An Bás a Muintire sa Amhrán: *the Impact of the Post-Famine Decline in Spoken Irish on Sean Nós Song*

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Introduction

"If Ireland loses her music she loses what is, after her Gaelic language and literature, her most valuable and most characteristic possession. And she is rapidly losing it" – Douglas Hyde (1860-1949)

It was this desperate aim to preserve the Irish language and Irish art forms that motivated the Gaelic Revival of the late nineteenth century. Hyde himself was a key player in the Revival - tirelessly promoting the Irish language, transcribing and translating Irish music and folklore as well as producing original material to jumpstart Irish's resurgence as a modern language. Hyde took a particular interest in preserving *sean nós* singing in his home region of Connacht. He recognized that the Great Famine threatened to extinguish the tradition and saw his revival work as a direct response to that threat. Hyde's goal was to publish and circulate pre-Famine *sean nós* songs among revivalists and rebuild the music-culture of the native style through the production of his own *sean nós* songs.

Sean nós is a native form Irish singing. It is generally performed by one unaccompanied vocalist, singing in the Irish language. The tradition emphasizes a song's lyrics and the story it tells over the singer's voice quality or musicality. It also places a high value on a singer's vocal ornamentation which accents the typical nasal tone, so much so that, Irish poet and musician Ciaran Carson claims, "the traditional singer does not conceive of ornament, or melodic variation, as being conceptually different to the melody itself."[1] *Sean nós* is most often performed in informal settings such as social gatherings held in homes or pubs.[2] Performances are often intimate and local. Professor and singer Tómas Ó Canainn explains that

[1] Carson, *Irish Traditional Music*, 50.
[2] Valleley, *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 336.

the art was "only completely at ease, as it were, in an Irish-speaking situation where the singer and his listener are in communication".[3] Performers typically minimize dramatic elements such as emotional facial expressions, varied volumes, or movement in order to allow listeners to focus on the music and lyrics.[4]

In Ireland, *sean nós* blurs the line between music and poetry.[5] *Sean nós* is an ancient art form that likely flourished concurrently with the rise of the filí, a class of highly trained poets who also acted as advisors to the tribal kings of early Ireland[6] and morphed into a form recognizable to a modern listener after the 13th century.[7] As *sean nós* is considered a form of traditional storytelling, the range of topics addressed through song is broad: love, religion, work, sorrow, or rebellion. While *sean nós* in some form stretches back to the time of the filí, circa the seventh century, the focus of this paper is more modern: post-Famine Ireland. The disastrous effects of the Famine across Ireland accelerated the Irish language's precipitous decline, in part because the Famine was especially deadly in the mainly Irish-speaking areas, the Gaeltachtaí.[8]

The Connemara Gaeltacht was hit particularly hard. The rocky, unproductive land was overpopulated in the years leading up to the Famine. Families were crowding onto smaller and smaller plots of land, trying to eke out marginal existences through the subsistence farming of potatoes.[9] Starting the 1840s a series

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[3] Ó Canainn, *Traditional Music in Ireland*, 49.
[4] Carson, *Irish Traditional Music*, 49.
[5] O'Boyle, *The Irish Song Tradition*, 19.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Valleley, *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 336-8.
[8] Ó Laoire and Williams, *Bright Star of the West: Joe Heaney, Irish Song-Man*, 49.
[9] Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine*, 37.

of severe potato blights hit the Irish crops, culminating in the widespread failure of 1845-48. Overcrowding in Connemara compounded the abysmal harvest leading to pervasive hunger and disease.[10] Due to the forced migrations, Connemara was also home to an extremely high concentration of native Irish-speakers in relation to the rest of the country. This meant that the famine and the ensuing emigrations disproportionately impacted the Irish language.

Sean nós grew out of Ireland's oral musical culture and was traditionally transmitted among musicians aurally. The sudden and severe loss of a large number of Irish speakers during the Famine affected the genre in two main ways. First, as people were dying or emigrating, they took their songs with them. In some cases, this meant the loss of entire local repertoires. Second, as fewer people spoke Irish, the relationship between the singer, his/her songs, and the audience shifted.[11] Instead of an understanding of the origin, nature, and message of the music that could be assumed when all parties in a performance were native Irish speakers, the performance of *sean nós* became more of a negotiation between the Irish language songs, which were often misunderstood and corrupted by their singers, and the largely English speaking audience.

The Gaelic Revivalists, like Douglas Hyde, and the antiquarians who preceded them, attempted to stall and reverse these effects in *sean nós*. Starting at the end of the 18th century and beginning in earnest during the 19th century, antiquarians such as Hyde, James Hardiman, Edward Bunting, and George Petrie collected Irish

[10] Ibid., 34.
[11] Ó Laoire and Williams, *Bright Star of the West: Joe Heaney, Irish Song-Man*, 71-81.

songs.[12] These efforts were initially directed at recording the instrumental tunes that could be heard across Ireland and cataloguing their variety. Later, however, antiquarians began to preserve the words that accompanied these airs and then the stand-alone *sean nós* songs.[13] Broadly, the Revival aimed to promote speaking the Irish Language and counter the Anglicization of the country.[14] Through preserving *sean nós* songs, revivalists aimed to protect and perpetuate what they saw as a uniquely Irish tradition.[15][16] Most of the songs collected in this period were composed between 1700 and 1850, likely growing and changing as they passed among musicians. Collectors found new material by traveling through small towns, asking for songs from the young and old, recording them in private homes, at fairs, or even on the roadside.[17]

This burst of interest in the Irish language in general and *sean nós* in particular led to an enormous increase in the amount of written *sean nós* material. This zeal saw collectors in all corners of Ireland, but a number of revivalists focused their work in Connacht and in Connemara specifically. Connemara has a distinctive style of *sean nós* singing that has come to dominate other forms more popular in the Munster and Ulster Gaeltachtaí. The *sean nós* tradition was and remains particularly strong in Connemara because of the region's concentration of native Irish

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[12] Valleley, *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 378.
[13] Ibid., 377.
[14] O'Boyle, *The Irish Song Tradition*, 16-7.
[15] Irish revivalists work was not unique, similar efforts to preserve folk song traditions across Europe had been made since the late 18th century. However the *sean nós* style itself is distinctive from other styles being preserved at the time like Hungarian traditional singing.
[16] Valleley, *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 378.
[17] Ibid., 336.

speakers.[18] To this day, the Connemara Gaeltacht retains the largest number of native Irish speakers in the world and continues to boast a strong practice of *sean nós*. The revivalists' focus on Connemara was natural as it was one of the few places where Irish was still an everyday language. Ultimately, through the establishment of several institutions such as the Gaelic League and "An tOireachtas", the role of revivalists shifted from preservation to production.[19] Collectors such as Hyde attempted to adopt the native, local song-style to add to the corpus of Connemara *sean nós*. However, neither the sheer amount of material recorded nor the production of studied mimicry are indicative of the Revivalists' success in rebuilding the *sean nós* tradition.

This paper will assess whether or not Hyde's original work was successful in accomplishing his stated goal of reviving the tradition. Hyde himself viewed his work as a direct response to the Famine and attempted to re-establish the continuity of the style of pre-Famine songs in his own work in the 1890s[20]. In order to judge Hyde's success, this paper will begin with an exploration of pre-Famine *sean nós* practices and the development of the style from the turn of the 19th century until Hyde's writing at the turn of the 20th. It will then assess Hyde's own work in

[18] Ibid., 336-8.
[19] Ibid.
[20] It should be noted that this paper does not endorse Hyde's anachronistic and limited goal of transplating pre-Famine *sean nós* into the cultural landscape of Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century without an appropriate recognition of the evolution of the art form over that period. However, to avoid imposing modern musicological judgements on historical figures it is best to assess whether Hyde met his own stated goal based on his expressed understandings of *sean nós* and musical revival.

relation to the pre-Famine song style. Finally, it will address whether Hyde's work meets the criteria necessary to classify it as a successful revival effort.

Linguistic and Musical Effects of the Great Famine

The Irish potato famine was a human tragedy of extreme proportions. The famine was precipitated by the widespread failure of the 1846 potato crop. The potato wasn't a dependable crop; there had been a series of blights and lesser failures in the decades leading up the Famine. Nevertheless, the majority of the population continued to subsist almost entirely on a diet of potatoes. Their dependency, compounded by the fact that few potatoes were stored in case of a poor harvest, left most of the nation extremely vulnerable to hunger. While the Famine was truly a national crisis, it did not affect all areas of the country equally. The less fertile west coast was hit particularly hard due to a number of factors: less arable soil, smaller family plots, and widespread overcrowding.

In the years leading up the Famine, Connemara had become dangerously overpopulated. New roads were built in the 1820s and 30s which led to an influx of new settlers as travelers and speculators made their way into the region. The construction also brought many workers to the region and the availability of land kept them there. These roads cut deep into the Connemara mountains and opened up large regions that were previously unreachable to settlers. The roads also provided a trade link between Killary, a fjord on the border of Counties Galway and Mayo and the upper boundary of the Connemara region, with the more prosperous and populous South. All of these factors contributed to a significant and steady population growth in the region in the years leading up the Famine.[21]

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[21] Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill, *Patient Endurance: The Great Famine in Connemara* (Connemara Girl Publications, 1997), 1.

But the growing population had comparatively less land to make their living. Connemara, and County Galway as a whole, has less arable land than neighboring areas in Counties Mayo or Roscommon. Instead the landscape is rocky and mountainous, with most cultivable land lying along the coasts. Common practice was for a family to divide their land among the children rather than maintain the size of the original holding by passing it down to a single heir. Even as more and more land among the mountains and bogs was reclaimed, it was not sufficient to prevent the people from creating smaller and smaller plots. This eventually prevented efficient development in the area as families' holdings grew too small to support their needs.

First hand accounts of Famine-stricken Connemara demonstrate the extent of the suffering that these practices allowed. English surveyors reported, "numerous miserable dilapidated cabins and depopulated villages, with large tracts of land … lying neglected."[22] The same roads that brought thousands of people into Connemara became the only hope of many. People walked the roads looking for food, work, or charity as the Famine persisted. Eventually, the surveyors observed, "the highways in many parts were occupied by the dying and the dead."[23] Those that did not starve on the road met a similar fate at home. The farmers' cabins were "wretched hovels"[24] and "sepulchers of … the whitened bones of many of the old and

[22] Joseph Denham Smith, *A Voice from the West; Or, the Condition and Claims of Connaught* (1848), 2.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

young who had huddled together, in these lone spots, to wait for death."[25] All told more than 1 million people died of starvation and sickness during the Famine and another 1.5 million emigrated to escape the disaster.[26] Immediately prior to the Famine, Connemara was one of the most densely populated areas of Europe, but her people were decimated by hunger and disease.

Because Irish speakers were unevenly spread across the country, they were disproportionately affected by the Famine. More Irish speakers were settled in Connacht as opposed to other areas due to a variety of factors, some that had been pushing the Irish language westward for centuries. As Pádraig Ó Riagáin, professor at the Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, explains, political changes and the increasing power of the English government in Ireland had "profound long-term consequences for the spatial and social distribution of the two languages".[27] In the 17th century, the Irish aristocracy were pushed off their estates through a series of military efforts that forced them to flee to the West and caused their lands in the eastern and central portions of the country to fall into the hands of English-speaking British settlers. But the nobles' relocation cannot sufficiently explain the decline of Irish in these regions. Rather, as Michael Bradley claims, the growing cultural influences of the Pale, an English-controlled region surrounding Dublin, and "the

[25] Thomas Colville Scott, *Connemara After the Famine: Journal of a Survey of the Martin Estate*, Ed. Tim Robinson (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1995), 30.
[26] Pádraig Ó Riagáin, *Language Policy and Social Reproduction : Ireland 1893-1993*. (Oxford University Press, 1997), 4-5.
[27] Ibid., 4.

acquiescence of the population in the spread of English [were] probably more salient factor[s] than any government decree".[28]

Because the overcrowded and poverty-stricken regions of the West were the hardest hit during the Famine, the impact of the Famine was felt most strongly among Irish-speaking communities. The Famine's unequal tolls on the two language communities were reflected in the census data taken after the disaster. The majority of those who died or emigrated during the Famine were lost from impoverished Irish speaking areas.[29] Riagáin estimates that approximately 45% of people spoke Irish at the end of the 18th century but following the Famine only 30% claimed Irish proficiency.[30] In the period immediately after the Famine, the earliest available censuses show that the general population fell by about 33% but the number of Irish speakers declined by more than half.[31] The sharp loss of so many Irish-speakers, especially in relation to the growing majority English speakers deeply affected *sean nós* and the unique lifestyle in which it was rooted.

However, even in the face of such a dramatic language shift, some scholars and collectors recorded "many people insisting on the virtues of Irish" following the Famine. Charles Percy Bushe (1829-98) was one such scholar who recorded the expression, "Budh coir do 'chuile dhuine fios a bheith aige a theanga-tír-féin a labhairt" (Everyone ought to know how to speak their own country's language)

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[28] Michael Bradley, "Is It Possible to Revitalize a Dying Language? An Examination of Attempts to Halt the Decline of Irish," *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics* 04, no. 04 (2014): 538.
[29] Bradley, "Is It Possible to Revitalize a Dying Language?", 538-9.
[30] Riagáin, *Language Policy and Social Reproduction*, 4.
[31] Dymphna Lonergan, "The Language, the Census, and the Rising: 'Uisce Faoi Thalamh,'" *The Australasian Journal of Irish Studies* 11 (2011): 44.

being circulated fervently throughout Connemara.[32] Bushe judged that one explanation for such loyalty to Irish long after English had supplanted Irish as the lingua franca for much of the island was that "Irish-speakers tended to view the respective value of the two languages differently".[33] This loyalty to the language is ultimately what allowed Irish-language traditions like *sean nós* to survive such a major linguistic shift.

While *sean nós* did continue to be produced after the Famine, the drastic decline in Irish speakers compounded with an oral culture and scarcity of printed material meant the irretrievable loss of what contemporaries characterized as a "wealth of folk-lore, song, and story down the stream of time".[34] Those that remained had experienced the depths of tragedy and hardship. Musicians, audiences, repertoires, and even the traditions themselves had been permanently damaged by the loss of millions of people and stories to death and diaspora.[35] The native class of musicians, poets, and dancers that had previously supported themselves by traveling among towns were forced to adapt to a new economic landscape. Renowned musician and ethnomusicologist Gearóid Ó. hAllmhuráin, notes that this "new economic and cultural ethos … differed radically from the pre-famine intimacy of the clachán and the townland."[36]

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[32] Nicholas M. Wolf, *Language Change and the Evolution of Religion, Community, and Culture in Ireland, 1800—1900* (ProQuest, 2008), 21-22.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Francis A. Fahy, "The Irish Language Movement," *Westminster Review, Jan. 1852-Jan. 1914* 157, no. 3 (March 1902): 309.
[35] Gearóid Ó. hAllmhuráin, "'Amhrán an Ghorta': The Great Famine and Irish Traditional Music." *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 3, no. 1 (April 1, 1999): 19.
[36] Ibid., 20.

In order to understand the effect of the Famine on *sean nós* song, one must compare typical musical practices before and after the disaster. Prior to the Famine, Irish was on the decline as the majority of people in the eastern and central regions of the country preferred using English but the West remained a bastion of Irish-speakers. *Sean nós* songs, their singers, and audiences were dependent on a largely rural, agricultural lifestyle. Life was local. hAllmhuráin elaborates that towns were "nucleated cluster[s] of farmhouses, within which holdings were organized communally … often with considerable ties of kinship between the families involved".[37] In the years before the Famine, 75% of the Irish population lived in communities like this. Predictably, then, many *sean nós* songs speak of the blessings and hardships that were common to this setting and lifestyle.

In addition to the physical and economic impacts of the Famine, the linguistic shift also had more direct implications for *sean nós* song. Since *sean nós* emphasizes a song's lyrics over the accompanying music, the audience's understanding of the story of the song is of primary importance. Ethnomusicologist Jeff Titon argues that an audience's reception of a musical performance is the foundation of music-culture. Music-culture is "a group's total involvement with music: ideas, actions, institutions, material objects etc."[38] Titon lays out a model of music-culture as a series of concentric circles. At the center is the affective experience that music creates for musicians and listeners. This response is broadened in the context of performance, which relates the affective experience to the wider community, which itself is

[37] Ibid., 29.
[38] Jeff Titon, Timothy Cooley, David Locke, David McAllester, and Anne Rasmussen, *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples, Shorter Version* (Cengage Learning, 2009), 16.

situated in a particular time and place.[39] In a strong music-culture the affective experience of the musicians carries through the widening circles to elucidate and strengthen the musical tradition and the broader community in which it is situated. The linguistic shift between Irish and English that was hastened by the Famine created a fundamental disconnect between the performers of *sean nós* and their audiences. This has long-reaching implications for the success of *sean nós* revival efforts as revivalists attempted to transplant an Irish language art form born out of the simplicity and rich history of a rural lifestyle into a modern English-speaking context.

[39] Ibid.

"Máire Ní Eidhin"

"Máire Ní Eidhin" preserves an idyllic vision of this life specific to Connemara before the Famine. Antoine Ó Raifteirí composed the song near the beginning of the 19th and it was widely performed throughout Connemara. Ó Raifteirí was a poor, blind, itinerant musician and poet who traveled around the countryside composing songs from around the turn of the 19th century until his death in 1835.[40] He was an extremely productive artist and a large number of his songs survive today despite the fact that they were never written down during his lifetime. Many were preserved in the memories of other Connemara singers and were later recorded by collectors such as Douglas Hyde and Lady Gregory near the end of the century.[41][42]

The song describes Ó Raifteirí's meeting with a young woman, Máire Ní Eidhin (Mary Hynes), while traveling and his journey accompanying her to the next town. The love song was one of Ó Raifteirí's most popular and it details him falling in love with the maiden.[43] He recounts her physical beauty, with her "head of ringlets" and "matchless face and bewitching eyes" as well as her generosity and hospitality in her offer to "Drink now, you're welcome / There's strength in cellars of Ballylee".[44] Ó Raifteirí also uses the song to express the extent of his devotion,

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[40] Douglas Hyde, *Abhráin Atá Legtha Ar an Reachtúire, Or, Songs Ascribed to Ó Raifteirí* (Dublin, 1903), 13.
[41] Ibid.
[42] "Máire Ní Eidhin" and the following songs were selected based on extensive review of the corpus of recorded *sean nós*. Many of the records of *sean nós* songs contain insufficient or incomplete lyrics. Of the hundreds considered, the following were selected because they are complete and appear to be typical of the genre at the time that each was written.
[43] Eileen Costello, *Amhráin Mhuighe Seóla. Traditional Folk-Songs from Galway and Mayo* (London: The Irish Folk-Song Society, 1919) 102-3.
[44] Ibid.

claiming "Through Loch An Toraic I'd ride my steed / By coasts and harbors and trackless oceans / If I lost the rosebud of Ballylee".[45] He ends the song with a plea to Máire to join him in his travels.

At first glance the song seems the picture of standard love song, however, like most *sean nós* pieces, meaning is layered throughout the work. A close reading exposes that Ó Raifteirí also employs Máire as a symbol of Ireland itself. He describes the natural beauty of the countryside, claiming:

> Tis airy walking beside the mountain
> And looking down on Ballylee
> Through glens of blackthorn bush and hazel
> And birds like fairies in choir you hear[46]

His conclusion to the verse that "she's my treasure" is more ambiguous than his explicit references to Máire in nearly every other verse by either her name or a nickname. The symbolism is reinforced when he again refers to the unnamed female figure in the next few lines:

> I walked through England and France for years once
> Through Spain and Greece and the long way home
> And from Loch Gréine to Galway's quay-side
> But her beauty's equal I've never known[47]

By comparing "her" with other nations, Ó Raifteirí cements the symbolism of Máire as Ireland as it makes the most sense that Ó Raifteirí would be comparing like items in the stanza.

In addition to his picturesque descriptions of his rural setting, Ó Raifteirí also references several particular locations in Ireland to create a sense of place in the

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

song. He mentions Kiltartan, Ballylee, Loch Gréine, Galway, and Loch an Toráic by name. These places are all located in Connacht; Ó Raifteirí's audiences likely would have had at least a basic familiarity with their geography. As the song was composed and performed in its original Irish, all of the placenames were referred to by their Irish names rather than the Anglicized versions used in the English translations above. This was one aspect of *sean nós* that was irrevocably impacted by the Famine and ongoing language shift. As fewer people spoke Irish, the particular places used in songs became less recognizable to audiences. This meant that the rich folklore and local history conjured at the mention of a placename in a song, the *seanchas* and *dinnsheanchas*, was being lost. This contributed to a growing disconnect between the performer and his audience. hAllmhuráin observes the "newly Anglicized placenames of post-famine Ireland grafted ill-fitting spatial parameters onto an older world of townlands"; this altered not only the physical topography of the land but the musical landscape as well.[48]

The significance and cultural understand of other types of referents was disappearing too, leaving Ó Raifteirí's supernatural references in "Máire Ní Eidhin" hollow. He calls Máire the "Flower of Tír-na-n-óg"[49] and references a "choir of fairies".[50] Belief in fairies and various otherworldly superstitions was widespread before the Famine and were commonly referenced in song. Ó Raifteirí could have expected that his audience be familiar with the stories that populated the landscape of Tír na nÓg and would have understood the sounds of a "choir of fairies".

[48] hAllmhuráin, "Amhrán an Ghorta," 44.
[49] Tír-na-n-óg is the land of eternal youth that plays a prominent role in Irish folklore.
[50] Ibid.

However, following the Famine, these popular beliefs were left behind as the "music and Irish-language songs failed to translate into narrow-gauge English".[51]

Over time, as some of the underlying meanings of the songs could not be adequately communicated to less fluent Irish or English speakers, *sean nós* lost a measure of its original depth. Gaeltacht communities slowed this process in Connacht, where concentrations of Irish speakers kept Irish songs alive and prevented them from being replaced entirely with bilingual, macaronic songs or purely English songs.[52] The linguistic and musical landscape in which *sean nós* songs like "Máire Ní Eidhin" were being performed in pre-Famine Ireland is essential understanding how the genre evolved in the years leading up the Famine and in response to the catastrophe.

[51] hAllmhuráin, "Amhrán an Ghorta," 38-9.
[52] Ibid., 27-8.

"Amhrán na Mine"

"Amhrán na Mine" chronicles one landlord's response to one of the lesser crop failures in the years leading up the Great Famine. Eileen Costello, a noted Irish language activist, collected this song from local singers in the Tuam area at the turn of the 20th century.[53] She attributes the song to Patrick Greaney, dating it to about 1820. The song was composed to commemorate the generosity of Major John Kirwan, a landlord who financed food relief for his tenants at his own expense.[54] The song begins, much like "Máire Ní Eidhin", in praise of the subject. The singer claims, "[Major Kirwan] is the manager in truth […] to not let the poor Irish die." The song recounts the Major's actions, narrating:

> It was the major who arranged for all this
> And sent out the message everywhere :
> 'Open up the storehouses of Ireland,
> And let not the poor Irish die.
> Let ye distribute meal in hundreds,
> And set up a crane in my yard.'[55]

The singer proceeds to praise "Mrs. Major" as well as the Kirwans' noble ancestors the Burkes, one of the fourteen Tribes of Galway. In the final stanza of the song, the listener learns about the first-person narrator when he yearns:

> To be freed from a third part of my debts,
> And never again to have them asked for;
> To get meal at the end of the year,
> There's my request, if it's granted[56]

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[53] Costello is occasionally referred to in the literature as Eibhlín Bean Ui Coisdealbha. Her English name will be used here as that was the name under which her work was published.
[54] Costello, *Amhráin Mhuighe Seóla*, 23-5.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

By identifying himself with Kirwan's tenants the singer more clearly states his stake in his landlord's generosity and demonstrates the ongoing desperation of Irish tenant farmers. The continued suffering of those with access to assistance in response to a lesser crop failure creates a sense of foreboding for the modern listener with knowledge of the looming 1846 Famine. But unlike "Máire Ní Eidhin" where the narrator is a key figure in the song, here the singer is not mentioned until the final two stanzas. Even then, his desires are commonplace enough that the narrator's use of "I" and "my" aren't necessarily identifying him with a particular individual but rather any tenant farmer of the period. The narrator's lack of distinctive characteristics allows his message to be easily universalized.

By using musical tactics like this, songs like "Amhrán na Mine" strengthen the music-culture of *sean nós*. Returning to Titon's idea of the performance at the heart of music-culture, practices that encourage an audience's engagement with the music bolster music-culture. Helping the audience relate to the experiences of the performer and/or subject of the song breaks down the emotional and symbolic barriers that are often erected between musicians and their audiences. Though *sean nós* was typically performed in informal settings, the nature of the performance, a single artist singing to a passive audience, creates an intangible distance between the groups. This further heightens the importance of techniques such as this to strengthen the rapport and understanding between a *sean nós* performer and his audience.

The song also lacks any clear timeline, obscuring the relationship between the narrator and his story. This is important because "Amhrán na Mine" is one of

the few songs that explicitly makes broader claims about the state of a community, rather than telling a narrower story like "Máire Ní Eidhin". Even though *sean nós* tends to elevate the everyday, very few songs speak directly to the general conditions of the common man, particularly in periods of famine.[57] First, the singer claims, "The people were coming in their crowds / And they increased in numbers every day" and that the Major acted so as not to "let the poor Irish die." Not only is the scope of the story broader than most *sean nós* songs, the singer also discusses "the Irish" as a group. Perhaps this is to distinguish the Kirwans from the common Irish masses, though the Kirwans descended from Irish nobility themselves, or perhaps it could serve to differentiate the narrator from his subject.[58] More likely, the singer references "the Irish" as an identifiable group because of their shared experience of famine and a growing national identity. This interpretation is given more weight in the following stanza:

> If war or dissension ever comes (amongst us),
> We will put up a camp on Knockma;
> We will rout the French and the Spaniards,
> And we will guard Erin forever[59]

This clear expression of patriotism is extremely rare among *sean nós* songs collected in the period. Instead of broader social movements, famed *sean nós* scholar

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[57] Alf MacLochlainn, "Amhráin Mhuighe Seóla," *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 53 (January 1, 2001): 183–4.
[58] The narrator may be distinguishing himself from "the Irish" for a variety of reasons, perhaps because of an economic or class difference, because the narrator was not one of Kirwan's tenants, or because the narrator was not Irish at all.
[59] Costello, *Amhráin Mhuighe Seóla*, 23-5.

Breandán Ó Madagain argues that poets tended to favor "their role of community mouthpiece, and of lifting the humdrum of every day life to the artistic level."[60]

This stanza also stands out from the tone of the rest of the song. The singer transitions from his praise of the Kirwans' noble lineage into this proclamation of loyalty. Interestingly, it is not explicitly in defense of the Major, which would more appropriately fit with the straightforward tone and his tribute to the Major's generosity. Nor does he elaborate on the potential threat to Ireland or tie it to developing nationalist movements of the period like Daniel O'Connell's push for Irish self-government or Catholic emancipation.[61] Instead, he shifts the focus back to Major Kirwan and his upcoming visit to a powerful regional landlord and the desire of the tenant farmers to settle their debts. These atypical traits that distinguish "Amhrán na Mine" from more standard *sean nós* songs are precisely the ones that will later be copied by Irish language revivalists in their effort to mimic what they perceived to be a dying genre.

"Amhrán na Mine" also represents a transitional piece between songs like "Máire Ní Eidhin" that typified the pre-Famine *sean nós* genre and songs such as, "Johnny Seoighe" - one of the few that can be reliably dated to the Famine period. "Máire Ní Eidhin" and "Amhrán na Mine" share similar reverence for their subject matters and express similar themes of hospitality and generosity. "Amhrán na Mine" develops the admiration of Ireland that Ó Raifteirí expressed into a much more explicit patriotic message, though not as skillfully integrated into the song as

[60] Brendán Ó Madagáin, "Functions of Irish Song in the Nineteenth Century," *Béaloideas* 53, (1985): 175-6.

in “Máire Ní Eidhin”. However “Amhrán na Mine” loses the cultural referents such as Ó Raifteirí’s allusions to fairies or Tír-na-nÓg that “Máire Ní Eidhin” employs so well. It also misses the opportunity to incorporate the *seanchas* and accompanying understood *dinnsheanchas* in favor of much more general, direct statements. Some of this is likely to due to the difference in subject matter – one is a love song, the other a commemoration of a leader during a time of hunger. However, had the poet wished, the people's misery could have easily been linked to a supernatural cause, or Kirwan's actions could have been likened to those of a mythical figure. So rather than simply a stylistic choice, the lack of those artistic and cultural trappings may speak to the growing linguistic divide, decline of Irish, and diminished understanding of the average *sean nós* listener of the complexities and multi-layered meanings of the songs. Given *sean nós*’s particular emphasis on everyday life and the fact that songs more generally tends to reflect cultural norms and values, the disappearance of these characteristics speaks to a broader cultural shift. This will be further substantiated by revivalists’ efforts to re-create *sean nós* songs. Disconnected from the local cultural landscape and a healthy Irish-language community, revivalists’ efforts were devoid of any of the cultural referents that were already on the wane in “Amhrán na Mine”. This is not to say that a shift toward increasingly generic songs entirely supplanted songs like “Máire Ní Eidhin”, which would continue to be performed and enjoyed even in the Post-Famine period, but this shift may explain the simplicity of tone and message of “Amhrán na Mine”.

"Johnny Seoighe"

Notoriously few songs can be reliably dated as being composed during the Famine years due to the disproportionate loss of so many Irish speakers and their musical repertoires to death and diaspora. Even fewer songs concern the event itself; as *sean nós* scholar and performer Lillis Ó Laoire conjectures, some things were too terrible to be put into words.[62] However, one song, "Johnny Seoighe", was preserved in Carna, County Galway. Carna today is at the heart of *sean nós* in Connemara. It is home to a number of families who have produced storied singers and it continues to sustain and foster the genre today. But its musical wealth could not protect Carna from the ravages of the Famine. Across Ireland, the Famine songs that have survived through the years seem to have originated in pockets of extreme devastation, like Carna. Though innumerable songs have been lost, it is remarkable that any such songs still exist - much less that they were preserved in spite of such desperate conditions.

Like most *sean nós* songs, the origins of "Johnny Seoighe" are murky. Famed *sean nós* singer and Carna man Joe Heaney (1919-1984) attributed the song to a local poet at the time, Micheál Mac Con Iomaire. Heaney's family passed the song down through generations before it was collected by Lillis Ó Laoire in the late twentieth century. Heaney's interpretation of the song is straightforward, noting that it is a simple plea by the author for food for his family.[63] Ó Laoire himself ascribes the song to another local poet, known to have survived the Famine, Tomás

[62] Lillis Ó Laoire and Sean Williams, *Bright Star of the West: Joe Heaney, Irish Song-Man* (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 2011), 75.
[63] Joe Heaney, "Johnny Seoighe", n.d. http://www.joeheaney.org/default.asp?contentID=1175.

Shiúnach. He proposes a satirical reading of the song as criticizing the unfair distribution of relief in the area.

On its surface, "Johnny Seoighe" recounts the poet's plea for charity to Mr. Seoighe (or Joyce) who was the Famine Relief Officer responsible for distributing food aid to families in the community.[64] The singer begins by pleading with Joyce to "heed my voice […] / And for the love of Christ, grant me relief". He claims, "Myself and my children out under the dew […] tired, bitter, lashed, frozen, upset and lacerated". Even with a relief ticket, "the workhouse is full and they won't accept any more people inside". He concludes by flattering Mr. Joyce and his female companion as "a source of great fame to the town" - seemingly in an effort to be granted immediate aid.[65]

Though it dates to slightly later than "Máire Ní Eidhin", "Johnny Seoighe" shares many of the same characteristics. Both songs have a strong first-person narrator and address a single individual. Like Ó Raifteirí, the poet of "Johnny Seoighe" piles hyperbolic praise on the subject of his song. He addresses Mr. Joyce as the "Star of Knowledge, the brightest beacon in the Temple of God / You are the flower of youth, of the finest speech that my eye has seen since I was born".[66] While the purpose of this flattery in "Máire Ní Eidhin" was to seduce the young woman, here the role of the praise depends on the reading of the piece as a whole. If the poem is meant to be taken at face value, then these lines are the poet's genuine

[64] hAllmhuráin, "Amhrán an Ghorta," 35.
[65] Ó Laoire and Williams, *Bright Star of the West: Joe Heaney, Irish Song-Man*, 75.
[66] Alternately translated as "You are the lodestar of truest light that my eye has ever beheld. You are the flower of youth, the fairest I have ever seen in God's temple".

attempt to convince Mr. Joyce to help his family, his hyperbole perhaps a testament to his desperation.

But what if the song is read with a more satiric eye? Then the praise becomes mocking as it highlights Joyce's immorality. The "great fame" that Joyce brought the town may have been closer to notoriety than envy. Local folklore held that Joyce stole his position from Seán Mac Donncha an honest man and Carna native.[67] Apparently Joyce proceeded to distribute aid as he pleased rather than in accordance with a family's need or the procedures of the Relief Office, an account likely not far off the mark as Joyce was later dismissed for corruption.[68] Reading against the grain of the poet's description of Joyce's companion only heightens the scandal. The singer describes the woman's beauty as "fine as the Morning Star when it shines". He continues, "The queen is ill and lying low, the doctors say that she will die / The reason for it all they say to me, that she is not married to Mister Joyce". This is likely a reference to Joyce's mistress, Peggy Barry, for whom he allegedly abandoned his wife and children in the neighboring parish of Oughterard.[69] By calling her "the queen", the poet emphasizes the discrepancy between the title and her perceived lack of virtue as well as Joyce's power: by controlling access to relief, Joyce could literally choose who lived and died, a power that he used to elevate Ms. Barry to the status of a queen. Overall however, the poet's meaning is deliberately ambiguous, left largely to the interpretation of the audience. This fits with the

[67] hAllmhuráin, "Amhrán an Ghorta," 36.
[68] Heaney, Joe. Johnny Seoighe, n.d.
[69] Ibid.

sensitive nature of the topic, especially in a time when it would have been risky to openly criticize one of the only men who could have provided aid during the Famine.

Also of interest is the author's use of English terms in an otherwise Irish song. The words "Mister Joyce", "relief", "workhouse", and "Morning Star" are all left in English even though these are all terms that could have been easily expressed in Irish, as evidenced by the title and initial use of Joyce's name as "Johnny Seoighe". Neither meter nor rhyme are particularly important characteristics in *sean nós* singing, so there is no musical reason why the artist would not have defaulted to his native Irish terms. More likely, the poet consciously chose to use the English words to draw attention to the foreignness of the concepts and figures. Famine relief and workhouses were instruments clumsily applied and implemented in Ireland by stewards of the English government such as Mister Joyce and by association the "Morning Star", Joyce's mistress. The poet may have been attempting to maintain or strengthen this connection through the use of the English terms, something that his Irish-speaking audience would have been familiar and receptive to.

Nevertheless these were still local figures. The song tells an extremely personal story of one family's plight during the Famine. As the song was passed down through generations, the particular figures and practices referenced would likely hold the most meaning and only be fully understood by a Carna audience familiar with the local history. While the poet may have used English words to highlight the difference between Joyce and the community he was serving, the inescapable fact was that Joyce was still an Irishman. Some scholars, MacLochlainn and hAllmhuráin among them, read the singer's use of English as an attempt to

'otherize' Joyce along standard lines of English-Irish animosity. While that may be true, it ignores the fact that Joyce was an Irishman, and simplifies the more complex underlying issues into a familiar mold. Rather than simply critiquing corrupt English practices, the singer also points out that the Irish were victimized by their own countrymen during the Famine, a fact that is often silenced or forgotten amidst nationalist blame games.

The poet's use of the English terms also directly draws attention to the language divide in Ireland. Public officials, as representatives of the Government in Dublin, were much more likely to speak English with little Irish language ability.[70] These socio-linguistic divisions were even more apparent in hunger-stricken Connacht where English was the language of mismanaged relief operations headed up by bureaucrats like Joyce. The English words also interrupt the otherwise beautiful, smoothly-flowing Irish. This may symbolize the encroachment of English into one of the last bastions of majority Irish-speakers in the years leading up to and during the Famine. By using the English words, the artist emphasizes how the linguistic landscape of Ireland was changing in response to the Famine as families like that of the singer's died or emigrated.

As hundreds of thousands of native Irish speakers died over the course of the Famine, much of this artistic complexity was lost. Douglas Hyde explains how the language is the key to these cultural referents, noting, "When Irish is the vernacular language of the peasantry there live enshrined in it memories and imaginations, deeds of daring and tragic catastrophy, a heroic cycle of legend and poem, a vast and

[70] Bradley, "Is It Possible to Revitalize a Dying Language?", 538.

varied store of apothegms, sententious proverbs, and weighty sentences, which contain the very best and truest thoughts."[71] The original Irish songs contain layers of meaning that would be inaccessible to an English-speaking audience. Without an understanding of the local history of Connemara and a close reading of the text, the satirical aspects of "Johnny Seoighe" as well as its implications for the growing language divide vanish. Instead, the song becomes a simple plea for relief that plays on the common English/Irish animosity. Many of the more subtle cultural and linguistic meanings of *sean nós* songs like "Johnny Seoighe" were lost as the gulf of understanding widened between English speakers and Irish art forms.

[71] Douglas Hyde, "A Plea for the Irish Language," in *Language, Lore and Lyrics*, ed. Brendán Ó Conaire. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1986), 77.

Douglas Hyde and the Gaelic League

Language revival movements like the Gaelic League were founded to fight the precipitous decline of the Irish language in the aftermath of the Great Famine and the perception that native art forms were vanishing. The Gaelic League was the descendant of a handful of earlier organizations. The Ossianic Society was founded in 1853 with the aim to preserve Irish as a living language. The group published a few collections of poetry and short stories, but the impact of their work should not be overstated. They were hard pressed to find readers for their work and the organization soon faded.[72] Next, the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was founded in 1876. It encouraged the use of Irish for everyday life and aimed to incorporate Irish language instruction into primary school curricula.[73] The group made modest gains, earning a concession from the Irish government for Irish to be taught outside of school hours in 1878. Leaders then set about creating instructional materials. However, these men were not native Irish speakers themselves, rendering their textbooks, as David Greene, a leading scholar of Irish literature, claimed, "stilted and unnatural, even sometimes wrong."[74] When questioned on the quality of their materials, the young Douglas Hyde wrote to the *The Irish Times* in the Society's defense even as Green judges, "Hyde's own early writings in Irish show that he had no particular authority to speak on the matter."[75]

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[72]David Greene, "The Founding of the Gaelic League," in *The Gaelic League Idea*, ed. Sean O'Tuama (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1993), 14.
[73] Riagáin, *Language Policy and Social Reproduction*, 8.
[74] Greene, "The Founding of the Gaelic League," 15.
[75] Ibid.

Hyde was born to a Protestant minister and his wife in northern Connacht in 1860. He was not a natural Irish speaker himself, but was exposed to the language as a child. He later recorded in his diary, "I began to learn a little of it *viva voce* from Seamus Hart, keeper of the bogs, … I was unable to understand a great deal when I heard it spoken, although I was able to say almost every word I wanted myself."[76] He was fascinated by Irish and spent much of his childhood listening to his Irish elders telling stories and singing songs. They gave him the nickname "*An Craoibhín Aoibhinn"* ("The Pleasant Little Branch"), which he would later adopt as a pseudonym for his earliest writings.[77] He studied several languages and excelled at Trinity College in Dublin. He then began a career in academia devoted to the Irish language and literature. He was a prolific writer, publishing numerous books of songs, short-stories, and folklore as well as histories of Irish literature and several plays. He became involved in the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language in the late 1870s and would go on to become a prominent member in the Irish language revival movement before ultimately founding the Gaelic League in 1893.

The Gaelic League was established as a direct response to the growing concern with the sharp decline of the number of Irish-speakers after the Famine.[78] As musicologist Harry White explains, the Gaelic League was one more effort to resume "the act of cultural preservation [that] itself became imperiled by the devastations of the potato blight and the massive death and emigration which it

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[76] Brendán Ó Conaire, *Language, Lore, and Lyrics*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1986), 35.
[77] *Douglas Hyde and the Revival of the Irish Language* (Press of Una, 1905), 13-16.
[78] Riagáin, *Language Policy and Social Reproduction*, 8.

brought in its wake."[79] Unlike earlier organizations, the Gaelic League extended their objectives to reviving Irish as a spoken language in areas where it had died out. They also aimed to create a body of modern Irish literature rather than simply publishing texts to preserve the language.[80] Hyde, himself, put forth a call for his countrymen to learn Irish in his foundational lecture "The Necessity of De-Anglicizing Ireland", claiming:

> I have no hesitation at all in saying that every Irish-feeling Irishman, who hates the reproach of West-Britonism, should set himself to encourage the efforts which are being made to keep alive our once great national tongue. The losing of it is our greatest blow, and the sorest stroke that the rapid Anglicisation of Ireland has inflicted upon us[81]

He believed that the Irish must throw off English cultural influence in many forms: language, music, games, and dress. Only once the Irish could develop their culture on their own terms would Ireland's greatness be restored. This is why Hyde advocated so strongly for society to return to what he saw as a traditional Irish way of life.[82]

Hyde viewed the Great Famine as the final death knell of that lifestyle. He claimed that the Famine had "at last broken the continuity of Irish life, and just at the moment when the Celtic race is presumably about to largely recover possession of its own country, it finds itself deprived and stript of its Celtic characteristics, cut

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[79] Harry White, "The Preservation of Music and Irish Cultural History," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 27, no. 2 (1996): 130-1.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Douglas Hyde, "The Necessity De-Anglicising Ireland," in *The Revival of Irish Literature*, ed. Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, George Sigerson, and Douglas Hye (T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), 136.
[82] Ibid., 161.

off from the past, yet scarcely in touch with the present."[83] He aimed to restore that cultural continuity through widespread language and literacy programs. He encouraged his followers to "endeavour to never forget […] that the Ireland of today is the descendant of the Ireland of the seventh century, then the school of Europe and the torch of learning."[84] Hyde wanted to bring his program to the people because he felt that the cultural life of the nation was embedded in the countryside. He admired the common men of the past, many of whom, he claimed, were scholars, poets, and musicians. Hyde placed particular emphasis on reviving the musical traditions of the past, likely influenced by his personal fascination with the native styles, and expressed a desire to "transmit [them] unmodified" to the next generation.[85] He recognized that many key traditional forms, like *sean nós*, were in danger, claiming, "If Ireland loses her music she loses what is, after her Gaelic language and literature, her most valuable and most characteristic possession. And she is rapidly losing it."[86] He claimed that native song styles were born of the "inextricable connexion [sic] between thought and language, [so the songs] will last exactly as long as the tongue of Oisin lasts, and will die when it dies."[87] To combat this Hyde incorporated musical instruction and competition into the League's activities.

The Gaelic League quickly expanded from its initial group in Dublin to establish branches across the country. Each community or townland, particularly in

[83] Ibid., 128.
[84] Ibid., 126.
[85] Hyde, "Plea for the Irish Language," 75.
[86]Hyde, "The Necessity De-Anglicising Ireland," 156.
[87] Douglas Hyde, "The Unpublished Songs of Ireland," in *Language, Lore and Lyrics*, ed. Brendán Ó Conaire. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1986), 66.

the South and the West – where native Irish speakers were concentrated – would have its own chapter. Nearly one thousand branches had been established within ten years of the League's founding. The main purpose of each chapter was to organize language classes. The classes were open to people of all ages and abilities and were organized by skill level. The majority of these classes took place on Saturdays from September to April in what the League termed its "indoor, quiet" season. Initially, the classes were taught by a local, native speaker or elder. As the organization became more established a young school teacher or priest would brush up on their own Irish using the League textbooks and "ploughing away for a time at the lessons with the aid of the pronunciation keys" before "facing a class" to take them through the same process.[88] The organization also published an enormous amount of material, from the textbooks and teaching materials, to plays and fiction, to pamphlets and broadsides. Contemporary sources estimate that the League was circulating nearly 200,000 pieces of printed material by the turn of the 20th century.[89]

In addition to these educational pursuits, the League also organized social activities on a local, regional, and national scale. Music and musical instruction were the centerpiece of this social program. Local community members used the League to host additional classes in musical instruction. The community would then gather for a concert or a dance to showcase the students' talents and progress. These weekly or monthly *ceilidhs* became the backbone of the League's social calendar.

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[88] Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910*., (Syracuse University Press, 2008), 129.
[89] *Douglas Hyde and the Revival of the Irish Language*, 1-2.

The League also allowed flexibility within its own organization, encouraging students to form sub-groups devoted to their interests. *An Cumman Ceoil* was one of these groups devoted to the immediate preservation of all Irish folk music.[90] In addition, the League staged festivals where singers, dancers, and musicians could compete for local prizes and the privilege to move on to the next level of competition, from district to county to regional and then national festivals. The *feis* system was key in establishing and maintaining popular interest in the League and its objectives. As noted scholar at the Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, Pádraig Ó Riagáin, observed, "The attractions of the League meetings and festivals as social gatherings were a 'powerful instrument for making proselytes.'"[91] Hyde recognized that these musical programs were key to the success of his organization. From the outset, in his lecture on de-Anglicization, he acknowledged, "For the present then, I must be content with hoping that the revival of our Irish music may go hand in hand with the revival of Irish ideas and Celtic modes of thought which our Society is seeking to bring about."[92] As might be evidenced by the fact that he introduced his program of cultural revitalization in a lecture on de-Anglicization, the League also discouraged or suppressed arts and activities that "did not directly support the promulgation of the language."[93] As he was establishing and directing the Gaelic League, Hyde was simultaneously collecting and publishing the traditional *sean nós* songs of Connemara. He claimed, "The wish to preserve what a score or so of years

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[90] Edward Martyn, "The Gaelic League and Irish Music," *The Irish Review* 1, no. 9 (1911) : 449.
[91] Riagáin, *Language Policy and Social Reproduction*, 8.
[92] Hyde, "The Necesity De-Anglicising Ireland," 156.
[93] Williams, 606.

will find disappeared off the face of the earth must serve as an excuse for reproducing the *ipissima verba*, for slowly but surely those who know them are disappearing; those who sung them are passing away; and soon, very soon, the place that knew them shall know them no more."[94] But that was not the extent of his revival efforts; Hyde also attempted to contribute to the traditional canon.

[94]Hyde, "The Unpublished Songs of Ireland," 71.

"An Díbirteach"

Douglas Hyde penned "An Díbirteach" ("The Exile") himself. The exact dating of the song is unknown, though it must have been written before the turn of the 20th century as the song was first published in Dr. T. O'Neil Russell's collection *Fíon Cháinreach na h-Éireann* in 1900.[95] Dr. Russell was a contemporary of Hyde's; both were involved in the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language and Russell was one of the founding members of the Gaelic League. The song was republished in Eileen Costello's *Amhran Muighe Seola* a few years later. This work first appeared in the *Journal of the Irish Folk Song Society*, a publication in which both Hyde and Costello were active. Costello's work was later republished as a standalone piece and seems to have gained a wider audience as such.

Costello herself was an avid song collector in the region surrounding her hometown of Tuam in Connacht. She was also an active member of her local branch of the Gaelic League. She credits her work with the League as the motivating factor behind the publication of her collection and credits them for preserving *sean nós* in her area. She claimed:

> I had discovered a rich field of song practically untouched, but in imminent danger of being lost through indifference and neglect. The work of reviving and fostering it was pre-eminently that of the Gaelic League, and the subject was discussed at several meetings of our Gaelic League Branch.[96]

On behalf of the Gaelic League she collected hundreds of songs being performed in her area. Most often she met with local singers to record their music and gather the origins of the songs. Where possible she traced the history of the songs as they

[95] Costello, *Amhráin Mhuighe Seóla,* 148-50.
[96] Ibid., 9.

moved and developed across Connamara and Connacht more generally. She also corroborated or gave alternate histories where applicable, making her work an immensely useful catalogue of Connacht *sean nós* at the turn of the century.

"An Díbirteach" is one of the few songs to which Costello lacks much historical background. The song was a relatively new creation by Douglas Hyde though she notes that, "I heard [it] sung some years ago at a Galway Féis by Miss Brennan, Athleague, Co. Roscommon. She told me she had learned the air from her mother." She also claims that this song was "an example of a modern song creeping into folklore"[97], and while this may have been Hyde's aim, there is little evidence that it was successful.[98] The song is not widely known, nor has been the subject of much analysis or criticism.

The song begins with a traveler wishing Ireland goodbye as he sets off for a new land. The singer seems heartbroken to being leaving his homeland behind, lamenting:

> Farewell, farewell, dear land of mine
> Since I must part from you
> And yet – and yet - I hestitate
> To speak my last adieu.

The song continues as Hyde begins to develop the reasons for his grief, claiming:

> I wander on my longely way,
> And bitter is my lot […]
> Alone I seek the lonely ways
> Across the lonesome world.

[97] Ibid., 150.
[98] MacLochlainn, "Amhráin Mhuighe Seóla," 185.

He continues on for a few stanzas alternating between expressing his love for Ireland and his sorrow at leaving before wrapping up the song much the way he started, wishing:

> And ever to my dying day
> Shall I remember you
> And, should I never more return,
> Farewell, dear land, adieu![99]

While the song appears to be a straightforward lament, Hyde actually combined several atypical characteristics and his own Romantic style to create a song that is far from traditional.

First, it is unclear if the song was originally composed in Irish. Hyde's Irish feels unnecessarily clunky to describe the relatively simple emotions he expresses. This is perplexing since Hyde himself reflected, "it is difficult and hard enough to understand most of the Irish prose, not to mention the poems. And I think that everyone writing Irish ought to use the simplest of words, and not selecting every hard word that he can."[100] The Irish lacks the natural rhythm and cadence key to the performance of *sean nós*. The lyricalness of a song is of particular importance in *sean nós* because the words, not the music, are the centerpiece of the performance. Performers also often play with the notes sung to fit their regional and individual styles, placing even greater emphasis on the rhythm of the words to maintain the flow of the song. But what Hyde lacks in elegance, he makes up for with a flowery English translation, as evidenced by the first stanza above. Here, his words are almost too lyrical – especially as compared to his translations of others' songs. Take

[99] Costello, *Amhráin Mhuighe Seóla,* 148-50.
[100] Douglas Hyde, "Smaointe: Thoughts," in *Language, Lore and Lyrics*, ed. Brendán Ó Conaire. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1986), 57.

for example Hyde's translation of one of Ó Raifteirí's songs most popular songs, "*Brighdín Bheusaidh"*:

> I'd marry Breedyeen Vesey
> Without coat, or boot, or mantle
> Treasure of my heart, if I could
> I would fast for you nine times
> Without food, or drink, or anything[101]

Here Hyde does not translate the rhythmic Irish into a lyrical English verse but instead gives a simple and direct translation. While Hyde may have selected some of his words for their musical qualities, it does not dictate his translation; the English words do not follow any clear rhythm or pattern. This type of translation is typical of Hyde's other work and many other *sean nós* pieces. It was this style that Hyde felt set his translations apart from other collectors. He claimed that he "endeavored to be a little more accurate then my predecessors, and to give the exact language of my informants, together with their names and various localities" which he felt "brought more truthful and scientific criteria to bear on the collecting, study, and presentation of Irish folklore".[102] That is what makes Hyde's translation of his own song particularly odd. Additionally, the structured repetition and the rhyme scheme are unusual in the *sean nós* tradition. While some local communities of performers routinely repeat the last line of song, this is not typical of the Connemara style that Hyde worked with. Singers also tend to choose to repeat the line or lines based on their feeling of the performance rather than have the repetition written into the song itself.[103] All of Hyde's verses, in both English and Irish, exhibit the same rhyme

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[101] Hyde, *Abhráin Atá Legtha Ar an Reachtúire*, 221-237.
[102] Ó Conaire, Language, Lore, and Lyrics, 42.
[103] Valleley, *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*, 336-8.

scheme – ABCBDEFE. Forcing the words into this pattern occasionally results in odd structures, as in the fifth stanza when Hyde forces twice as many words into a single line to preserve the rhyme in the following line. In so doing, Hyde seems to reserve the poetic elegance that he so admired in ancient Irish poets for his English verses, which more clearly and smoothly express his feelings.

Nor were these the only atypical aspects of "An Díbirteach". Hyde adopted one of the unique characteristics of "Amhrán na Mine" and unsuccessfully attempts to mimic the style of "Máire Ní Eidhin". Like "Amhrán na Mine", Hyde discusses Ireland as a single unit rather than referencing particular counties or regions. He refers to his homeland as "Sweet Erin" and "dear land of mine". While it is possible that Hyde's repeated references refer not to Ireland as a whole but rather as a literal reference to his land or estate in County Roscommon, this is unlikely. First, the overt reference to "Erin" matches the tone of "Amhrán na Mine". A look to the original Irish text of "An Díbirteach" also reveals that the word Hyde used was "*tír"* which he translates as "land". A more accurate/common translation of *"tír"* is "country". Another potential translation of "land" to reference literal earth is "*talamh"*. Hyde's use of "*tír"* rather than *"talamh"* substantiates the claim that he was referencing Ireland as a nation throughout "An Díbirteach".

Hyde also mimics the imagery used by Ó Raifteirí in "Máire Ní Eidhin". Ó Raifteirí communicated his devotion to Ireland through vivid descriptions of Mary's, and symbolically Ireland's, beauty. Hyde depicts his sorrow at leaving his homeland in similarly descriptive terms. His mimicry is most apparent in the fifth stanza of "An Díbirteach". He claims that:

Were I to roam the wide, wide world,
And wander o'er and o'er
The devious winding ways of earth,
By surging sea and shore ;
0, never, never would I find
One sweet secluded place
Meet for the loving glance I gave
Sweet Erin's clouded face

This is extremely similar to the fourth stanza of "Máire Ní Eidhin":

I walked through England and France for years once,
Through Spain and Greece and the long way home,
And from Loch Greine to Galway's quay-side,
But her beauty's equal I've never known.
Were my bride this Flower of Tír-na-n-óg now,
Through Loch an Toraic I'd ride my steed,
By coasts and harbours and trackless oceans
If I lost the Rosebud of Ballylee.

Both passages express the unmatchable beauty of Ireland and place the singer on a journey through countrysides and coastlines to find their way back to their homeland. The fact that Hyde attempted to copy Ó Raifteirí so directly is significant because it is a clear example of what Hyde envisioned his revival to be. His aim was to recreate traditional, pre-Famine *sean nós* songs through his own original writing. Hyde's ideas may have formulaically followed Ó Raifteirí's own but he was unable to accurately recreate specific stylistic elements, leaving his own work a poor imitation of Ó Raifteirí's rather than a positive addition to a rich tradition.

Following Ó Raifteirí's example, Hyde claims that the ocean is "Deep with a wild unrest, / But blacker is the surging grief" within his own chest. He resigns himself to "The devious winding ways of earth [...] where alien waters boom". While his language is equally as evocative as Ó Raifteirí's, his use of imagery isn't as effective, primarily because it lacks the same symbolic undertones. Ó Raifteirí

couched many of his descriptions of Ireland's beauty or his devotion for the land as pictures of Máire Ní Eidhin and his adoration for her. This enabled his song to be interpreted in a multitude of ways; something that Hyde's lacks. Because of Hyde's authorship, it doesn't make sense to read a deeper meaning into "An Díbirteach". Setting aside Hyde as the author, the song easily reads as a farewell to the traditional lifestyles or cultures of Ireland that were being lost in the period immediately prior, as discussed above. If that is the case, then the song is Ireland's sentimental farewell to the past as she must chart a new course in a modernizing world. But it is extremely unlikely that this could be Hyde's message. It is directly contradictory with the purpose of his movement, as he clearly explains, "just at the moment when the Celtic race is presumably about to largely recover possession of its own country, it finds itself deprived and stript of its Celtic characteristics, cut off from the past, yet scarcely in touch with the present."[104] He charges all Irishmen to revive the culture and society of the recent past because as he claims, only "upon Irish lines can the Irish race once more become what it was of yore – one of the most original, artistic, literary and charming peoples of Europe."[105] Therefore, it is unlikely that Hyde would have intended his song to be read as encouraging a further break with those traditions, meaning that it lacks much of the symbolic complexity of songs like "Máire Ní Eidhin".

Further, "An Díbirteach" does not have a narrative structure nor any characters other than the singer to people the limited landscape that Hyde creates. Thus, Hyde cannot layer his emotions in symbolism but instead hits the reader over

[104] Hyde, "The Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland," 128.
[105] Ibid., 161.

the head with his message. His "wild" ocean is simply that, not a symbol for the depth of his grief; his "lonely way" is a path, rather than an exploration of his solitude. Hyde repeats adjectives like "lonely", "surging", and "loving" to emphasize the singer's feelings. Instead of using imagery to paint a picture for his audience of the singer's inconsolable sadness at leaving Ireland, Hyde opts to use descriptive language to simply tell them. This is particularly odd as Hyde praised *sean nós* for its "stainlessness of sentiment" in contrast with the "very antipodes of the vulgar effusions" he found in English songs but nonetheless wrote a song of effusive sentimentality. This ultimately means that "An Díbirteach" lacks the subtlety or feeling of "Máire Ní Eidhin", making it a less effective medium for the singer's message. Both the singer and the audience's affective response to a piece is at the heart of music culture. When that response is stifled or left undeveloped, as is the case here, a song and its performance cannot contribute to creating a healthy music culture. This is because a music or performance must first resonate with the audience before it can have a wider impact on a community or musical genre. Given that Hyde's goal was revival, it was critical that his music contribute to the same traditional music-culture as pre-Famine *sean nós.*

The excerpts above evidence another shortcoming in Hyde's mimicry of Ó Raifteirí. Hyde's choice to vaguely refer to Ireland as a whole rather than any particular place is a detriment to the song. Where Ó Raifteirí paints pictures of "Loch Greine to Galway's quay-side", "Loch Toraic" and "the cellars of Ballylee", Hyde repeats his reference to his "dear land of mine" or even more simply "the land". Nearly every stanza affords Hyde the opportunity to be more specific, to

relate his feelings to some kind of geographic or cultural landmark. Instead, he continues to repeat the same generalities. This is particularly interesting because Hyde was no stranger to the importance of *seanchas* and *dinnseachas* in Irish topography and was vehemently opposed to the Anglicization of the Irish landscape.[106] He called such practices "deliberately careless", "inept", and "ignorant" rendering the landscape "wholly unrecognizable".[107] By failing to use Irish placenames and re-assert the Irishness of his environment, he loses out on the ability to more firmly root his song in the cultural landscape.

This has wider reaching implications for his success at rebuilding the music-culture of *sean nós.* By failing to locate his song within a specific geographic area, Hyde makes it more difficult for his audience to engage with the song. Instead of drawing listeners into the story through a shared experience of a place, he relies on their general sympathy for the exiled traveler. Beyond the immediate performance of the song, Hyde's overreliance on generalities means that he misses the opportunity to give his work broader meaning in the community or within its own historical context. Had Hyde used specific referents to locate his song within a particular community or time and space, it still may have been able to contribute to the music-culture of *sean nós*. This is especially true because Hyde does not simultaneously draw on the nationalist or patriotic sentiments expressed in "Amhrán na Mine" to capitalize on his references to the country/nation. This means that his song is left adrift appealing to a nebulous shared understanding between the singer and his audience without any of the key characteristics that would anchor

[106] Ibid., 151, 154.
[107] Ibid.

that relationship. In many ways, this was less likely an artistic choice than a necessity. Coming from an outside perspective and attempting to create a song in a non-native language to revitalize a traditional style, it is obvious why Hyde failed to bridge the gulf of understanding between himself and a native-Irish speaking audience.

Revival or Ruin?

To assess whether Hyde's transcription and translation efforts in addition to his own attempts to create new *sean nós* material were successful in reviving the tradition, specific criteria need to be addressed. This section will first lay out the general characteristics of a music revival then assess whether Hyde's work meets two key standards: authenticity and continuity.

While the specific definition of what constitutes a revival is still hotly contested among musicologists and ethnomusicologists, some general characteristics can be identified. Revivals often occur as a part of various broader social movements but one element that unites musical revivals into an identifiable category is the explicit agenda of revivalists to renew a musical style.[108] This was clearly the case here. The revival of *sean nós* was one piece of the Gaelic League program to de-Anglicize Ireland through the promotion of native culture including language, literature, and music. The League's efforts themselves were part of the broader renewal of antiquarian interest in Irish culture following the Famine that would gradually be subsumed by Nationalist political concerns.[109]

The nature of revival is inherently backward looking as it aims to restore the musical practices or styles of the past in the present time. But at the point that a revival is necessary, the revivalists often have little first-hand exposure to the music

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[108] Tamara E. Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory," *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 1999): 66.

[109] Hyde attempted to disassociate the League from political causes for years, though predictably, there was significant overlap in the participants of League and Nationalist activities. Hyde ultimately stepped down from his position as President of the League in 1918 over growing concerns of the politicization of the organization.

they are attempting to resurrect. As musicologists Hill and Bithell explain, another uniting characteristic of revival is its "adherence to a received history". The historical accounts of a musical practice or tradition are often passed down from generation to generation and in the process are altered by the vagrancies of memory, the preferences of the storyteller, and the imaginations of the listeners.[110] For the most part, these changes are unconscious, though collectors do occasionally make the deliberate choice to "correct" material or alter the music to be sound more familiar to appeal to a wider audience.[111] This is much like the *sean nós* tradition itself, where oral transmission and an emphasis on individual style led singers to embellish the musical structure or substitute local figures into a song.

Given that histories change over time, *sean nós* was primarily an oral tradition and recordings did not yet exist, is this a practice that can be said to be accurately and faithfully revived? This is certainly the subject of some debate, though not one that will be addressed more generally here. This assessment is the narrower question of whether Douglas Hyde's original writings can be said to have contributed to his stated goal of reviving the *sean nós* tradition.

Stemming from revivalists devotion to renewing a historical practice, two key criteria arise: continuity and authenticity. Bolstering or recreating a continuous link between the historical tradition and the present is necessary to legitimating the revival. Absent this link, the revivalists have failed to re-establish the prior style but rather have simply created an original style inspired by the first. This leads

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[110] Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 13.
[111] Ibid., 25-6.

revivalists to the mindset that their work and the narratives used to support them must form " a continuous path of positive progression".[112] Douglas Hyde seemed to have shared this viewpoint, concerning himself with the "continuation of Erin's national life" as "the Ireland of today is the descendant of the Ireland of the seventh century".[113] However, Hyde also acknowledged that the Famine gravely damaged Ireland's native culture, claiming, "The Irish peasantry [before the Famine] were all to some extent cultured men, and many of the better off ones were scholars and poets. What have we now left of all that? Scarcely a trace."[114] He continues, ""We have at last broken the continuity of Irish life … [Ireland] finds itself cut off from the past, yet scarcely in touch with the present".[115] Given Hyde's perception that cultural continuity had been broken, he took it upon himself to restore traditional *sean nós* practices and bridge the gap between pre-Famine *sean nós* and the musical landscape of the 1890s through his own writings.

One way to judge whether the Hyde was successful in re-establishing continuity[116], as noted ethnomusicologist Tamara Livingston lays out, is "the organic purity of the of the revived practice".[117] This is typically referred to as the

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[112] Herbert, Spencer, "Social History and Music History," in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, (Routledge, 2013), 148-9.
[113] Hyde, "The Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland," 126-8.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Musicologists disagree as to the appropriate relationship between these two factors. Some, such as Hill, Bithell, and Livingston, argue that authenticity is a pre-requisite for continuity. Others, like Swedish scholar Owe Ronstrom, hold the opposite. Here, the former relationship will be used as a practice cannot be said to have existed over a period if essential elements of that musical practice have changed. Whereas the converse is not necessarily true, even if a practice or style has laid dormant for a period, given sufficient evidence, it can be recreated.
[117] Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory," 74.

authenticity of the revived musical style. Authenticity is the key characteristic that differentiates revived music from other musical movements or styles. As Livingston suggests, "the departure of 'authentic' aesthetic standards may cause the eventual break down of the revival".[118] There are several different types of musical authenticity. First, the authenticity of the producer assesses how well the products of a musical revival match the intentions of the original, historical artists. Revivalists also attempt to faithfully recreate the product itself. This form of authenticity judges how typical a revival piece is of the tradition as a whole. This is the type most often associated with folk music, which places value on the authentic origins of the music.[119]

Given the ancient origins of many *sean nós* songs, their often murky authorship, and a traditional of individual embellishment, it is difficult to assess the original intentions of the authors of the songs. However, one of the foundational characteristics of *sean nós* is its documentation of the everyday and accessibility to the common man. Based on Hyde's explicitly activist agenda it is unlikely that he shared the original intentions of the artists. Hyde saw his attempt to revive *sean nós* as a tool in his broader revival program of Irish language and literature. At the time that most of Hyde's source material was being written, both Irish and *sean nós* seem to have been fairly healthy – certainly not as endangered as they became after the Famine. However, given a lack of specific evidence it would be premature to conclude that Hyde's work lacked the authenticity of the producer.

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Owe Ronstrom, "Traditional Music, Heritage Music," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, ed. Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 46.

What can be said is that Hyde failed to attain an authenticity of production, as his work does not faithfully recreate *sean nós* song style. Though portions of "An Díbirteach" seem to directly mimicking Ó Raifteirí's songs, Hyde oddly selected atypical characteristics into his own work. It is also unlikely that Hyde did not recognize the uniqueness of these elements, given his extensive exposure Ó Raifteirí's and other artists' songs through his extensive transcription and translation work. In addition to a general lack of symbolic meaning in his original work, he also doesn't utilize the same cultural or physical referents, which help ground *sean nós* in the local landscape. Hyde also places unusual emphasis on lyrical structure and repetition rather than the more typical practice of accommodating the music to the singer's words. In his essay "The Unpublished Songs of Ireland" Hyde points out this very same distinction between traditional *sean nós* and Western art music. He claimed, "In too many instances, the regular versifiers have far too often preferred a luscious sweetness and a delicious softness in numbers and rhythm to sound sense and striking thoughts."[120] His awareness of the distinctions between the two styles and choice to disregard traditional practices make his music inauthentic. Based on this metric then, Hyde's original songs cannot be judged authentic and lacking that authenticity, ultimately dooms the success of his revival efforts.[121]

Like other revivalists Hyde's work exists at the intersection of preservation and innovation. As Harry White, musicologist and Fellow of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, explains, earlier *sean nós* collectors' work is characterized by the "dialectic

[120] Hyde, "The Unpublished Songs of Ireland," 67.
[121] Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory," 74.

between antiquarianism and romanticism". The tension between the two was typified in the work of the antiquarian Edward Bunting who studiously worked to preserve Irish music in its most original form and Thomas Moore who took Bunting's work with the "explicit intention of re-animating it" in a romantic style to be performed for English-speaking audiences in the salons of Dublin, Belfast and London. Each man developed a passel of devotees and the controversy over the proper role of a collector of traditional music continued until the Famine. Antiquarian interest in *sean nós* in particular was re-established in the years following the Famine in response to the growing, and not incorrect, notion that the Irish language and by association, tradition Irish arts, were in grave danger of extinction.[122] The period from the 1840s to the 1890s saw a resurgence in antiquarian research accompanied by a growing sense of romantic nationalism.[123] It was through this lens that Hyde was introduced into the Revival movement. The tension between antiquarianism and nationalism is renewed in his own work between his preservationist purpose and ideals and his actual practice of modifying the song style.

In an effort to mask some of the original elements of his work, Hyde is makes overt claims about the authenticity of his songs. Like other revivalists, he is careful to source the origins of the songs he transcribes or translates. For example, in his 1903 book *Abhráin Atá Legtha Ar an Reachtúire (Songs Ascribed to Ó Raifteirí)* Hyde describes how he found his material:

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[122] Francis Fahy, "Irish Language Movement", in *Westminster review, Jan. 1852-Jan. 1914* 157, no. 3 (1902): 309.
[123] White, "The Preservation of Music and Irish Cultural History," 129.

> I got eight poems from my friend Owen O Neachtain in Galway. I believe that he got most of them from a man of the Comynses near that city. I got five other songs from Father Clement O'Looney, from the Abbey in Loughrea, who had written them down from the mouth of an old man about twenty years before.[124]

By linking the songs to particular towns, families, and singers, Hyde attempts to co-opt the legitimacy of those sources for his own translation or potentially modification of the song. Revivalists today continue to use this practice. Contemporary artists working to revive American folk songs, such as those collected by Alan Lomax, use identical techniques to lend credibility to their work and minimize their original contributions to the genre.[125] Antithetically, this very attempt to authenticate their music draws attention to unmistakable break between the revivalists' own music and the original source music. Hyde falls into the same trap. Since authenticity is one test to determine the continuity of the musical style, Hyde not only fails to recreate an authentic song style, he draws further attention to the acknowledged discontinuity of *sean nós*.

At the point that Hyde fails to recreate an authentic practice or style, he necessarily must have failed to stage a successful revival. In her article "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory" Tamara Livingston elaborates, "when there is no longer an overriding concern for 'authenticity' (i.e. style markers that are consciously employed for historical reference) … revivals break down into different styles. In such cases revivals may stimulate new innovative styles and thus cease to

[124] Hyde, *Abhráin Atá Legtha Ar an Reachtúire,* 11.
[125] Stone, Jayme. "Jayme Stone and the Lomax Project." Tufts University, November 6, 2014.

exist primarily as a revivalist genre."[126] So rather than a revival, Hyde contributed to the creation of a new genre inspired by *sean nós*, marrying its basic a capella style and nasal tone with rhythms and structures more consistent with contemporary Western art music.

Though not the case here, in some instances it is possible that a revival movement can accommodate innovations like Hyde's. If a revival most values the process of creating music, rather than the product created like folk music revivals, then creativity and originality may be paramount. This occurs when the tradition being revived places an emphasis on individuality and artistic experimentation such as the *radif* tradition in Iran.[127] In cases like this, Hill and Bithell argue, "innovation, if pursued according to certain criteria, may be argued to be just as traditional and authentic as faithful replications of historical pieces".[128] An argument could certainly be made that *sean nós* also has a history of individual innovation and creative embellishment and that Hyde's original work was within the parameters of the tradition. It is also possible, even likely, that *sean nós* evolved in identifiable, concrete ways over the course of the 19th century and the purpose of this paper is not to reify the pre-Famine song style. However, Hyde himself did not share this view and this paper is limited to assessing Hyde's success in relation to his own goal. Though Hyde viewed native music as one of the primary symbols of Irish culture, he also believed that it existed in a static state that could be retrieved from the past and

[126] Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory," 80-1.
[127] Hill and Bithell, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, 23-4.
[128] Ibid.

resurrected into contemporary times.[129] So even though musical revival need not prohibit innovation, Hyde's own understanding of traditional music meant that his own original work cannot be classified as a revival effort.

[129] Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770-1970*, (Notre Dame, IN: Univ of Notre Dame Pr, 1998): 68.

Conclusion

The Great Famine irrevocably altered the musical and linguistic landscape of Ireland. It hastened the decline of the language and imperiled native artistic traditions. The Famine disproportionately affected Irish-speakers who were already marginalized and impoverished. Heavy dependence on the potato crop combined with infertile soil and overcrowding meant that the death toll was particularly high in Irish-speaking areas like Connemara. In addition to a demographic and economic impact, the Famine also endangered the artistic and linguistic vitality of the region.

This led to a burst of scholarly interest in preserving the Irish language and art in the aftermath of the Famine. The resurgence of antiquarian interest in native Irish culture led to the birth of the Gaelic Revival in the late 19th century. Douglas Hyde emerged as a leader in the revivalist movement in the 1880s, ultimately founding the Gaelic League in 1893. The goal of the League was to revive the Irish language and revitalize Irish culture through the translation and publication of pre-Famine artistic material as well as the production of an original, modern literature. In service of this mission, Hyde transcribed and translated hundreds of *sean nós* songs he collected in Connacht and wrote original songs to rebuild the music culture of *sean nós.* The musical landscape of pre-Famine Ireland as well as the specific characteristics of pre-Famine *sean nós* songs directly inspired Hyde's efforts and were a blueprint for his own work.

However, this inspiration was insufficient as Hyde's songs unsuccessfully mimicked the song style of traditional *sean nós*. Hyde chose to highlight atypical

characteristics of *sean nós* in his work and failed to incorporate the essential markers of the style, such as layers of symbolic meaning and cultural and geographic referents. Instead, Hyde altered the song style to more closely resemble Western art music, incorporating repetition and a rhyme structure. This meant that Hyde lacked the two key characteristics of a musical revival: authenticity and continuity. Based on these characteristics, Hyde's original music did not authentically replicate the song style of pre-Famine *sean nós.* Hyde himself also freely acknowledged that the Famine had disrupted the continuity of the tradition, something his work was attempting to rectify. While this means that Hyde was unsuccessful in achieving his stated goal of reviving the *sean nós* tradition, it does not speak to the value of the new genre he created by fusing characteristics of *sean nós* with his contemporary Romantic sensibilities, surely a topic worth an analysis in its own right.

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