possessive pronoun "we" is used to convey a sense of unity when asking "Who are we mistaken?" (line 4) and when asserting that, in fact, "We must be mistaken" (line 20). On the other side, the second half of the first verse ("And the violence caused such silence / Who are we mistaken?", lines 3-4) portrays the dichotomy of staying silent. That is, if the citizens were to tell the government of the threats of the IRA, they would end up in trouble, but by not telling, they are putting others into danger too.¹³⁴ This leaves a particularly emotional imagery of tension within a country full of "zombies" who refuse to take action while others suffer. Curiously enough, in Seamus Heaney's poem "Punishment," the poet also finds himself guilty of remaining silent out of loyalty to the tribe (he actually says he "would have cast... / the stones of silence") because he knows that, as an artist, he is both part of the situation and outside it. Yet, in watching reality, the poet remains an onlooker

¹³⁴ Indeed, O'Riordan said that "[i]t's a tough thing to sing about, but when you're young you don't think twice about things, you just grab it and do it. As you get older you develop more fear and you get more apprehensive, but when you're young, you've no fear" (qtd. in Johnston 24).

who has "stood dumb" (Heaney *North* 31). Therefore, both "Zombie" and "Punishment" are good examples of what is required of artists "tested by dangerous times" (Heaney *Government* 39), in that they should be acutely aware and self-critical to produce art that deals with subjects such as violence and oppression. Heaney would also indicate that one of poetry's tasks, as a power to concentrate self-reflexively, is to leave everyone in society (accused and accusers) "speechless and renewed" (*Finders Keepers* 189), or, in other words, to reveal and make them aware of the social and moral complexities of the situation (which does not mean prescribing a solution to the ills of society). In that way, "Zombie" definitely threw a powerful message out to Irish people, calling out for inconformity and to not accept the reality to which they were being subjected.

Therefore, although the song itself cannot reveal the full awfulness of the conflict's horrors, it does attempt to understand them through its metaphors, returning to reality as it climaxes in a terse expression of death: "In your head / They are dying" (line 26). Here, the repetition of the words "in your head" implies that war stays forever in thought. In that sense, the song would also deal with post-traumatic stress disorder, as we might interpret that it portrays how a person who has been through conflict or war is now being haunted by the memories of the victims. This would connect to the work of those poets who have lived through and survived war, torture, exile or repression, using poetry to "preserve their memories."¹³⁵ It might as well relate, more especially, to Ciaran Carson's poem "Belfast Confetti" (1987).¹³⁶ In this poem, which pulls the listener

¹³⁵ Poets such as Langston Hughes, Pablo Neruda, Carolyn Forché, Federico García Lorca, Sam Hamill, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Yehuda Amichai, César Vallejo, Anna Akhmatova, Francisco X. Alarcón, and others. See "Carolyn Forché: on a Poetry of Witness."

¹³⁶ See Ciaran Carson, "Belfast Confetti," *The Irish for No* (Gallery Press, 1987), p. 31. See also Appendix II.

into the aftermath of a sectarian riot in Belfast,¹³⁷ Carson uses metaphoric language to portray every single effect of violence on the heart of the artist.¹³⁸ Thus, the first line, "Exclamation marks," depicts the screaming voices of those who were killed during the riot. Consequently, the line "I was trying to complete a sentence in my head, but it kept stuttering" (7) means that the poet finds it difficult to put in words the terror that his eyes witnessed—the word "stuttering," indeed, depicts how petrified he was when he saw the roads blocked and the hatred for each other in the eyes of humans. The hidden meaning behind these words is that, even if he has escaped the riot and survived, he will never be able to get rid of the sight that he witnessed, for the violent scene is going to haunt his memories forever.

Then, the poem's narrator feels panic at being trapped in the streets he was walking through, and the stop-and-search questions begin: "What is / My name? Where am I coming from?" (line 17). Previously, "Why can't I escape?" (line 13) depicts the helplessness the poet feels inside. On the one hand, he wishes to leave, but even though he knows that he has survived, he is unable to get rid of his helplessness about being unable to help those who lost their lives in the riot. On the other hand, since he has witnessed the death of several people right in front of his eyes, he just cannot and will not forget the violent memories. This, in turn, has disoriented the poet's own sense of self. Interestingly enough, both the poem and the song end with questions about one's own identity left hanging: "Where am I coming from? Where am I going?" and "What's

¹³⁷ In fact, the term "Belfast confetti" refers to bombs made out of scraps of metal and ship building rivets used as weapons by Protestant ship builders during anti-Catholic riots, because when they exploded, the scraps of metal and rivets sprung forth like confetti.

¹³⁸ Carson said: "I'm not that interested in ideologies. I'm interested in the words, and how they sound to me, how words connect with experience" (qtd. in Edemariam).

in your head, zombie?", respectively. In the latter, however, Dolores O'Riordan turns on the warlords and tries to understand their motives: "What's in your head, zombie?," she angrily and repeatedly demands in the chorus. While the word "zombie" conveys multiple associations with death and burial, even with violence and trauma, it is the symbolic use of the zombie figure that provides us with insight into the long-lasting effects of violence. In fact, Michael Broyles notes that, "for O'Riordan, the zombie seemingly symbolizes the ever-possible eruption of violence emanating from historical conflicts and the trauma such violence causes for generations."¹³⁹ In modern times, the word "zombie" has been also interpreted as the re-living corpses that eat human brains. Therefore, another figurative meaning in the song would be that the zombie is the thought of war itself, which technically does "eat" or take-over human emotions. Either meaning creates a horrifying tone, especially when she repeats the word multiple times in the chorus, creating an almost hostile picture in the listener's mind. While for James Joyce "History (...) is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (*Ulysses* 34), for Dolores O'Riordan, by all evidence, this nightmare remained ever alive.

Following the analysis above, it seems that Dolores O'Riordan created such a desperate and aggressive song as "Zombie" to disapprove of the mindless violence seen in history, while also trying to persuade the listeners that war has a negative impact for everyone involved. However, when read or listened with the historical context of the Troubles in mind, the song clearly illustrates the anguish of those surrounded by conflict and violence in Northern Ireland. We can conclude, then, that although artistic purity of purpose is a laudable thing to hang on to in a war zone, it is perhaps a fantasy, because

¹³⁹ The zombie originated as a religious figure in Haitian Voodoo, thus it would be interesting to further explore O'Riordan's use of the zombie figure in relation to historical Haitian interpretations. See Michael Broyles, "Cranberries, "Zombie," and the Irish-English Conflict."

this Cranberries song is, in a similar way to Carson's poem, full of all the layers of meaning and history that the simplest words such as "zombie" or "confetti" can carry.¹⁴⁰ Ultimately, regardless of apparent subject or genre, "Zombie" "bear[s] the trace of extremity within [it]," and it is, as such, "evidence of what occurred" (Forché 17). As a consequence, "Zombie" should be considered not just a timeless anthem against terrorism and war, but one of the most powerful artistic creations about the Irish conflict ever produced.¹⁴¹

Released as the album's first single, "Zombie" went to No.1 in several countries and on the US rock chart (although it only made it to No.14 in the UK), and was certified platinum in Australia and Germany. In the MTV era, however, equally

¹⁴⁰ For instance, a simple, apparently harmless word like "confetti" is used consistently throughout Ciaran Carson's entire book *The Irish for No* (1987) to represent brutality, as in "Queen's Gambit": "Just as the street outside is splattered with bits of corrugated / iron and confetti." However, confetti is used somewhat more ambiguously in "Snow," the second poem, which subtly references Louis MacNeice's poem also entitled "Snow": "The room was suddenly rich and the great bay-window was / spawning snow and pink roses against it / Soundlessly collateral and incompatible: / (...) There is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses," to which Carson answers: "A white dot flicked back and forth across the bay window / (...) Her face was snow and roses / just behind / The bullet-proof glass: / (...) Roses are brought in, and suddenly, white confetti seethes / against the window." Curiously enough, to further the conversation-like quality of these poems, MacNeice's "Snow" from his *Poems* (1935), is next to a dark poem titled "Belfast."

¹⁴¹ On 31 August 1994, just a few weeks after The Cranberries released the song, the IRA declared a ceasefire, and the loyalist paramilitaries were also about to follow suit. By then, the IRA had fought for 25 years against the British troops, so many critics of the song interpreted the ceasefire of the IRA as the direct result of "Zombie". Thus, the song was the last record bemoaning the Troubles before the onset of peace, and The Cranberries were invited to perform it at the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998, when they honoured Unionist leader John Hume and SDLP leader David Trimble "for their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland." See "The Nobel Peace Prize 1998."

important to the success of a song was the accompanying video, which in this case used an effective lyric and visual relationship. In the next section, I will thus apply the semiotic theory to allow the interpretation of the various facets and symbols that are encoded in the music video for the song and how the audience might have decoded such cultural concepts.

5.3.3.2. Audiovisual Analysis of the "Zombie" Music Video

Filmed by Samuel Bayer—already a world-renowned director who had made the video for Nirvana's ground-breaking anthem "Smells Like Teen Spirit" in 1991—the music video for "Zombie" gives an impressive visual statement that is highly aesthetic and supports the interplay of text and music at the same time. It is, however, one type of performance video where the lead singer is no longer just a performer but a materialization of a "televised bard,"¹⁴² because O'Riordan acts as a singing storyteller who uses on-screen images while delivering her urgent message.¹⁴³ The use of both performance and narrative in the video encourages repeatability as well as metaphorical and literal interpretation, allowing the audience to receive a creative interpretation of the original text. In the same way, the narrative part of the video encourages musical synesthesia, where the lyrical and musical performance of the song "determines the mood and atmosphere of the song as well as the visual subject and overall matter of the video" (Godsell). This is used to allow the audience to give meaning to the lyrics and to make intertextual references to the Northern Irish conflict, which shows that "music clips

¹⁴² According to audiovisual theorist Sven E. Carlson, a televised bard is "a singing storyteller who uses actual on-screen images instead of inner, personal images" (qtd. in Godsell).

¹⁴³ In fact, there are many close-up camera shots in both the narrative and performance parts of the video so that the audience are drawn into it and understand O'Riordan's role as singer and storyteller.

can provide a number of actual, authentic and motivating occasions for differentiated intercultural knowledge" (Thaler 67).

Music videos also give the content of a song a distinct, artistic shape because they are shot like mini feature films full of visual metaphors and symbols (Thaler 65). In fact, the focus of "Zombie" is not the band itself, but the visual narrative that they use to make the message conveyed in the lyrics even more explicit. For instance, at the very beginning of the video, a boy in black shows up and then suddenly the screen shifts into a piece of glass on which have been written the words "life" and "die," as if setting the key notes for what is going to happen (00:00:01-00:00:04). Bayer also intertwined religious and mythical discourses in various images and scenes throughout, such as the scene in three colours (gold, red and black) which is set in a metaphorical and symbolic world where a strange character—an Egyptian goddess-like woman daubed in golden paint (O'Riordan)—stands at the foot of a large cross, surrounded by golden angels fearfully holding up arches (00:00:40-00:00:49).¹⁴⁴ This is inter-cut with black-and-white documentary footage of soldiers and children on the war-torn streets of Belfast recorded by Bayer himself. "Zombie" is, therefore, a perfect example of what audiovisual theorist Sven E. Carlson believes music videos to be, that is, "a combination of modern mythic characters or forces" (Carlson qtd. in Godsell). Besides, if we suppose that the child in black of the first scene is one of the victims whom O'Riordan claims to sing for, we can see this as a comparison of his life and death. This whole visual image could thus be divided into two categories: life during wartime (that is, armed soldiers searching everywhere and children playing with each other using sticks and guns), and death caused by the war (symbolised by the golden angels standing in front of the wooden cross).

¹⁴⁴ See Appendix I, figure 24.

Furthermore, Andrew Goodwin notes that in music videos "the tone and atmosphere of the visual reflects that of the music—either illustrative, amplifying, or contradicting" (qtd. in Godsell). That way, Samuel Bayer and his team filmed in black, monochrome footage British squads patrolling the peace line in West Belfast, alert and nervous, to represent the harsh, brute fact of reality in Northern Ireland.¹⁴⁵ These scenes clearly and visually show the audience the change in mood and atmosphere of the song, something which is also often linked to the fast paced change of emotions that rock genre video's display. More importantly, by showing wreckage and death, this part of the video puts clear significance on the homes and lives that were destroyed because of the bombing and killings, and displays emotions of sadness and deep depression.¹⁴⁶ On a different note, says Goodwin, in music videos "[t]here is frequently reference to notion of looking (screens within screens, mirrors stages, etc) and particularly voyeuristic treatment of the female body." In "Zombie," there are notions of looking made by characters such as the children, some of which are represented as weak and vulnerable by looking at the fourth wall and staring at the camera with an expression of fear and depression on their faces to evoke pity from the viewer (such as in 00:00:01, 00:00:04 and 00:00:06).¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, however, it might be argued that the "male gaze" is not that evident in "Zombie" due to the emotional and delicate topic of the song.¹⁴⁸ Still, while the video does not focus on O'Riordan's body, nor does she wear

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix I, figure 25.

¹⁴⁶ Close-ups are used on the children and the soldiers to reflect such emotions as well.

¹⁴⁷ See Appendix I, figure 26.

¹⁴⁸ Feminist theorist and literary critic Laura Mulvey argued that the "male gaze" in cinema and audiovisual media is the way "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed [as sexual objects to the spectator], with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey 11).

provocative clothing, her eyes and her lips moving in the close-ups (00:00:49-00:00:53) might attract and draw viewers into it because of her strange beauty. We are also attracted to look to her due to the golden colour that gives the singer a magnificent, divine position to perform the song in. Thus, in the video, O'Riordan appears to be "daring to break with normal pleasurable expectations in order to conceive a new language of desire" (Mulvey 2184). In addition, she projects a contrasting image from those conventional markers of Irish identity—more notably, from Roman Catholicism—by representing an Egyptian woman-like goddess of life and death, in the role of Isis. This may be no coincidence, not only because Isis, like all Egyptian gods and goddesses, was connected to death and the Underworld, but also because it is commonly argued that her worship may have influenced Christian beliefs and practices such as the veneration of Mary, a practice performed in Roman Catholicism and Christianity but generally rejected in Protestant denominations.¹⁴⁹

Similarly, the use of religious iconography which references the integral Catholic and Protestant elements in the ongoing conflict is prominent in the video, especially in the "death narrative." These kind of visuals, according to Carlson, add new and deeper meaning to the images through the use of metaphorical language that

¹⁴⁹ In the abundance of divinities in Egyptian mythology, goddesses were usually associated with life and fertility. In the case of the goddess Isis, however, the principles of life and death were closely linked. In effect, while she was initially the personification of many motherly qualities, she was then associated with funeral rites that were to prevent the deceased from submitting to a second death in the succeeding dimension. The adoration of Isis reached beyond the traditional boundaries of ancient Egypt to account for a cult that was spread across the later Greco-Roman world, and was ended by the rise of Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries CE. See Dattatreya Mandal, "20 Major Egyptian Gods, Goddesses, and Their Family Tree."

conveys.¹⁵⁰ For example, angels are supposed to be in heaven, but these golden children are sitting around the woman at the feet of the giant cross instead, and they are wearing brambles on their heads. In Christianity, both are implications of carrying the sin for people, as Christ did, but who brought the sins and pressures on these innocent children? Looking at their faces, they seem so scared that some of them use bow and arrow outward, as if they are trying to protect themselves against some invisible threat (00:00:46). This might be a symbolic reference to the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian.¹⁵¹ Again, Bayer is trying to convey how the war and the violent conflict scared these children who cannot forget the ruthless violence they once experienced. Thus, while the cross might stand for the mostly religious reasons that led to the Troubles, the angels represent the young boys who died, as well as all the children who suffer under the influence of the conflict. Nonetheless, by applying Saussure's second order of signification between a sign and the signified,¹⁵² the use of such a large cross can connote the stifling power of religion over the Irish people—women and children in particular—because the giant cross is positioned looming over the golden woman and the children (00:01:01-00:01:06). Also, the use of red lighting in the background

¹⁵⁰ Carlson argues that, in music videos, lyrics and figures interact creating meaning, and thus, "[n]ew meaning is added to the banal lyrics through metaphorical language." The greater the leap between the content of the lyrics and the imagery in this metaphorical joining, the more difficult it becomes for viewers to understand and interpret the context. See Jacob Godsell, "Music Video Analysis."

¹⁵¹ Saint Sebastian was a senior officer of the Roman army pierced to death by hundreds of arrows as a punishment for being very close to Christianity.

¹⁵² Saussure defined a "sign" as being the construct of a signifier—the physical, whether it is a sound, image or object—and the "signified"—the internal perception. The relationship between the two aspects of a sign forms the associated meaning. The sign thus becomes a cultural representation and can be expanded to further orders of signification. This analytical theory suggests cultural diversity can affect the audience's mental observation, such as religious symbols. See Elli Smart, "Semiotics."

negatively associates danger and death to faith, drawn from the Christian connotations of the cross.

"Zombie" meets Carlson's theory again when O'Riordan sings "In your head, they are crying": the visuals and moving images meet the lyrics in metaphorical interpretation, as we see images of children playing with sticks while undergoing the pain and suffering brought about by the IRA (00:01:30-00:01:34).¹⁵³ These images are a rationale for the description, but they also ask us to question the work of art the song constructs, as the actuality of terror asserts itself: "In your head, they are dying." This can also be seen as the turning point for the use of the goddess metaphor, as the director makes us aware of the clash between myth and reality, beauty and atrocity. Another narrative function of this music video is fulfilled by the murals depicting war heroes of the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and its Protestant antagonist, the UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force). As Rose Chen notes, "wall-paintings are records of events and for a certain period, so these wall-paintings are best evidences and story-teller of the political conflicts and wars in Ireland." The first three wall-paintings shown are a royal-like symbol of Belfast, a soldier in black surrounded by "For God, UVF, Ulster" and a soldier in blue. These images that cover entire walls of buildings and churches seem to claim the greatness of the Northern Ireland government, by the following stronger pictures: giant flags of IRA, and the volunteers on its side (00:01:59-00:02:06). Then, another intimidating painting appears: two soldiers using guns pointing at a woman on her bent knee, entitled "Falls/Clonard, 25 Years of Resistance" (00:02:12). In other scene, we see the names of those who were shot by IRA in an inhumane and abusive way written in large letters on the walls. After that comes a painting of two men's head; right upon them, a soldier is using a gun pointing at them (00:02:28). This video is

¹⁵³ See Appendix I, figure 27.

therefore composed of two main interlacing parts: first, the religious and mythical imagery of life and death, and second, the actual historical events presented by the paintings on the wall. Clearly, we are shown these wall-paintings and murals to claim the cruelty of conflict and war, but, in fact, both parts equally reveal how the endless wars and assassinations were threatening the lives of people in Ireland.

Last but not least, there is a performance part in the video which shows another kind of relationship between the song and the visuals through the instrumental base, tempo and volume, and links in with the conventions of rock as emotion and mood depicted by the aggression or slowness of the playing.¹⁵⁴ For example, the moment when O'Riordan rises her voice and, with the strongest, most powerful sound, shouts out loud her anger to the soldiers. She screams from the top of her lungs for that freedom Ireland has longed so much for (00:03:31-00:03:40). The intensity of the drumming and the guitar alongside the singer harshly repeating "zombie, zombie, zombie" is then cut to children on the streets of Belfast beating each other with sticks and guns to playfully fight with each other (00:03:25-00:03:30). The camerawork and editing of the video puts here a significant interest on the children trying to convey the terrible effects the IRA have had on their lives. The children's playing with sticks and guns is indeed a striking imagery, for these scenes show that violence is a game to Irish children because they are too young and innocent to realise the impact of the conflict, but in the end they will become victims of it too. In a similar way, the playground of the children serves ironically as a metaphor of the battlefield of the soldiers. In the next scene, four golden angels tied on the cross, who first have their heads down, raise them up and scream, painfully but silently (00:03:55-00:04:35), while we listen to the highly distorted guitar

¹⁵⁴ See Andrew Goodwin's theory in Jacob Godsell, "Music Video Analysis. Theorists: Sven E. Carlsson's and Andrew Goodwin."

furiously strumming louder and louder.¹⁵⁵ Curiously enough, the image of these angels painfully shaking and screaming intersects with another one of a boy falling down on the ground. We might understand this as if the silver screaming angel was just remembering or thinking of the moment of his own death. Finally, we see a close-up of the boy lying on the ground (00:04:54-00:05:05). This scene has a double meaning again: it symbolises not just youth violence, but the whole destruction of humanity.

From the foregoing analysis, it becomes clear that Samuel Bayer made sure that the visual form of "Zombie" was close to the lyrical and musical form through the manipulation of colour (changing from black-and-white to colour), the motive settings and the footage of the story (which included soldiers, broken buildings and political murals), as well as make-up and clothing too. He successfully rearranged such visual motifs to illustrate the military violence, the bloodless killers and the potential menace in Irish people's life which put them in constant danger and fear under the great influence of endless fighting. Therefore, by relating both the lyrics and the images to the Troubles, the interpretation of the video supported the concept portrayed through the song of the Irish conflict being extremely destructive, painful and negative. As a result, "Zombie" still is one of the greatest examples of how music videos can provide actual and authentic cultural knowledge through merging artistic meanings and morphing cultural and objective interpretation into mass and popular culture.

Finally, just about four minutes after the last song on the album has ceased playing, a hidden track comes. "So Cold in Ireland" is a beautiful song whose meaning, nonetheless, many Cranberries' fans and music critics alike have questioned. On the one hand, the lyrics seem to describe a man who has abandoned his partner all of a sudden,

¹⁵⁵ See Appendix I, figure 28.

forever, maybe. On the other hand, it could be the story of a woman whose lover is killed in some sort of sectarian strife, which would make this song a lament for the Troubles. However, I argue that this song actually includes questions of identity, and, more especially, of belonging and longing with reference to an exile's relationship with Ireland. Thus, in the next section, I will explore how does the migration experience manifest itself and is linked to the vocal performance's power in the song. Throughout, the words highlighted in this case study will be analysed in detail to reveal the song's potential meanings and the "Irishness" encoded with the lyrical and musical content of the text itself, the effect to which is to claim intertextuality with Irish lament (*caoineadh*) and its specific socio-cultural characteristics.

5.3.3.3. Exile, Belonging and Longing in "So Cold in Ireland"

To begin with, on "So Cold in Ireland," O'Riordan's presence oscillates between two related yet distinguishable discursive functions: one oriented towards her extra-textual public persona, the other towards her role as a character "inside" the song. Moreover, in iconographical terms, she operates between two recognisable paradigms: one sensitive and vulnerable (in the verses), the other aggressive and assertive (in the chorus). These paradigms are directly related to her singing style, which is characterised by the use of two distinctive voices: a more private, confessional, restrained and intimate breathy voice; and a more imperative, harsh and declamatory voice that she eventually slides into shout. This, indeed, created a tension throughout many of her vocal performances, where the grain of her voice usually signified raw anguish.¹⁵⁶ At the same time, the style of the song, haunting and melancholic but also epic and intense, adapts itself to such vocal performance and to

¹⁵⁶ See Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," *On Record: Rock, Pop, And The Written Word* (Routledge, 1994), pp. 293-300.

the vocabulary that is used. In fact, the style's role is more important in the context of the storyline to place the characters and the imaginary nature of the drama, as the song begins in a ballad-like way:

Here is a story
Of hope and of glory
He's eighteen years old
And well, I fell in love. (1-4)

The lyrics are characterised throughout by the frequent use of the direct style, where, for example, the "I" addresses itself to the "you"—even though it is obvious from the lyrics that the "you" in question is far away:

Where have you gone from me?
The one that I loved endlessly
We used to have a life
But now it's all gone. (6-9)

This, together with the word "mystified" repeated again and again and sung "in crescendo" in the pre-chorus (line 10), instantly gives the song the form of a fantasy or a daydream in which the protagonist speaks aloud to someone who is not there, anymore. The "mystified" word also proves that in lyrics, as Antoine Henionn claims,

it is through the selection of words that the appeal must be made; certain key words, in contrast with the obviousness of the other words (...) function as pure signifiers: mysteriously, they have an autonomy of their own within the meaning of the text and are selected for the way they ring, for the expressive power which

gives them their opacity; they have to engage the imagination of the listener.

(Henionn 196)

Besides, the direct style in songs allows the direct expression of feelings and enables the listener to identify with the protagonist. Consequently, there is scope for the expression of real personal grief in these lyrics, which relates "So Cold in Ireland" to Irish laments or *caoineadh* (keening).¹⁵⁷ Traditionally, singers would sing *caoineadh* songs to lament for Ireland after having been forced to exile due to financial or political reasons (for example, many *caoineadh* songs have their roots or basis in the Troubles, with particular reference to the presence of the British military during this period). However, with *caoineadh*, women in particular could also lament the loss of a loved one. In this way, just like a traditional *caoineadh*, "So Cold in Ireland" begins as a mourning lament for the death or the loss of a loved one, but evolves into a kind of Irish diaspora mourning and reflecting on the political situation. In fact, as Narelle McCoy's research posits, keening "moved from a ritual form to an 'art' form where subjects normally considered taboo can be examined without censure" (McCoy 11), and these actually are expressed in a variety of contexts, some apparent and others more subtle, like a rock song, as is the case. Interestingly enough, the practice of keening is a tradition which was associated almost exclusively with women, and while Patricia Lysaght states that, "[a]s a poetic and song genre, it is part of the Irish language tradition" (65), Angela Bourke points out that the Irish word *caoineadh* means "a highly articulate tradition of women's oral poetry" (287).¹⁵⁸ ¹⁵⁹ Finally, Ruth Finnegan notes that:

¹⁵⁷ *Caoineadh* is Irish for a lament, a song which is typified by lyrics which stress sorrow and pain.

¹⁵⁸ McCoy also says that "[t]he significance of the feminine voice in funerary rites is not peculiar to Ireland but can be found in many cultures throughout the world" (1).

Poets and performers of lament songs or praise poems create and re-order the situation through their poetic expression, just as negro slaves transformed their environment by their songs. They encompass sadness and grief, the overwhelming emotions. (Finnegan 274)

In fact, although many of the descriptions of keens suggest or state that they were performed with a musical setting, some written accounts simply speak of a "cry" or a "howl" similar to those found in blues songs. In "So Cold in Ireland" (as is the case in much traditional Irish music), there are a lot of "sound words" that are perfect examples of this, such as the "la da da da-a"'s and the "Ya ha haaaaa" warbling done in the middle and at the end of the song. Another aspect common to this song and to many Irish ballads in particular,¹⁶⁰ is the powerful sense of place which is displayed.¹⁶¹ Similarly, in his essay "The Sense of Place," Seamus Heaney explains the profound link between displacement and what Patrick Sheeran has called "topomania" in Ireland (198):

¹⁵⁹ Any framework for analysis needs to take into account the importance of this poetic utterance as demonstrated by formal laments such as "Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire" or "Lament for Art O'Leary," which is the most outstanding existing example of the genre (Ó Tuama 88-90).

¹⁶⁰ Defined in the simplest terms by Gordon H. Gerould, "the ballad is a folk-song that tells a story. (...) What we have come to call a ballad is always a narrative, is always sung to a rounded melody and is always learned from the lips of others rather than by reading" (3).

¹⁶¹ Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin has said that that, "When the Irish speaker sings (...) he speaks of love, he speaks lyrically, he speaks of the now, and it's all linked to feeling and emotion (...) and a very strong sense of place" (qtd. in O'Connor *Bringing* 131). That is, indeed, a common feature of many compositions of Irish literature, from Ó Dubhgáí's 14th-century "topographical poems" to Aodhagán Ó Rathaille's 18th-century deathbed poem "Cabhair Ní Ghairfead" ("I'll Not Ask for Help"), on to William Butler Yeats exclaiming about John Synge, "that rooted man" (in "The Municipal Gallery Revisited"), and more recently, Seamus Heaney's 1975 poem collection *North*, Brian Friel's 1980 play *Translations*, or Ciaran Carson's 1987 poem "Turn Again."

It is this feeling, assenting, equable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind, whether that country of the mind takes its tone unconsciously from a shared oral inherited culture, or from a consciously savoured literary culture, or from both, it is this marriage that constitutes the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation. (Heaney *Preoccupations* 132)

At the same time, says Heaney, "[t]his love of place and lamentation against exile from a cherished territory is another typical strain in the Celtic sensibility" (*Preoccupations* 184). Thus, we could summarise that "So Cold in Ireland" bridges the gap between current events and timeless Irish myths through conventional simplicity and ancient wisdom. At least, that is the formula for the drama of the song itself, which seems to be timeless and mythic because in Ireland's rich tradition of music and song, emigration is one of the big themes.

In fact, in the 1950s and down to the 1980s, a variety of themes regarding migrations was evoked in songs, such as the beauty of the home place, nostalgia, loss, the pain of departure, and exile, but also anger and bitterness.¹⁶² In the 1990s, however, Irishness was increasingly defined according to the notion of the "migrant nation" and diaspora, and the weight of historical narrative bore down on Irish artists during this period of profound social change. We could thus argue that "So Cold in Ireland" tells the story of an Irish emigrant who has opened her eyes to the permanence of the conflicts and restrictions which once prompted departure, still questioning the capacity of her country to provide a home for her. That way, we find in this song the dual image of the Irish psyche facing emigration, and an interrogation as to where the protagonist's home may be: "Does

¹⁶² There are, indeed, relatively few songs in the Irish tradition which celebrate emigration as opportunity, challenge and a better life. Still, Black 47's "Livin' in America" and The Pogues' iconic "Fairy Tale of New York" are perfect examples of this from the modern period.

it have to be so cold in Ireland? / Does it have to be so cold in Ireland, for me?", O'Riordan shouts in anguish. We can also learn from the lyrics that a migrant's journey inevitably involves excising part of their past, so whenever the protagonist moves, she leaves part of herself and her story behind:

We were to have a child

Yesterday's gone

Well, I knew the time would come

When I'd have to leave and run. (16-20)

Throughout, she seems to be distressed by the prospect of not belonging to either home or host country, and wonders how can she feel at home when she is back in such a place, with such experiences ("Are they ready for me?", she asks herself). The song is therefore concerned with the psychological nature of exile, of becoming a stranger in one's won place, as well. This is not an exclusive Irish phenomenon, but it is culturally centralised for the Irish via historical and socio-cultural precedents of migration and exile.

In the lyrics, however, this weird discomfort the protagonist is feeling is actually of loss, because, in many ways, coming back has not meant coming home for her—that is what she means by saying, "Look what they've done to me / They've taken my hand... / And it's killing me" (lines 29-31). Moreover, the place of her memory is nowhere to be found and home is still undetermined, still intangible for her: "I see, that there is nothing for me / There is nothing for me" (lines 30-31). To further explain this, it might be helpful to think of "reverse culture shock," in terms of the culture shock one experiences when moving to or from a different country. Craig Storti, in his book *The Art of Coming Home*, talks about "reverse culture shock" as the fact that "many of the same events and circumstances that create stress when adapting to a foreign culture also create stress in the

return trip." At the same time, with culture shock, "many aspects of reverse culture shock are subjective, because each person will have a unique experience in readapting to his or her home culture." Consequently, new customs and habits are incorporated into our identity, until we eventually become accustomed to our new way of life, not realising that these little changes are what we now find familiar.¹⁶³ New routines become our norm and we create new identities through these routines and practices, immersing ourselves into the customs of our new "host" country. Finally, our concept of "home" is built on these new ideas of familiarity, routine, communication and identity (see "Reverse Culture Shock"). It is clear, then, that "home" is more than the physical place in which we live. Home involves, indeed, feelings, relationships, routines and predictable patterns of interaction. It is also associated with all of the people, actions, emotions and cues that make us feel "at home," because these elements associate the feelings of security, understanding, trust, safety and belonging.¹⁶⁴ In addition, it is not only space but time too that separates the past and the present in terms of place. All things considered, since there is a connection forged between place and being, and although one might be able to return to the same place in which one grew up, when both place and person change, one can never really "go back home" again. This is exactly what the persona is missing in Ireland and the reason why she does not want to come back, still "I'm afraid I'm returning to Ireland" (line 29).

In a similar way to Dolores O'Riordan, other Irish artists from diverse cultural fields have featured this phenomenon of return and repeat migration in their works. As an

¹⁶³ However, Craig Storti notes that as we immerse ourselves into a new culture, we become familiar with new practices. We learn the smells, the sounds and the feel of our new location, but we also learn to interact with new people. See Craig Storti, *The Art of Coming Home* (Intercultural Press Inc, 2001).

¹⁶⁴ It is also important to take into account that globalisation and mobility affect relations with both home and host countries, causing a shift in the balances of national identity, displacement and belonging.

example, for award-winning poet Sinéad Morrissey, who returned to Belfast after a decade abroad, resettlement in her home city is in many ways as challenging as any of her earlier relocations, resulting in a poetic renegotiation on the poems of her second collection, *Between Here and There* (2002):

I have returned here after ten years to a corner
and tell myself it is as real to sleep here
as the twenty other corners I have slept in.
More real, even, with this history's dent and fracture
splitting the atmosphere. (Morrissey 13)

Both O'Riordan's and Morrissey's reactions might be due to the fact that, as Seán Kennedy explains, "longing implies a residual affiliation to place, but cannot affiliate to the acts of national imagining that have consolidated their claim on that place, and this gives way to the experience of nostalgia" (qtd. in Harte 137). Conclusively, with "So Cold in Ireland," Dolores O'Riordan set to examining how she, as an Irish artist, could fit into the historical narrative of migration, while simultaneously acknowledging the altered conditions of her generational circumstance. In doing so, she faced the challenge and artistically acknowledged one of the socio-cultural contexts of Irish life. As a result, her song speaks to a duality of self and sense, and further dualities: of here and there, of home and away, of familiarity and estrangement. Ultimately, it offers a unique glimpse of the evolving migrant condition, tracing as it does the singer's conflicted reactions to the circumstances of Irish contemporary migration and her attempts to artistically manage such emotionally-charged concerns.

5.3.4. Conclusion

It becomes clear, then, that Dolores O'Riordan was one of the fiercest creative leaders in Irish rock, as well as one of the most talented and fearless artists the island has ever produced. Certainly, her effect on young Irish women has been absolutely radical and inspirational through the years, as it really made a huge difference to see such a young, shy girl from Limerick leading an all-male rock band, until transforming into one of Ireland's biggest and most successful rock icons. Although she sadly passed away on the 16th January 2018 (just a few weeks after this study was started), we have attempted to show that her unique individual voice and artistic identity will never be recreated nor forgotten, because the truth, passion, intensity and beauty of all of her songs will doubtless continue to inspire many generations to come.

5.4. References to William Butler Yeats' Poetry in Sinéad O'Connor's "Troy" and Dolores O'Riordan's "Yeats' Grave"

5.4.1. Introduction

There are only so many artists who are able to leave their mark so indelibly on the world that it ripples through the popular culture for generations. In this way, William Butler Yeats, having written some of the most enduring poems about love, life and death ever, profoundly inspires popular culture and music, as his influence extends far beyond the world of literature. Thus, love poems by Yeats have been present in a series of song lyrics to the extent that they represent a reinterpretation of his literary past and his personal life. More particularly, his unsuccessful love story with Anglo-Irish

revolutionary Maud Gonne has been recalled now and again, while vividly questioned and investigated by historians and biographers.¹⁶⁵ However, while the love theme is frequent in rock, Yeats has been an especially attractive figure to Irish musicians because they found in his poetry a historical component that is a way of enlivening Ireland's cultural past.¹⁶⁶ In fact, throughout his life, he adopted shifting stances (nationalist, liberal, nihilist, anti-establishment, radical) that would be familiar to many rock musicians too. Besides, according to M. L. Rosenthal:

Yeats was also the poet who, while very much of his own day in Ireland, spoke best to the people of all countries. (...) The element of song is always present in this poet's work, not only in his purely lyrical writing with obvious roots in folksong but also in his more intellectual and rhetorical writing. Everywhere, too, the theme of music and singing recurs constantly. (Rosenthal xv)

Still, most Yeats' poems explore personal and symbolic terminology which requires elaborated and extensive studies of both his artistic and intellectual writings. For example, "No Second Troy"—from *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910)—contains symbolic language and an eventful presence of Irish history while paralleling Greek mythology and history, yet it has frequently been analysed according to Yeats'

¹⁶⁵ Gonne became known mainly as a revolutionary, an activist for the rights of women and Irish independence who did not condemn the use of force. Along with her outstanding beauty, Yeats was probably attracted to her because she shared his dream of Irish Free State. She eventually married John McBride (one of the later leaders of the Easter Revolt), and even though Yeats also got married to his wife Georgie, he never stopped loving Maud.

¹⁶⁶ A compilation album of Yeats' songs, *Now and in Time to Be*, was released in 1997, featuring The Pogues' Shane MacGowan, Christy Moore, The Cranberries and The Waterboys, among other several acts.

own biography. Thus, it seems that Maud Gonne's presence in the poem might be a matter of common sense, and about the fact that she may be, indeed, Yeats' "Helen." Nonetheless, the crossing of languages, attitudes or styles which results in a "dialogue between points of view" (Bakhtin 76), describes certain perspectives about the different readings of the poem that became relevant to Irish rock artists such as Sinéad O'Connor and Dolores O'Riordan, who added "No Second Troy" to their songs "Troy" and "Yeats' Grave," respectively. In this way, the poem displays different points of convergence in each song, as the textual dialogues in the lyrics appear either as a double-voiced symbol or as homage to the poet himself.

This analysis, therefore, attempts to trace out the influence of the poetry of William Butler Yeats in Irish female rock musicians from a biographical and feministic point of view. It will mostly focus on the two songs mentioned above, "Troy" by Sinéad O'Connor and "Yeats' Grave" by Dolores O'Riordan from The Cranberries, as great examples of some of the inspiring ways in which women artists pay tribute and/or replicate the poets who came before them. Ultimately, it will demonstrate, once again, the ways in which Irish music icons are placed side-by-side with those of literature—in this case, through evoking the figure of William Butler Yeats.

5.4.2. "Troy" by Sinéad O'Connor

"Troy" is the most epic song from Sinéad O'Connor's debut album, *The Lion and the Cobra* (1987). Opening with a nearly whispered vocal, the song builds slowly over six-and-a-half minutes, while painting the picture of a romantic triangle full of passion, betrayal and rage. The song is, however, a stunning ballad on remembrance and regret, in which O'Connor uses the sack of Troy as a metaphor for deep heartache and pain, borrowing references, even lines, from "No Second Troy" to good effect. Notwithstanding the fact that the poem's theme is about a woman (presumably a modern

Helen), the narrator speaks of her in the form of four, somehow rhetorical questions, the first being a question of why:

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
Had they but courage equal to desire? (1-5)

Although the problem appears here as a rhetorical question, by asking about a reason to blame the woman, his tone is that which gives her forgiveness. The next three questions are directed towards the reader, as the narrator reflects on the possibility of a peaceful life for that woman. Still, in another question, the narrator consoles himself by saying that there was not another thing that she could have done, since she is "what she is":

What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is? (6-11)

Finally, the very last question on the poem expresses his main doubt: "Was there another Troy for her to burn?" (line 12), that is, was there a second Troy that she could have put down into ashes? The title has already given the answer to that question: no, there was "no second Troy," although the question arises whether the woman in question has destroyed something other than the city of Troy, perhaps the narrator

himself. Indeed, while in Greek history, Troy was a city fought over the abduction of an unfaithful woman (Helen) first, and completely destroyed during the Trojan War later on, the poet makes a comparison with a woman who has performed a similar story, although there has been much speculation about who the woman really is. When writing about the poem, Harold Bloom explains that "*The Green Helmet* is composed mostly of consciously retrospective poems on the lost relationship with Maud Gonne" (168), adding a quote from Winters, who affirms that Maud Gonne "is a special case, for Yeats was in love with her; but his equation of Maud Gonne with Deirdre, Helen of Troy, and Cathleen ni Houlihan partakes of his dramatization himself" (qtd. in Bloom 169).

Certainly, these views enter the historical context in a way that they become "true" inasmuch as they are combined with Irish popular culture and beliefs, in a similar way to Sinéad O'Connor's art. Therefore, although she does not specifically consider the plot of "No Second Troy" in her song "Troy," she willingly borrows symbols that already have a strong historical connotation. In the lyrics, however, these symbols do not just convey their original, historical meanings, but rather represent the failure of love relationships and the anguish of separation, implicitly suggesting Yeats and Gonne's romance. In that way, "Troy" becomes an insidious story of lost love, betrayal and despair, where anger and guilt are crying (sometimes even literally), as the lyrics go from describing small domestic moments to sudden laconic reflections in which two grand symbols derived from ancient mythology/history appear: the Greek city of Troy and the Egyptian phoenix.¹⁶⁷ O'Connor thus weaves the burning of Troy with the image

¹⁶⁷ Both symbols, Troy and the phoenix, are often used by Yeats in his poetry—compare "His Phoenix" and "No Second Troy," for example.

of a phoenix rising from the flames, a comparison that definitely enhances the already dramatic tension of the song:

But I will rise
And I will return
The phoenix from the flame
I have learned, I will rise
And you'll see me return
Being what I am
There is no other Troy
For me to burn. (41-48)

At this point, her vocals gain intensity, showing off her range to greater dramatic effect and to emphasise the gripping lyric. On the other hand, the line "Being what I am..." echoes Yeats' "being what she is" and "Being what you are / There is no other Troy / For you to burn" (lines 19-21). However, where Yeats seems concerned about the suggestion to burn, this should be interpreted more literally in the song, in which there is as much of a promise of resurrection as of revenge ("The phoenix from the flame").¹⁶⁸ Therefore, we can conclude that the song "No Second Troy" displays a distinct story from the poem "Troy" because the main symbols are double-voiced in the song.¹⁶⁹ On

¹⁶⁸ In fact, the music clip for "Troy" shows the singer in the middle of a sea of flames, and a singed skin is also suggested at the end. Watch Sinéad O'Connor, "Troy (Official Music Video)," www.youtube.com/watch?v=0c4v7fp5GC8 (00:05:40).

¹⁶⁹ According to Bakhtin, the heteroglot speech "constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct

the one hand, they represent Sinéad O'Connor's own voice, trying to associate them to Yeats' life. On the other hand, they represent the protagonist's voice, who lives the dreadful end of a relationship. However, both the poem and the song succeed equally in turning such a common experience into a transcendent, meaningful drama, evoking in a beautiful but brutally honest way all the contradictory emotions, from anger to confusion to awareness of loving the other still, that usually go with it.

5.4.3. "Yeats' Grave" by Dolores O'Riordan

Dolores O'Riordan also referred to Yeats' life and to his love for Maud Gonne in the song "Yeats' Grave" (included in *No Need To Argue*), without subjectively adjusting the symbol of "No Second Troy," as it is in O'Connor's "Troy."¹⁷⁰ Thus, "Yeats' Grave" represents "Yeats" speaking to someone from his grave, since the lyrics suggest Yeats' physical or spiritual presence with an unknown character (someone who might often visit the author's grave).¹⁷¹ In fact, she wrote it after visiting the site beneath Ben Bulbin mountain in County Sligo—where the poet is buried—as a tribute to Yeats both as a poet and as a man. However, on the contrary to "Troy", in this song, not only the author but also the song's persona is aware of what Yeats has represented in Irish culture. Thus,

intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions" (324).

¹⁷⁰ Curiously enough, a typo mistake led the track to be listed on the album sleeve as "Yeats' Grave" by accident, a serious grammatical error that was never corrected on later versions. For example, the album version of this song was also featured on the tribute compilation *Now and Then in Time—A Musical Celebration of the Works of W.B. Yeats*, released in 1997.

¹⁷¹ See Appendix I, figure 30.

"Yeats's Grave" is actually inspired by two poems Yeats wrote about his muse, Maud Gonne: namely, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and "No Second Troy."¹⁷²

On the one hand, "The Lake Isle Of Innisfree" is perhaps the best known of all Yeats' poems.¹⁷³ With its Irish folk resonance, the poem's progress reflects an inner wish to get away from the anxiety of the current life to the harmony of a rural idyll, where noise, pollution and crowds do not exist:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;

Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,

And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,

Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;

There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,

And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day

¹⁷² Both these poems are actually written in the booklet of the "Complete Sessions" version of the album, released in 2002.

¹⁷³ Isle Innisfree (*Inis Fraoigh* or "Heather Island") is an actual place in Lough Gill in County Sligo, Ireland. Ever since Yeats wrote "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" back in 1888, the tiny, uninhabited island has been a place of pilgrimage, celebrated in popular culture as a veritable antidote to stress and strain of daily life.

I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;

While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,

I hear it in the deep heart's core.

On the other hand, "No Second Troy" is usually read as autobiographical, and like we commented above, there are some reasons to do so: since Yeats was deeply obsessed with Maud Gonne, the pain her refusing caused him was the source of much of his poetry. Thus, in "Yeats' Grave," the "sitting in a grave" part seems to refer to Yeats using his personal suffering as artistic inspiration—something O'Riordan herself knew about very well. Similarly, the song tells us that the persona identifies with Yeats both in his life (imagining sitting with him at the Lake Isle of Innisfree) and in death (speaking "here / in the grave" with him). The situation, therefore, oscillates between binding and disconnection, between remembrance and forgetfulness. In the lyrics, this appears as double-voiced discourse: the positing of two distinct consciousnesses within a single idea (Bakhtin 324-25). Hence, listeners hear within the singer's words not one single voice but many, "those voices that claim the presence of Yeats' work in Irish arts—forces of continuity—and those voices that represent forces of discontinuity" (Stankiewicz 82). However, the song does not announce the shift in the persona's voice, as it alternates from his or hers to Yeats' voice throughout. Similarly, the persona or narrator of the song paradoxically informs that "William Butler Yeats couldn't save" (line 2)—that is, he could not resist the temptation of speaking again—soon after she declares that he was "silenced by death in the grave" (line 1). With no changes in the persona's voice, "Yeats" starts enquiring the person about a reason for his or her visitation, but his questions seem a complaint:

Why did you stand here?

Were you sickened in time?

But I know by now

Why did you sit here? (3-6)

In arranging the lyrics in this way, O'Riordan develops a stylised version of Yeats' language and poetic technique and, especially, that of the musical genre represented by grieving songs or laments. To further complicate matters, she then directly quotes the poet, speaking some lines from "No Second Troy" (from lines 8 to 13, to be more precise):

Why should I blame her that she filled my days

With misery or that she would of late

Have taught to ignorant men violent ways

Or hurled the little street upon the great. (1-4)

This use of "No Second Troy" in specific parts of the song is not neutral whatsoever, because the poem resonates with Irish cultural and ideological overtones about a national character that is inseparable from Irish culture. Still, O'Riordan makes Yeats seem both romantic and ridiculous at the same time when she goes on to tell us that Gonne was in love someone else: "Sad that Maud Gonne couldn't stay," she sings, "But she had MacBride anyway" (lines 14-15). However, I find this suggestion of romance and humanness behind the legendary writer's name to be particularly remarkable, for here is Yeats, imagining his love interests as being of world-historical importance, and here is this young woman, singing about it and "stealing" his words for her own purpose. Thus, it is almost like Maud Gonne herself is speaking back to Yeats, confronting him with his own inability to have "courage equal to desire" (line 23).

Interestingly enough, this "talking back" to the male authors and poets before them is also found in the work of many other women artists, such as Muriel Rukeyser (who rewrote the myths of ancient Greece), Adrienne Rich, Sylvia Plath, or Eavan Boland (who traced the maps of Ireland to find the famine roads), to name a few.¹⁷⁴ In fact, Boland herself wrote that:

All women poets have one thing in common. They are all daughters of fathers. Not simply daughters of a natural father, but also daughters within—and therefore sometimes entrapped by—the literature they seek to add to. (Boland qtd. in Passin).

However, as American poet and critic Marilyn Hacker notes:

Traditional narrative and lyric forms have been used by women for centuries—even if our professors of Western literature never mentioned Marie de France or Christine de Pisan. The language that we use was as much created and invented by women as by men. But generation after generation, women's contributions get edged out, written out. (Hacker qtd. in Passin)

Therefore, although this has not been the only way for women authors to create, of course, dealing with the works previously made by male authors was and will always be an important cultural act of vindication by women artists and creators across the board.

¹⁷⁴ See Muriel Rukeyser, "Myth"; Adrienne Rich, "V," *The Dream of a Common Language* (W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 27; Sylvia Plath, "Daddy," *Ariel* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), p. 49; and Eavan Boland, "The Lost Land," *The Lost Land* (W. W. Norton, 1998), pp. 37-38.

5.4.4. Conclusion

It is clear, then, that Sinéad O'Connor and Dolores O'Riordan, although having distinct musical arrangements, both partook of that amalgam of melancholy, anger and romance generally found in Irish poetics. They also included in many of their songs the history of wars and social difficulties undergone by Ireland.¹⁷⁵ It was through songs like theirs, indeed, that Ireland found a way to blend its past with the present in a way that had a new sense of ownership for the Irish youth in the late 80s and early 90s. Similarly, the two songs explored above, which were initially about Yeats, were in the end not really or only about him but about O'Connor and O'Riordan themselves, and just about any woman artist who, like them, has dealt creatively with the male poets. In that sense, they did not only give us the grandeur of Yeats' words spoken in a woman's voice, but also shew us how women artists can talk back creatively to the authors who came before them and claim their space beside them.

¹⁷⁵ Some of Sinéad O'Connor's songs that show major war matters and "modern laments" are: "Drink Before the War" (*Lion*, 1987); "I Am Stretched on Your Grave," "Lord Franklin," "Molly Malone," "Oro, se to Beatha Bhaile," "Paddy's Lament," "You Cause as Much Sorrow" (*I Do Not*, 1990); "Famine," "Fire on Babylon," "In This Heart," "Tiny Grief Song" (*Universal*, 1994); "The Lamb's Book of Life," "Kyrié Eléison" (*Faith*, 2000). Meanwhile, Dolores O'Riordan's lyrics on the same subjects are, for example: "I Will Always," "Put Me Down," "Waltzing Back" (*Everybody Else*, 1992); "Daffodil Lament," "Dreaming My Dreams," "Empty," "No Need to Argue," "Ode to my Family," "The Icicle Melts," "Twenty One," "Zombie" (*No Need to Argue*, 1994); "Bosnia," "Cordell," "Electric Blue," "War Child," "When You're Gone" (*To the Faithful Departed*, 1996); "Dying Inside," "Fee Fi Fo," "Like Dying in the Sun," "Sorry Son" (*Bury the Hatchet*, 2000).

5.5. Chapter Conclusions

From the analysis above, it becomes clear that Sinéad O'Connor's and Dolores O'Riordan's careers have meant a subversion of the dominant female archetype, not just in Ireland but in the music business, as well. Irish artists who shared a time of revolution and change in their country, it was in rock that they got a space to image alternative visions of gender when there were few other possibilities for resistance. Moreover, they chose to pursue authenticity in music, which resulted in a sort of "emotional nudism" as a tool of self-expression, therapy and rebellion through their songs. Songs in which they speak of love and heartbreak, but also of equality and the right to free expression. In fact, although their music sounds nothing like "traditional" rock 'n' roll, they did deliver rock 'n' roll's original thrill of transgressive expression in favour not only or purely of sexual freedom, but of the freedom to play and to transgress boundaries: boundaries of gender, music, and discourse. Therefore, even though they were different from each other, they can be connected by the truth and the bravery shown in their careers, because real bravery is taking back control of language, of image, of expression. However, what really marks them both out as significant Irish artists is the fact that they have incorporated controversial issues and included many explicit references to Irish culture into their music, from their lyrics to their way of singing. Conclusively, they are artists that should be admired for their talent as well as for their pioneering careers, because, following their example, a growing number of female performers have stepped to the fore in Ireland since then, openly incorporating gender rebellion into their art in the hope of making a difference—and this hope is, indeed, what maintains music as such an enlivening art form.

6. Still Looking for the Mystic: Singer-Songwriters in Irish Rock, Then and Now

6.1.1. Introduction

Songs are a medium where music and words have their place and simply go together, but there is a certain connection which creates a unique blend, for a song is always incomplete without words (otherwise, we would be talking of just music or a musical text). Thus, the songwriter obviously chooses his or her words carefully to convey the right meaning, and in that sense, their approach is very similar to that of a poet or a writer. As we mentioned on Chapter 1, in his essay "Why Do Songs Have Words?", Simon Frith speaks about the importance of the lyrics as words that are open to interpretation by the listener, just like words in poetry work: "Song words matter most, as words (...) when they are still open to interpretation—not just by the singers, but by their listeners too" (*Music* 123). However, the difficulty of writing a song usually lies in the use of appropriate words not only from a semantic point of view but also from a musical and rhythmic point of view, because, as Richard Middleton says, songs do not only work as mere words, "not only as verbal texts but as sung words" (*Reading Pop* 7). Similarly, Frith points out that poets might as well choose words "for reasons to do with meaning and sound" (*Rites* 169). Still, it would not be objective to label every song lyric a form of poetry, for if that were so, then looking for songs with "poetic lyrics" brings us back to what Geert Buelens, in his paper "Lyricist's Lyrical Lyrics: Widening the Scope of Poetry Studies by Claiming the Obvious," recommends avoiding: thinking that songs with lyrics that are not considered "poetic" or "literary" enough are not suitable for a literary analysis.

Moreover, song-writing is also a quest for perpetual enrichment of the song and of the effect those words are going to have during performance, because the poetic effect of the lyric is at its most powerful when put to music and performed. In fact, the juxtaposition of music and lyrics creates a subtle relationship between the two of them that provides another layer of meaning to the song, which must also be analysed in order to understand the song's text fully (Dougherty qtd. in Hernández-Riwes 1). Thus, if rock songs are not poems *per se*, they are at least "implied narratives," with a character (the singer) who has "an attitude, in a situation, talking to someone, if only to [themselves]" (Frith *Rites* 169). In that sense, songs would better appear as short dramas or acts in plays because "song, like drama, is about the invention of characters and stories. People (...) are at its centre" (Frith *Rites* 170). Still, we can claim that songs have, in a way, similar functions to poetry, such as to offer escapism in hard times, whether on a personal or a social level. In fact, song-writing has proven to be one of the most cathartic communications of feelings and thoughts, even more so because it is an art, and as such, it should have the right, even the need, to tackle any topic, whether romantic, philosophical or political. As an example, when Irish society began to become more liberal during the 1960s, one of the first ways in which this process was articulated was through the social organisation of music (Smyth 2005). Thus, it was in this decade that the beginning of the revival of Irish music and song-writing got started, the period during which a particular musical discourse (that of folk and traditional music) began to be re-articulated by new generations in terms of their concerns and desires (those articulated by rock).

Before that, however, songs in popular music had already been the subject of attention, with authors like Peatman (1943), Mooney (1954) and Horton (1957) undertaking "content analysis," but they concentrated only on what the words in the

lyrics were saying. This, according to Frith and Goodwin, appealed initially to empirical sociologists because it employed an apparently scientific method (2), but in the 1960s, lyrics began to work in different ways and deal in a myriad of subject matters. As rock was now providing a new aesthetic vocabulary, Richard Goldstein's book from 1969, *The Poetry of Rock*, signalled a tendency to the valuing of elements that had previously been taken for granted in songs. However, Simon Frith highlights the issue with *The Poetry of Rock* and other subsequent works in which those so-called "rock poets" are recognised by a particular sort of "self-consciousness," and whose status rests "not on their approach to words but on the types of word they use" (*Music for Pleasure* 117). In his analysis of songs as texts, Frith also argues that the common anthologist's perception of rock lyrics was stuck in a set of "middlebrow criteria the New Criticism successfully drove out of the academy in the 1930s" (*Performing* 117). In fact, Robert Christgau, in an article entitled "Rock Lyrics Are Poetry (Maybe)" from 1967 (predating *The Poetry of Rock* itself), had acknowledged these contradictions and highlighted one of the most useful ideas in later writing on song lyrics: "Poems are read or said. Songs are sung." Interestingly enough, he concludes the article by linking the work of singers and songwriters to an "almost lost bardic tradition, where their function was to speak to a new, non-literary, audience." There is, indeed, another link with an older, pre-twentieth-century poetry that was designed to be spoken out and remembered, in the way that popular song is now: if we listen to recordings of poets such as Robert Browning, Lord Tennyson or Yeats, the musical, oratorical and incantatory nature of their recitation is clearly apparent in their delivery (this, for example, allowed the words' meanings to live in the listeners' mind). Likewise, as Negus notes, "song words have an ability to live in the head long after the song has stopped being listened to, because the grain of the voice

of the singer and their words, sung and intoned, are replayed and played with long after the listening event."

For all its shortcomings, however, the importance of the works mentioned above lay in their role as markers for the emerging breakdown of the divisions between "high" and "low" cultural practice that was taking place at the time. Thus, where it had previously been very easy to stereotype any popular music song as mostly formulaic and in step with cultural norms of love and life, now there was a real case for rock lyrics to express wider and deeper ideas. As a consequence, there emerged a body of critical work dealing with lyrical analysis (Gray 1973; Gracyk 1996; Griffiths 2003; etc) which has a valid point to make: namely, that there is much in a song beyond its tone and expression. Thus, while acknowledging and using the perspectives of Frith et al. with regard to performance and articulation, a closer study and attention to the words of lyrics is much more valuable in deepening our understanding of how rock songs function. Therefore, in the present chapter, I will consider some of the theoretical and methodological issues pertaining to the study of song-writing while looking at Van Morrison and Hozier, two of the most renowned lyricists of Irish rock in which such song-writing techniques feature. I will also acknowledge some of the most powerful literary-poetic influences and references in their songs, such as Joyce, Blake, Yeats and Heaney. Ultimately, this chapter is about connections and how things carry on.

6.2. "Ventured in the Slipstream": The Poeticism of Self and Place in Van Morrison's Early Albums

6.2.1. Introduction

Van Morrison's career can be considered a narrative in which he has pursued variations upon a number of key lyrical, musical and conceptual discourses. Like Bob Dylan, he has explored his evolving responses to the world and reported his findings in musical form.¹⁷⁶ He also has been the first Irish musician to define a unique style that had a profound effect on the evolution of Irish rock music, because, as McLaughlin and McLoone suggest:

[Van Morrison], more than any other Irish (or British) rock musician, has maintained a strong sense of his roots while at the same time exploring—and extending considerably—the international rock idiom. His art is an art of the periphery, soaking up the influences of the centre, adapting them to its own designs and then offering them back to the centre in a wholly unique form. ("Hybridity" 184)

Thus, Morrison's contribution to Irish rock heritage is immeasurable, but unfortunately, his recording history is too extensive to detail here. However, his early works, those created and released between 1968 and 1980, already harnessed the mystical side of his music, which was all at once a Celtic mixture of folk and the genres derived from the great American forms: blues, jazz, country, rock and soul. He had inherited black folk traditions not entirely from the outside, not as a separate genre, but as ever-present influences on other hybrid styles. This inheritance shows clearly right from the start.

¹⁷⁶ See Appendix I, figure 31.

Nonetheless, Peter Mills says that "Van Morrison's music is (...) not very "Irish" in any generic sense. Yet there is a deep and understand "Irishness" running throughout his work, even if (...) it might not seem that way at first glance" (xiv). In fact, he was peculiarly amenable to soul music because, as his own theory puts it, he believed "that soul music originally came from Scotland and Ireland" (Morrison qtd. in O'Connor 6). Similarly, his views on blues and traditional Irish music were essentially linked in the context of Belfast of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Therefore, although his creative insight and integrity set him beyond that sphere, his work has been grounded on the folk culture of Ireland ever since, which provided a fundamental basis for his creativity. In his view, both Northern Ireland and the United States had their compensations and their drawbacks, their attractions and their limitations, thus his music may be understood as an ongoing and evolving response to the paradoxical situation in which he, as an Ulsterman with access to the African-American musical tradition, found himself—indeed, his imaginative shift from Irish traditional music to blues and jazz would begin to show political strains by the early 1970s. Moreover, Peter Mills has noted that:

Morrison's work has swung beside a position of detachment and a more open set of connections, sometimes giving us a remarkably candid sketches of Belfast and the world in which he grew up, sometimes mystical and allusive, sometimes bright and direct. [However,] He has freely admitted in song and in conversation that he does not feel the need to know exactly what he is doing in the moment of creativity, or what the "meaning" of such work might be. (Mills xviii)

Consequently, writing about the songs of Van Morrison is seen as something of a paradox too, and this examination is not out to force any meaning upon his music. However, the themes of the Van Morrison's songs which I will look at can broadly be described as explicit poeticism and mythologisation of both self and place, which

pursue a direct emotional response on the listener. This spirit, which has animated his work intensely throughout his career, was already apparent in his earlier works, some of which will be explored next.

6.2.2. Mythologisation of Self: *Astral Weeks* and "Into the Mystic"

On *Astral Weeks* (1968), Van Morrison forged a new kind of song-poetry—literate and lyrical, immediate but lingering—in the pursuit of what Dave Marsh called a "personal emotional equivalent of the blues" (345).¹⁷⁷ ¹⁷⁸ Written about largely in exile, the lyrics comprise the Belfast suburb of his childhood and landscapes drawn from his imagination. There is, indeed, a powerful "stream of consciousness" running through the songs—or as W.B. Yeats put it: "A passion-driven exultant man sings out / Sentences that he has never thought" ("Magic" 293)—with Morrison, in Seamus Heaney's term, "digging" deeper and deeper into the inner-self to uncover a poetic quality that was new for rock 'n' roll until then. In fact, in his famous poem of that same name, Heaney compares his father's and grandfather's work and craft with his own, drawing out the differences and likenesses between pen and spade:

Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound

¹⁷⁷ Interestingly enough, *Astral Weeks* appeared in the same year as Derek Mahon's first poetry collection, *Night Crossing*. Also around that year, one sees a new and powerful generation of Northern Irish poets emerging out of the post-war period: Seamus Heaney with *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and *Door into the Dark* (1969); Michael Longley and *No Continuing City* (1969), with its "Words for Jazz Perhaps" (updating Yeats); and James Simmons' *Late But in Earnest* (1967) and *In the Wilderness* (1969).

¹⁷⁸ See Appendix I, figure 32.

When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:

My father, digging. I look down.

[. . .]

My grandfather cut more turf in a day

Than any other man on Toner's bog.

Once I carried him milk in a bottle

Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up

To drink it, then fell to right away

Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods

Over his shoulder, going down and down

For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap

Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge

Through living roots awaken in my head.

But I've no spade to follow men like them. ("Digging" 3)

The poem concludes with this thought: "Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests / I'll dig with it." Like Heaney, Van Morrison is also aware of the differences between him and previous generations, and establishes connections between what he does and manual work. However, while the poet says he will dig with his pen (that is,

the tool of his trade), Morrison will use his songwriting to illuminate what he sees, because that is his tool. In a similar way, in "Astral Weeks" the artist implores someone (be it lover or some other person) an understanding of the creative spirit, to allow oneself go, to trust in feelings. The song opens with a shivering, gentle guitar over a shuffle beat; then Morrison's voice sings abstract, almost psychedelic lines about exploring "the viaducts" of his lover's thoughts, maybe even of getting lost there:

If I ventured in the slipstream

Between the viaducts of your dream

Where immobile steel rims crack

And the ditch in the back roads stop

Could you find me?

Would you kiss-a my eyes? (1-6)

This is an opening into what Lester Bangs called the "mystical awe that cut right through the heart of the work" (20). The song, however, has no chorus, and its jazz structure (propelled by acoustic bass and guitar) conveys a mood of mystery and longing. After that, it just drifts upward on the imploring tone of the following lines:

Lay me down

In silence easy

To be born again

In another world. (50-53)

Morrison addresses both his unnamed lover and the listener (here as one), and aims directly at a place where words cannot carry:

In another land

So far away

Way up in the heaven

In another time

In another place

Way up in the heaven. (59-64)

He thus seems to believe in sexual connection as salvation and rebirth, and lovers as guiding lights. Yet all is uncertain, this spiritual rebirth a question, not a statement. There is also something of this sense of being an outsider everywhere in the way he uses the idea of exile, when he equates his move to a new world (both America and that of love) with a sense of being lost: "I ain't nothing but a stranger in this world" (line 57). Finally, he drifts away at the end of this endlessly circular song into dreams of heaven, repeated over and over, as his voice takes on a tone of wistfulness and surrender. The metaphysical quality of Morrison's repeated assertion that he belongs "In another time / And another place / (...) And another face" anticipates a discovery he would make: that the likes of W. B. Yeats had worked at the same seam of creativity and ideas before him (especially in his highly mystical work "A Vision"), and that he was in some ways as much a successor to that tradition as to that of the bluesmen and women, for they are, in

their own ways, members of the bardic tradition, mystics, visionaries, and therefore, Morrison's true literary ancestors.¹⁷⁹

What is more, with this emphasis on romance and Celtic mystery, the song "Astral Weeks" is strangely reminiscent of Peter Marshall's *The Philosopher's Stone* (2001), a book in which Marshall attempted to define the search for the stone: "No alchemical experiment in the laboratory is devoid of a moral or spiritual dimension. Alchemists agree with the ancient principles: "As above, so below" and "As within, so without"" (13). The stone is thus an image of unity and of wholeness, and as such, harmonises with the primal human urge towards a return to the centre, to the source. Van Morrison would later make redundant this same subject, the quest, and the visceral vehemence of it all in "Into the Mystic," another beautiful ethereal song about looking for some kind of faith that would allow him to feel at peace everywhere. Ransacking the work of mystics, seers and poets for clues, it would be included in his album of 1970, *Moondance*:

We were born before the wind

Also younger than the sun

Ere the bonnie boat was won

As we sailed into the mystic

Hark, now hear the sailors cry

Smell the sea and feel the sky

¹⁷⁹ Indexed in this song by the reference to his childhood idol, African-American blues musician Leadbelly, describing a woman talking "to Huddie Ledbetter." This amplifies the blues in the song while depicting him as a character in a poetic landscape.

Let your soul and spirit fly into the mystic

And when that foghorn blows

I will be coming home

And when the foghorn blows

I want to hear it. (1-11)

From these lines on, the music builds for "I don't have to fear it and I want to rock your gypsy soul / Just like way back in the days of old / And magnificently we will flow into the mystic (lines 12-14), suggesting real points of connection between the verbal (lyrical) and emotional (musical) sense of the song. These flowing sail-shapes of "Into The Mystic" have some concrete links to the real landscapes of Morrison's childhood, a concept of place that we will also find in "Cyprus Avenue," for example. However, there is room for interpretation beyond the song's superficial meaning. On the one hand, it might be interpreted as expressing an understanding that life is finite (the ship sailing on its round trip) and must be lived to its fullest ("I want to rock your gypsy soul"). On the other hand, as he sings "When that fog horn blows / You know I will be coming home," the lyrics seem to describe an act of love (normally a foghorn signals danger, but in this case it means he is close to home and his love), but it could also be a metaphor for an acceptance of life's inevitable end ("sailing into the mystic"). This idea of the unfold door that leads out of time and space relates as well to the most obvious and famous image of finding the marvelous in and through the ordinary in C. S. Lewis' fantasy novel *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (1950). Both works offer a magic door into another world and go "into the mystic," a place built on feeling and a kind of

nirvana that has to be defended but is never owned. More particularly, the song is an invitation to experience oneself and the world about us differently, and offers almost complete openness of experience: to sail into the mystic, one only has to learn to look, to listen and feel. Whatever the case, the intensity with which Morrison engages in his pursuit of what he deems "the mystic," the obsessive quest to reach a higher spiritual plain—indeed, to lose himself there—seldom had been witnessed among rock performers before. Dave Marsh, writing in 1983 about Bruce Springsteen, Bob Seger, and others who might be considered Morrison's acolytes, argued that "none of these [other singers] has yet taken the spiritual basis of rock and R&B and the blues so far into an almost religious concept" (346).

Another song from *Astral Weeks*, "Madame George," dramatises such condition with a haunting portrait of belonging and leaving. In this sense, the nearly countless "goodbyes" at the end no longer necessarily signify "I must leave" or "I'll never see you again," but rather "I'm returning" and "I will never forget you"—at least until the end, when Morrison sings in a beautiful twirling melodic arc: "And the love that loves the love that loves the love that loves the love that loves to love the love that loves to love the love that loves." It is this ending which shows that, as Lester Bangs wrote in his review on the album:

Van Morrison is interested, *obsessed* with how much musical or verbal information he can compress into a small space, and, almost conversely, how far he can spread one note, word, sound, or picture. (...) He repeats certain phrases to extremes that from anybody else would seem ridiculous, because he's waiting for a vision to unfold. It's the great search, fuelled by the belief that through these musical and mental processes illumination is attainable. Or may at least be glimpsed. (Bangs "Astral Weeks" 24)

In fact, as Peter Mills points out, "Morrison is a lyricist as well as a singer, and that 'skilled combination' of verbal and vocal dexterity is very important to him" (*Hymns* 149). However, his voice usually dominates what is sung because language turns into music at certain points, especially when the tongue, the throat, the making of the sound itself, is its own instrument. He also uses hypnotic repetition (isolates words and syllables, or repeats them) to create emotional intensification and verbal fragmentation to create unity. These repetitions, also according to Mills, are "spiral evocations which heighten and subtly modify the emotional input and response of the listener with each recurrence of the key sound" ("Aural Poetry" 93). Similarly, key mood words such as "eye," "goodbye," "why" and "love" are repeated over and over inside a softly swelling and tumbling melody, until they assume a different tone and proportion. Such repetitions indicate the centrality and the evocative quality of every image, and thus assist rather than impede the flow of the lyric, while stressing the sense and drawing attention to crucial moments. In "Madame George," it also helps that the song's dominant mood is that of remembered adolescence, yet the meaning hangs elusive as the stream of images follow one after the other like a film, where they seem to paint a sexual encounter:

Down on Cyprus Avenue

With a childlike vision leaping into view

Clicking, clacking of the high heeled shoe

Ford and Fitzroy, Madame George

Marching with the soldier boy behind

He's much older now with hat on drinking wine

And that smell of sweet perfume comes drifting through

The cool night air like Shalimar. (1-8)

These lines are similar to a modernist use of "stream of consciousness," but this uses a technique which is radically different to that used by James Joyce: while in *Ulysses* Joyce uses the technique to show the fragmented inner life of his characters, with all kinds of base desires and thoughts, Morrison is much closer to the more impressionistic style of Virginia Woolf, with her flow of feeling and painterly abstractions. Where Morrison does correspond with Joyce, however, is in this double vision, the love and compassion that both can bring to their portraits of others, be it Leopold Bloom or Madame George, seeing their tawdriness and defeats but also the bravery with which they survive and live out their lives. Moreover, according to Theodore Gracyk:

The historical author chooses specific places, objects, and people, but they function as placeholders for ideas more than as references to the individuals they mention. (...) [Therefore,] When Van Morrison seems to tell us details about his childhood and adolescence, the seemingly direct act of self-disclosure gives way to the indirect act of inviting the audience to make it relevant by engaging in imaginative substitution. (Gracyk *I Wanna* 66)

On the other hand, Gerald Dawe's view on this song is somewhat broader and pan-culturally-based. While stating that "the key lyric is *Astral Weeks*," he also cites it as "a cultural ever-present in the Belfast [he] knew of 1969-70," and how that period corresponded "to a break-up of the world that he and Morrison had grown up with," claiming that "Madame George" is "a portrait of a society about to withdraw from public view at the same time as the voice which describes it is also leaving the scene (...). The site of the poem blurs and moves in and out of focus" (Dawe "Burning" 57).

This sense of locality informs the internal logic of the record, with its Blakean division of sides one and two into "In the Beginning" and "Afterwards."

Similarly, in the song "Cyprus Avenue" (Van Morrison's first and most celebrated evocation of the Belfast in which he grew up), he made use of the power of the name to evoke and modify the original meaning of place. Thus, as with "Madame George," the lyrics to "Cyprus Avenue" are "both evocative of the spirit of place while being almost completely free of specific detail" (Mills 295):

Caught one more time

Up on Cyprus Avenue

And I'm conquered in a car seat

Not a thing that I can do. (3-6)

Moreover, in this song, which concludes the "In the Beginning" side of the record, the sense of exile is strong, even though the line "Caught one more time up on Cyprus Avenue" suggests a strong desire to escape. Yet, the poetic landscape which the songs create and in which the action takes place cannot be escaped, because it is internal ("Not a thing that I can do," as the singer says). Throughout, the mood is autumnal, with "leaves" an ongoing image imitated by strings, and slightly obscure lyrics which call up familiar imagery: that of trees and lonesome, olden-day ladies returning from the fairs. Here again, like in his previous, more mystical songs, we are hearing experience relieved:

I may go crazy

Before that mansion on the hill

But my heart keeps beating faster

And my feet can't keep still. (9-12)

There is, however, a further element introduced as Morrison touches upon inarticulateness, that much-vaunted feature of Northern Irish cultural identity (and one that he has explored in live performances). The lyrics, thus, express the idea of how difficult it is to communicate powerful feelings:

My tongue gets tied

Every time I try to speak

And my inside shakes just like a leaf on a tree

I think I'll go on by the river with my cherry, cherry wine

I believe I'll go walking by the railroad with my cherry, cherry wine

If I pass the rumbling station where the lonesome engine drivers pine. (21-26)

However, what really makes "Cyprus Avenue" such an important song in Van Morrison's writing as a whole is the feeling of home. Between the formal poetry and the physical setting, "Cyprus Avenue" is a very powerful evocation of place which does try to transcend the mundane existence of the ordinary street with rows of houses by illuminating the lives that have been lived there. In this regard, Morrison said in the BBC2 programme *Arena: One Irish Rover* (originally broadcasted in 1991):

I must be an Irish writer (...) We're preoccupied with the past because we're trying to transcend the mundane existence (...) that there is something else, never mind "must be" (...) there is something else and in Ireland, it's there (...) this preoccupation with the past, it's not sentimental (...) as with Raglan Road,

[Cyprus Avenue] is an ordinary street with rows of houses, but you go away thinking (...) the lives that have been lived in this place, the things that have happened... ("Van Morrison Arena")

The beauty of the song, its unsentimental yet emotional expressiveness, is also characteristic of a particular genre of Irish songs of exile. In that way, the poem goes on to praise the places the singer loves, displays a great joy in nature, and finishes on a note of bitter regret and longing for home:

And I'm conquered in a car seat

And I'm looking straight at you

Way up on, way up on, way up on...

The avenue of trees

Keep walking down

In the wind and rain, darling

You keep walking down when the sun shone through the trees

Nobody, no, nobody stops me from loving you baby. (38-45)

Such transcendent vision gives way to the song's final stanza, which is the same as the first ("Well, I'm caught one more time..."). Locating the source in the destination is a poetic convention—"In my end is my beginning," T. S. Elliot wrote in the *Four Quartets* (27), and James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* is similarly circular—that produces a continuous poem in which the artist's memory returns again and again to its first home.

Therefore, the acknowledgment of homelessness and the struggle against it is, in fact, essential to the poetic spirit of *Astral Weeks*. In this sense, *Astral Weeks* would be Van Morrison's *Ulysses*, that is, a litany of who the young Morrison was, as well as the places that made him. This album also showed, however, the extent to which Van Morrison was an artist who not only had a strong commitment to the place, but also a particular vision infused by a powerful sense of how ordinary life is suffused with the spirit of place. This feeling for and exploration of Irish balladry and music continued to be reflected in his song-writing. The records and songs that followed *Astral Weeks* would deepen and extend his early concerns (namely, a Northern Irish childhood, the healing power of the homeland, and a search for spiritual consolation) and connect them to his own sense of belonging and exile through looking back to his roots, once more.

6.2.3. Poeticism of Place in *St. Dominic's Preview* and *Veedon Fleece*

The idea of journey is a recurring theme in the history of Irish music, and with this idea of journey goes its expressed perception of exile. At the same time, why leaving the home place should be invariably conceived of as exile (even when it presaged an improvement in life) is bound up with the pre-eminence of landscape in Irish minds and hearts. Thus, in Seamus Heaney's words: "This love of place and lamentation against exile from a cherished territory is another typical strain in the Celtic sensibility" ("God" 184). This is especially true of Van Morrison's music.

From 1971 to 1976, he lived in America, a condition that intensified both his ambivalence about being Irish and the Irishness itself (just as would happen later to U2). Consequently, the albums created during this period were, on the one hand, an imagining of America and the extraordinary sense of freedom (as well as obsessiveness) associated with the place. On the other hand, they belied another truth: that of the profound, irrevocable change Belfast was experiencing as the site of sectarian violence

that took possession of the city from the late 1960s. More specifically, 1969 was the year in which Belfast broke out into civil war, with British troops brought over almost as an army of occupation to keep order. Interestingly enough, the cover of *St. Dominic's Preview* (1972)¹⁸⁰ features a theatrical shot of Van Morrison sitting on what might have been church steps, holding a battered guitar, his head slightly lifted toward the sky, his face sad but thoughtful, his eyes gazing into the future and into the past, seems to be thinking: "Will this war never end?" Certainly, the cover works as a setup, convicting both the album's title and that of song that would name Belfast with a bitter regret.¹⁸¹ Widely understood as a comment on the state of Northern Ireland in the early '70s, the evocation of Belfast in "Saint Dominic's Preview" is a personal one again, still we feel the nostalgia about being far from home during troubled times, or the homesickness implicit in Morrison's observation "It's a long way to Buffalo / It's a long way to Belfast city, too" (lines 9-10). Moreover, again in this song we are pulled into the artist's burning emotion, again we are part of a free flow of images, and repetition is the key factor as every line builds up and up:

All the orange boxes are scattered

Against the safeway's supermarket in the rain

And everybody feels so determined

Not to feel anyone else's pain

¹⁸⁰ See Appendix I, figure 33.

¹⁸¹ The title is related to a mass for Irish peace held at St. Dominic's church in San Francisco, where Van Morrison was trying to make a new life.

No one's making no commitments

To anybody but themselves

Talkin' behind closed doorways

Tryin' to get outside, get outside of empty shells. (16-23)

The imagery is glancing, oblique and, for the most part, forlorn: "orange" boxes and "flags and emblems," people determined "not to feel anyone else's pain," freedom marchers who feel the pain but cannot solve the problems. The song continues autobiographically, listing Morrison's own experiences with record companies: "And they're flying too high to see my point of view" (line 42), he even spits at one moment. However, while it connects or can be connected with Northern Ireland via its mention of Belfast and its imagery, this song gives equal measure to the rest of the world with all of its history (which is also to say, all of its killings) in the chorus: "As we gaze out, as we gaze out on / St. Dominic's Preview."

Ultimately, "St. Dominic's Preview," like "Cyprus Avenue" and "Madame George," seeks to connect to Van Morrison's habit of using music to recreate or just evoke time, space and place via memory—he would later describe the song as "a stream of consciousness work" (Morrison qtd. in Hinton 142). It is also close to the existential condition of eternal movement which found its first and purest expression in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), a novel full of dreamy, poetry-like evocations of the pleasures of eternal movement. This idea of perpetual movement is clearly a seductive and alluring one, the road having a meaning both powerfully mythic as well as very specific and non-mythic for a musician like Van Morrison. Certainly, Kerouac's idea of motion and movement, of rootlessness being both a blessing and a curse, was later explicitly and developed as an idea by him. More importantly, for a whole post-war

generation, *On the Road* gave them a view of what was possible in one's lifetime. Likewise, the language of the novel, in its seamless blend of the fictional and autobiographical, also filled the lyrical discourses of the popular music that was to follow it. Consequently, it impacted upon a generation's speech patterns and frames of cultural reference. Seeing how these ideas move through the themes of exile and restlessness can be discerned right through Van Morrison's songs. This also identifies with the wild loneliness of the blues—the musical expression of a covert community of sole and singular people who, like the Irish, were always in motion, yet somehow connected—and passes on to a very important theme in his work, that of the sensitivity to the spirit of place.

In this way, the culture of exile is strong and absolutely central to the mingling of aching fondness which runs through the songs on the album *Veedon Fleece* from 1974.¹⁸² More particularly, the sense of exile in one's own land is further pursued in "Streets of Arklow." It is, on one level, a song of joy coming out of darkness—"And the morning / Coming on to dawn" (lines 7-8)—but it does not necessarily sound like it: while it is a ballad which has all the folk feelings introduced on *Astral Weeks*, it does, however, derive from the dark end of the spectrum, retaining enough mystery and menace to make it an unsettling listening experience. It is not so much that Ireland is a place of "mystery, imagination and dreams," but rather that the idea of the place seems to unlock these elements within Morrison's own creativity. In other words, the feeling relationship "between the country of geography and the country of the mind—be that relationship based in the conscious or unconscious senses—stimulates a sense of wonder through the spirit of place in its richest manifestations" (Mills "Aural Poetry" 94). On the other hand, the song employs a certain amount of rhetoric generally found

¹⁸² See Appendix I, figure 34.

in the folk song,¹⁸³ yet, unlike many such songs, his does not deliver a full and coherent narrative:

And as we walked

Through the streets of Arklow

Oh the color

Of the day wore on

And our heads

Were filled with poetry

And the morning

A-comin' on to dawn. (1-8)

Paradoxical as it may sound, this is typical of Morrison's songwriting method: his lyrics work more by suggestion and atmosphere than by the building up of a coherent set of images and details. This itself may be down to the artist's vision and technique, which throughout his career has been concerned with the extraordinary within the everyday and the survival of the mystical alongside the material—it seems, indeed, that the relationship between Ireland and the rest of the world functions for Morrison as an allegory of this vision. Thus, the gloominess at the opening is temporarily relieved when we sense the kind of world to which we are just about to be introduced:

And as we walked

¹⁸³ The title self-consciously evokes the world of Irish balladry, with its allusion to both the sub-genre of the place-name song, and the strain of "street" songs, such as "Streets of Laredo" or "Streets of London."

Through the streets of Arklow

In a drenching beauty

Rolling back 'til the day

And I saw your eyes

They was shining, sparkling crystal clear

And our souls were clean

And the grass did grow

And our souls were clean... (18-26)

Here, the opening word "and" (typical of folk and/or fairy narratives), suggests an established, ongoing story, while the "we" represents a community of protagonists and listeners (something fundamentally opposed to the first singular persona associated with the classic rock and popular music canon, where "I" is usually the subject of the song throughout). Moreover, the gypsies, a nation without territory, represent another way of understanding place, nationhood and belonging (an image further removed from dreary old Arklow in the 1970s).¹⁸⁴ In fact, although clearly most Morrison's songs are about the spirit of place and are in that sense "Irish" in derivation, they are not necessarily circumscribed by national identity, be that musical or ideological. This is part of the connective strand that runs through most songs on this thesis: the regarding of the homeland as a place which in itself is a cultural composition. In order to see it,

¹⁸⁴ The town is south of Dublin on the County Wicklow coast, and was once a centre for boatbuilding and a destination for itinerant mariners. It is thus an industrial centre that faces out to the sea, and the combination of the grounded and exile may have appealed to Morrison.

sometimes one needs to leave and then return as a stranger, even if that return is purely done by the creative imagination and informed by memory. All things considered, a juxtaposition of poets might be in order, for Morrison's *Veedon Fleece* connects to the body of work made by other Irish exiled artists like him: James Joyce's Dublin reinvented in Zurich, Paris and Trieste; Sean O'Casey's Ireland, coined in London and Devon; or the Irish landscape as seen by Samuel Beckett in Paris. They all have exerted a considerable influence on Morrison's lyrics, at least in part because, all unimaginable, in every sense, had they been writing within the island of Ireland itself.

6.2.4. Conclusion

From the 1980s onwards, Van Morrison would devote much time to studying Celtic culture in its philosophical and mystical dimensions. However, from the foregoing analysis, we can conclude that in his early works the yearning songwriter's voice was already seeking to recapture a past that was cast within the emblematic inner-city landscapes, especially in the language of street song and declaimed literary allusions. We also note the way in which the lyricism of Van Morrison might be addressed in terms of its invocation of a series of locations imaginatively identified as home and not-home, the attractions of each, and the ability to travel between these locations. As a result, the songs explored above succeed in creating a distinct world of associations and feelings, being both local and universal at the same time. We also find in Van Morrison's songs not just different musical but different ideological values at work, a perfect blend of styles, traditions and effects. Ultimately, it has been out of all these diverse influences (musical, cultural, philosophical, literary and mystical) that Van Morrison moulded his own creativity in an unfolding poetic narrative that has cross-referenced Beat literature and jazz, Irish folk, song and poetry into an excellent and

long-lasting achievement, with songs that have told of such discovery with a unique intensity and vision every time.

6.3. "Shaking The Wings of Their Terrible Youths":

References and Allusions in Hozier's Songwriting

6.3.1. Introduction

From the incredibly popular debut single "Take Me to Church" to the darkest songs on the album *Wasteland, Baby!*, the lyrics written by Andrew Hozier-Byrne, simply known as Hozier, often have the dramatic quality that he admires in traditional Irish songs and ballads, but adding a metaphorical density and the attention to rhythm usually associated to blues. Consequently, in all his songs, images, metaphors and symbols form a coherent whole, a poetic system whose meaning cannot be paraphrased. His songwriting technique allows us, however, to approach his work from directions other than the purely interpretative. One especially useful avenue involves focusing of his use of allusions, references and intertexts.

The use of allusions has had a deservedly long rhetorical history, for reasons apparent in Holman and Harmon's definition of "allusion" in *A Handbook to Literature*: "[B]y tapping the knowledge and memory of the reader [allusion] seeks (...) to secure a resonant emotional effect from the associations already existing in the readers's mind" (12). In other words, allusions and references allow writers to engage readers actively in the communicative process, and this also epitomises a songwriter's use of intertexts, from allusions to other popular musicians, to literary authors and mythology. In this way, they may believe that they can allude to these people and places with reasonable

confidence that their "culturally literate" listeners will be able to follow the references. Thus, songwriters like Van Morrison and Hozier assume that certain singers, writers and Irish locales constitute parts of what Umberto Eco would call his listeners' "intertextual encyclopedia" (172). Consequently, while it is not good to attach far too much importance to lyrics alone,¹⁸⁵ the dangers are greatly reduced when examining the works of those lyricists who demonstrate the ability to create allusive and referential communities, because this kind of songs help, indeed, to create "a common culture of reciprocal communication and psychological shorthand" (Bloom 69).

Like most prolific writers and lyricists alike, Hozier frequently uses allusions and references to ground his ideas in specific details. In this way, his intertexts range broadly across the fields of Irish mythology, blues music, religion and literature. However, in order for him to develop a voice for storytelling, there were different literary works that helped him with his songwriting in the first place. As we read throughout his songs, we see that not only Ireland's fantastic oral tradition of storytelling through songs and tales influenced him greatly, but also the fairytales and stories of Irish mythology, and the way Oscar Wilde and W. B. Yeats captured all that into their writing.¹⁸⁶ In addition, James Joyce's work supplies another significant intertext for Hozier's music, since he constantly cites *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners* as the two literary works that had the strongest influence on him. For instance, a theme from the first novel that is present in his music is that of "the struggle reconciling your own personal need to be yourself against the expectations of

¹⁸⁵ See the chapter on "Historical & Theoretical Introduction to Irish Rock" in this thesis.

¹⁸⁶ In fact, he says that "the poetry of Yeats has [influenced the lyricism], and his work was hugely influenced by Irish mythology. His work has found its way into my inner life and work" (Hozier qtd. in "Hozier on Seamus Heaney").

(...) nationalism and religion" (Hozier qtd. in 3voor12). Then, in regards to musical influences, he lists artists such as Aretha Franklin, Tom Waits and Nina Simone among many others, because, as he says:

All songs, all pieces of art, reflect the world that they were made in and the values of those artists and the hopes and aspirations of the people who listen to that music and who made that music. I'm influenced a lot by (...) [p]eople who wrote and sang songs that were reflective of their times. (Hozier qtd. in Ehrlich)

He would see Nina Simone in particular as "a real powerhouse and an uncompromising writer," and became fascinated with her unique voice as much as with "the fiery nature of her songwriting" (Hozier qtd. in Kaplan). It is clear, then, that Hozier's influences, whether in music or literature, are all vivid and gifted storytellers, and those characteristics he admires so much have been carried over to his own body of work, which will be explored next.

What is also interesting, if a lot more personal, is how Irish artists defined themselves. For Anne MacCarthy, "the word "identity" is closely bound up with the idea of individuality, and since the Romantic revolution it has been seen as a necessary part for someone to develop and nourish their individuality" (32). Individuality, however, is not only about personal development, as we will see. Since 2013 (the year that he gained recognition by millions worldwide for his debut single "Take Me To Church"), Hozier has been considered one of Ireland's new leading political voices in popular culture. Thus, it is his candor and ability to weave political and social messages with beautifully crafted lyrics and melodies what also makes the case of Hozier one particularly worth exploring.

6.3.2. *Hozier (2014)*

Hozier's first album was released in September 2014, and became both a critical and a commercial success almost immediately.¹⁸⁷ Throughout the fourteen-songs collection, he also makes clear that his musical tastes range through American soul music, gospel, blues, classic rock and Irish folk. The way that he channels all those influences to convey his own lyrical concerns is, however, different altogether, especially because there is no one single theme behind the album but a lot of recurring themes, such as mortality, repression and survival. In songs like "Angel of Small Death & The Codeine Scene" and "Arsonist's Lullaby," for example, there is the story of a man's struggle to find his own liberation within an oppressive society and the culture of Catholic Church that he just wants to be free of, reminding us of Joyce's works. Of course, any belief that the subject of paralysis and oppression is only related to Irish literature would be absurd, but Joyce seems to have claimed the topic for Ireland and for *Dubliners*, and his words rang true for many years. Thus, in the first song, the protagonist acknowledges that there is danger and harm to be found in liberty (he uses words like "abuse," "wretched," and "terrible"), but also pleasure and greatness too:

I watched the work of my kin, bold and boyful,

Toying somewhere between love and abuse,

Calling to join them, the wretched and joyful,

Shaking the wings of their terrible youth.

Freshly disowned, in some frozen devotion,

No more alone or myself could I be,

¹⁸⁷ See Appendix I, figure 35.

Lurched like a stray to the arms that were open,

No shortage of sordid, no protest from me. (1-8)

Similarly, "Arsonist's Lullaby" tells another story of repression and guilt through metaphors and symbolism.¹⁸⁸ Hozier's voice on this track is as expressive as ever of distilled, unspecific experience and a fine sensibility, totally engaged. For the whole song, words, music and performance are all central. Bearing that in mind, as usual, we do need the whole lyrics to look at properly: these paint an overall picture of life through its three main stages (childhood, adolescence and adulthood), as the protagonist (an arsonist) says that he would debate with himself which path or life he wanted to take and who he wanted to be:

When I was a child I heard voices

Some would sing and some would scream.

You soon find you have few choices

I learned the voices died with me. (1-4)

Moreover, the use of the anaphora "When I was..." at the beginning of each stanza shows that although life keeps on moving forward and we may change with it, some things might still be the same:

When I was a child I'd sit for hours

Staring into open flame.

Something in it had a power

¹⁸⁸ This song is included as a bonus track on the deluxe version of the album.

Could barely tear my eyes away.

[. . .]

When I was sixteen my senses fooled me

Thought gasoline was on my clothes.

I knew that something would always rule me

I knew the scent was mine alone. (5-16)

However, the grammatical tension of the chorus makes for an effective change:

All you have is your fire

And the place you need to reach.

Don't you ever tame your demons

But always keep' em on a leash. (9-12)

These lines show an appeal to transgress desires and dreams which should not be laid to rest but kept from becoming unobtainable, because they both guide us to our destiny and to what we want from life. Eventually, however, we find that the real end of the story is not the chorus but the fourth and last stanza:

When I was a man I thought it ended

When I knew love's perfect ache

But my peace has always depended

On all the ashes in my wake. (21-24)

In these lines, the arsonist finally accepts his fire, both its beauty and its destruction, and comes to the conclusion that other options are no longer viable for him to find peace, because it "has always depended / On all the ashes in my wake." This reference is both suggestive and obscure, and makes the whole song much more powerful, its final emphasis being that we must learn to keep our demons (that is, our fears and weaknesses) from destroying us, but still we must keep them because the conflagration of these elements is what makes us human, more creative and strong. Creating a personal identity is thus a never-ending human endeavour, but unfortunately, we are constantly instructed by society and organised religions that we must destroy, constrain or deny our "evil" parts in order to become "good." The fact that a performer like Hozier suggests lyrically that individual identity is a significant concern is, therefore, not coincidental to his popularity and recording success.

Certainly, a wide spectrum of human emotion is depicted in Hozier's songs, but another dimension of such a musical spectrum emerges through his fascination with "what a song can be in the eyes of history, [that is,] a snapshot of an era, almost like a photograph of the times the songwriter lived in [because] you get an insight into the cultural mentality and society's values, hopes and fears" (Hozier qtd. in Diroff). In this case, some songs on the album reflect the singer's frustration with the oppression of the Catholic Church in particular. He has explained that "[c]oming from Ireland, there's a bit of a cultural hangover from the influence of the church. You've got a lot of people walking around with a heavy weight in their hearts and a disappointment, and that (expletive) carries from generation to generation" (Hozier qtd. in Chow). He is referring here to the ascription of "paralysis" to an Irish culture and society permeated by Catholicism. According to Douglas Kanter, it was Joyce who gave meaning to the word, for "Joyce (...) used the term to denote a condition of spiritual torpor cause by

what he perceived to be the oppressive religiosity of Catholic culture in Ireland" (382). With his writing, Joyce fought against that torpor and the "hemiplegia of the will" that challenged censorship.¹⁸⁹ He also denounced cultural and parochial paralysis and fought against it by writing in a way that opposed the myth and the legend influences of the Celtic Revival. Thus, Joyce challenged the sterility of Irish cultural life, but changes were not as many in some aspects afterwards: paralysis pervaded not just in the Ireland of Joyce's time, but in latter times as well. For instance, in 2013, Hozier explained to *Rolling Stone* that, "Growing up, I always saw the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church. The history speaks for itself, and I grew incredibly frustrated and angry. [So] I essentially just put that into my words" (qtd. in Greene). As a result, and quite unsurprisingly, a song like "Take Me to Church," which had this unstoppable focus to it, became right away the cornerstone in his career. Lyrically, upon first listen, Hozier metaphorically compares his relationship to a religious experience through using some similes:

My church offers no absolutes
She tells me, "Worship in the bedroom"
The only heaven I'll be sent to
Is when I'm alone with you. (10-11)

The background of the song is evoked in impressionistic strokes, but right from the start "Take Me to Church" is unmistakably a love song that celebrates the spiritual dimensions of sexual desire. The song would be much less powerful, however, if the symbols were not contained within their corresponding realities (the symbolic within the real church, and so on):

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Jeri Johnson's notes to *Dubliners*, xi.

Take me to church

I'll worship like a dog at the shrine of your lies

I'll tell you my sins and you can sharpen your knife

Offer me that deathless death

Good God, let me give you my life. (19-23)

In the chorus, after submitting as a dog (because his humanity has been undermined by the church), he asks his lover to "Offer me that deathless death" in the promise of devotion. Hozier explained the use of the term (and alliteration) "deathless death" saying that he experienced falling in love or even making love as "a death, a death of everything (...) and you experience for the briefest moment (...) everything you believed about yourself gone, in a death-and-rebirth sense" (qtd. in Mullally). This idea connects with that of Van Morrison's in "Astral Weeks" ("If I ventured in the slipstream / (...) To be born again"), which celebrates sex as rebirth. It seems, indeed, that as an inspiration, Van Morrison was crucial, especially his interest in language and in getting out new meanings from it. As commented previously, Van Morrison stretched words, broke them down and created new ones, letting his inner self rise to the surface and express itself. Guiding this search for descriptive, expressive resources beyond language was a profound interest in spirituality. In this respect, his was a soul sensibility that saw sexual connection as salvation and rebirth, and the profane as sacred. In that way, Hozier and Van Morrison do speak the same language: both worship romantic love and delight in it; both have loved and hurt artistically. Van Morrison's influence on "Take Me to Church" is, therefore, unmistakable. Yet, if angels dominate most of Van Morrison's work, the devil makes a covert appearance in Hozier's grappling with sexuality. The song "From Eden," for example, is written like a seductive love story between the devil (who

"slithers" from Eden, clearly a biblical reference to the serpent in the Garden of Eden) and a person (presumably a woman), the object of his desire, whom he is constantly tempting into sin:

Honey, you're familiar like my mirror years ago

Idealism sits in prison, chivalry fell on its sword

Innocence died screaming, honey, ask me I should know

I slithered here from Eden just to sit outside your door. (9-12)

The song seems to be quite a radical departure from the account in Genesis, but the groundwork had actually been laid in a 1667 epic poem titled *Paradise Lost*, by the 17th-century English poet John Milton. Written in blank verse, it revolves around the biblical story of Adam and Eve tempted by the fallen angel Satan and their consequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In Book IX, Satan admires and spies on Eve before tempting her to go against God's wishes and rebel and bringing about her downfall:

Such Pleasure took the Serpent to behold

This Flourie Plat, the sweet recess of Eve

Thus earlie, thus alone; her Heav'nly forme

Angelic, but more soft, and Feminine,

Her graceful Innocence, her every Aire

Of gesture or lest action overaw'd

His Malice, and with rapine sweet bereav'd

His fierceness of the fierce intent it brought:

That space the Evil one abstracted stood

From his own evil, and for the time remaind

Stupidly good, of enmitie disarm'd,

Of guile, of hate, of envie, of revenge. (455-466)

Thus, Hozier expands on Milton's non-canonical imagining of how Eve's beauty made the devil fall for her, and goes a step further by developing this into a dark romantic relationship narrated by Satan himself—all while a lighthearted and innocent guitar picking continues playing throughout. Moreover, since it is sung from the perspective of the devil, "From Eden" speaks, in a way, about loneliness, about being ostracised by the world, and the desire for a genuine companion (as he observes the woman's solitude, he feels that she yearns a true companion as much as he does, and he feels drawn to her). In that sense, the lyrics are also about temptation to fight the current of social conformity and mass belief.

In a similar manner, if "Take Me to Church" is a contemplation of love and sin, it also contemplates how "an organization like the church, through its doctrine, would undermine humanity by successfully teaching shame about sexual orientation—that it is sinful, or that it offends God" (Hozier qtd. in Shepherd). On this wise, the singer says, the song is about "asserting yourself and reclaiming your humanity through an act of love." In fact, he employs stronger metaphors than it is seen from the literal perspective, and such a deep and hidden meaning appears to disseminate a strong message to Catholic Church for disrespecting humanity. For example, the knife is used in the chorus as a symbol which represents the harsh consequences that befall those who do not conform to the teachings of the Catholic Church, and how it punishes those who do not follow their moral rules or share their different sexual orientation. Furthermore, the

line "I was born sick / But I love it / Command me to be well" (lines 14-16), is likely to derive from Elizabethan dramatist Fulke Greville's poem of 1554, "Chorus Sacerdotum,"¹⁹⁰ which speaks of mankind being "created sick, commanded to be sound" (line 4)—since Hozier does not allude to Greville elsewhere, however, the connection cannot be labeled more strongly than that it is "likely." In the poem, Greville complains about man's divided nature: according to him, on the one hand, there is human nature, but on the other hand, we are commanded by moral laws and religion to act contrary to our nature. The sick and the sound are thus intertwined in a moving dynamic relationship because, while human nature urges us in one direction, moral law pushes in the opposite. Finally, Greville agrees that religion seems to be pushing this moral law, backing it up with all the trappings of tradition:

We that are bound by vows and by promotion,
With pomp of holy sacrifice and rites,
To teach belief in good and still¹⁹¹ devotion,
To preach of heaven's wonders and delights. (19-22)

Still, the author thinks that the real force of moral law comes not from what religion teaches, but from the sense of the divine each person feels in their own soul: "Yet when each of us in his own heart looks / He finds the God there far unlike his books" (lines 23-24).¹⁹² In a similar way, "Take Me to Church" is an assertion of self against

¹⁹⁰ It is a "chorus" because it was originally part of a play, and "sacerdotum" means "of the priests."

¹⁹¹ Here, "still" means "instil."

¹⁹² Since Fulk Greville was a Protestant, this is part of that Reformation debate. The Protestants would claim that the Catholic Church junked religion up with everything from theology, angels and miracles, to cathedrals, rituals and saints, but true religiosity was the sense of the God that the individual has in his or

organised religion which also tackles Catholic guilt and the doctrine of original sin, reclaiming humanity for something that, according to the singer, is the most natural and worthwhile:

There is no sweeter innocence than our gentle sin

In the madness and soil of that sad earthly scene

Only then I am human

Only then I am clean

Amen. Amen. Amen. (43-47)

Ultimately, "Take Me to Church" is a song with such an impact because, through its lyrics, the singer already emotionally captures the audience. However, it attracted further attention with the music video which was released through the small Irish production house Feel Good Lost. They created a stark, black-and-white clip which depicts a gentle love affair between two young men who are followed by masked people attempting to harm them. One of the protagonists spends much of the video trying to hide a steel case wrapped in chains. His efforts, however, are not successful, and the masked people capture his lover and torture him. Hozier may have known that such a disturbing video would strike a lot of controversy by criticising the intolerance and repression of homosexuality and the reality of violent homophobic backlash. Nonetheless, it gets right to the central message of the song, because it is meant to be a commentary on human rights and the relationship between institutional homophobia in Putin's Russia. In Hozier's words, "[g]rowing up in Ireland, the church is always there—

her own soul or heart. Therefore, Protestantism was pushing against authority in favour of individual relationship with God.

the hypocrisy, the political cowardice. [Thus,] The video has the same theme: an organization that undermines humanity" (qtd. in Hughes). He further explains that:

The video has to do with the song because the Church provides a justification, through God, to discriminate against sectors of society. Pontifical on how to love or who. The song is mostly about the Catholic church, and how through its doctrine, it belittles sexuality, which is a very important part of a person. Twenty years ago, I could not have released this song. (Hozier qtd. in Ximénez de Sandoval)

Therefore, with all its symbolism, beauty and brutality, the video not only put "Take Me to Church" in a different perspective for most listeners, but it actually carried the song and its author to worldwide fame.¹⁹³ More importantly, it proved that Hozier is a musician who is vocal about his beliefs and has the power to spark social change, becoming a leading voice for the Irish youth nowadays.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ "Take Me to Church" was 2014's most-streamed track globally on Spotify: it was streamed over 87 million times during that year only on the service.

¹⁹⁴ For instance, in 2016, he very actively backed the campaign to reform Ireland's abortion laws and to repeal the Eighth Amendment which was inserted into the Constitution after a referendum on the issue in 1983. He publicly told that Ireland's constitutional ban on abortion laws was considered "cruel and degrading" by human rights organisations. Thus, having been an active part in pro-choice campaigning before the Irish abortion referendum, Hozier's main takeaways from the experience were, "[f]irst of all, pride in my generation. Pride in the democratic process. But also watch the citizens exert pressure upon the government from a point of nearly zero momentum. (...) It gave me a new appreciation of the rights we enjoy today that have already been fought for, that we take for granted. And it gave me great faith in the leadership shown by members of my generation" (Hozier qtd. in "Hozier on Seamus Heaney").

We can conclude, then, that Hozier's debut album in its entirety tells a brutal story of life and love, spirituality and religion, because many of the songs are desperate and honest about the world we live in. In this way, it is clear that his lyrics work on at least two levels: the first and most obvious, the sexual undertones of so many of the lyrics; and the second, the alienation and loneliness that is often there. As a songwriter, he was able to find unusual ways to talk about subjects that are not unusual at all, writing about how he experiences these issues himself, and sharing the worries and anxieties of what we as humans are facing nowadays. In 2019, however, Hozier returned with another powerful and moving album, titled *Wasteland, Baby!*, whose lyrical themes range from doom ("No Plan," "As It Was") and intimacy ("Movement," "Nobody"), to honoring love ("Shrike") and facilitating ideological, political and societal change ("Be"). Still, as we will see next, there is on this album a remarkably deep thematic core: chaos and its aftermath.

6.3.3. *Wasteland, Baby!* (2019)

Apparently, on this second album Hozier faces his own mortality and the fate of humanity in general by writing through it. Thus, riddled with imagery of desolation and the remains of nature, the album features the artist desperately looking for beauty amid the turmoil, finding inspiration in music while also paying homage to his musical and literary influences and his Irish heritage. Songs like "Nina Cried Power" and "Be" depict his successes in finding such beauty, while "As It Was" and "Shrike" chronicle a deeper inner struggle. Then again, although most of the songs deal with the different concerns that we might be facing as a global community, some others try to actually

confront such concerns—thus we might see the album's cover art as Hozier "drowning" in life's immensity.¹⁹⁵

To begin with, in the album opener "Nina Cried Power," Hozier pays tribute to the musicians who came before him, and who inspired generations to take action against social injustice through music and activism. A song about protest songs, this is Hozier's particular way of honoring the freedom-fighting singers of the past, including Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield, B.B. King and, most notably, Nina Simone, who inspired the song's title and the content itself. Thus, Hozier calls back to his political ideologies accompanied by blues legend and civil rights leader Mavis Staples, as he righteously name-checks many different songwriters of American protest anthems who really challenged prejudice and made a difference. According to E. D. Hirsch, cultural literacy requires effective intellectual command of "specific, communally shared information" (xv). Hozier's lyrics seem often to assume such knowledge because, as with singers mentioned throughout this thesis, he remains confident that by invoking these distinguished musical names, he can secure "a resonant emotional effect from the associations already existing in the [listener's] mind" (Holman 12). At the same time, he infuses such names with a frisson-inducing fervour, Hozier delivers a message about power, that "It's not the song, it is the singing" (line 11), and that he finds social advance and cultural meaning in the chaos of protest itself:

It's not the waking, it's the rising

It is the grounding of a foot uncompromising

It's not forgoing of the lie

¹⁹⁵ See Appendix I, figure 36.

It's not the opening of eyes

It's not the waking, it's the rising

It's not the shade, we should be past it

It's the light, and it's the obstacle that casts it

It's the heat that drives the light

It's the fire it ignites

It's not the waking, it's the rising. (1-10)

Continuing the theme of this song, the lyrics of "To Noise Making (Sing)" call for "find[ing] a little remedy" in the act of singing with passion:

You don't have to sing it right

But who could call you wrong?

To put your emptiness to melody

Your awful heart to song

You don't have to sing it nice, but, honey, sing it strong

At best, you find a little remedy; at worst, the world will sing along. (9-14)

At time, the precise sources of Hozier's literary allusions are less obvious than his references to musicians. However, it is likely that this song was inspired by Seamus Heaney's poem "At the Wellhead," which consists of two sonnets that hark back to the

poet's roots.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, as a huge Seamus Heaney fan,¹⁹⁷ Hozier has said that what he loves about this poem in particular is "how it credits what can be offered, and what can be translated, and captured (...) in music and poetry, and in anything that can be heard."¹⁹⁸ Thus, in the poem, Heaney reaches towards a blind old singer, anonymous and dear to him, and recalls familiar strains delivered in her singular way: "Your songs, when you sing them with your two eyes closed / As you always do" (lines 1-2), which airs familiar to him "like a local road / We've known every turn of in the past" (lines 2-3). Throughout, lyrical melodies betoken the rural Ulster landscape—"That midge-veiled, high-hedged side-road" (line 4)—where the singer "stood / Looking and listening until a car / Would come and go" (lines 4-6). Finally, wherever she may go, the poet implores her not to stop—"So, sing on / Dear shut-eyed one, dear far-voiced¹⁹⁹ veteran" (lines 7-8)—and encourages her to sing until she reaches the wellspring source of music: "Sing yourself to where the singing comes from" (line 9). Therefore, the similarities between Heaney's and Hozier's protagonists are carried through in both the poem and the song, but the singer's emotions well up at the end in the latter:

Who could ask you be unbroken or be brave again?

Or, honey, hope even on this side of the grave again?

And who could ask you to be sound or to feel saved again?

¹⁹⁶ A wellhead is the point where underground water is raised to the surface, and it is here an image for "where the singing comes from."

¹⁹⁷ On the cover art for the single "Movement," Hozier reveals a tattoo with Seamus Heaney's famous last words: "Noli Timere." This is something he texted his wife, apparently, in the last moments of his life, and which means "Don't be afraid."

¹⁹⁸ In April 2019, Hozier recorded "At the Wellhead" as part of a series for Poetry Day Ireland 2019, which took place on Thursday 2nd May. See "Hozier reading 'At The Wellhead' by Seamus Heaney."

¹⁹⁹ Voice remembered and from time past.

Just stick around until you hear that music play again

So honey, sing, and sing, and sing, and sing, and sing, and sing, and sing

Sing, sing, and sing, and sing, and sing, and sing, sing

For the love of it

Remember when you'd sing, just for the love of it?

And any joy it would bring. (29-37)

On a different note, the darkest, most impactful moments on the record are those in which Hozier fails to find the value in chaos, namely in the centerpieces "As It Was" and "Shrike." The former opens with an acoustic guitar riff, followed by a whisper singing that echoes on and on, while Hozier starts painting a picture of "a roadway / Muddy, foxgloved" (lines 1-2), one of the many wastelands that appears throughout the record. As the chorus blossoms with violin and piano, Hozier sounds desperate to return to his lost love—"Whenever I'd had life enough / My heart is screaming of" (lines 3-4)—, and find it "Just as it was, baby / Before the otherness came / And I knew its name" (lines 9-11). He seems haunted by whatever destroyed the love he once had:

The highs hit the heights of my baby

And its hold had the fight of my baby

And the lights were as bright as my baby

But your love was unmoved

And the sights were as stark as my baby

And the cold cut as sharp as my baby

And the nights were as dark as my baby

Half as beautiful too. (31-38)

Yet, we are devastated to find out on "Shrike" that the otherness he refers to is the singer himself. On this low-tempo track, which calls to his Gaelic roots, a beautiful melody also recalls Gregorian chants and wraps it all in joyfulness. Again, the poetic lyrics tell a fable of grief, as the singer retrospectively recounts how he never expressed his love at the time, even though his partner needed his reassurance:

I couldn't utter my love when it counted

Ah, but I'm singing like a bird 'bout it now

And I couldn't whisper when you needed it shouted

Ah, but I'm singing like a bird 'bout it now. (1-4)

In this song, Hozier likens himself to the shrike songbird that impales its freshly killed prey on tree thorns, but only in this case, the thorn is his lover. He then delivers disturbing imagery of "flying like a bird to you now / Back to the hedgerows where bodies are mounted" (lines 22-23), meaning that losing his partner has caused him to harm those he subsequently tried to love. All he can do now is to try to return somehow, maybe as a shrike that needs a thorn to survive (just like him, who would also need his lover to survive):

I was housed by your warmth

But I was transformed

By your grounded and giving

And darkening scorn

Remember me, love, when I'm reborn

As the shrike to your sharp

And glorious thorn. (25-31)

Hozier comes to a tired but uplifting resolution on the closure track, "Wasteland, Baby!":

And I love too, that love soon might end

Be known in its aching

Shown in the shaking

Lately of my wasteland, baby

Be still, my indelible friend, you are unbreaking

Though quaking, though crazy

That's just wasteland, baby. (13-19)

Finally, the end of life is directly addressed in this song, as it is the hope that something new will follow:

When the stench of the sea and the absence of green

Are the death of all things that are seen and unseen

Are an end but the start of all things that are left to do. (32-34)

The artist related this song's inspiration to the fact that,

in 2016 [and] 2017, with the kind of civil discourse and political discourse that was taking place at home and abroad in Europe (...) like we were moving towards—in regards to our leadership—a bit of a moral wasteland. (...) "Wasteland, Baby!" with its exclamation mark and this wry smile to it (...) [i]t's dealing with the worst case scenario, but maybe it's a very Irish thing—if you don't laugh, you'd cry, so you try to meet these things with a smile on your face. (Hozier qtd. in Hughes)

Therefore, while the lyrics tell us that the world might end soon, this abstract and lost domain is also presented as a more authentically place where to live life from.

6.3.4. Conclusion

From the discussion above, we can conclude that Hozier's goal as a songwriter has been to create songs that matter, move and change people. In order to do this, he has looked to the outside for the future, just as Joyce's "Eveline" looks for a moment to the outside for a better life where she will be respected. As a result, he has brought something rare to the present music industry: songs that are influenced by great musicians and thinkers alike and which open up a discussion about pressing social issues, all while showcasing high quality music. Similarly, just as in *Portrait of an Artist* Joyce suggests a moment of change or a glimpse of a better life for his protagonist, in his lyrics, Hozier creates stories and characters who want to escape the asphyxiating world they know to find themselves, accept themselves and, eventually, make sense of themselves. In fact, most Hozier's lyrics do have a social message that does not ignore the personal. By doing so, he credits today's reality, and like so many other Irish artists before him, he reaches to make sense of life and death, good and evil, pleasure and pain, all just through his songs.

6.4. Chapter Conclusions

Van Morrison and Hozier's alchemy in their lyrics—that is, their power to evoke—is hidden in straightforward conversational language sometimes, but often in symbolism, by using language in an extraordinary way through writing and singing. Consequently, their songs seem connected to much older and more deeply embedded cultural traditions of expression, welling up together to make something new. However, even if it seems as all great artists like them are capable of opening themselves and facing the world without defences in an attempt to deliver it whole, that indeed has been, to some extent, the attraction of Irish singer-songwriters in particular: the sense of elementary emotions and experiences beneath their music and lyrics. In order to obtain this, as we have seen, they need to uproot and demolish themselves, enter exile or wilderness through imagination, or struggle blindly to remake themselves (perhaps partly in a spiritual quest, perhaps even through emotional selfishness), all to create art.

7. Epilogue

On 11 March 2020, a new infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome, COVID-19, was recognised as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), with more than 244,000 cases of COVID-19 reported in over 170 countries and territories to that date. Efforts to prevent spreading included the nationwide quarantines of many countries like Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and Germany, border closures, curfews, and event postponements and cancellations. Schools and universities also closed on a nationwide basis in at least 115 countries, affecting more than 950 million students. As a consequence, the pandemic led to global socioeconomic disruption, the postponement or cancellation of sporting and cultural events, as well as widespread fears of supply shortages across various sectors including pharmaceuticals, electronics and food. Some other negative effects included online misinformation, xenophobia and racism. Up to this day, the pandemic has been considered the biggest global event since World War II.

On Tuesday 17 March, St. Patrick's Day, U2 frontman Bono shared a video of himself performing a new song, saying it was dedicated to everyone "who this St. Patrick's Day is in a tight spot and still singing" (YouTube). "For the doctors, nurses, careers on the front line, it's you we're singing to," the video's caption read. This song was Bono's first new music since 2017, the first one officially inspired by the terrible situation, and a gift to those quarantined: "A little postcard from bubblin' Dublin on St Patrick's Day," the singer says at the start of the clip. Then, Bono explains he wrote "Let Your Love Be Known" an hour before posting it, and starts singing over a piano solo melody. In the lyrics, he feels the isolation and fear all around him as he walks through the empty streets of Dublin:

Yes there was silence

yes there was no people here

yes I walked through the streets of Dublin and no-one was near

Yes I don't know you

No I didn't think I didn't care

You live so very far away from just across the square. (1-6)

However, inspired by the footage of people quarantined singing to each other from their balconies, he then reminded us that

You can't touch but you can sing

Across rooftops

Sing down the phone

Sing and promise me you won't stop

Sing your love, be known, let your love be known. (8-12)

Eventually, he tells us all to

Sing as an act of resistance

Sing though your heart is overthrown

When you sing there is no distance

So let your love be known, oh let your love be known

Though your heart is overthrown

Let your love be known. (13-18)

Through the centuries, artists in all disciplines and genres have found inspiration in history's lowest moments to create works of tragedy and works of inspiration. As

Patrick Kavanagh claimed: "Art is never art. What is called art is merely 'Life'" (130). These, too, are strident times, and it is too easy for subtleties and nuances to be lost in the noise of devaluated words. Yet, when we stop and really listen to each other's voices, we make a still space in the world, and that is a space for art. I think it is needed now more than ever. In fact, this example shows, once again, that for musicians, composers and performers, there is a sense that at difficult times like these, it is still important even just to sing or play a song for people. Often a song comes spontaneously, expressing joy or loneliness, to dispel fear or show great and small triumphs, but finding the words they carry inside is what will always drive them to sing. In this way, rock music (like poetry) may whisper or rage, but it can say things the heart knows before the world has a chance to even catch up. Indeed, one of the amazing things about music in general is that it touches people's deepest feelings, and that is one of the reasons why, I believe, we tend to turn to songs at moments when plain words seem to fail us.

Perhaps because of this ability to say the unsayable, more and more people are turning into songs and poetry now, but these have always been there, working away to say things that needed to be said, as part of everyday life and speech, in every language. Thus, we "speak songs" without even realising it, in phrases that are used every day. Ultimately, the weight and the power of the words we sing in songs draw a map of the heart in a particular language, until that song takes on a life on its own. In other words, songs are universal and can cross boundaries of language, culture, ethnicity and age, without a passport, to remind us what it is to be human. Similarly, songs matter and stand out best when we actually feel moved by them, even if we do not necessarily know anything about their background or context; when they speak to us in a way that awakens something within us and makes us aware of how this is the one life we have

and that we are sharing it with others, so we need to treat it with great care. It does not really matter what kind of song it is, indeed, for it can be a hymn, a splinter of rebellion or a prayer, we will find our own little ways of allowing that song to address us. Therefore, if songs can change lives and songs can heal, if they can make any difference at all, the need to create must and will overcome all obstacles.

8. Final Conclusions

The major narrative of this thesis has concentrated on the way Irish rock has changed Ireland's cultural landscape since the early 1970s, outlining in depth the prominent songs and musicians that have brought about such change. Of course, the structure of an analysis of this nature cannot hope to include every artist that has been involved, so the emphasis has been on those who have shaped and expanded the form. This has included songs that also reveal all kinds of emotional and social landscapes. This thesis, then, has been not a history or a purely musical analysis, nor a set of personality profiles, but an attempt to deal with rock not just as youth culture or counterculture, but simply as part of Irish culture. In other words, my aim has partly been to locate the study of Irish rock music within the context of more general debates about Irish culture, its analysis and its effects. My exploration has also been rooted in the idea that such artists gave light to different matters concerning questions of "Irishness," which added a social and cultural imprint to their artistic production. In this way, all the bands and musicians in this study have represented Ireland abroad in many ways, becoming the modern symbolic cultural link that ties Ireland to the rest of the world, and being part of Ireland in the same way that other artists, like, for example, writers, are. In fact, we feel connected to foreign countries when or because ideas and events from those places reach us through music and literature. Similarly, songs we hear from a particular country can make us interested in its culture and politics because, in a way, they are history lessons in a palatable, exciting form. As for my selection of artists and songs, I am aware that there might be those readers who would have expected to see a whole chapter or just more pages spent on a particular artist of his or her taste; those who have missed more musical analysis in the formal sense; others who might have found my use of theory too difficult or too easy, etc. However, I am convinced that any

criticism is an inevitable product of my trying to achieve the aims set out in the introductory chapters in a study of this length.

Early in the process of creating this thesis, I decided to relate a narrative by focusing on the men and women who really made a difference by looking closely at what they wrote in their songs. Consequently, this study has been mostly about the artists' lyrics, while at the same time, attempting to take into account the importance of music. In fact, lyrics have been presented throughout not as poems, but just as an essential part of a song because, like vocal performance and music, words are simply ingredients of a song. However, it is in the lyrics that a song tells us that someone maybe understands, that someone out there thinks the same, that someone else feels like us. Musicians and songwriters share their discoveries and journeys with us through the lyrics. Like poets, they are artists who know how to put words to feelings, ideas and experiences. Moreover, they can find the need or the power to create not only using their own personal experiences but also those of a community or a country. Based on the above conclusions, we should consider the potential for using songs and music as tools in most formal educational settings—something which is still largely unexplored, despite the prominence of popular genres like rock as cultural forms with their own sociopolitical dimensions. Likewise, to better understand the implications of these results, future studies should address the educative potential of using interdisciplinary arts (such as songwriting, acting, performing, etc) not only as part of a creative process but also in teaching different subjects. This would be a culturally enriching experience for both students and teachers, too. In addition, spaces and strategies for using musical, plastic, performing and literary arts as tools for cultural empowerment in and beyond the prevailing educational system should as well be identified.

In fact, to examine the presence and impact of rock music on the formation of the Irish cultural matrix was just another one of the main objectives of this work, as we have considered that the evolution of the genre in Ireland has been capable of representing the country's time and epoch. With this in mind, the structure of the thesis has adhered to a loosely chronological narrative, without which it would have been impossible to recognise adequately the development of central concepts of rock in Ireland which determined its reception history and conditioned the development of the genre itself. Yet, the main goal of this study was not to create a totally comprehensive 1970-2020 song compilation, but to stimulate further thought and to provide factual material for future examination of song lyrics as literary texts and pieces of oral history which depict a country's culture in the form of an audio collage. Within Irish culture, it has become clear that Irish rock accords significance to various narratives of Irish socio-political and cultural history, as well as to its literary, musical and mythological tradition. Music, literature, politics, art: all crosses over and feeds into each other. Consequently, narrowing the list of subjects was one of the hardest parts of this work, but those chosen encompass a range that we consider to be as broad as it is deep. The making of this thesis was not exempt from other drawbacks, such as the difficulty in finding support material regarding the presence of literary aspects in the works of Irish rock artists (something I was aware of long before the start), but this meant having an opportunity to provide new data on a subject that had hardly been investigated. Nonetheless, the biggest challenge in the present work was trying to find new and improved ways with which to speak about songs, to describe them without giving away the solution to one of the key principles of any artistic piece (either a song, a poem or a painting), because they are meant to be given a meaning by the audience. This worry doubtless was inevitable given my academic and vocational pursuits.

We can conclude, however, that songwriting's main function usually is, in any case, to be cathartic, that is, to artistically release and express emotion. This release is effected by the relation of the individual's experience of the world to the words in the lyrics, while being mirrored and reflected in the musical accompaniment. We have acknowledged that this is, indeed, a large part of what draws us to a certain song, and of what keeps us coming back to it for insight and inspiration, time after time. Similarly, we have claimed that songs, as a means of expressing one's own or other people's experiences, can prove to be a beautiful, powerful tool with which to either face the world or to abstract ourselves from the reality we may be living in, at the same time. A song can connect us. It can power dreams, and hope too. Most of all, it is one way to answer back and stand up to the bullies of culture—an act of subversion far too powerful to be controlled or contained. To make such transcendental claims for rock songs, for example, is also to admit the extent to which many of them can speak to the restlessness we all feel at different times in our lives, and in this sense alone, this work is absolutely relevant. Therefore, on a more personal level, this doctoral thesis, which has been the result of many years of experiencing, studying, writing and arguing about both music and literature, will certainly condition my own artistic goals as well as my way of analysing how others create art. I thus hope it also inspires many others to write, to play, to learn and create. All just to express themselves. All just to make a difference.

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Appendix I - Pictures

Figure 1. Promotional portrait of Horslips.



Figure 2. Front cover of Horslips' *The Táin* (1973).



Figure 3. Front cover of *The Book of Invasions: A Celtic Symphony* (1976).

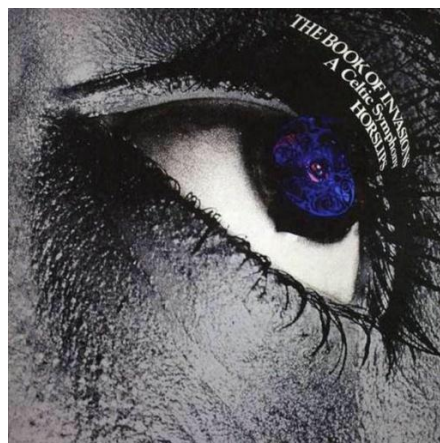


Figure 4. Portrait of Phil Lynott of Thin Lizzy singing on stage.



Figure 5. Front cover of Thin Lizzy's *Vagabonds of the Western World* (1973).



Figure 6. Front cover of Thin Lizzy's *Jailbreak* (1976).



Figure 7. Front cover of Thin Lizzy's *Black Rose: A Rock Legend* (1978).

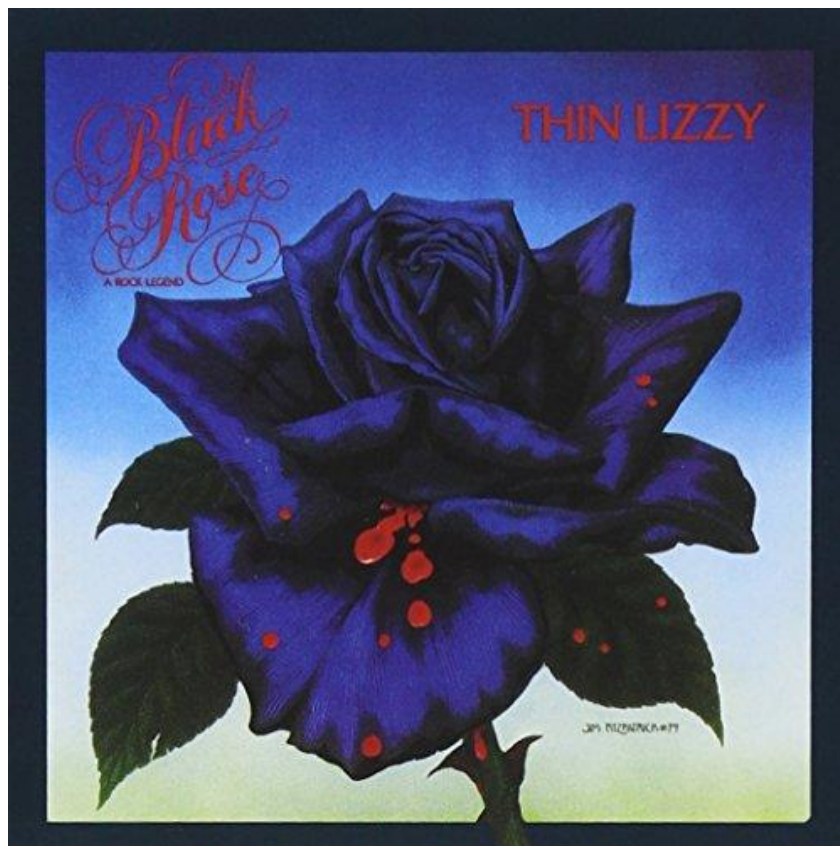


Figure 8. Front cover of Gary Moore's *Wild Frontier* (1987).

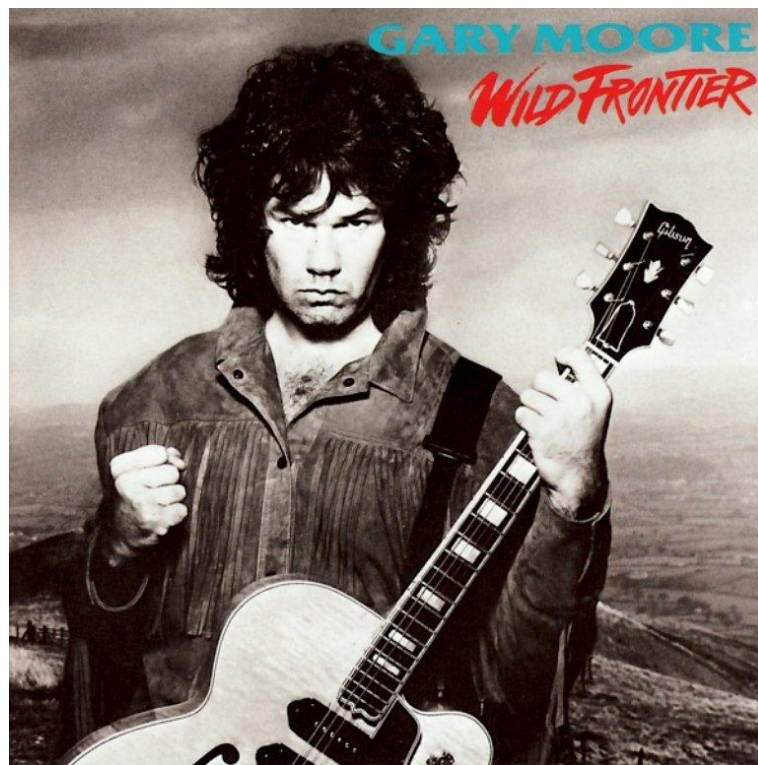


Figure 9. Promotional portrait of Gary Moore for *After the War* (1989).

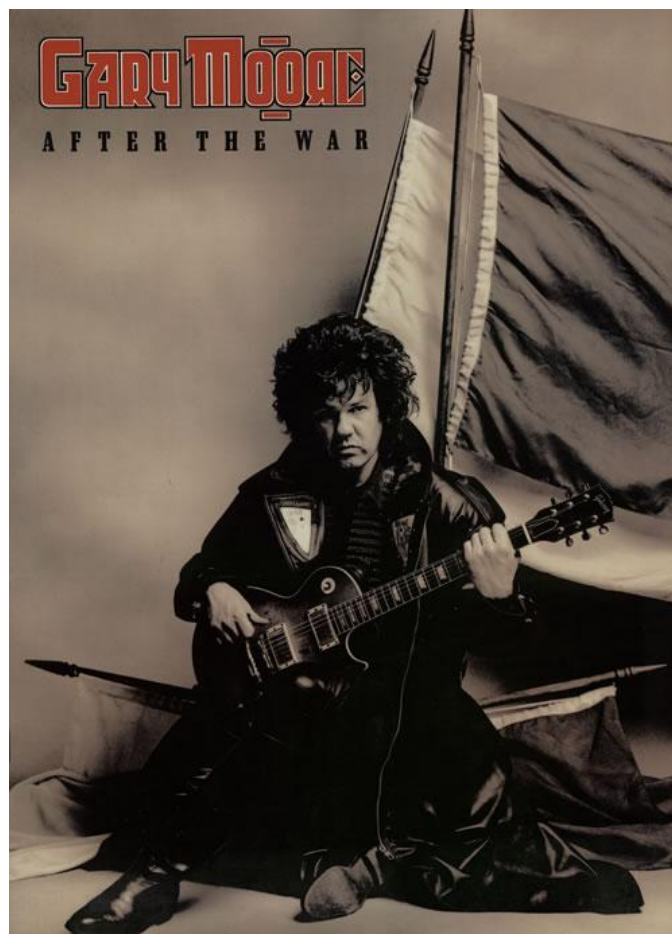


Figure 10. Front cover of The Radiators From Space's first record (1977).



Figure 11. Front cover of Stiff Little Fingers' debut album (1978).



Figure 12. Front cover of The Undertones' "Teenage Kicks" single.



Figure 13. Promotional picture of The Boomtown Rats.



Figure 14. Front cover of The Boomtown Rats' 1978 album.

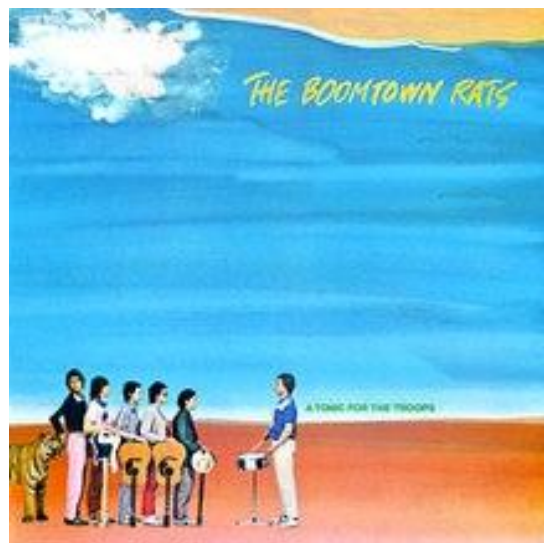


Figure 15. Front cover of U2's album *War* (1983).

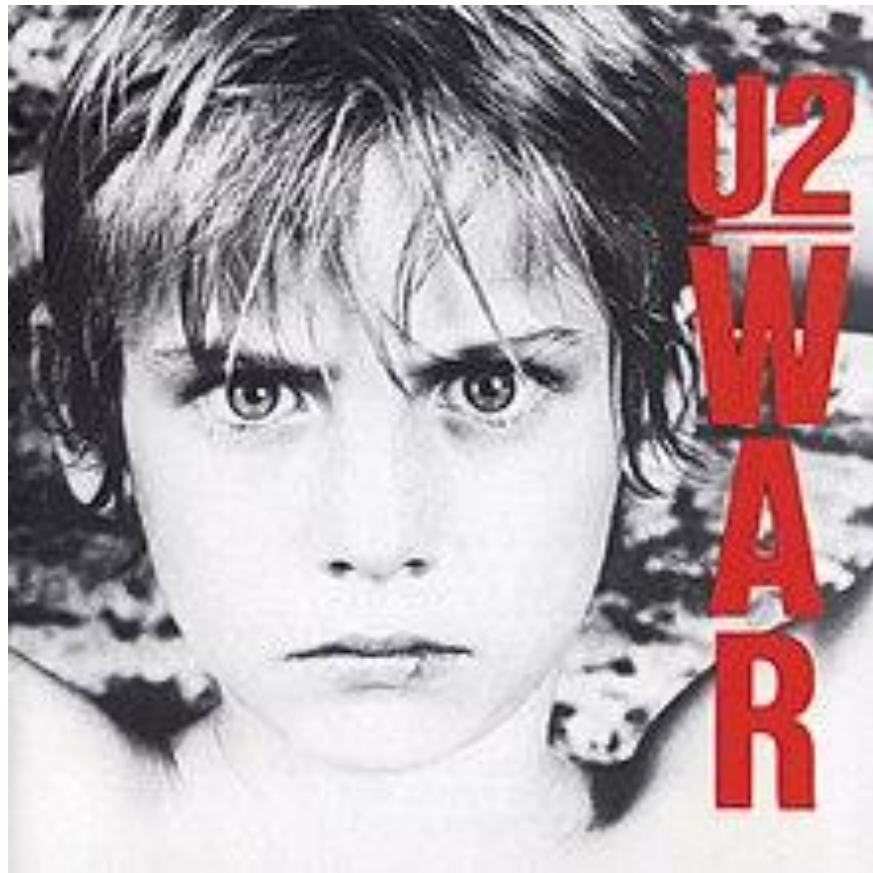


Figure 16. Front and back cover of U2's album *The Joshua Tree* (1987).

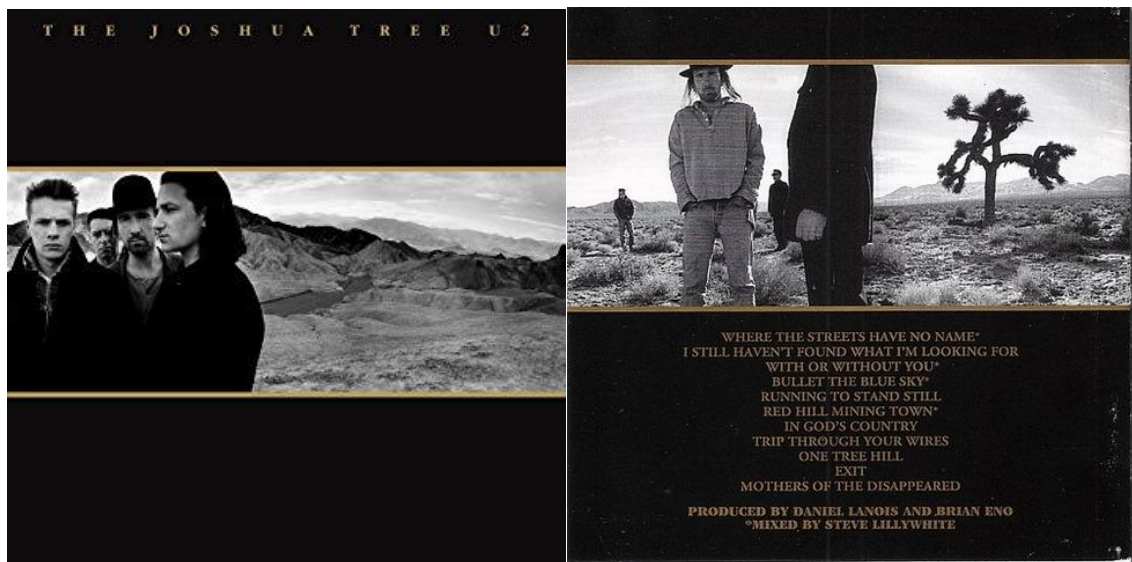


Figure 17. Portrait of Sinéad O'Connor singing live.



Figure 18. Front cover of Sinéad O'Connor's *The Lion and the Cobra* (1987).



Figure 19. Front cover of *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got* (1990).



Figure 20. Dolores O'Riordan on stage in 1994.

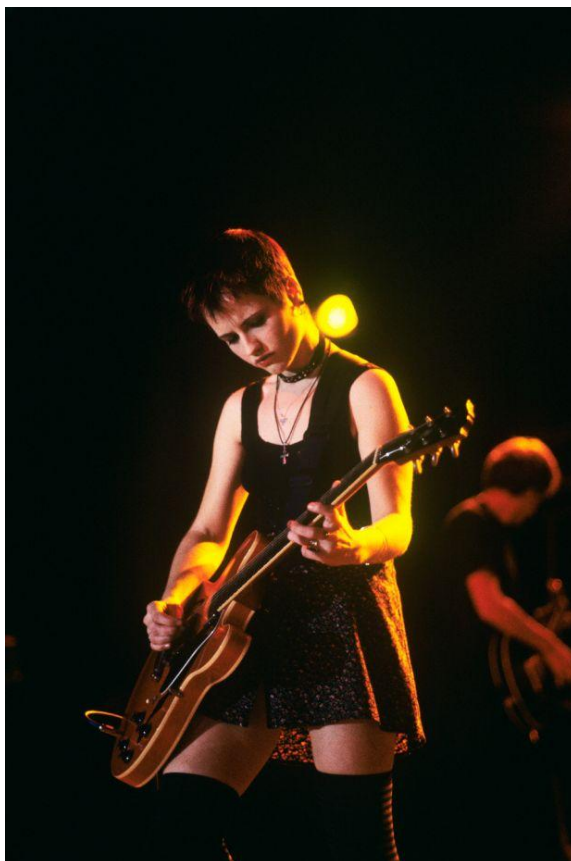


Figure 21. Front cover of *Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* (1993).

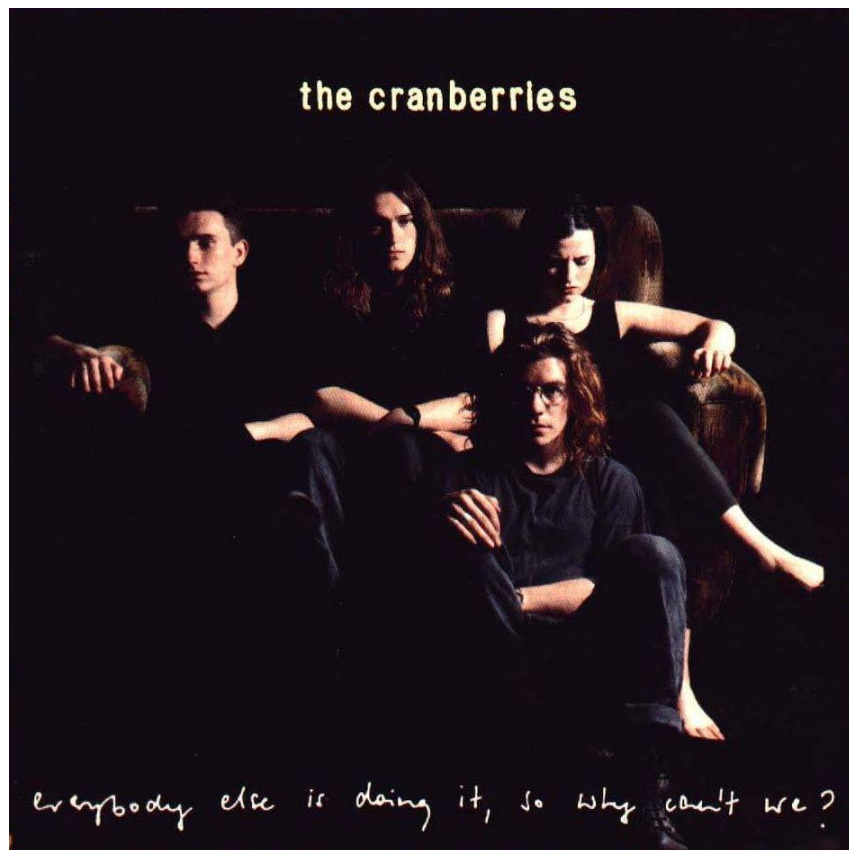


Figure 22. Front cover of The Cranberries' *No Need to Argue* (1994).



Figure 23. Official "The Icicle Melts" lyrics of the *No Need To Argue* commercial CD, handwritten by Dolores O'Riordan.

"THE ICICLE MELTS"

When
When will the icicle melt,
And when
When will the picture show end
I should not have read the paper today
Cause a child, child he was taken away

There's a place for the baby that died
And there's a time for the mother who cried
And she will hold him in her arms sometime
Cause his months is too long

How could you hurt a child
Now does this make you satisfied
I don't know what's
happening to people today
When a child, he was taken away

There's a place for the baby that died
There's a time for the mother that cried
And she will hold him in
her arms sometime
Cause his months is too long

There's a place for the baby that died
And there's a time for the mother who cried
And you will hold him in
your arms sometime
Cause his months is too long

Figure 24. Dolores O'Riordan, dressed as an Egyptian goddess-like woman, and surrounded by golden angels holding arcs in the "Zombie" music video.



Figure 25. British squads patrolling the peace line in West Belfast in the "Zombie" music video.



Figure 26. Children staring at the camera in the "Zombie" video.



Figure 27. Children play-fighting with sticks in the "Zombie" music video.



Figure 28. Boy/angel screaming in the "Zombie" music video.



Figure 29. Boy lying on the ground at the end of the "Zombie" music video.



Figure 30. Official "Yeats's Grave" lyrics of the *No Need To Argue* commercial CD, handwritten by Dolores O'Riordan.

"YEATS GRAVE"

Silenced by death in the grave
W.B. Yeats couldn't save
Why did you stand here
- were you kicked in time
But I know by now
Why did you sit here?
In the GRAVE

W. B. Yeats "Second"

Why should I blame her,
that she filled my days
with misery or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men violent ways
Or hurled the little streets upon the great
Had they but courage
Equal to desire

Sad that Maonl Gonne couldn't stay
But she had Mac Bride anyway
And you sit here with me
on the Isle Inistree
And your writing down everything
But I know by now
Why did you sit here
In the grave...

Why should I blame her
Had they but courage equal to desire

Figure 31. Promotional picture of Van Morrison in 1970.



Figure 32. Front cover of Van Morrison's album *Astral Weeks* (1968).

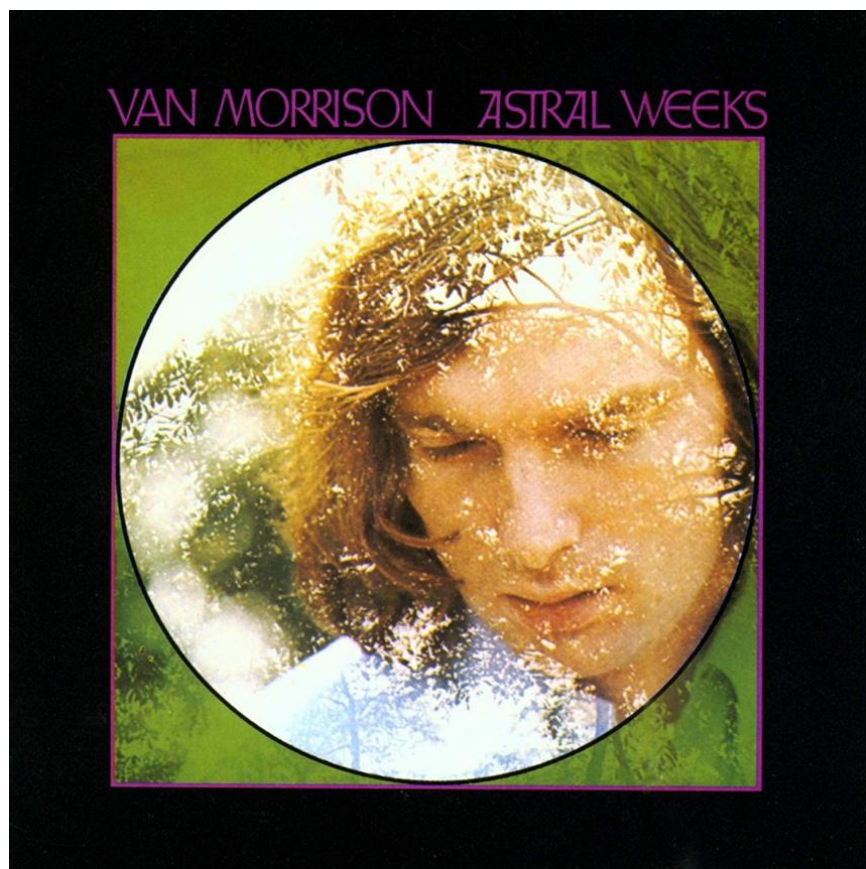


Figure 33. Front cover of the album *St. Dominic's Preview* (1972).

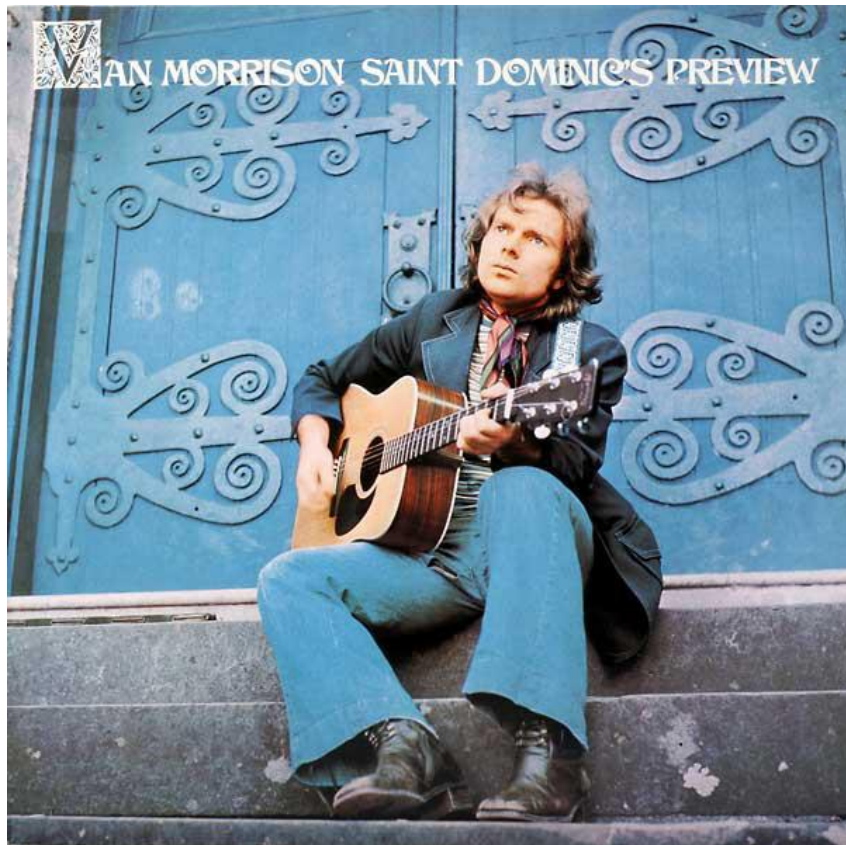


Figure 34. Front cover of Van Morrison's album *Veedon Fleece* (1974).



Figure 35. Front cover of Hozier's self-titled debut album (2014).



Figure 36. Front cover of Hozier's second album, *Wasteland, Baby!* (2019).



Appendix II - Lyrics & Poems

"Alternative Ulster" by Stiff Little Fingers

There's nothin' for us in Belfast
The Pound's old, and that's a pity
OK, so there's the Trident in Bangor
And then you walk back to the city
We ain't got nothin' but they don't really care
They don't even know you know
They just want money, we can take it or leave
it
What we need

Is an Alternative Ulster
Grab it and change it, it's yours
Get an Alternative Ulster
Ignore the bores and their laws
Get an Alternative Ulster
Be an anti-security force
Alter your native Ulster
Alter your native land

Take a look where you're livin'
You got the army on the street
And the R-U-C dog of repression

"Angel of Small Death & The Codeine Scene" by Hozier

I watch the work of my kin bold and boyful
Toying somewhere between love and abuse
Calling to join them the wretched and joyful
Shaking the wings of their terrible youths
Freshly disowned in some frozen devotion
No more alone or myself could I be

Is barking at your feet
Is this the kind of place you want to live?
Is this where you want to be?
Is this the only life we're gonna have?
What we need

Is an Alternative Ulster
Grab it and change it, it's yours
Get an Alternative Ulster
Ignore the bores and their laws
Get an Alternative Ulster
Be an anti-security force
Alter your native Ulster
Alter your native land

They say they're a part of you
And that's not true, you know
They say they've got control of you
And that's a lie, you know
They say you will never
Be free, free, free

Oh, you've done it now!

Lurched like a stray to the arms that were open
No shortage of sordid, no protest from me
With her sweetened breath, and her tongue so mean
She's the angel of small death and the codeine scene
With her straw-blond hair, her arms hard and lean

She's the angel of small death and the codeine scene

Feeling more human and hooked on her flesh I

Lay my heart down with the rest at her feet

Fresh from the fields, all fetor and fertile

It's bloody and raw, but I swear it is sweet

With her sweetened breath, and her tongue so mean

She's the angel of small death and the codeine scene

With her straw-blond hair, her arms hard and lean

She's the angel of small death and the codeine scene

Leash-less confusion I wander the concrete

Wonder if better now having survived

Jarring of judgment and reasons defeat

The sweet heat of her breath in my mouth I'm alive

With her sweetened breath, and her tongue so mean

She's the angel of small death and the codeine scene

With her straw-blond hair, her arms hard and lean

She's the angel of small death and the codeine scene

"Arsonist's Lullaby" by Hozier

When I was a child I heard voices

Some would sing and some would scream

You soon find you have few choices

I learned the voices died with me

When I was a child I'd sit for hours

Staring into open flame

Something in it had a power

Could barely tear my eyes away

All you have is your fire

And the place you need to reach

Don't you ever tame your demons

But always keep them on a leash

When I was sixteen my senses fooled me

I thought gasoline was on my clothes

I knew that something would always rule me

I knew the scent was mine alone

All you have is your fire

And the place you need to reach

Don't you ever tame your demons

But always keep them on a leash

When I was a man I thought it ended

When I knew love's perfect ache

But my peace has always depended

On all the ashes in my wake

All you have is your fire

And the place you need to reach

Don't you ever tame your demons

But always keep them on a leash

"As It Was" by Hozier

There is a roadway

Muddy and foxgloved

Whenever I'd had life enough

My heart is screaming of

And in a few days

I will be there, love

Whatever here that's left of me

Is yours just as it was

Just as it was, baby

Before the otherness came

And I knew its name

The drug, the dark,

The light, the flame

The highs hit the heights of my baby

And its hold had the fight of my baby

And the lights were as bright as my baby

But your love was unmoved

Tell me if somehow

Some of it remains

How long you would wait for me

How long I've been away

The shape that I'm in now

Your shape in the doorway

Make your good love known to me

Or just tell me about your day

Just as it was, baby

Before the otherness came

And I knew its name

The drug, the dark,

The light, the shame

The highs hit the heights of my baby

And its hold had the fight of my baby

And the lights were as bright as my baby

But your love was unmoved

And the sights were as stark as my baby

And the cold cut as sharp as my baby

And the nights were as dark as my baby

Half as beautiful too

"A Song for While I'm Away" by Thin Lizzy

These words I wrote, play and sing to you

Do not convey the love I brought and bring to you

For this is a song for while I'm away

To say all the things I'd love to say

You are my life, my everything, you're all I have

You are my hopes, my dreams, my world come true

You're all I have

Please heed me now these words I have to say

Now I'm headed for the border

You see this song it ends right at the start

I swore when I was younger

No one would win my heart

And far away hills look greener still

But soon they'll all slip away

It's then I'll be returning

And I'll be coming home to stay

You are my life, my everything, you're all I
have

You are my hopes, my dreams, my world come
true

You're all I have

Please heed me now these words I have to say

"Astral Weeks" by Van Morrison

If I ventured in the slipstream

Between the viaducts of your dream

Where immobile steel rims crack

And the ditch in the back roads stop

Could you find me?

Would you kiss-a my eyes?

To lay me down

In silence easy

To be born again

To be born again

From the far side of the ocean

If I put the wheels in motion

And I stand with my arms behind me

And I'm pushin' on the door

Could you find me?

Would you kiss-a my eyes?

To lay me down

In silence easy

To be born again

To be born again

There you go

Standin' with the look of avarice

Talkin' to Huddie Ledbetter

Showin' pictures on the wall

Whisperin' in the hall

And pointin' a finger at me

There you go, there you go

Standin' in the sun darlin'

With your arms behind you

And your eyes before

There you go

Takin' good care of your boy

Seein' that he's got clean clothes

Puttin' on his little red shoes

I see you know he's got clean clothes

A-puttin' on his little red shoes

A-pointin' a finger at me

And here I am

Standing in your sad arrest

Trying to do my very best

Lookin' straight at you

Comin' through, darlin'

Yeah, yeah, yeah

If I ventured in the slipstream

Between the viaducts of your dreams

Where immobile steel rims crack

And the ditch in the back roads stop

Could you find me

Would you kiss-a my eyes

Lay me down

In silence easy
 To be born again
 To be born again
 To be born again
 In another world
 In another world
 In another time
 Got a home on high
 Ain't nothing but a stranger in this world
 I'm nothing but a stranger in this world
 I got a home on high
 In another land
 So far away
 So far away
 Way up in the heaven
 Way up in the heaven
 Way up in the heaven
 Way up in the heaven
 In another time
 In another place
 In another time
 In another place
 Way up in the heaven
 Way up in the heaven
 We are goin' up to heaven
 We are goin' to heaven
 In another time
 In another place
 In another time
 In another place
 In another face

"At the Wellhead" by Seamus Heaney

Your songs, when you sing them with
 your two eyes closed
 As you always do, are like a local road

We've known every turn of in the past—
 That midge-veiled, high-hedged side-
 road where you stood
 Looking and listening until a car
 Would come and go and leave you
 lonelier
 Than you had been to begin with. So,
 sing on,
 Dear shut-eyed one, dear far-voiced
 veteran,
 Sing yourself to where the singing
 comes from,
 Ardent and cut off like our blind
 neighbour
 Who played the piano all day in her bedroom.
 Her notes came out to us like hoisted water
 Ravelling off a bucket at the wellhead
 Where next thing we'd be listening, hushed
 and awkward.
 That blind-from-birth, sweet-voiced,
 withdrawn musician
 Was like a silver vein in heavy clay.
 Night water glittering in the light of day.
 But also just our neighbour, Rosie
 Keenan.
 She touched our cheeks. She let us touch
 her braille
 In books like books wallpaper patterns
 come in.
 Her hands were active and her eyes were
 full
 Of open darkness and a watery shine.

She knew us by our voices. She'd say
she "saw"

Whoever or whatever. Being with her

Was intimate and helpful, like a cure

You didn't notice happening. When I
read

A poem with Keenan's well in it, she
said,

"I can see the sky at the bottom of it
now."

"Belfast Confetti" by Ciaran Carson

Suddenly as the riot squad moved in it
was raining exclamation

marks,

Nuts, bolts, nails, car keys. A fount of
broken type. And

the explosion

Itself - an asterisk on the map. This
hyphenated line, a burst

of rapid fire ...

I was trying to complete a sentence in
my head, but it kept

stuttering

All the alleyways and side streets
blocked with stops and

colons.

I know this labyrinth so well -
Balaklava, Raglan, Inkerman,

Odessa Street -

Why can't I escape? Every move is
punctuated. Crimea Street.

Dead end again.

A Saracen, Kremlin-2 mesh. Makrolon
face -shields. Walkie-

talkies. What is

My name? Where am I coming from?
Where am I going?

A fusillade of question-marks.

"Black Boys on Mopeds" by Sinéad O'Connor

Margareth Thatcher on TV

Shocked by the deaths that took place in
Beijing

It seems strange that she should be
offended

The same orders are given by her

I've said this before now

You said I was childish and you'll say it
now

Remember what I told you

If they hated me they will hate you

England's not the mythical land of
Madame George and roses

It's the home of police who kill black
boys on mopeds

And I love my boy and that's why I'm
leaving

I don't want him to be aware that there's

Any such thing as grieving

Young mother down at Smithfield

Five a.m., looking for food for her kids

In her arms she holds three cold babies

And the first word that they learned was
please

These are dangerous days

To say what you feel is to dig your own
grave

Remember what I told you

If you were of the world they would
love you

England's not the mythical land of
Madame George and roses

It's the home of police who kill blacks
boys on mopeds

And I love my boy and that's why I'm
leaving

I don't want him to be aware that there's

Any such thing as grieving

"Blindman" by Horslips

Man of straw

Shuffling down the night

Going to visit little girls

Who never do things right

Scarecrow wooden heart

Finds it hard to love

Dressing up in deadmen's clothes

To charm the stars above

Do you ever feel like dancing

When the evening turns to gold

Or does life's simple melody

Make you blood run cold

Blindman

Halfway there

Empty as a nun

Your tears turn into diamonds

At the eclipse of the sun

Scarecrow

Out alone

Play your pantomime

I'd join you for the Late Late Show

But haven't got the time

Do you ever feel like crying

When swallows leave the rain behind

Or does some crazy rhythm

Drive your spirit wild

Blindman, tell me

Tell me tell me do

Can't you see that I'm a blindman

Just like you

Scarecrow

In the wind

Let your thoughts blow free

Got to tell the others what you once told
me

"Blood of Emeralds" by Gary Moore

I was born up on the North side
Where the Lagan River flows
When I came across the border
I was following my nose
Dublin city '69
There could have been no better place
There was no better time
Through the thunder and the rain
The deepest blood of emeralds
Was running through my veins
Blood of emeralds
I was down and out on Skid Row
But I held on to my pride
The darkest son of Ireland
He was standin' by my side
We would sail the stormy seas
Never looking back
We were afraid of what we'd see
Through the thunder and the rain
The deepest blood of emeralds
Was running through our veins

Some of us will win and some of us will
lose
The strong will survive
Some of us will fall
Some of us won't get out of here alive

Blood of emeralds

I was angry, I was sad
Just thinking about the times we had
I felt so lost and lonely too
What could I say, what could I do?
And after all, the time goes by
No one knows the reasons why

You lived each day like there was no
tomorrow
You spent those years living on time you
borrowed
And in your eyes, all I could see was
sorrow

Some of us will win, some of us will
lose
The strong will survive
Some of us will fall
Some of us won't get out of here alive

Blood of emeralds

The deepest blood of emeralds
Blood of emeralds

"Bullet the Blue Sky" by U2

In the howlin' wind
Comes a stingin' rain
See it drivin' nails
Into the souls on the tree of pain.

From the firefly
A red orange glow
See the face of fear
Runnin' scared in the valley below.

Bullet the blue sky
Bullet the blue sky

In the locust wind
Comes a rattle and hum.
Jacob wrestled the angel

And the angel was overcome.

You plant a demon seed
You raise a flower of fire.
We see them burnin' crosses
See the flames, higher and higher.

Bullet the blue sky
Bullet the blue sky

Suit and tie comes up to me
His face red like a rose on a thorn bush
Like all the colours of a royal flush
And he's peelin' off those dollar bills
Slappin' 'em down
One hundred, two hundred.

And I can see those fighter planes
And I can see those fighter planes
Across the tin huts as children sleep
Through the alleys of a quiet city street.
Up the staircase to the first floor
We turn the key and slowly unlock the
door
As a man breathes into his saxophone
And through the walls you hear the city
groan.
Outside, is America
Outside, is America
America.

See across the field
See the sky ripped open
See the rain comin' through the gapin'
wound
Howlin' the women and children

Who run into the arms
Of America.

"Charolais" by Horslips

Her words were sharp; they cut him
deep,

In a war between the sheets.
But when he brought his bull to her
It meant a woman making war
Beyond the eiderdown.

The druids read the smoke and sand;
Told her that she would love again.
The rhythms from the wolfskin drums
Called men to war in hide and bronze.

This goddess wore a crown.

Charolais, charolais

We are come for you today.

The champions and the Seven Sons are
Come to take away the Donn

But the Fairy Child knew more;
Saw the host stained red in war,
Saw the hero-light around the head
Of a dragon-boy just ripe for bed
Of wives and manly sons

**"Chorus Sacerdotum" by Baron
Brooke Fulke Greville**

O wearisome condition of humanity!
Born under one law, to another bound;
Vainly begot and yet forbidden vanity;
Created sick, commanded to be sound.
What meaneth nature by these diverse
laws?
Passion and reason, self-division cause.
Is it the mark or majesty of power
To make offenses that it may forgive?
Nature herself doth her own self
deflower
To hate those errors she herself doth
give.
For how should man think that he may
not do,
If nature did not fail and punish, too?
Tyrant to others, to herself unjust,
Only commands things difficult and
hard,
Forbids us all things which it knows is
lust,
Makes easy pains, impossible reward.
If nature did not take delight in blood,
She would have made more easy ways
to good.
We that are bound by vows and by
promotion,
With pomp of holy sacrifice and rites,
To teach belief in good and still
devotion,
To preach of heaven's wonders and
delights;
Yet when each of us in his own heart
looks

He finds the God there, far unlike his
books.

"Cyprus Avenue" by Van Morrison

Well, I'm caught one more time
Up on Cyprus Avenue
Caught one more time
Up on Cyprus Avenue

And I'm conquered in a car seat
Not a thing that I can do
I may go crazy
Before that mansion on the hill
I may go crazy
Before that mansion on the hill
But my heart keeps beating faster
And my feet can't keep still
And all the little girls rhyme something
On the way back home from school
And all the little girls rhyme something
On the way back home from school
And the leaves fall one by one
And call the autumn time a fool
Yeah, my t-tongue gets tied
Every, every, every time I try to speak
My tongue gets tied
Every time I try to speak
And my inside shakes just like a leaf on
a tree
I think I'll go on by the river with my
cherry, cherry wine
I believe I'll go walking by the railroad
with my cherry, cherry wine
If I pass the rumbling station where the
lonesome engine drivers pine
Wait a minute, yonder come my lady

Rainbow ribbons in her hair
Yonder come my lady
Rainbow ribbons in her hair
Six white horses and a carriage
She's returning from the fair
Baby, baby, baby

Well, I'm caught one more time
Up on Cyprus Avenue
Caught one more time
Up on Cyprus Avenue

And I'm conquered in a car seat
And I'm looking straight at you
Way up on, way up on, way up on, way
up on, way up on, way up on, way up on
The avenue of trees
Keep walking down
In the wind and rain, darling
You keep walking down when the sun
shone through the trees
Nobody, no, no, no, no, nobody stops
me from loving you baby
So young and bold, fourteen-year old
Baby, baby, baby

"Dearg Doom" by Horslips

My love is colder than black marble by
the Sea.
My heart is older than the cold oak tree.
I am the flash of silver in the sun.
When you see me coming you had better
Run... run... run...
From Dearg Doom.

You speak in whispers of the devils I
have slain,

By the fire of my silver Devil's Blade,
And still you dare to flaunt yourself at
me.

I don't want you, I don't need you,
I don't love you, can't you see
I'm Dearg Doom.

And when the stars go out
You can hear me shout

"Two heads are better than none,
One hundred heads are so much better
Than one".

I'm a boy who was born blind to pain

And, like a hawk, I'll swoop and swoop
again.

I am the flash of hawk eye in the sun.

When you see me coming you had better

Run... run... run...

From Dearg Doom

"Diddy Levine" by Thin Lizzy

In the later forties

When Diddy Levine lived with Eunice

King

He gave her the ring that she wore

Janice the smiling daughter

Who came from a marriage way before

But Eunice was the father that she

always saw

Though they never never never never
told her
She always knew the score
You see kids were so much wiser after
the wars

But Diddy hadn't have enough
She had to get some more
On a ration piece of paper, she wrote
"Eunice, I'm not sure"

And with her child in her arms
She went looking for a fling
Besides, she didn't like the name Mrs.
King

The first time that she heard Damper
Dan
Was on the radio
Crooning at a volume that was way, way
down low

Diddy was surprised to hear that
Damper's name was Dan
Soon after he was a calling
And he asked, begged and pleaded for
her hand

Damper's heart was dampened
When Diddy answered "no, no, no, no,
no"
But if she changed her mind, she said
"Dan, I'll let you know"
With her child in her arms
She went looking for man
Besides, she didn't like the name
Damper Dan

Janice the smiling daughter grew up to
be a teenage queen
Through all of her mother's lovers
She kept the name Levine

Behind the picture house she first made
her scene
With a boy called Allister
Who was dating a friend called Celine

And Celine wasn't mad when Janice
came in between
But Allister got scared when he heard
And he joined the USA Marines

Inheritance, you see, runs through every
family
Who is to say what is to be is any better
Over and over it goes, goodness and
badness winds blow

Over and over, over and over
Over and over and over and over and
over and over and over
The good and the bad winds blow

"Dreams" by The Cranberries

Oh my life is changing everyday
In every possible way
And oh my dreams
It's never quite as it seems
Never quite as it seems
I know I felt like this before
But now I'm feeling it even more

Because it came from you
Then I open up and see
The person falling here is me
A different way to be

I want more, impossible to ignore
Impossible to ignore
And they'll come true
Impossible not to do
Possible not to do

And now I tell you openly
You have my heart so don't hurt me
You're what I couldn't find
A totally amazing mind
So understanding and so kind
You're everything to me

Oh my life is changing everyday
In every possible way
And oh my dream
It's never quite as it seems
'Cause you're a dream to me
Dream to me

"Dublin" by Thin Lizzy
After our affair
I swore that I'd leave Dublin
And in that line I'd left behind
The years, the tears, the memories and
you

In Dublin
At the quays friends come and say
farewell
We'd laugh and joke and smoke
And later on the boat
I'd cry over you
In Dublin

How can I leave the town that brings me
down
That has no jobs
Is blessed by god
And makes me cry
Dublin

And at sea with flowing hair
I'd think of Dublin
Of Grafton Street and derby square
And those for whom I really care and
you
In Dublin

"Eire" by Thin Lizzy
In the land of Eireann
Sat the high king
Faced with the problems
The dreaded vikings
Gather all the men folk
Speaking the Celtic tongue
The land is Eireann
The land is young
Stands Red O'Donnell

Fighting the Saxon foe
With Hugh O'Neil
Oh

All along the north land
They fight bitterly
The land is Eireann
The land is free

"Emerald" by Thin Lizzy

Down from the glen came the marching
men
With their shields and their swords
To fight the fight they believed to be
right
Overthrow the overlords

To the town where there was plenty
They brought plunder, swords and flame
When they left the town was empty
Children would never play again

From their graves I heard the fallen
Above the battle cry
By that bridge near the border
There were many more to die
Then onward over the mountain
And outward towards the sea
They had come to claim the Emerald
Without it they could not leave

**"Feel So Different" by Sinéad
O'Connor**

God grant me the serenity to accept the
things I cannot change

Courage to change the things I can
And the wisdom to know the difference

I am not like I was before
I thought that nothing would change me

I was not listening anymore
Still you continued to affect me

I was not thinking anymore

Although I said I still was

I'd said I don't want anymore

Because of bad experience

And now I feel so different

I feel so different

I feel so different

I have not seen freedom before

And I did not expect to

Don't let me forget now I'm here

Help me to help you to behold you

I started off with many friends

And we spent a long time talking

I thought they meant every word they
said

But like everyone else they were stalling

And now they seem so different

They seem so different

They seem so different

I should have hatred for you

But I do not have any

And I have always loved you

Oh you have taught me plenty

The whole time I'd never seen

All you had spread before me

The whole time I'd never seen

All I'd need was inside me

Now I feel so different

I feel so different

I feel so different

"From Eden" by Hozier

Babe, there's something tragic about
you

Something so magic about you

Don't you agree?

Babe, there's something lonesome
about you

Something so wholesome about you

Get closer to me

No tight side, no rolling eyes, no
irony

No 'who cares', no vacant stares, no
time for me

Honey you're familiar like my

mirror years ago

Idealism sits prison, chivalry fell on

it's sword

Innocence died screaming, honey
ask me I should know

I slithered here from Eden just to sit
outside your door

Babe, there's something wretched
about this

Something so precious about this
Oh what a sin

To the strand a picnic plan for you
and me

A rope in hand for your other man to
hang from a tree

Honey you're familiar like my
mirror years ago

Idealism sits in prison, chivalry fell
on its sword

Innocents died screaming, honey ask
me I should know

I slithered here from Eden just to sit
outside your door

"Glanmore Revisited" by Seamus Heaney

I. Scrabble

*in memoriam Tom Delaney,
archaeologist*

Bare flags. Pump water. Winter-evening
cold.

Our backs might never warm up but our
faces

Burned from the hearth-blaze and the
hot whiskeys.

It felt remembered even then, an old
Rightness half-imagined or foretold.
As green sticks hissed and spat into the
ashes
And whatever rampaged out there
couldn't reach us,
Firelit, shuttered, slated and stone-
walled.
Year after year, our game of Scrabble:
love
Taken for granted like any other word
That was chanced on and allowed within
the rules.
So "scrabble" let it be. Intransitive.
Meaning to scratch or rake at something
hard.
Which is what he hears. Our scraping,
clinking tools.

**"I Am Stretched on Your Grave" by
Sinéad O'Connor**

I am stretched on your grave
And will lie there forever
If your hands were in mine
I'd be sure we'd not sever

My apple tree my brightness
It's time we were together
For I smell of the earth
And am worn by the weather

When my family thinks

That I'm safe in my bed
From night until morning
I am stretched at your head
Calling out to the air
With tears hot and wild
My grief for the girl
That I loved as a child
Do you remember
The night we were lost
In the shade of the blackthorn
And the chill of the frost
Thanks be to Jesus
We did what was right
And your maiden head still
Is your pillar of light

The priest and the friars
Approach me in dread
Because I still love you
My love and you're dead
I still would be your shelter
Through rain and through storm
And with you in your cold grave
I cannot sleep warm

So I'm stretched on your grave
And will lie there forever
If you hands were in mine
I'd be sure we'd not sever

My apple tree my brightness
It's time we were together
For I smell of the earth
And am worn by the weather

**"I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got"
by Sinéad O'Connor**

I'm walking through the desert
And I am not frightened although it's hot
I have all that I requested
And I do not want what I haven't got

I have water for my journey
I have bread and I have wine
No longer will I be hungry
For the bread of life is mine.

I saw a navy blue bird
Flying way above the sea
I walked on and I learned later
That this navy blue bird was me

I returned a paler blue bird
And this is the advice they gave me
"You must not try to be too pure
You must fly closer to the sea"

**"I Don't Like Mondays" by The
Boomtown Rats**

The silicon chip inside her head
Gets switched to overload
And nobody's gonna go to school today
She's going to make them stay at home
And daddy doesn't understand it
He always said she was as good as gold
And he can see no reason
'Cause there are no reasons
What reason do you need to be sure

Oh, oh, oh tell me why
I don't like Mondays
Tell me why
I don't like Mondays

Tell me why
I don't like Mondays
I want to shoot
The whole day down

The Telex machine is kept so clean
As it types to a waiting world
And mother feels so shocked
Father's world is rocked
And their thoughts turn to their own
little girl
Sweet sixteen ain't that peachy keen
Now, it ain't so neat to admit defeat
They can see no reasons
'Cause there are no reasons
What reason do you need oh, woah

Tell me why

I don't like Mondays
I want to shoot
The whole day down
Down, down
Shoot it all down

All the playing's stopped in the
playground now
She wants to play with her toys a while
And school's out early and soon we'll be
learning
And the lesson today is how to die
And then the bullhorn crackles
And the captain tackles
With the problems and the how's and
why's
And he can see no reasons
'Cause there are no reasons
What reason do you need to die, die
Oh, oh, oh and the silicon chip inside
her head
Gets switched to overload
And nobody's gonna go to school today
She's going to make them stay at home
And daddy doesn't understand it
He always said she was as good as gold
And he can see no reason
'Cause there are no reasons
What reason do you need to be sure

Tell me why
I don't like Mondays
Tell me why
I don't like Mondays
Tell me why

I don't like, I don't like, I don't like

Mondays
Tell me why
I don't like, I don't like, (tell me why) I
don't like Mondays
Tell me why
I don't like Mondays
I want to shoot the whole day down

"Into the Mystic" by Van Morrison

We were born before the wind
Also younger than the sun
Ere the bonnie boat was won
As we sailed into the mystic
Hark, now hear the sailors cry
Smell the sea and feel the sky
Let your soul and spirit fly into the
mystic
And when that foghorn blows
I will be coming home
And when the foghorn blows
I want to hear it

I don't have to fear it and I want to rock
your gypsy soul
Just like way back in the days of old
And magnificently we will flow into the
mystic

When that fog horn blows
You know I will be coming home
And when that fog horn whistle blows
I got to hear it

I don't have to fear it and I want to rock
your gypsy soul

Just like way back in the days of old
And together we will flow into the
mystic

Come on, girl
Too late to stop now

**"I Still Haven't Found What I'm
Looking For" by U2**

I have climbed the highest mountains
I have run through the fields
Only to be with you
Only to be with you.

I have run, I have crawled
I have scaled these city walls
These city walls
Only to be with you.

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.
I have kissed honey lips
Felt the healing in her finger tips
It burned like fire
(I was) burning inside her.

I have spoke with the tongue of angels
I have held the hand of a devil
It was warm in the night
I was cold as a stone.

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.

I believe in the Kingdom Come
Then all the colours will bleed into one
Bleed into one.
But yes, I'm still running.
You broke the bonds
And you loosed the chains
Carried the cross of my shame
Oh my shame, you know I believe it.

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for.
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for

"Jailbreak" by Thin Lizzy

Tonight there's gonna be a jailbreak
Somewhere in this town
See me and the boys we don't like it
So were getting up and going down

Hiding low looking right to left
If you see us coming I think it's best
To move away do you hear what I say
From under my breath

Tonight there's gonna be a jailbreak

Somewhere in the town
Tonight there's gonna be a jailbreak
So don't you be around

Tonight there's gonna be trouble
Some of us won't survive
See the boys and me mean business
Bustin' out dead or alive
I can hear the hound dogs on my trail
All hell breaks loose, alarm and sirens
wail
Like the game if you lose
Go to jail

Tonight there's gonna be a jailbreak
Somewhere in the town
Tonight there's gonna be a jailbreak
So don't you be around
Tonight there's gonna trouble
I'm gonna find myself in
Tonight there's gonna be a jailbreak
So woman stay with a friend

You know it's safer
Breakout!

Tonight there's gonna be a breakout
Into the city zones
Don't you dare to try and stop us
No one could for long

Searchlight on my trail
Tonight's the night all systems fail
Hey you good lookin' female
Come here!

Tonight there's gonna be a jailbreak
Somewhere in the town
Tonight there's gonna be a jailbreak
So don't you be around
Tonight there's gonna be trouble
I'm gonna find myself in
Tonight there's gonna be trouble
So woman stay with a friend

"Johnny Boy" by Gary Moore

When I hear that wind blow
All across the Wicklow mountains
Is it you I hear a calling?
Johnny boy, oh Johnny boy

When I look to the west
Out across the River Shannon
I can still see you smiling
Johnny boy, oh Johnny boy

When the leaves have turned to brown
And winter's due
As I watch the sun go down
I'll think of you

When I hear that wind blow
All across the Wicklow mountains

Sure it's you, I'll hear a calling
Johnny boy, oh Johnny boy

"Led Clones" by Gary Moore

The time has come to talk about
tomorrow
You should be a careful one tomorrow
I heard them on the radio
I saw them on the video
I don't think I can take much more

Led clones, Led clones

You've stolen from the houses of the
holy
You've rolled into the kingdom of the
saint
I heard you on the radio
I saw those crummy videos
I don't think I can take no more

Led clones, Led clones
Got to get it on
From the still of the night
But you're gettin' it wrong
You know it ain't right

I saw them on the radio
I heard them on the videos
I don't think I can take much more

Led clones, Led clones

"Let Your Love Be Known" by Bono

Yes there was silence
yes there was no people here
yes I walked through the streets of
Dublin and no-one was near
Yes I don't know you
No I didn't think I didn't care
You live so very far away from just
across the square

And I can't reach but I can rain
You can't touch but you can sing
Across rooftops
Sing down the phone
Sing and promise me you won't stop
Sing your love, be known, let your love
be known

Yes there is isolation
You and me we're still here
Yes when we open our eyes we will
stare down the fear
And maybe I've said the wrong thing
Yes I made you smile
I guess the longest distance is always the
last mile

And I can't reach but I can rain
You can't touch but you can sing
Across rooftops
Sing to me down the phone
Sing and promise me you won't stop
Sing and you're never alone

Sing as an act of resistance
Sing though your heart is overthrown
When you sing there is no distance

So let your love be known, oh let your
love be known
Though your heart is overthrown
Let your love be known

"Limbo" by Seamus Heaney

Fishermen at Ballyshannon
Netted an infant last night
Along with the salmon.
An illegitimate spawning,

A small one thrown back
To the waters. But I'm sure
As she stood in the shallows
Ducking him tenderly
Till the frozen knobs of her wrists
Were dead as the gravel,
He was a minnow with hooks
Tearing her open.
She waded in under
The sign of the cross.
He was hauled in with the fish.
Now limbo will be

A cold glitter of souls
Through some far briny zone.
Even Christ's palms, unhealed,
Smart and cannot fish there.

"Linger" by The Cranberries

If you, if you could return
Don't let it burn
Don't let it fade
I'm sure I'm not being rude
But it's just your attitude
It's tearing me apart
It's ruining every day
For me

I swore I would be true
And fellow, so did you
So why were you holding her hand?
Is that the way we stand?
Were you lying all the time?
Was it just a game to you?
But I'm in so deep
You know I'm such a fool for you
You've got me wrapped around your
finger
Do you have to let it linger?
Do you have to, do you have to, do have
to let it linger?
Oh, I thought the world of you
I thought nothing could go wrong
But I was wrong, I was wrong
If you, if you could get by
Trying not to lie
Things wouldn't be so confused
And I wouldn't feel so used
But you always really knew
I just want to be with you

And I'm in so deep
You know I'm such a fool for you
You've got me wrapped around your
finger
Do have to let it linger?
Do you have to, do you have to, do have
to let it linger?

**"Lookin' After No. 1" by The
Boomtown Rats**

The world owes me a living
I've waited on this dole queue too long
I've been standin' in the rain for fifteen
minutes
That's a quarter of an hour too long.

I'll take all they can give me
And then I'm gonna ask for more
Cos the money's buried deep in the Bank
of England
And I want the key to the vault

I'm gonna take your money
Count your loss when I'm gone.
I'm alright, Jack,
I'm lookin' after number one.

If I want something I get it
Don't matter what I have to do
I'll step on your face, on your mother's
grave
Never underestimate me I'm nobody's
fool

Don't wanna be like you.

Don't wanna live like you.
Don't wanna talk like you, at all.

Don't give me love thy neighbour
Don't give me charity
Don't give me peace and love or the
good lord above
You only get in my way with your
stupid ideas

I am an island
Entire of myself
And when I get old, older than today
I'll never need anybody's help in any
way.

Don't wanna be like you.
Don't wanna live like you.
Don't wanna talk like you, at all.
I'm gonna be like
I'm gonna be like
I'm gonna be like ME!

"Mad Pat" by Horslips

There was a country fiddler,
A jester, a riddler, a joker,
A singer of songs,
In every town he passed
He'd stop to help the dancing master
Entertain his straw-rope-foot throng
And from a green cloth on his back
He'd take his fiddle
And some goodbye snow
Now singing high, now murmuring low
Now in the middle with his magic bow

And all the people would know.

Mad Paddy's gone back on the road
A wire string fiddle is his only load,
He's kicking up turf everywhere he goes
And he's on his own.

From the houses all the people they stare
At his Horslips and his emerald green
hair

You know he keeps on moving
He just doesn't care
When he's on his own.

First he'll play a slow, slow air
So fair, to drive away your cares
And bring a magic sleep
Then the pace will quicken
As you burst out of your slumber
And find yourself up on your feet
But then his magic tune will change
To something strange, there's something
wrong
What's going on.

And through the tears you cry
You'll look, you'll sigh, you'll feel like
dying
Cos the fiddler's gone
Mad Paddy's moving on.

Mad Paddy's gone back on the road
A wire string fiddle is his only load
He's kicking up turf everywhere he goes

And he's on his own.

In the corner there's a smile on his face
His fancy is taking him to some distant
place

You know his tunes keep changing
He can't keep the pace

And he's on his own

Mad Pat's on the road

"Madame George" by Van Morrison

Down on Cyprus Avenue
With a childlike vision leaping into view
Clicking, clacking of the high heeled
shoe

Ford and Fitzroy, Madame George
Marching with the soldier boy behind
He's much older now with hat on
drinking wine

And that smell of sweet perfume comes
drifting through

The cool night air like Shalimar
And outside they're making all the stops
The kids out in the street collecting
bottle-tops

Gone for cigarettes and matches in the
shops

Happy taken Madame George
That's when you fall

Whoa, that's when you fall

Yeah, that's when you fall

When you fall into a trance

Sitting on a sofa playing games of
chance

With your folded arms and history
books

You glance into the eyes of Madame
George
And you think you found the bag
You're getting weaker and your knees
begin to sag
In a corner playing dominoes in drag
The one and only Madame George

And then from outside the frosty
window raps
She jumps up and says, Lord, have
mercy I think it's the cops
And immediately drops everything she
gots
Down into the street below
And you know you gotta go
On that train from Dublin up to Sandy
Row
Throwing pennies at the bridges down
below
And the rain, hail, sleet, and snow

Say goodbye to Madame George
Dry your eye for Madame George
Wonder why for Madame George
And as you leave, the room is filled with
music
Laughing, music, dancing, music all
around the room
And all the little boys come around,
walking away from it all

So cold, and as you're about to leave
She jumps up and says, hey love, you
forgot your gloves
And the gloves to love, to love the
gloves

To say goodbye to Madame George
Dry your eye for Madame George
Wonder why for Madame George
Dry your eyes for Madame George

Say goodbye in the wind and the rain on
the back street
In the backstreet, in the back street
Say goodbye to Madame George
In the backstreet, in the back street, in
the back street
Down home, down home in the back
street
Gotta go, say goodbye, goodbye,
goodbye
Dry your eye, your eye, your eye, your
eye, your eye

Say goodbye to Madame George
And the loves to love to love the love
Say goodbye, goodbye, goodbye
Say goodbye goodbye, goodbye,
goodbye to Madame George
Dry your eye for Madame George
Wonder why for Madame George
The love's to love, the love's to love, the
love's to love
Say goodbye, goodbye

Get on the train
Get on the train, the train, the train
This is the train, this is the train
Whoa, say goodbye, goodbye, goodbye,
goodbye
Get on the train, get on the train

"Mandinka" by Sinéad O'Connor

I'm dancing the seven veils

Want you to pick up my scarf

See how the black moon fades

Soon I can give you my heart

I don't know no shame

I feel no pain

I can't see the flame

But I do know Man-din-ka

I do know Man-din-ka

I do know Man-din-ka

I do

They're throwing it all this way

Dragging it back to the start

And they say, "See how the glass is raised?"

I have refused to take part

I told them "drink something new"

Please let me pull something through

I don't know no shame

I feel no pain

I can't

I don't know no shame

I feel no pain

I can't see the flame

But I do know Man-din-ka

I do know Man-din-ka

I do know Man-din-ka

I do, I do, I do

I say I do

Soon I can give you my heart

I swear I do

Soon I can give you my heart

I do

Mandinka

Soon I can give you my heart

**"More Than You Can Chew" by
Horslips**

People say you're dressed to kill

You're not a girl to come on slow.

Once you get the bit between your teeth

You don't feel like letting go.

But before you hit off

Let me say you've bit off

More than you can chew.

I recall just how you laughed,

And you tried to make a fool of me.

How you thought you could get away

Without me knowing is hard to see.

Though things may look doubtful,

You've got yourself a mouthful

More than you can chew.

You can give me back my pride

And I will trade you all that's due.

Cos like a spider I'm creeping back

Gonna spin my web all over you.

And if you take it in haste

You're gonna waste

Aah you can't taste
More than you can chew

"Never Get Old" by Sinéad O'Connor

*[Introduction by Enya: Psalm 91:11-13
in Gaelic]*

Óir thug sé ordú dá aingil i do thaobh:
Tú a chosaint i do shlite go léir
Iompróidh siad thú lena lámha
Sula mbuailfeá do chos in aghaidh
cloiche
Satlóidh tú ar an leon is ar an nathair
Gheobhaidh tú de chosa sa leon óg is sa
dragan

Young woman with a drink in her hand
She likes to listen to rock and roll
She moves with the music
Cause it never gets old
It's the only thing
That never gets old
Young man in a quiet place
Got a hawk on his arm
He loves that bird
Never does no harm
It's the only thing
That never can do no harm
Must be the only thing
That never can do no harm

Sun setting on the avenue
Everyone walks by

They live their life under cover
Being blind
Being blind

"New Year's Day" by U2

All is quiet on New Year's Day.
A world in white gets underway.
I want to be with you, be with you night
and day.
Nothing changes on New Year's Day.
On New Year's Day.

I will be with you again.
I will be with you again.
Under a blood-red sky
A crowd has gathered in black and white
Arms entwined, the chosen few
The newspaper says, says
Say it's true, it's true...
And we can break through
Though torn in two
We can be one.
I, I will begin again
I, I will begin again.

Oh, maybe the time is right.
Oh, maybe tonight.
I will be with you again.
I will be with you again.

And so we are told this is the golden age
And gold is the reason for the wars we
wage
Though I want to be with you
Be with you night and day

Nothing changes
On New Year's Day

"Nina Cried Power" by Hozier

It's not the waking, it's the rising
It is the grounding of a foot
uncompromising
It's not forgoing of the lie
It's not the opening of eyes
It's not the waking, it's the rising

It's not the shade, we should be past it
It's the light, and it's the obstacle that
casts it
It's the heat that drives the light
It's the fire it ignites
It's not the waking, it's the rising

It's not the song, it is the singing
It's the heaven of a human spirit ringing
It is the bringing of the line
It is the bearing of the rhyme
It's not the waking, it's the rising
And I could cry power (Power), power
(Power)
Power, Lord
Nina cried power
Billie cried power
Mavis cried power
And I could cry (Power) power, (Power)
power
Hey, power
Curtis cried power

Patti cried power
Nina cried power
It's not the wall, but what's behind it
Oh, the fear of fellow man, it's mere
assignment
And everything that we're denied
By keeping the divide
It's not the waking, it's the rising

And I could cry power (Power), power
(Power)
Oh, power
Nina cried power
Lennon cried power
James Brown cried power
And I could cry (Power) power, (Power)
power
Hey, power
B.B. cried power
Joni cried power
Nina cried power

And I could cry power
Power has been cried by those stronger
than me
Straight into the face that tells you
To rattle your chains if you love being
free

But I could cry power (Power)
'Cause power is my love when my love
reaches to me
James Brown cried power
Seeger cried power

Marvin cried power
Yeah ah, power
James cried power
Lennon cried power
Patti cried power
Billie, power
Dylan, power
Woody, power
Nina cried power

"No Second Troy" by W. B. Yeats

Why should I blame her that she filled
my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most
violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the
great,
Had they but courage equal to desire?
What could have made her peaceful with
a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being
what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

**"Over the Hills and Far Away" by
Gary Moore**

They came for him one winter's night
Arrested, he was bound

They said there'd been a robbery
His pistol had been found
They marched him to the station house
He waited till the dawn
And as they led him to the dock
He knew that he'd been wronged
You stand accused of robbery
He heard the bailiff say
He knew without an alibi
Tomorrow's light would mourn his
freedom
Over the hills and far away
For ten long years he'll count the days
Over the mountains and the seas
A prisoner's life for him there'll be

He knew that it would cost him dear
But yet he dare not say
Just where he'd been that fateful night
A secret it must stay
He had to fight back tears of rage
His heart beat like a drum
For with the wife of his best friend
He'd spent his final night of freedom

Over the hills and far away
He swears he will return one day
Far from the mountains and the seas
Back in her arms again he'll be
Over the hills and far away

Each night within his prison cell
He looks out through the bars
He reads the letters that she wrote
One day he'll know the taste of freedom

Over the hills and far away

She prays he will return one day
As sure as the rivers reach the seas
Back in his arms again she'll be
Over the hills and far away
He swears he will return one day
As sure as the river reach the sea
Back in his arms is where she'll be

Over the hills and far away
She prays he will return one day
As sure as the rivers reach the seas
Back in her arms is where he'll be

Over the hills
Over the hills and far away

**"Out in the Fields" by Gary Moore &
Phil Lynott**

It doesn't matter if you're wrong or if
you're right
It makes no difference if you're black or
if you're white
All men are equal till the victory is won
No color or religion ever stopped a
bullet from a gun

Out in the fields, the fighting has begun
Out on the streets, they're falling one by
one
Out from the skies, a thousand more will
die each day
Death is just a heartbeat away

It doesn't matter if you're left or to the
right

Don't try to hide behind the cause for
which you fight
There'll be no prisoners taken when the
day is done
No flag no uniform ever stopped a bullet
from a gun
Out in the fields, the fighting has begun
Out on the streets, they're falling one by
one
Out from the skies, a thousand more will
die each day
Death is just a heartbeat away

There's no communication
No one to take the blame
The cries of every nation
They're falling on deaf ears again
Out in the fields
Out in the fields, they are falling one by
one
Out in the fields, no flag has ever
stopped a bullet from a gun
Death is just a heartbeat away

Out in the fields, a heartbeat away
Out in the fields, death is just a heartbeat
away
Out in the fields, a heartbeat away
Out in the fields

Out in the fields, the fighting has begun
Out on the streets, they're falling one by
one
Out from the skies, a thousand more will
die each day
Out!

"Pretty" by The Cranberries

You're so pretty the way you are
You're so pretty the way you are
And you have no reason
To be so insolent to me
You're so pretty the way you are
La, la
You got to say it if you want to
But you won't change me
La, la
You got to say it if you want to
But you won't change me

"Rat Trap" by The Boomtown Rats

There was a lot of rocking going on that
night
Cruising time for the young bright lights
Just down past the gasworks, by the
meat factory door
The five lamp boys were coming on
strong

The Saturday night city beat had already
started
And the, the pulse of the corner boys
just sprang into action
And young Billy watched it all under the
yellow street light
And said "tonight of all nights, there's
gonna be a fight"

Billy don't like it living here in this town
He says the traps have been sprung long
before he was born

He says "hope bites the dust behind all
the closed doors"
And pus and grime ooze from its scab
crusted sores

There's screaming and crying in the
high-rise blocks"
It's a rat trap Billy, but you're already
caught
And you can make it if you wanna or
you need it bad enough
You're young and good-looking and
you're acting kind of tough

Anyway it's Saturday night time to see
what's going down
Put on the bright suit Billy, head for the
right side of town
It's only 8 o'clock but you're already
bored
You don't know what it is but, there's
got to be more
You'd better find a way out, hey kick
down that door
It's a rat trap and you've been caught

In this town Billy says "everybody's
trying to tell you what to do"

In this town Billy says "everybody says
you gotta follow rules"
You walk up to those traffic lights
You switch from your left to right
You push in that button and that button
comes alight
And hits you

"Walk, don't walk
Walk, don't walk
Talk, don't talk
Talk, don't talk"

"Walk, don't walk
Walk, don't walk
Talk, don't talk
Talk, don't talk"
Hey Billy take a walk, take a walk, take
a walk

Hey Billy, take a walk with me
Take a walk that leads to me
Sweet high school blues
Oh little Judy's trying to watch "top of
the pops"
But mum and dad are fighting don't they
ever stop
She takes off her coat and walks down
into the street
It's cold on that road, but it's got that
home beat
Deep down in her pockets she finds 50p
Hey is that any way for a young girl to
be?
I'm gonna get out of school work in
some factory
Work all the hours God gave me get
myself a little easy money
Now, now, now na na

Her mind's made up, she walks down the
road
Her hands in her pockets, coat buttoned
'gainst the cold
She finds Billy down at the Italian cafe

And when he's drunk it's hard to
understand what Billy says
But then he mumbles in his coffee and
he suddenly roars
"It's a rat trap Judy; and we've been
caught"

Rat trap, you've been caught
In a rat trap, you've been caught

"Remembering Part 1" by Thin Lizzy

Remember those golden days
We used to walk hand in hand
I was your friend, your fool, your lover
I was your man

I can see you then
Smiling, looking straight at me
You caught me unawares, I blushed
Let's sit beneath this tree

I can't get over the change in you
I can't get over the change in me

And I keep on remembering the old days
I keep on remembering the old ways

I can recall you running to a sweet shop
You stopped
Bought me something
And you handed it to me

You were my girlfriend then
The first that I ever had
The first that I ever kissed

And the first to make me sad

I can't get over the change in you

I can't get over the change in me

I keep on remembering the old days

I keep on remembering the old ways

I keep on remembering

I keep on remembering

I keep on remembering the old days

I keep on remembering

Your pretty dress

With the zip up the back

I used to love you like that

I used to love you like that

Oh yeah

I keep on remembering

I keep on remembering all about you

"Ride to Hell" by Horslips

You'll find him hard to recognise,

Cos he won't dress in black.

He wears a suit of gold lamé,

With velvet front and back.

But he can touch your trembling heart,

Can touch your very soul:

He'll take you with him when he leaves,

He'll make your dreams turn old.

Some people say that he's a fiend,

A devil in disguise.

He'll promise love and happiness

Bright lights before your eyes.

And still you know you can't refuse,

No matter what you think.

You just got to taste the glamour

Ovations as you sink.

Ride your nightmare,

On your ride to hell,

Ride your nightmare,

On your ride.

He alone can read the signs

And he can read them well,

But where he gets his power,

There's no one here can tell.

So if you're out alone at night,

Be sure to take a friend.

Cos it gets awful lonely,

In a world that never ends.

He's sure to come a calling

When the shades of night are drawn

a twisted blackthorn in his hand,

He'll linger until dawn.

You wish to stay forever young,

But only he knows how,

It's his blessing, it's his curse,

And it's your decision now...

"Róisín Dubh (Black Rose): A Rock Legend" by Thin Lizzy

Tell me the legends of long ago
When the kings and queens would dance
in the realm of the Black Rose
Play me the melodies I want to know
So I can teach my children, oh
Pray tell me the story of young Cú
Chulainn
How his eyes were dark his expression
sullen
And how he'd fight and always won
And how they cried when he was fallen

Oh tell me the story of the Queen of this
land
And how her sons died at her own hand
And how fools obey commands
Oh tell me the legends of long ago

Where the mountains of Mourne come
down to the sea
Will she no come back to me
Will she no come back to me

Oh Shenandoah I hear you calling
Far away you rolling river
Roll down the mountain side
On down on down go lassie go

Oh Tell me the legends of long ago
When the kings and queens would dance
in the realms of the Black Rose
Play me the melodies so I might know

So I can tell my children, oh

My Róisín Dubh is my one and only true
love
It was a joy that Joyce brought to me
While William Butler waits
And Oscar, he's going Wilde

Ah sure, Brendan where have you
Behan?
Looking for a girl with green eyes
My dark Rosaleen is my only colleen
That Georgie knows Best

But Van is the man
Starvation once again
Drinking whiskey in the jar-o
Synge's Playboy of the Western World

As Shaw, Sean I was born and reared
there
Where the Mountains of Mourne come
down to the sea
Is such a long, long way from Tipperary

**"Running from the Storm" by Gary
Moore**
The wind is up
And the sky is falling
The thunder cracks
And the sea is rolling

Wonder if we'll ever see tomorrow

Ride with our backs to the wind
Don't know if I'll make home again
Running from the storm

The sky is black
And the wind is howling
The lightning strikes
And the sea is raging

Wonder if we'll ever see tomorrow
Turning our ships to the sun
This time there is no place to run
Running from the storm

"Saga of the Ageing Orphan" by Thin Lizzy

Father and I waved goodbye
As we went to look
Uncle Peter was writing a book
And his mama was starting to cook and
she's ageing

We had come in search of one
Who evades us all
Never heeds the call
If only someone could stall this ageing

So I'll go and hope and know
That my time is near
Laughing through the years
Having only fears of ageing

"Saint Dominic's Preview" by Van Morrison

Shammy cleaning all the windows
Singing songs about Edith Piaf's soul
And I hear blue strains of no regredior
Across the street from Cathedral Notre
Dame

Meanwhile back in San Francisco
We're trying hard to make this whole
thing blend
As we sit upon this jagged
Storey block, with you my friend

And it's a long way to Buffalo
It's a long way to Belfast city too
And I'm hoping the choice won't blow
the hoist
'Cause this town, they bit off more than
they can chew.

As we gaze out on, as we gaze out on
As we gaze out on, as we gaze out on
Saint Dominic's Preview

All the orange boxes are scattered
Against the safeway's supermarket in the
rain
And everybody feels so determined
Not to feel anyone else's pain

No one's making no commitments
To anybody but themselves
Talkin' behind closed doorways
Tryin' to get outside, get outside of
empty shells

And for every cross cuttin' country
 corner, country corner
 For every Hank Williams railroad train
 that cried
 And all the chains, badges, flags and
 emblems
 And every strain on brain and every eye

 As we gaze out on, as we gaze out on
 As we gaze out on, as we gaze out on
 Saint Dominic's Preview
 And the restaurant tables are completely
 covered
 The record company has paid out for the
 wine
 You got everything in the world you
 ever wanted
 Right about now your face should wear
 a smile

 That's the way it all should happen
 When you're in, when you're in the state
 you're in
 You've got your pen and notebook ready
 I think it's about time, time for us to
 begin

 And meanwhile we're over in a 52nd
 Street apartment
 Socializing with the wino few
 Just to be hip and get wet with the jet set
 But they're flying too high to see my
 point of view

 As we gaze out on, as we gaze out on
 As we gaze out on, as we gaze out on
 Saint Dominic's Preview

See them freedom marching
 Out on the street, freedom marching
 Saint Dominic's Preview
 Out in the street
 Look at the man
 Turn around
 Come back, come back
 Turn around
 Look at the man
 Says hold on
 Saint Dominic's Preview
 Saint Dominic's Preview

 Says hold me in
 Saint Dominic's Preview

"Se Alza el Trueno" by Los Suaves

Apostados en la torre
 sobre un castro erguida
 ven al guerrero volver
 después de matar otra vez.
 De la crin de su caballo
 cuelga el botín de guerra
 cabezas goteando sangre
 de hombres muertos ayer
 Ver su rostro es ver la muerte
 y en sus ojos al Infierno arder.

 Nace el trueno, nace el trueno
 Se alza el trueno cuando llega el día
 Arde el pueblo, el mundo gira
 con la madrugada el trueno brilla.

Ha nacido en una tierra
que desconoce el miedo
cada vez que golpea,
un enemigo menos.
Por querer asoballar
a este hijo de los celtas
por intentarse burlar
sus risas ahora son muecas.
Ver su rostro es ver la muerte
y en sus ojos al Infierno arder.

Nace el trueno, nace el trueno
Se alza el trueno cuando llega el día
Arde el pueblo, el mundo gira
con la madrugada el trueno brilla.

Hace tiempo que esta historia
es otra leyenda más
de unos hombres que se matan
por el gusto de matar
unos dicen que traiciones
otros que por beber de más.
La verdad es que sus padres
les mintieron: otro engaño más.

Nace el trueno, nace el trueno
Se alza el trueno cuando llega el día
Arde el pueblo, el mundo gira
con la madrugada el trueno brilla.

Viudas que lloran, hombres sin vida

Se alza el trueno cuando llega el día
Arde el pueblo, el mundo gira
con la madrugada el trueno brilla.

**"Shades of a Blue Orphanage" by
Thin Lizzy**

When we were kids he used to go over
the back wall into old Dan's scrapyard

Into the snooker hall where most us kids
were barred

An' into the Roxy and the Stella where
film stars starred

That's where me and Hopalong an' Roy
Rogers got drunk and jarred

And we might have been the saviour of
the men,

the captured captain in the devil's demon
den

And we might have been the magic
politician in some kind of tricky position

Like an old, old, old master musician we
kept on wishin'

We was headed for the number one hit
country again

And it's true, true blue

Irish blue

And it's true, true blue

And sometimes it reminds me of you

There's an old photograph of Dan that I
wish you could-a seen

Of him and the boys posed, standing in
St. Stephen's Green

Ya see, they were a part of the great
freedom dream

But they were caught and detained and
are locked inside

the frame of the photograph

And he might have been the clever con,
the good samaritan, the rassclaut man

An' he might have been the loaded gun,
the charlatan of the tap dancin' fan

But like an old pioneer from outer
Afghanistan,

headed for the number one hit country
again

And it's true, true blue

Irish blue

And it's true, true blue

And sometimes it reminds me of you

Old Dan in a raincoat hums the very,
very, very special notes

of a long lost favorite melody

It reminds him of a love affair when he
was young and did not care

And how he parted so soft, so sadden

And he might have been the laughing
cavaliero, the wise old commanchero

Ow, the desparate desparado, the good
looking Randolph Valentino,

the gigolo from Glasgow

But like an old, old hunter of the female
buffalo,

he's headed for the number one hit
country again

And it's true, true blue

Irish blue

And it's true, true blue

And sometimes it reminds me of you

"Shrike" by Hozier

I couldn't utter my love when it counted

Ah, but I'm singing like a bird 'bout it
now

And I couldn't whisper when you needed
it shouted

Ah, but I'm singing like a bird 'bout it
now

The words hung above

But never would form

Like a cry at the final breath that is
drawn

Remember me love when I'm reborn

As the shrike to your sharp

And glorious thorn

And I had no idea on what ground I was
founded

All of that goodness is going with you
now

Then when I met you, my virtues
uncounted

All of my goodness is going with you
now

Dragging along
Following your form
Hung like the pelt of some prey you had worn
Remember me, love, when I'm reborn
As the shrike to your sharp
And glorious thorn

I fled to the city with so much
discounted
Ah, but I'm flying like a bird to you now
Back to the hedgerows where bodies are
mounted
Ah, but I'm flying like a bird to you now

I was housed by your warmth
But I was transformed
By your grounded and giving
And darkening scorn
Remember me, love, when I'm reborn
As the shrike to your sharp
And glorious thorn

"Sideways to the Sun" by Horslips

We were wise, oh so wise,
Not given to lies or deceit.
We juggled secrets at our fingertips,
Wore diamonds at our feet.
We showed you ways to play old airs.
We said we could be friends.
But, when our backs were turned, you
got us in the end.

We're the mystery of the lake when the
water's still.

We're the laughter in the twilight

You can hear behind the hill.

We'll stay around to watch you laugh,

Destroy yourselves for fun.

But, you won't see us, we've grown
sideways to the sun

"So Cold in Ireland" by The Cranberries

Here is a story

Of hope and of glory.

Hee, eighteen years old

And well, I fell in love.

La da da da-ah

Where have you gone from me?

The one that I loved endlessly.

We used to have a life,

Now it's all gone

Mystified, mystified, mystified, mystified

Mystified, mystified, mystified, mystified!

Does it have to be so cold in Ireland?

Does it have to be so cold in Ireland for me?

Are they waiting for me?

Are they waiting for me?

Are they waiting for me?

Where have you gone, from me?

The one that I loved endlessly.
We were to have a child,
Yesterday's gone.
Well, I knew the time would come
When I'd have to leave,
Go on.
Look what they've done to me,
They've taken my hand...
And it's killing me
Killing me, killing me, killing me!

Does it have to be so cold in Ireland?
Does it have to be so cold in Ireland for me?
Are they ready for me?
Are they ready for me?
Are they ready for me?

But I'm afraid I'm returning to Ireland.
I'm afraid I'm returning to Ireland.
I see, that there is nothing for me
There is nothing for me
There is nothing for me?

"Streets of Arklow" by Van Morrison

And as we walked
Through the streets of Arklow
Oh the color
Of the day wore on
And our heads
Were filled with poetry
And the morning
A-comin' on to dawn

And as we walked
Through the streets of Arklow
And gay perfusion
In god's green land
And the gypsy's rode
With their hearts on fire
They say "We love to wander,"
"Lord we love,"
"Lord we love to roam"

And as we walked
Through the streets of Arklow
In a drenching beauty
Rolling back 'til the day
And I saw your eyes
They was shining, sparkling crystal clear
And our souls were clean
And the grass did grow
And our souls were clean
And the grass did grow
And our souls were clean
And the grass did grow

And as we walked
Through the streets of Arklow

"Sunburst" by Horslips

I come down like an eagle
An eagle from far on the sea
Won't you set me free

Time spins down to a standstill
My hands fill with all I desire
I can feel your fire

I steal into your cities
And pity the sleepers who say
Time can't slip away

Light streams out from your doorway
Your stairway is waiting to climb
Then your sunburst's mine

Sun is shining on her wings
Keeps her happy, makes her sing
But her talons flash upon the things
She needs to keep her smiling
Prey is sighted from above
It's moving fast but not quite fast enough
Deathly grip - cruel love
Take me to your sunburst

Want to feel your sunburst
Sunburst deep inside of me
Want to feel your sunburst

Daylight creeps in your window
You know all the promises made
Cannot be betrayed

You wait for me to take you
And make you a hunter like me
When we're flying free

"Sunday Bloody Sunday" by U2

I can't believe the news today
I can't close my eyes and make it go
away.
How long, how long must we sing this
song?
How long, how long?
'Cos tonight
We can be as one, tonight.

Broken bottles under children's feet
Bodies strewn across the dead-end
street.
But I won't heed the battle call
It puts my back up, puts my back up
against the wall.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.

And the battle's just begun
There's many lost, but tell me who has
won?
The trenches dug within our hearts
And mothers, children, brothers, sisters
Torn apart.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.

How long, how long must we sing this
song?
How long, how long?
'Cos tonight
We can be as one, tonight.
Sunday, bloody Sunday.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

Wipe the tears from your eyes

Wipe your tears away.

I'll wipe your tears away.

I'll wipe your tears away.

I'll wipe your bloodshot eyes.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

And it's true we are immune

When fact is fiction and TV reality.

And today the millions cry

We eat and drink while tomorrow they
die.

The real battle just begun

To claim the victory Jesus won

On Sunday, bloody Sunday

Sunday, bloody Sunday

**"Táim Sínte Ar Do Thuama" -
unknown**

áim sínte ar do thuama agus gheobhair
ann de shíor mé.

Dá mbeadh barra do dhá láimh agam, ní
scarfainn leat choíche.

A phlúirín is an tsearc sé ann domsa luí
leat.

Mar tá boladh fuar na cré uait, dath na
gréine is na gaoithe.

Is nuair is dóigh le mo mhuintir go
mbímse ar mo leabaigh.

Is ar do thuama sea a bhím sínte ó oíche
go maidin.

Ag cur síos ar mo chruatan is ag
cruaghol go daingean.

Sí mo chailín chiúin, stuama do ghluais
liom ina leanbh.

Is tá na sagairt is na bráithre gach lá
liomsa i bhfearg.

D'fhonn a bheith i ngrá leat a stórmhnaoi
is tú marbh.

Dhéanfainn foithnín ón ngaoth duit, is
díon díot ón bhfearthainn.

Agus brón ar mo chroíse tú a bheith
thíos ins an talamh.

Is an gcuimhin leatsa an oíche úd a
bhíosa agus tusa.

Fé bhun an chrann draighnigh, is bhí an
oíche ag cur cuisne.

Céad moladh le hÍosa nár dheineamar an
milleadh.

Is go bhfuil an choróin Mhaighdein mar
chrann soilse inár gcoinne.

Is tabhair mo mhallacht dod' mháithrín
is ní áirímse d'athair.

Is a maireann de do chairde gach lá faid
a mhaireann.

Nár lig dom tú a phósadh is tú beo agam
i do bheathaigh

Mar nach n-iarrfainn mar spré leat ach
luí leat sa leabaigh.

Is tá brón ar mo chroíse atá líonta le grá
dhuit.

Is an lionndubh taobh thíos dó atá
chomh dubh leis na háirne.

Sara dtiocfaidh aon ní orm is go
gcloífidh an bás mé

Ó béad-sa i mo shí gaoithe romhat thíos
ar na bántaibh.

"Take Me to Church" by Hozier

My lover's got humour

She's the giggle at a funeral

Knows everybody's disapproval

I should've worshipped her sooner

If the heavens ever did speak

She's the last true mouthpiece

Every Sunday's getting more bleak

A fresh poison each week

"We were born sick," you heard them
say it

My church offers no absolutes

She tells me, "Worship in the bedroom"

The only heaven I'll be sent to

Is when I'm alone with you

I was born sick

But I love it

Command me to be well

Amen. Amen. Amen

Take me to church

I'll worship like a dog at the shrine of
your lies

I'll tell you my sins and you can sharpen
your knife

Offer me that deathless death

Good God, let me give you my life

If I'm a pagan of the good times

My lover's the sunlight

To keep the Goddess on my side

She demands a sacrifice

Drain the whole sea

Get something shiny

Something meaty for the main course

That's a fine-looking high horse

What you got in the stable?

We've a lot of starving faithful

That looks tasty

That looks plenty

This is hungry work

Take me to church

I'll worship like a dog at the shrine of
your lies

I'll tell you my sins so you can sharpen
your knife

Offer me my deathless death

Good God, let me give you my life

No Masters or Kings

When the Ritual begins

There is no sweeter innocence than our
gentle sin

In the madness and soil of that sad
earthly scene

Only then I am human

Only then I am clean

Amen. Amen. Amen

Take me to church

I'll worship like a dog at the shrine of
your lies

I'll tell you my sins and you can sharpen
your knife

Offer me that deathless death

Good God, let me give you my life

"Teenage Kicks" by The Undertones

Are teenage dreams so hard to beat?

Everytime she walks down the street

Another girl in the neighbourhood

Wish she was mine, she looks so good

I wanna hold her, wanna hold her tight

Get teenage kicks right through the night

I'm gonna call her on the telephone

Have her over 'cause I'm all alone

I need excitement, oh, I need it bad

And it's the best I've ever had

I wanna hold her, wanna hold her tight

Get teenage kicks right through the

night, all right

"Television Screen" by Radiators from Space

There is a man in a shiny suit, he's

saying

"Get them off the streets and into the
schools"

But he looks pretty dull he's got a
middle aged spread

And he could never understand what's
going on in my head

But I'll get him tonight, I'll teach him a
lesson alright

I'm gonna smash my Telecaster

Through the television screen

'Because I don't like what's going down

I got the rights, I got the rights

I've got the ticket and the buck stops
here

Devaluation on the network news

Rock 'n' Roll heroes with the rich man's
blues

It don't really matter if the future looks
bleak

Cos I never see more than a tenner a
week

Can't afford their records so I steal them
when I can

Watch out for that guitar there

Wham bam bam

So here I am, just watch me now

I've got a new band

It's the victim and the weapon this guitar
in my hand

Greta Garbage Trashcans playing hard

and fast
Things are looking good at last
Don't call me blank generation
I'm doin' the best that I can

**"The Boys Are Back in Town" by
Thin Lizzy**

Guess who just got back today?
Them wild-eyed boys that had been
away
Haven't changed, haven't much to say
But man, I still think them cats are great

They were asking if you were around
How you was, where you could be
found

I told them you were living downtown
Driving all the old men crazy
The boys are back in town

You know the chick that used to dance a
lot

Every night she'd be on the floor shaking
what she'd got

Man when I tell you she was cool, she
was red hot

I mean she was steaming

That time over at Johnny's place

Well this chick got up and she slapped
Johnny's face

Man we just fell about the place

If that chick don't want to know, forget
her

The boys are back in town

Spread the word around
The boys are back in town

Friday night they'll be dressed to kill

Down at Dino's bar and grill

The drink will flow and blood will spill

If the boys want to fight, you'd better let
them

That jukebox in the corner blasting out
my favorite song

The nights are getting warmer, it won't
be long

It won't be long till summer comes

Now that the boys are here again

The boys are back in town

**"The Friendly Ranger at Clontarf
Castle" by Thin Lizzy**

The friendly ranger paused
And scooping a bowl of beans
Spreading them like stars
Falling like justice on different scenes

"I'm damned"

"Indeed, comrade"

"I'm being bombed"

And all the people's faces turned
strawberry blonde

By the morning gate the friendly ranger
waits

For the sun making sure it's not late

"Just in time" "No need to fear" "Well,

just in case"
And all the people are happy for another
year
And in the evening shade he climbs
upon the sun
Getting it's glow
He goes on
Singing this song

To feel the goodness glowing inside
To walk down a street with my arms
about your hips, side by side
To play with a sad eyed child till he
smiles
To look at a starry sky at night, realize
the miles

To see the sun set behind the steeple
Clontarf Castle, no King, Queen or
knightly people
A coal fire and it's pouring rain
To wave goodbye to a very good friend,
never meet again
Little thoughts bring little memories of
you to me

**"The Icicle Melts" by The
Cranberries**

When
When will the icicle melt
The icicle, icicle
And when
When will the picture show end
The picture show, picture show
I should not have read the paper today

'Cause a child, child, child, child
He was taken away

There's a place for the baby that died
And there's a time for the mother who
cried
And she will hold him in her arms
sometime

'Cause nine months is too long, too long,
too long

How

How could you hurt a child

How could you hurt a child

Now does this make you satisfied,
satisfied, satisfied

I don't know what's

Happening to people today

When a child, child, child, child

He was taken away

There's a place for the baby that died

There's a time for the mother who cried

And she will hold him in

Her arms sometime

'Cause nine months is too long, too long,
too long

There's a place for the baby that died

And there's a time for the mother who
cried

And you will hold him in

Your arms sometime

'Cause nine months is too long, too long,
too long (too long)

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by W. B. Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to
Innisfree,

And a small cabin build there, of clay
and wattles made;

Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive
for the honey-bee,

And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for
peace comes dropping slow,

Dropping from the veils of the morning
to where the cricket sings;

There midnight's all a glimmer, and
noon a purple glow,

And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night
and day

I hear lake water lapping with low
sounds by the shore;

While I stand on the roadway, or on the
pavements grey,

I hear it in the deep heart's core.

"The Little Black Rose" by Thomas Kinsella, translator

Roisin, have no sorrow for all that has
happened to you

The Friars are out on the brine. They are
travelling the sea

Your pardon from the Pope will come,
from Rome in the East

And we won't spare the Spanish wine for
my Roisin Dubh

Far have we journeyed together, since
days gone by.

I've crossed over mountains with her,
and sailed the sea

I have cleared the Erne, though in spate,
at a single leap

And like music of the strings all about
me, my Roisin Dubh

You have driven me mad, fickle girl-
may it do you no good!

My soul is in thrall, not just yesterday
nor today

You have left me weary and weak in
body and mind

O deceive not the one who loves you,
my Roisin Dubh

I would walk in the dew beside you, or
the bitter desert

In hopes I might have your affection, or
part of your love

Fragrant small branch, you have given
your word you love me

The choicest flower of Munster, my
Roisin Dubh

If I had six horses, I would plough
against the hill

I'd make Roisin Dubh my Gospel in the
middle of Mass

I'd kiss the young girl who would grant
me her maidenhead

And do deeds behind the lios with my
Roisin Dubh!

The Erne will be strong in flood, the
hills be torn

The ocean will be all red waves, the sky
all blood,

Every mountain and bog in Ireland will
shake

One day, before she shall perish, my
Roisin Dubh.

"The Rocks Remain" by Horslips

Precious stones and stolen thrones
vanish in a day

And your golden rings, your silver rings
will crumble and decay

Silks and satins and crimson velvet will
someday fade away

But the stones will stand across the land
and love will have its day

Change will come to everyone, never
question why

Sticks and stones will break your bones
and words will make you cry

The sun will shiver, the moon will
crumble and vanish from the sky

But the hills remain, love's the same,
love will never die

I can see the lights below us twinkle like
the stars;

And I know they're waiting patiently for
the day to break again

Distant skies, different eyes, change has
come so fast

Mother of pearl, distant girl clutches at
the past

But in the sunset I see your eyes and
they tell me nothing's lost

While the rocks remain, loves the same,
strong love, strong love, strong love will
last

"Three Babies" by Sinéad O'Connor

Each of these my three babies

I will carry with me

For myself

I ask no one else will be

Mother to these three

And of course

I'm like a wild horse

But there's no other way I could be

Water and feed

Are not tools that I need

For the thing that I've chosen to be

In my soul

My blood and my bones

I have wrapped your cold bodies around
me

The face on you

The smell of you

Will always be with me
Each of these my three babies
I was not willing to leave
Though I tried
I blasphemed and denied
I know they will be returned to me
Each of these my babies
Have brought you closer to me
No longer mad like a horse
I'm still wild but not lost
From the thing that I've chosen to be
And it's 'cause you've thrilled me
Silenced me
Stilled me
Proved things I never believed
The face on you
The smell of you
Will always be with me
Each of these my three babies
I will carry with me
For myself
I ask no one else will be
Mother to these three

"Thunder Rising" by Gary Moore

They looked out from the fortress on the
hill
There came a single warrior returning
from the kill
The spoils of war hung from his horses
mane
The bloody heads of enemies that he had

freshly slayed

They saw the face, the eyes so sullen
Could only be the young Cúchulain

Thunder rising, thunder rising
Thunder rising early in the morning
Cities burning
The world keeps turning
Thunder rising early in the morning

The son of Lugh MacEithleen knew no
fear
For just one blow at any foe to tell his
end was near
So many tried to mock this Celtic son
They taunted and they teased him till
He slayed them one by one

And so they came, and so they've fallen
At the hands of young Cúchulain

Thunder rising, thunder rising
Thunder rising early in the morning
Cities burning
The world keeps turning
Thunder rising early in the morning

Long ago the legend has it
How the mighty Ulster men
Battled with the King Of Connacht
Fighting to the bitter end
No one knew what foolish reason
Caused this skirmish to begin
Was it treachery or treason
Or just the idle threats of drunken men?

Thunder rising, thunder rising
Thunder rising early in the morning
Cities burning
The world keeps turning
Thunder rising early in the morning
Thunder rising, thunder rising
Thunder rising early in the morning
Young men are dying
The widows are crying
Thunder rising early in the morning

"To Noise Making (Sing)" by Hozier

Remember when you'd sing, just for the
fuck of it?

And any joy it would bring

Honey, the look of it was as sweet as the
sound

Your head tilt back, your funny mouth
to the clouds

I couldn't hope to know that song and all
its words

Wouldn't claim to feel the same we felt
the first time it was heard

I couldn't name that feeling carried in
that voice

Was it that or just the act of making
noise that brought you joy?

You don't have to sing it right

But who could call you wrong?

To put your emptiness to melody

Your awful heart to song

You don't have to sing it nice, but,
honey, sing it strong

At best, you find a little remedy, at
worst the world will sing along

So honey, sing, and sing, and sing, and
sing, and sing, and sing, and sing

Sing, sing, and sing, and sing, and sing,
and sing, sing

Remember when you'd sing before we'd
move to it?

And we'd scuff up our shoes, honey, the
groove of it

Was whatever you choose

"I Wanna Be Your Lover" or "The
Fisherman's Blues"

You didn't always sing it right

But who could call you wrong?

To put your emptiness to melody

Your awful heart to song

You don't have to sing it nice, but,
honey, sing it strong

At best, you find a little remedy, at
worst the world will sing along

So honey, sing, and sing, and sing, and
sing, and sing, and sing, and sing

Sing, sing, and sing, and sing, and sing

Who could ask you be unbroken or be
brave again?

Or, honey, hope even on this side of the
grave again?

And who could ask you to be sound or
to feel saved again?

Just stick around until you hear that
music play again

So honey, sing, and sing, and sing, and
sing, and sing, and sing, and sing

Sing, sing, and sing, and sing, and sing,
and sing, sing

For the love of it

Remember when you'd sing, just for the
love of it?

And any joy it would bring

**"Trouble (with a Capital T)" by
Horslips**

High on the mountain stands a boat

But are they gods or real folk?

We can't see the fire but we smell the
smoke

Who'll take the plough? Who'll be the
yoke?

Night after night I don't believe

We are the ones you won't deceive

Not a thing will you achieve

'Cos we belong and we won't leave

Trouble, trouble

I try to chase trouble but it's chasing me

Trouble, trouble

Trouble with a capital T

Lay down your silver and your gold

I'm a man who can't be sold

And, even when my heart grows cold

I'll curse your evil stranglehold

The waves are running much too high

It's got so dark can't see the sky

But a change is coming by and by

A time to laugh, a time to die

Trouble, trouble

I try to chase trouble but it's chasing me

Trouble, trouble

Trouble with a capital T

Been so long away from home

I almost made this place my own

Now it seems I'll soon be gone

Moving on and all alone

High on the mountain stands a boat

But are they gods or real folk?

We can't see the fire but we smell the
smoke

Who'll take the plough? Who'll be the
yoke?

Trouble, trouble

I try to chase trouble but it's chasing me

Trouble, trouble

Trouble with a capital T

"Troy" by Sinéad O'Connor

I'll remember it
And Dublin in a rainstorm
And sitting in the long grass in summer
Keeping warm
I'll remember it
Every restless night
We were so young then
We thought that everything
We could possibly do was right
Then we moved
Stolen from our very eyes
And I wondered where you went to
Tell me when did the light die
You will rise
You'll return
The phoenix from the flame
You will learn
You will rise
You'll return
Being what you are
There is no other Troy
For you to burn
And I never meant to hurt you
I swear I didn't mean
Those things I said
I never meant to do that to you
Next time I'll keep my hands to myself
instead
Oh, does she love you
What do you want to do?

Does she need you like I do?
Do you love her?
Is she good for you?
Does she hold you like I do?
Do you want me?
Should I leave?
I know you're always telling me
That you love me
Just sometimes I wonder
If I should believe
Oh, I love you
God, I love you
I'd kill a dragon for you
I'll die
But I will rise
And I will return
The Phoenix from the flame
I have learned
I will rise
And you'll see me return
Being what I am
There is no other Troy
For me to burn
And you should've left the light on
You should've left the light on
Then I wouldn't have tried
And you'd never have known
And I wouldn't have pulled you tighter
No I wouldn't have pulled you close
I wouldn't have screamed
No I can't let you go

And the door wasn't closed
No I wouldn't have pulled you to me
No I wouldn't have kissed your face
You wouldn't have begged me to hold
you
If we hadn't been there in the first place
Ah but I know you wanted me to be
there oh oh
Every look that you threw told me so
But you should've left the light on
You should've left the light on
And the flames burned away
But you're still spitting fire
Make no difference what you say
You're still a liar

"Warriors" by Thin Lizzy

I am the warrior
I serve the death machine
Losers or conquerors
All flash past on my silver screen

Death is no easy answer
For those who wish to know
Ask those who have been before you
What fate the future holds

It ain't pretty...

I am a messenger
The message here, you must know
I am the warrior

I deliver the fatal blow

So fate will have to wait
Till time can heal the scar
My heart is ruled by Venus
And my head by Mars

"Wasteland, Baby!" by Hozier

All the fear and fire of the end of the
world

Happens each time a boy falls in love
with a girl

Happens great, happens sweet

Happily, I'm unfazed here, too

Wasteland, baby

I'm in love, I'm in love with you

All the things yet to come are the things
that have passed

Like the holding of hands, like the
breaking of glass

Like the bonfire that burns

That all words in the fight fell to

Wasteland, baby

I'm in love, I'm in love with you

And I love too, that love soon might end

Be known in its aching

Shown in the shaking

Lately of my wasteland, baby

Be still, my indelible friend, you are
unbreaking

Though quaking, though crazy

That's just wasteland, baby

And that day that we'll watch the death
of the sun

To the cloud and the cold and those
jeans you have on

And you'll gaze unafraid as they sob
from the city roofs

Wasteland, baby

I'm in love, I'm in love with you

And I love too, that love soon might end

Be known in its aching

Shown in the shaking

Lately of my wasteland, baby

Be still, my indelible friend, you are
unbreaking

Though quaking, though crazy

That's wasteland, baby

When the stench of the sea and the
absence of green

Are the death of all things that are seen
and unseen

Are an end but the start of all things that
are left to do

Wasteland, baby

I'm in love, I'm in love with you

(That's it)

"Where the Streets Have No Name"

by U2

I wanna run, I want to hide

I wanna tear down the walls

That hold me inside.

I wanna reach out

And touch the flame

Where the streets have no name.

I wanna feel sunlight on my face.

I see the dust-cloud

Disappear without a trace.

I wanna take shelter

From the poison rain

Where the streets have no name

Where the streets have no name

Where the streets have no name

We're still building and burning down
love

Burning down love.

And when I go there

I go there with you

(It's all I can do)

The city's a flood, and our love turns to
rust.

We're beaten and blown by the wind

Trampled in dust.

I'll show you a place

High on a desert plain

Where the streets have no name

Where the streets have no name

Where the streets have no name.

We're still building and burning down

love
Burning down love.
And when I go there
I go there with you
(It's all I can do)

"Whiskey in the Jar" by Thin Lizzy

As I was goin' over the Cork and Kerry
mountains.

I saw Captain Farrell and his money he
was countin'.

I first produced my pistol and then
produced my rapier.

I said stand o'er and deliver or the devil
he may take ya.

Musha ring dumb a do dumb a da.

Whack for my daddy-o,

Whack for my daddy-o.

There's whiskey in the jar-o.

I took all of his money and it was a
pretty penny.

I took all of his money and I brought it
home to Molly.

She swore that she'd love me, never
would she leave me.

But the devil take that woman for you
know she tricked me easy.

Musha ring dumb a do dumb a da.

Whack for my daddy-o,

Whack for my daddy-o.

There's whiskey in the jar-o.

Being drunk and weary I went to Molly's
chamber.

Takin' my money with me and I never
knew the danger.

For about six or maybe seven in walked
Captain Farrell.

I jumped up, fired off my pistols and I
shot him with both barrels.

Musha ring dumb a do dumb a da.

Whack for my daddy-o,

Whack for my daddy-o.

There's whiskey in the jar-o.

Now some men like the fishin' and some
men like the fowlin',

And some men like ta hear a cannon ball
a roarin'.

Me? I like sleepin' specially in my
Molly's chamber.

But here I am in prison, here I am with a
ball and chain, yeah.

Musha ring dumb a do dumb a da.

Whack for my daddy-o,

Whack for my daddy-o.

There's whiskey in the jar-o.

"Wild Frontier" by Gary Moore

I remember the old country

They call the Emerald Land

And I remember my home town

Before the wars began

Now we're riding on a sea of rage

The victims you have seen

You'll never hear them sing again

The Forty Shades Of Green

We're goin' back to the wild frontier
Back to the wild frontier, it's calling
Back to the wild frontier
We're goin' back
Back to the wild frontier

I remember my city streets
Before the soldiers came
Now armoured cars and barricades
Remind us of our shame

We are drowning in a sea of blood
The victims you have seen
Never more to sing again
The Forty Shades Of Green

We're goin' back to the wild frontier
Back to the wild frontier, it's calling
Back to the wild frontier
Back to the wild frontier, it's calling

Those are the days I will remember
Those are the days I most recall
We count the cost of those we lost
And pray it's not in vain
The bitter tears of all those years
I hope we live to see those days again

Now we're riding on a sea of rage
The victims you have seen
You'll never hear us sing again
The Forty Shades Of Green
And I remember a friend of mine
So sad now that he's gone
They tell me I'll forget
As time goes on

We're goin' back to the wild frontier
Back to the wild frontier, it's calling
Back to the wild frontier
We're goin' back
Back to the wild frontier (can you hear it
callin'?)
Back to the wild frontier (can you hear it
callin', callin'?)
Back to the wild frontier

"Yeats's Grave" by The Cranberries

Silenced by death in the grave
William Butler Yeats couldn't save
Why did you stand here
Were you sickened in time
But I know by now
Why did you sit here
In the grave
Why should I blame her
That she filled my days
With misery or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most
violent ways
Or hurled the little streets upon the great
Had they but courage equal to desire?
Sad that Maud Gonne couldn't stay
But she had MacBride anyway
And you sit here with me
On the Isle Innisfree
And you are writing down everything
But I know by now
Why did you sit here

In the grave

Why should I blame her

Had they but courage equal to desire

"Zombie" by The Cranberries

Another head hangs lowly

Child is slowly taken

And the violence caused such silence

Who are we mistaken?

But you see it's not me

It's not my family

In your head, in your head

They are fighting

With their tanks and their bombs

And their bombs and their guns

In your head, in your head

They are crying

In your head, in your head

Zombie, zombie, zombie

What's in your head, in your head

Zombie, zombie, zombie

Another mother's breaking heart

Is taken over

When the violence causes silence

We must be mistaken

It's the same old theme since 1916

In your head, in your head

They're still fighting

With their tanks and their bombs

And their bombs and their guns

In your head, in your head

They are dying

In your head, in your head

Zombie, zombie, zombie

What's in your head, in your head

Zombie, zombie, zombie

Appendix III - Official Playlist

I would strongly recommend listening to the songs while reading every chapter. However, if you cannot access the original recordings, I have created a free Spotify playlist entitled *Ireland into the Mystic: Irish Rock Music, 1970-2020*, to make the listening process available to every possible reader. As both a soundtrack and a virtual guide, it includes all the songs explored and analysed within the thesis, plus some more from the same albums that I also found helpful and that illustrate my arguments. You can access the Spotify playlist through the following link:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2gYUmsYmTonvCFDEelPJ8G>

For an even easier, more immediate access to the playlist, scan the QR code below with your mobile camera, and it will automatically play on your phone:



Appendix IV - Resumo da Tese

Irlanda cara á Mística: o Espírito Poético e o Contido Cultural da Música Rock Irlandesa, 1970-2020

Ao longo da historia, a música tivo sempre un papel central na cultura e mais na sociedade, e non só como fonte de entretemento, senón tamén como unha efectiva maneira de deixar constancia da propia historia e a identidade do país a través da arte, e esta é especialmente obvio no caso dun país como Irlanda. O principal obxectivo desta tese doutoral será, polo tanto, tratar un tema de especial interese e relevancia para os Estudos Culturais e os Humanísticos en xeral e os Estudos Irlandeses en particular, ao analizar dende unha perspectiva interdisciplinaria a profundidade cultural e intelectual da música rock irlandesa xunto coa súa historia, a súa estrutura e as súas características distintivas, o que tamén supoñería enfoque innovador na análise de cancións como fenómeno literario e cultural. Investigárase a relación entre música, literatura, cultura e sociedade a partires da presentación, análise, comparación e estudo detallado no seu correspondente contexto musical, cultural e histórico-social das cancións e traballos representativos nos que o rock representa unha arte musical e mais poética para demostrar a inclusión das diferentes ideas literarias, musicais e culturais no Rock Irlandés. Así pois, ao investigar o desenvolvemento da música rock en Irlanda ao longo de cinco décadas (dende os anos 1970 ata a actualidade), esta tese concluirá que mentres que Irlanda foi sempre sinónimo de creatividade cultural, a música rock foi símbolo dun país en proceso de cambio nunha etapa decisiva da súa historia. Esta e mais outras

conclusións serán resultado da análise crítica dos diferentes discursos biográficos, culturais, histórico-sociais, literarios e musicais que conforman esta investigación.

Como se dixo anteriormente, a música xogou un papel moi importante en Irlanda dende a antigüidade porque sempre representou (xunto coa literatura) unha das principais fontes culturais para a expresión da cultura e das distintas identidades irlandesas. Como resultado, a música irlandesa (tanto a tradicional como, en moita menor medida, a popular) aparece nos estudos culturais irlandeses como punto de encontro entre a cultura e a sociedade, sobre todo en *The Irishness of Irish Music* (2009) de John O'Flynn. Por outro lado, Seán Crosson analizou a relación entre a música tradicional irlandesa e a literatura no seu ensaio *'The Given Note': Traditional Music and Modern Irish Poetry* (2008), no cal expuxo que moitos poetas irlandeses incluíron nas súas obras moitas características desa especial relación artística. Pero foi en realidade *Noisy Island: A Short History of Irish Popular Music* de Gerry Smyth (publicado en 2005) a primeira obra que procurou tratar a música popular irlandesa como unha lexítima área académica dos Estudos Irlandeses. Uns anos despois, no 2012, no libro *Rock and Popular Music in Ireland: Before and After U2* de McLaughlin e McLoone, destacouse de novo a importancia de considerar a música popular irlandesa coma unha área de interese académico no futuro.

Así pois, dunha banda, este tese doutoral pretende supoñer a culminación de anos de profundo interese persoal, experiencia e investigación nas áreas da música e da literatura, mais doutra banda, foi tamén en resposta deste recente desenvolvemento que decidínme a investigar sobre o papel da música rock na historia social e cultural de Irlanda. Sen embargo, a énfase destes escritores e académicos difire da miña principal motivación, porque mentres que se ten escrito sobre a importancia social da música pop e rock en xeral, unha análise crítica máis profunda das propias cancións segue a ser

estraño, tanto no campo académico dos Estudos da Música Popular e no da Literatura Comparada, como sobre todo no dos Estudos Culturais Irlandeses.

En xeral, semella que unha pregunta principal (e aparentemente moi sinxela, mais non o é tal en moitos casos) é: ¿que di unha canción en particular e como? Por outra parte, ¿ata que punto é importante a literatura para os músicos? Tamén, ¿pódese expresar con musicalidade o que non se pode expresar con palabras, e viceversa? ¿E que din de nós as cancións que escoitamos? ¿Definen como somos, o que pensamos ou sentimos? Estas son só algunhas das preguntas que esta investigación busca responder. Ademais, xa que as artes, as humanidades e os estudos culturais compren unha función tan importante e vital na sociedade, tamén se pregunta: ¿como está representada a cultura dun país nas artes e, máis concretamente, na música? Entón, ¿pódese contar a historia dun país a partir de música producida nel? ¿E cales serían as funcións dos e das artistas como escritores, músicos e membros dunha comunidade? En resumo, esta tese será unha investigación sobre as posibles conexións entre a música rock e a literatura e a súa influencia cultural e social en Irlanda a través dunha detallada análise de cancións (letras e música) daqueles artistas e bandas rock irlandesas de maior impacto nacional e internacional, na procura de definir os usos e as funcións da música rock en Irlanda, sendo o máis importante o de revolta cultural contra a represión social. Así pois, o principal obxectivo desta tese será sacar á luz dende unha perspectiva interdisciplinaria a esencia poética do Rock Irlandés—isto é, a súa historia, a súa estrutura, o seu contido e as súas máis distintivas características—para producires un estudo que ambiciona ser tan informativo e razoado como expresivo e evocativo á vez.

Esta investigación ofrecerá un estudo amplo pero moi enfocado en canto a períodos de tempo e aproximacións teóricas, e combinará texto escrito con letras de cancións, partituras e fotografías contextualizadas con material de arquivo e ata

entrevistas no intento de establecer a profundidade intelectual e artística das respectivas obras dos e das artistas do rock irlandés. Estará principalmente dirixida por dous tipos de cuestións:

- primeiro, preguntarlle ao texto musical o que, o como e o por que.
- segundo, analizar a través de diferentes propostas teóricas se o texto musical acadou un obxectivo estético ou cultural en concreto, e cal foi a súa función histórica-cultural, se tiver.

Para iso, escollerei determinados traballos de artistas irlandeses que contribuíron de maneira significativa á cultura irlandesa moderna nos seus contextos musical, cultural e histórico: dende pioneiros como Van Morrison ou Rory Gallagher e bandas lendarias como Thin Lizzy e U2, ata iconas mundiais como Sinéad O'Connor e Dolores O'Riordan de The Cranberries, por exemplo. É dicir, artistas que no seu repertorio mostran a (r)evolución de ideas e a modernización das costumes que aconteceu no seu país, ao mesmo tempo que ofrecen a mellor síntese da chamada "condición do irlandés/irlandesa" ("Irishness"). Dado que o material artístico destes artistas é extenso, considero oportuno facer unha selección daqueles traballos nos que a presenza do rock como arte musical e poética sexa evidente ou polo menos abundante. Así, cantante a cantante, álbum a álbum, canción a canción, incluso ás veces liña por liña, farei un percorrido histórico e crítico para demostrar que estes textos artísticos combinan á vez distintas ideas literarias, musicais e culturais. Ao mesmo tempo, seguindo o argumento de Fitzgerald e O'Flynn de que "O rock está normalmente relacionado co nacional, e o nacional co rock," unha aproximación histórica centrarase nos aspectos históricos que tiveron lugar na era cando a canción foi creada, comentando como o ou a artista interpretou a historia, a situación e o evento na canción que el ou ela escribiu.

Ao referirnos aos avances no rock irlandés desde comezos dos anos 70 ata nosos días, esta tese explorará como o xurdimento deste xénero musical cambiou o panorama cultural de Irlanda para sempre, destacando aquelas letras e músicas de cancións que se converteron no mellor atallo para entender e sentir como era o mundo e mesmo a vida. É por iso que, por último mais non menos importante, investigarei como a música rock é unha forma de arte que celebra sentimentos e inspira soños, ambicións, ideas e emocións a través duns acordes, dunhas notas e duns versos... porque esa é a mística.

Metodoloxía

Esta exhaustiva investigación tomará cancións de artistas do rock irlandés como principal tema de análise e empregará un enfoque descritivo para obter información sobre tales temas en todas as cancións e artistas examinados. A investigación analítica basearase no estudo da "natureza híbrida" dos textos, xa que se argumentará que estes combinan simultaneamente unha serie de ideas literarias, musicais e culturais. Pretenderá así dar resposta a dúas cuestións principais: en primeiro lugar, facerlle a un texto musical as preguntas que, como e por que; e en segundo lugar, facer preguntas de valor, analizando eficazmente se dito texto musical logra un obxectivo estético ou cultural determinado. Inspirado na miña propia traxectoria artística, trato estes temas non só desde o punto de vista académico, senón das miñas propias experiencias. Non obstante, para apoiar a miña análise, xunto ao material escollido, tamén vou traballar con fontes secundarias como libros académicos, teses, ensaios, revistas e investigacións en campos tan diversos como a literatura, musicoloxía, socioloxía, análise de arte, educación e teoría cultural (ver, por exemplo, Smyth 2005, 2009; McLaughlin e McLoone 2000; Moore 2001; Whiteley 2000; e White 1998, 2008). Ademais, a presente obra tamén pon en común a semioloxía e a historia, xa que o enfoque da semioloxía

clásica tende a illar os textos de significado de contextos específicos. Aquí, polo contrario, un enfoque histórico centrarase nos aspectos históricos acontecidos na época en que se creou a canción, comentando por que o escritor escribiu a canción ou discurso e como o intérprete interpretou unha situación ou un acontecemento naquel momento. Ao analizar a evolución da música rock irlandesa ao longo de cinco décadas, desde os anos 70 ata a actualidade, esta tese contará a historia da Irlanda moderna desde a perspectiva da música rock producida en toda a illa durante esta etapa clave da súa historia política e cultural. Así, proporcionará unha ponte entre os aspectos semiolóxicos e os históricos do tratamento do rock irlandés, que é, en palabras de Hartley, o lugar onde se atopan "sistemas lingüísticos e condicións sociais" (6). Así pois, esta tese sinala a profundidade intelectual e cultural das cancións de rock irlandesas coa esperanza dunha comprensión que sería á súa vez a síntese dunha variedade de ideas derivadas dos distintos discursos culturais, históricos, literarios, musicolóxicos e filosóficos.

Estrutura da Tese

A ampla estrutura desta tese divide o noso tema en dúas grandes áreas, a primeira delas sobre as raíces do rock irlandés, é dicir, lugares e ideas de Irlanda cunha valoración de como estas exerceron unha influencia sobre a música rock. Esta sección tamén aborda as cuestións da condición irlandesa así como a do espírito de lugar fixándonos, por exemplo, na idea de exilio e nostalxia nas cancións destes artistas. Non obstante, algúns temas non están reflectidos só nunha sección concreta senón que se desenvolven en todas elas—por exemplo, lugar e memoria. Así, as cancións serán tratadas non só como unha melodía para ser cantada ou coma un texto para ser lida,

senón como "un instrumento de forza cultural, unha ferramenta central na creación de identidades nacionais e sociais" (Mitchell 1). Na segunda área, analizamos aos artistas, en primeiro lugar, como escritores e escritoras (a través do estudo de varias cancións e a análise de motivos clave nas súas letras), sen esquecermos do seu traballo como cantantes/intérpretes e músicos. Ademais, nesta segunda sección examínanse os discos que considero mellor ilustran esta metodoloxía, os que sexan absolutamente centrais para este traballo. É por iso que a tese divídese máis tematicamente do que cronoloxicamente (aínda que se teñen especialmente en conta os períodos de tempo porque tamén queremos amosar como as cancións poden usarse como forma de evidencia histórica). Así, hai cancións de, por exemplo, o álbum de Van Morrison de 1968, *Astral Weeks*, comentadas xunto as do *Wasteland, Baby!* de Hozier do 2019. Tamén conectamos o uso de mitos celtas dos Horslips nos anos 70 co de Gary Moore nos anos 80. Isto non quere suxerir que non haxa diferenza entre a música ou o artista que a faga en 1972, 1985 e 2020, senón que procuro atopar conexións e continuidades ao longo do tempo e das circunstancias. De feito, é parte da miña hipótese que os traballo musicais ou cancións do rock irlandés incorporan e revelan estas continuidades. Do mesmo xeito, esta tese analiza como a condición de irlandeses de intérpretes e bandas como Thin Lizzy, U2 ou The Cranberries expresouse doutras formas menos obvias, pero aínda así seguen a entenderse como "artistas irlandeses." En canto á elección de cancións nas que se centra o estudo, isto non é subxectivo, pero hai unha énfase nas gravacións que ilustran e exemplifican mellor algunhas tendencias creativas que ao meu ver son centrais no traballo en xeral. Ao mesmo tempo, a través desas cancións tamén valoro as influencias formativas que constitúen a identidade de tales artistas.

Esta tese pregúntase tamén que é "literario" ou poético sobre estas cancións, e se hai algo especialmente "irlandés" sobre estas calidades? ¿De que tradicións proceden os músicos de rock irlandeses, a cal pertencen? ¿Como definiron entón estas tradicións? Por iso, centrámonos nestes artistas como creadores de cancións e pensamos en como é que encaixan os seus respectivos traballos nas metodoloxías escollidas analizando polo miúdo algúns dos seus mellores discos. Do mesmo xeito, buscamos as súas conexións con varios escritores, xa que a comparación literaria discorre ao longo da tese no seu total. Isto non quere dicir que eles e elas sexan "como" Yeats, Beckett ou Blake, entre outros, senón que dalgunha forma e ás veces parecían estar traballando na mesma dirección que os autores. Así, distinguimos unha mestura de influencias conscientes e inconscientes, xunto cunha conexión natural. De feito, considero que o rock irlandés é unha música que adoita sacar a súa forza do pasado, do poder da memoria, e considero esta dinámica como un equilibrio entre a tradición e a innovación. Á vista deste pensamento, o estudo pon especial atención en certas cancións e álbumes que parecen ilustrar e iluminar mellor estas tendencias creativas. Para alcanzar este obxectivo, dividín a miña análise en cinco capítulos principais. Cada un destes capítulos individuais inclúe o contexto, a teoría máis relevante ou relacionada e o estudo detallado da canción, polo que normalmente hai unha sección de apertura baseada na teoría seguida dunha análise polo miúdo das cancións a tratar.

É por iso que a primeira parte da tese suxire que, como intento probar, as cancións que estou a explorar inclúen puntos de vista honestos de dito período, demostrando que factores como o contexto cultural ou a sociedade na que viven os artistas marcan a diferenza á hora de expresar a identidade cultural a través de cancións e da música. Así pois, inclúense as ideas e observacións básicas da análise de cancións específicas no capítulo introdutorio, "Introdución Histórica e Teórica ao Rock Irlandés,"

que ten catro subcapítulos. O primeiro e o segundo subcapítulo tratan da importancia do rock como ferramenta de expresión, tanto cultural como persoal, dende a súa orixe. O terceiro e o cuarto subcapítulo abordan os retos de definir o "rock irlandés" e as súas características dentro de cancións, así como o xeito en que diferentes autores suxiren que estas sexan analizadas. A importancia deste capítulo reside en que estes aspectos reflíctense dun xeito ou doutro en todas as cancións, discos e artistas que escollín para analizar, e forman así a base da elección temática desta tese.

A segunda parte da tese (capítulos 2 a 5) traza paralelos entre determinados temas e como estes influíron ou son tratados nas cancións e/ou discos escollidos. Así, o capítulo 2, "Mitoloxía e Celtismo na Música Rock Irlandesa," refírese á revolución persoal e artística de Horslips, Thin Lizzy e Gary Moore, cuxo uso do mito irlandés e celta e do folclore no seu legado musical lles garantiu un lugar especial tanto na escena rock como na esfera artística de Irlanda nos anos 70 e ao longo dos anos 80, respectivamente. A continuación, no capítulo 3, titulado "Conciencia Socio-política no Rock Irlandés," exploro como as e os artistas irlandeses foron capaces de usar a música rock como medio para expor as súas ideas e crenzas políticas nunha cadea de cancións que se escoitaron por todo o mundo durante décadas. No capítulo 4, "O Impacto Cultural e Artístico das Mulleres no Rock Irlandés," subliño a transgresión de fronteiras sociais e culturais das artistas irlandesas, como as protagonizadas por Sinéad O'Connor e Dolores O'Riordan en particular. O meu interese está no traballo destas artistas máis que na súa vida persoal, aínda que exista unha conexión entre ambos factores. Non obstante, elas falan da súa propia experiencia do mundo a través das súas cancións e actuacións, o que significa que, na práctica, o actor biográfico no sentido tradicional está á marxe. Finalmente, no capítulo 5, "Aínda á Procura da Mística: Cantautores no Rock Irlandés, Antes e Agora," considero algunhas das cuestións teóricas e

metodolóxicas relacionadas co estudo da canción na música popular mentres exploro os casos de Van Morrison e Hozier, dous dos máis recoñecidos cantautores irlandeses nos que atopamos ditas técnicas de creación de cancións. Non obstante, xa que pertencen a diferentes épocas musicais, este capítulo tamén fai referencia directa á conexión e a continuidade das cousas ao longo do tempo.

Conclusiones

A narrativa principal desta tese centrouse na forma en que o rock irlandés cambiou o panorama cultural de Irlanda desde principios dos anos 70, destacando en profundidade as cancións e os músicos destacados que provocaron ese cambio. Por suposto, a estrutura de tal análise non pode esperar incluír a todos os artistas implicados, polo que a énfase foi sobre os que conformaron e ampliaron a forma. Isto incluíu cancións que amosan tamén todo tipo de paisaxes emocionais e sociais. Así pois, esta tese non foi unha historia nin unha análise puramente musical, nin un conxunto de perfís de personalidades, senón un intento de tratar o rock non só como cultura xuvenil ou contracultura, senón simplemente como parte da cultura irlandesa. Ademais, a miña exploración baseouse na idea de que estes artistas sacaban á luz diferentes cuestións relacionadas coa "condición do irlandés/irlandesa" ("Irishness"), o que engadiu unha pegada social e cultural ao seu traballo artístico. Deste xeito, todas as bandas e músicos deste estudo representaron a Irlanda no estranxeiro de moitos xeitos, converténdose no moderno vínculo simbólico cultural que vincula Irlanda co resto do mundo, e formando parte de Irlanda do mesmo xeito que outros artistas, como , por exemplo, os escritores.

Xa no comezo da elaboración desta tese, decidín que non ía ser só un relato biográfico dalgúns artistas de rock irlandeses, senón un estudo crítico dos seus traballos. Dito doutro xeito, quería contar unha historia narrativa centrándome nos homes e mulleres que marcaron a diferenza, analizando polo miúdo o que escribiron nas súas cancións. Por conseguinte, este estudo tratou sobre todo das letras dos artistas, aínda que tentou dar boa conta tanto das palabras como da música. De feito, as letras presentáronse ao longo do traballo non como poemas senón como unha parte esencial dunha canción porque, ao igual que a interpretación vocal e a música, as palabras son só ingredientes dunha canción. Non obstante, é na letra onde unha canción di que alguén quizais entende, que alguén pensa o mesmo, que alguén máis sente coma nós. Así, os autores das letras de cancións son artistas que, como os poetas, saben poñer palabras a sentimentos, ideas e experiencias. Ademais, poden atopar a necesidade ou o poder de crear non só nas súas propias experiencias persoais senón naquelas dunha comunidade ou dun país. A partir das conclusións anteriores, habería que considerar o potencial de usar cancións e a música como ferramentas na maioría dos ámbitos educativos formais, algo que aínda non está aínda explorado a pesar da relevancia de xéneros populares coma o rock como formas culturais coas súas propias dimensións socio-políticas. Así mesmo, para comprender mellor as implicacións destes resultados, futuros estudos deberán abordar o potencial educativo de usar artes interdisciplinarias (como a composición de cancións, a actuación, a *performance*, etc.) non só como parte dun proceso creativo senón tamén no ensino de diferentes materias. Esta sería, sen dúbida, unha experiencia culturalmente enriquecedora tanto para estudantes como para profesores. Ademais, tamén deberían identificarse espazos e estratexias de uso das artes musicais, plásticas, escénicas e literarias como ferramentas para a potenciación da cultura dentro e fóra do sistema educativo actual.

De feito, examinar a presenza e o impacto do rock na formación da matriz cultural irlandesa foi outro dos obxectivos principais deste estudo, tendo en conta que a evolución do xénero en Irlanda foi capaz de representar diferentes época do país. É por tanto que a estrutura da tese adheriuse a unha narración principalmente cronolóxica, xa que doutro xeito, seríanos imposible recoñecer adecuadamente o desenvolvemento de conceptos centrais do rock en Irlanda que condicionaron a súa historia e o seu desenvolvemento. Non obstante, o principal obxectivo deste estudo, que foi esencialmente interpretativo, non era só crear unha compilación de cancións dos anos 1970-2020, senón estimular o pensamento e proporcionar material de feito para a futura investigación das letras de cancións como textos literarios e pezas da historia oral que representan a cultura dun país en pezas de audio. Dentro da cultura irlandesa, quedou claro que o rock irlandés ofrece importancia a varias narracións da historia socio-política e cultural irlandesa, así como á súa tradición literaria, musical e mitolóxica. Consecuentemente, definir ou concretar unha lista de temas foi unha das cuestións máis complicadas deste traballo, pero os escollidos finalmente abarcan unha gama que consideramos tan ampla como profunda. A realización desta tese non estaba exenta doutros inconvenientes, como a dificultade para atopar material de apoio respecto da presenza de aspectos literarios nas obras de artistas de rock irlandeses (algo do que era consciente moito antes do comezo), pero isto significaba ter a oportunidade de proporcionar novos datos sobre un tema que apenas fora investigado. Non obstante, o maior reto deste traballo foi tratar de atopar novas e melloradas formas de falar das cancións, describilas sen dar a solución a un dos principios clave de calquera peza artística (xa sexa unha canción, un poema ou un cadro), porque debe ser o público o que lles dea o seu significado. Esta preocupación, sen dúbida, era inevitable, dado o meu traballo académico e vocacional.

Podemos concluír, non obstante, que a función principal dunha canción de rock normalmente é, en todo caso, ser catártica, é dicir, liberar e expresar artisticamente distintas emocións. Tamén recoñecemos que isto é realmente gran parte do que nos atrae a unha determinada canción e do que nos leva a volver a ela para atopar entendemento, coñecemento e inspiración, tempo despois. Do mesmo xeito, reivindicamos as cancións como medio para expresar as experiencias propias ou alleas, sendo unha fermosa e poderosa ferramenta coa que queremos enfrontarnos ao mundo ou abstraernos da realidade na que vivimos. Afirmar tales cousas sobre as cancións rock é admitir tamén a medida en que moitas delas poden falar da inquietude que todos sentimos en diferentes momentos das nosas vidas, e xa só neste sentido, este traballo é agora aínda máis relevante. Por iso, a un nivel máis persoal, esta tese doutoral, que foi o resultado de moitos anos de experimentar, estudar, escribir e discutir tanto sobre música como de literatura, condicionará os meus propios obxectivos artísticos así como o meu xeito de analizar como outros crean arte. Só espero que tamén inspire a moitas outras persoas a escribir, tocar, aprender e crear. Todo só para expresarse. Todo para marcar a diferenza.

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And now, for those about to rock: *I salute you.*