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Surviving Folklore:
Transnational Irish Folk Traditions and the Politics of Genre

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M.A., Wake Forest University, 2004
B.A., The University of North Carolina at Asheville, 2001

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Abstract

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By Emily Kader

“Surviving Folklore” approaches the Irish and Appalachian oral traditions from a transnational perspective and critiques the nationalist rhetoric that has accompanied major folklore collections of both traditions. My work contends that oral traditions are capricious, interconnected, and inherently mobile phenomena that resist political, cultural, and religious borders and mores. While this project focuses on transnational, English-language folklore from Ireland, it also bridges various academic disciplines (including literature, folklore, history, cultural studies, and anthropology) and connects recent scholarship on the Celtic Revival with contemporary American cultural theory.

My project approaches five major folklore collections from Ireland and Appalachia: W. B. Yeats’s *The Celtic Twilight*, J. M. Synge’s *The Aran Islands*, Lady Gregory’s *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, Cecil Sharp’s *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, and Richard Chase’s *The Jack Tales*. What connects these collections is that each collector (with the exception of Synge) attempts to circumscribe the oral traditions included within a nationalist framework—that is, they claim that the folklore they publish belongs to and represents the essence of their nation and that the people from whom have they collected represent a racially pure national demographic. By investigating the connections between the Irish and Appalachian oral traditions, I reveal the political motivations behind these desires for nationally pure folklores as well as the inherent hybridity and transnational migration of both Irish and Appalachian oral traditions. In order to reveal the hybridity and migration of Irish populations and the folk traditions they carried, I investigate various Irish groups, including the supposedly pure populations of the western Irish coast, the ambiguously Irish Ulster Scots immigrants of the eighteenth century, the largely forgotten Irish Catholic immigrants of the seventeenth century, and the oft-maligned populations of nomadic Irish Travellers. I argue that these oral traditions were transmitted via migrant Irish populations, a fact that has been largely overlooked by both Irish and American scholars.

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In his poem, "The Choice," Yeats writes, "The intellect of man is forced to choose / Perfection of the life, or of the work." While I cannot claim perfection in either realm, my intellect has been fostered by many people who, I am happy to say, enrich both my life and my work. To my advisor, Geraldine Higgins, I owe an incredible debt of gratitude. Over the course of my research she has challenged me to be thorough in my investigation of new disciplinary realms and to grapple with the often politically messy issues of Irish and Southern studies. She has guided me with expertise, open-mindedness, and good humor, always reminding me to take joy in my work. I cannot thank her enough for her scholarly and professional example. Meg Harper has also been a guiding scholarly force and a believer in the value of my work; furthermore she has been overwhelmingly generous with her time and resources. I thank her for championing me and spreading the word about my project on more than one occasion. Ron Schuchard has offered me an example of scholarly acuteness that has made my work more precise and focused on what is essential. He has also given me a professional example of how one might succeed as a scholar and teacher with a hearty mixture of rigor and mirth. To Allen Tullos I offer thanks for showing me the way into new disciplines. His scholarly expertise and patience made it possible for me to execute this project carefully with multiple perspectives in mind and without getting into too much trouble. In addition to this group of scholars, there have been others at Emory who have supported my graduate career. William Chace has been an incredible teaching mentor and advisor, and Benjamin Reiss has been a resource for professional advice. In addition, Deepika Bahri, Patricia Cahill, Michael Elliott, Molly Epstein, Nikki Graves, Jim Morey, and Sandra Still have all guided me by their example and with their expertise. I thank them all for their willingness to council me over the years.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	
Transnational Traditions and the Politics of Nationalism	1
Chapter 1	
W. B. Yeats and “the commonwealth of faery”	19
Chapter 2	
Revising the Folk: J. M. Synge, Lady Augusta Gregory, and the International Tale	62
Chapter 3	
Irish Folk Songs in “Anglo-Saxon” Appalachia	119
Chapter 4	
Jack in Ireland: The International Tale at Home and Abroad	186
Conclusion	
Reinventing Ireland Globally through a Local Lens	250
Works Cited	257
Non-Printed Sources Cited	271

Introduction: Transnational Traditions and the Politics of Nationalism

The reaction to J. M. Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903) is a revealing moment in the history of Irish folklore. Famously, Arthur Griffith wrote of the play, based on a folk tale Synge collected on the Aran Islands, that it was "no more Irish than the Decameron" (quoted in Levitas 577). Less famously, he also said that the main character, Nora, was "a foul echo from degenerate Greece" (quoted in Frawley 21). Maud Gonne, who walked out of the play's first performance, wrote of its "insidious and destructive tyranny of foreign influence" (quoted in Frawley 21). These statements make a simple argument: Irish folklore is exclusively Irish while oral traditions with other national origins cannot be Irish—Irish people and un-Irish people do not share folk traditions. Despite the ongoing defense of Synge's work and the indisputable Irishness of his source (an Irish-speaking Inishmaan storyteller named Pat Dirane), there has been little work to bolster Synge's overarching theatrical objective to imagine Irish folk traditions and folklife within an international context. My project corrects this oversight by arguing that Irish oral traditions are inherently mobile and hybrid phenomena that have crossed national, cultural, and religious borders for centuries. My analysis first reveals the roots of the argument for the purity of Irish folklore, then proves the pre-colonial plurality of Irish oral traditions, and finally examines the movements of Irish traditions abroad by way of immigrants whose cultural identities are themselves ambiguous and hybrid and yet part of the Irish cultural landscape.

A transnational approach to Irish folklore allows me to understand it, not as stagnant tradition encapsulating Ireland's purer, pre-colonial culture, but rather as a body

of fluid and ever-changing texts that have flowed in and out of the nation with each wave of intra- and international migration. According to Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, “the transnational designates spaces and practices acted upon by border-crossing agents” (5). In Ireland these agents comprise a host of migratory groups and individuals, including, of course, colonial settlers from Britain. But there are less-visible and certainly less infamous migrants who have crossed the Irish border and influenced the flow and content of Irish oral traditions, including nomadic Irish Travellers, sea wracked sailors washed up on western coasts, Irish migrant laborers in Britain, and five hundred years of Irish immigrants abroad. Lionnet and Shih encourage scholars to “study the center and the margin” in order to understand the vertical flow of ideas in the theoretical framework of Franz Fanon, where the colonizer and colonized become hybrid within a distinct colonial hierarchy. But Lionnet and Shih also challenge scholars more urgently to “examine the relationships among different margins” from a transnational perspective, thus interrogating the horizontal flow of culture among groups who are less stratified and whose interactions are less evidently visible (2). My project pursues this goal by re-imagining Irish cultural identity through the effects of various migratory groups on the Irish oral tradition and the movement of oral folk texts abroad.

In contrast to border-crossing, marginal, and capricious oral traditions, I contend that “Irish folklore” is, in fact, a falsely constructed canon of texts chosen by elite members of the Revival for the political purpose of imagining and constructing the nation. By examining the published and archival records of Irish, British, and American folklore before and since the Revival, I construct a more complete picture of the genres of folk texts the Revivalists were choosing from for their literary, dramatic, and folkloristic

productions. The Revivalists (the center) constructed a national folklore by manipulating the traditions of the rural poor of western Ireland (the margin), placing folk texts that bolstered their political aims in the foreground while giving little attention to oral traditions that contrasted or were irrelevant to their cultural aspirations. But in order to reveal the *hybridity* of the Irish oral tradition—the element that was most overlooked by the nationalist project within the Revival—I also imagine various kinds of exchange that likely occurred within marginal Irish communities, not just in the West but also across Ireland and abroad into Britain and the United States.

Irishness has often been conceived of in degrees, as if some people living in Ireland are more or less Irish than others. I argue that the roots of this cultural tendency lie in Revivalist assertions of the purity of western Irish populations and oral traditions. Claims of relative Irishness persist in literary and even popular realms to this day. For example, in *Ulysses* there is the sailor's claim in "Eumaeus" that Simon Dedalus is "All Irish" (and Stephen Dedalus' rebuttal that he is "All too Irish") (509). More recently, the Corrigan Brothers have claimed that "no one's as Irish as Barack Obama," perhaps indicating that a more hybrid approach to Irishness is upon us. While these are both comic examples, they reveal the pervasive assumption that a pure Irish identity exists, or at least can be aspired to and imagined. The Revival located this pure national identity in the rural communities of western Ireland, the location farthest from the corrupting influences of both British colonialism and metropolitan modernity. Yeats argued, and the general Revivalist thesis agrees, that pure Irishness was accessible through a communion with Ireland's ancient and unchanging folk traditions and that these were available in the

West, preserved in the Irish language and revealing the wonders of a native and exclusively Irish tradition.

Conceiving of the Irish oral tradition transnationally allows me to challenge the dominant nationalist narrative of Irish folklore by reconceptualizing plural Irish identities. Imagining oral traditions in Ireland as the product of exchange and movement rather than containment and stasis, my project posits that Irish identity itself is inherently hybrid and the product of multiple cultural sources. While part of my project aims to imagine the hybrid influence of oral traditions on Ireland, I also consider the influence of Irish traditions abroad to refigure standard notions of the Irish diaspora. Using southern Appalachia as a counter-point, my analysis interrogates the routes Irish oral traditions may have taken in order to arrive in this seemingly un-Irish location in the American South. This analysis reveals multiple sources of Irish traditional culture that, indeed, exist in Appalachia, including Ulster Scots Protestants, Anglicized seventeenth-century Irish immigrants in colonial America, Irish immigrants in Britain, and nomadic Irish Travellers. All of these Irish groups were vital to the transmission of folk forms shared by Ireland and Appalachia.

Because this project examines the phenomenon of transatlantic Irish folklore, my approach is positioned between two geographically distant fields: recent approaches to the Celtic Revival within Irish studies and the work of contemporary scholars of American traditional culture. I bring these two diverse, yet related, bodies of scholarship into conversation in order to draw connections among different oral traditions and to correct oversights in both fields of inquiry. Recent scholars of the Irish Revival, such as Sinéad Garrigan Mattar and Gregory Castle, have illuminated the Revivalists'

engagement with anthropological discourse and their adoption of primitivist aesthetics within their collections. My work builds on their research and analysis, but it also relocates the folk text as well as the folk teller, rather than the literary collector, at the center of the Irish folkloristic discussion. While Yeats, Gregory, and Synge are each central to the literary value of this study, a folkloristic approach focuses attention on the sources from whom they collected. Therefore, Pat Dirane, the storyteller on Inishmaan who both Synge and Gregory encountered, becomes a fourth figure of equal import within Revivalist aesthetics. A methodology that values oral sources as equal to elite folklore collectors is available through the work of American scholars, including Cecelia Conway and Benjamin Filene, who focus on recovering the oral source and examining the relationship between the folklorist and the folk teller. Using their methods, I examine how certain Irish traditions have been neglected both within Ireland and by collectors and scholars of British and American folklore.

Despite the dearth of studies that link Irish and Appalachian culture, there are compelling reasons to compare the two regions' oral traditions that propel my analysis. One reason is that the interest in Irish and Appalachian folk traditions peaked in close succession during the early twentieth century, and interest in the oral traditions of these locations continues to this day, as do the traditions themselves. Nineteenth-century dabbling in Irish folklore gave way to a frenzy of collecting in the 1890s through the 1920s by the likes of Lady Wilde, Douglas Hyde, W. B. Yeats, Edward Martyn, J. M. Synge, and Lady Gregory. The work of these collectors, all involved to some degree with the cultural nationalist movement, led the newly established Irish Republic to create the Irish Folklore Commission in 1935. This governmental body sent full- and part-time

collectors out into the field up until 1971 to record and preserve the folk traditions of the nation. Their findings are housed today in the National Folklore Collection, which, according to their website, houses “one of the largest collections of oral and ethnological material in the world.”

Serious interest in Appalachian folklore began only a decade or so after the beginnings of the Celtic Revival and followed a similar trajectory, although academic rather than government institutions have been largely responsible for the preservation of folklorists' efforts. Between 1910 and 1930, collectors such as Hubert Gibson Shearin, Josiah Henry Combs, I. G. Greer, Olive Dame Campbell, Cecil Sharp, and Maud Sutton began collecting the song and tale traditions in the mountains of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia. Sharp and Campbell's 1917 collection of Appalachian folk songs led subsequent collectors to focus on that tradition almost exclusively until collectors like Isabel Gordon Carter and Richard Chase shifted the focus to folk tales in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. The careers of these and other Appalachian folklore collectors have produced, in addition to a handful of important publications, a number of remarkable collections and archives across the American South. These include the William Leonard Eury Appalachian Collection at Appalachian State University, the Frank C. Brown papers at Duke University, the Southern Folklife Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the Appalachian Center at Berea College. While the product of folklore collecting in Ireland and Appalachia is not measurable, it is safe to assume both locations have produced similarly fruitful fields of interest that, through sheer volume alone, beg comparison.

In addition to the parallel interest and fields of folklore supplied by Ireland and Appalachia, both the Irish West and the Appalachian region function similarly within their broader regional contexts. Like the Irish West, Appalachia serves a specific psychic purpose for the American and, it turns out, English imaginations. Both Ireland and Appalachia have been imagined as primitive and savage. West of the Dublin Pale, Ireland supplied nineteenth-century England and Europe with imagined specters of wild Irishmen as well as the more domesticated stage Irish buffoon. Appalachia, too, renders in the larger American consciousness images of inbred hillbillies and the threatening chords of “Dueling Banjos.” In turn both locations have had their defenders who reacted to such characterization with primitivism, or the idealization of primitive cultures. For example, compare the following passage from Synge’s *The Aran Islands* to a selection from Sharp’s introduction to *English Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians*:

It gave me a moment of exquisite satisfaction to find myself moving away from civilisation.... Every article on these islands has an almost personal character, which gives this simple life, where all art is unknown, something of the artistic beauty of medieval life. The curaghs and spinning-wheels, the tiny wooden barrels that are still much used in the place of earthenware, the home-made cradles, churns, and baskets, are all full of individuality, and being made from materials that are common here, yet to some extent peculiar to the island, they seem to exist as a natural link between the people and the world that is about them.... The courtesy of the old woman of the house is singularly attractive, and though I could not understand much of what she said—she has no English—I could see

with how much grace she motioned each visitor to a chair, or stool, according to his age, and said a few words to him till he drifted into our English conversation. (Synge 14-15)

The region is from its inaccessibility a very secluded one. There are but few roads—most of them little better than mountain tracks—and practically no railroads. Indeed, so remote and shut off from outside influences were, until recently, these sequestered mountain valleys that the inhabitants have for a hundred years or more been completely isolated and cut off from all traffic with the rest of the world.... Economically they are independent. As there are practically no available markets, little or no surplus produce is grown, each family extracting from its holding just what is needed to support life, and no more.... They are a leisurely, cheery people in their quiet way, in whom the social instinct is very highly developed.... They have an easy unaffected bearing and unselfconscious manners of the well-bred. (Sharp iv-v)

Each folklorist makes similar, primitivist moves, working with and against stereotypes of his chosen region. Both maintain that the regions are isolated, as Synge moves away from civilization and Sharp travels down mountain tracks, inaccessible to modern traffic. But this isolation, rather than rendering savage the people it has protected from modernity, has, in fact, allowed them to maintain an almost genteel dignity because of their distance from modern industry. Synge's Aran Islanders produce their own goods and are thus in harmony with their native landscape, while Sharp's mountaineers live off the land and

grow their own produce in exacting amounts. In contrast to their urban working-class counterparts, dehumanized and mechanized by their encounters with the excesses of the modern age, the rural inhabitants of these landscapes maintain an almost aristocratic manner, treating visitors and each other with unmatched civility.

More so than Synge, Yeats and Gregory used the oral traditions of the Irish West, in Gregory's words, to "show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism" (*Our Irish Theatre*, 379). Sharp, too, found his "ideal society" in Appalachia, where the folk songs that had been largely neglected and forgotten in his native England were sung by "pretty nearly every one I met, young and old" (viii). If the "wise and simple peasant" of Yeats's imagination dwelled in the Irish West (*Collected Poems* 148), then "the simple, Arcadian life of the [Appalachian] mountains" (xxii) served Sharp a similar assuaging and idealized image of pastoral England. And since his defense of mountain culture, the Appalachians have become for some a symbol of America's unadulterated heritage—an idealized America, setting the standard for the rest of the nation's degenerate decline. Richard Chase, who collected Appalachian Jack tales in the 1930s, describes the people he encountered in a similar fashion as his predecessors: "They are honest, industrious, and intelligent citizens; and they have rare qualities of kindness and poise which make them excellent company" (vii).

Behind Chase and Sharp's idealization of the Appalachians lies a desire for a pure white identity—a vision of the American South unsullied by black populations, Caribbean influences, and the hoards of Catholic immigrants that invaded the North. Emily Satterwhite has pointed out the echoes of white pride that sound in idealizations of

Appalachian heritage. She writes, “For over a century, the idea of Appalachia as racially distinct, rural, and premodern has served to reassure white Americans of the persistence of an indigenous white national culture” (306). Her work, and the work of scholars such as Benjamin Filene and Cecelia Conway, have argued for the importance of African-American influence on Appalachian culture.

A hybrid approach is the only way to understand culture in the Appalachians completely, and this study hopes to add to our conception of Appalachia’s hybridity. However, I also intend to allow the more insidious implications of imagining Appalachia’s purity to reflect on similar desires in Ireland. By ignoring the influences of groups who are not “all Irish,” Irish studies makes the same misstep in its approach to Irish culture and folklore as Confederate nationalists make in the American South. Diane Negra points out that “Irish studies still clings in many ways to a monolithic sense of Irishness” that is itself a celebration of whiteness (14). She advocates scholarship that “intervene[s] on the process of essentializing Irishness” (15). Indeed, a new, progressive Ireland must conceive of a hybrid national identity, something akin to Leopold Bloom’s thesis that a nation is “the same people living in the same place.... Or also living in different places” (*Ulysses*, 272). Joyce’s Bloom, a character who embodies the possibilities of Irish hybridity, ghosts my argument, even though Joyce rarely shows himself in my analysis of Irish and Appalachian folk traditions.

Finally, and perhaps most concretely, the folklore of Ireland and Appalachia should be compared because of demographic links between the two locations and the Irish hybridity that these demographics reveal. Because the most memorialized group of Irish immigrants—Irish Catholics who located to America after the Great Famine—rarely

settled in the southern Appalachian Mountains, both Irish and American scholars have failed to consider the region as a viable source for Irish-American folklore. Indeed, the Irish immigrants who, in Patrick Griffin's words, "would identify themselves and be identified by the moniker 'Irish American,'" seem to have for the most part bypassed the region ("The Two-Migrations Myth" 244). David T. Gleeson notes that nineteenth-century Irish immigrants "were not prepared for the isolation of the southern backcountry" and instead settled in the larger towns and cities of the piedmont and coast (23). Scholars such as Griffin, Gleeson, and Kieran Quinlan have recently challenged the assumption that Irish immigrants avoided settling in the American South all together; however, southern Appalachia rarely features in their extensive analyses, likely because of the region's geographically marginal location and its cultural otherness from the larger South.

As a result of the singular view of Irish-America as post-Famine Catholic immigrants who migrated to urban centers, Irish influence on Appalachian culture has been largely neglected. In order to understand the flow of Irish folk texts to the Appalachians, we must examine Irish immigrant groups who arrived before the Famine. These groups, including eighteenth-century Ulster Scots and seventeenth-century native Irish immigrants, carried Irish oral traditions to America that found their way and were preserved in the folk memories of the southern Appalachians. Griffin has urged scholars of Irish-American culture and history to conceive of the Irish immigration narrative broadly, to integrate the contributions of pre-Famine Irish immigrants, and to discuss "migration from Ireland as a continuum" that begins in the seventeenth century and continues to this day ("The Two-Migrations Myth" 246). The immigrant groups that are

central to my discussion of Irish folklore in the Appalachians are those who left Ireland before the nineteenth century, both Catholic and Protestant, that settled the southern Appalachian region or influenced early circulations of American folk texts.

In the century before the Famine, Protestant emigrants relocating from Ulster migrated south and west from Pennsylvania. The Appalachian Mountains, today home to the so-called “Scots Irish,” were the final destination for many Ulster Scots immigrant communities as well as a handful of native Irish immigrants. The American Scots Irish are not a monolithic group wholly analogous to contemporary Ulster Scots populations in Ireland. Instead, they are a culturally ambiguous group that carried hybrid strains of oral tradition. Because of their perceived cultural otherness, collectors and scholars of American and Irish folklore rarely conceive of the folk traditions that these immigrants carried as Irish-derived (although some have tried to make the argument for the “Celtic” nature of these traditions while wholly omitting the possibility of Irish influence). Furthermore, while this period of Irish immigration is usually conceived of as Protestant, Gleeson reminds us that a minority of Irish immigrants who settled in America during the eighteenth century, perhaps one hundred thousand, were Catholic. Impoverished and culturally isolated, these individuals lost their language, native religion, and their Irish identities within the colonial American landscape (11-12).

Furthermore, seventeenth-century Irish Catholic immigrants may have had a significant, though indirect, impact on the Appalachian region. Griffin refers to this group as a “forgotten” force in early American history¹ that arrived in the New World in “large numbers—certainly for the time period” (“The Two-Migrations Myth” 246). Because of their historical distance and their apparent cultural erasure upon landing in the New

World, this group is also rarely memorialized as a significant part of the Irish diaspora. The Irish oral traditions that are a part of Appalachian folk memory reveal the impact of these groups, which should be reconsidered as important cultural forces within the oral traditions of the United States.

Given the impact of these early Irish immigrants on the Appalachian region and the overwhelming amount of folklore that has been collected there, Appalachia should be considered a fruitful location to explore the existence of Irish oral traditions in America. Examining these immigrant groups' impact on Appalachia helps us imagine, not an Irish oral tradition trapped in stasis, but rather one that has experienced hybridity and exchange both within Ireland and abroad. The Appalachian narrative of Irish folklore asks us to imagine folk texts being traded by Irish immigrants on English and American soil, between native Irish and Ulster Scots settlers in northern Ireland, between Irish Travellers and the various populations they encountered on their journeys—and even between illicit *poitín*-makers and their ambiguous clientele.

My discussion of Irish folk traditions in Appalachia does not, however, assume the “Celtic” nature of the region, as have some studies of the American South that try to claim the importance of Ulster Scots connections. I distance my analysis from Grady McWhiney's thesis, which argues that the South is culturally Celtic because of the predominance of Ulster Scots immigrants in the region. By employing “Celtic” to describe the (white inhabitants of the) South, McWhiney engages with concepts of race—and thus ideas of purity—that my analysis rejects. I am uninterested in the racial heritage of Appalachian populations; instead, what interests me is the presence of Irish oral texts in their midst. Even if the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon races were not a fiction, oral traditions

would still be able to move from one group to the other. Furthermore, McWhiney's analysis employs the kinds of nationalist demarcating of territory that this project hopes to challenge. Confederate nationalism, Irish nationalism, English nationalism, and Ulster Scots Loyalism all attempt to draw borders around culture. But these borders are not immune to the infectious, pervasive nature of oral folk texts—their catchiness and memorability. As Henry Glassie points out, even during the Troubles in Northern Ireland, folk songs, fairy legends, and the old stories were a currency—perhaps the only cultural currency—shared between Catholics and Protestants who viewed themselves as culturally, politically, and even racially different (*Stars* 24-27).

Because this is an interdisciplinary project, it seems important to say something in regard to my use of some key folklore terms. The word *folklore*, itself, has multiple meanings that can lead to some confusion. Folklore can mean the study of folkways (as in the academic field of folklore), the collection of folkways, or can stand in for the ways themselves. In my analysis I define folklore as collected, published, and canonized oral texts. Therefore, the Irish Revivalists defined a national Irish folklore—a selection of published texts derived from the *oral tradition*. On the other hand, oral traditions are the folk texts that exist before and beyond publication and canonization—they are the unauthorized texts of the folk and comprise a much larger, nebulous tradition of oral lore. The oral tradition, in a sense, is a singular body of texts that stretches the globe, linked by exchanges of individual folk texts. Therefore, when I speak of non-canonized oral objects, I refer to them as oral traditions or folk texts in order to distinguish them from the sanctioned and somewhat cordoned-off idea of published folklore.

This project is divided in two halves: two chapters dealing with the creation of a national Irish folklore during the Revival and two chapters examining connections between Irish and Appalachian oral traditions that challenge this canon. Each chapter takes on a different folk genre, a central collector, and, when possible, an important folk informant. My examination of Yeats brings me to the fairy legend and to his erasure and fictionalization of his oral sources. I then move on to Synge's collection and use of the international tale and his relationship with Pat Dirane, an Inishmaan storyteller; Lady Gregory encountered the same teller and used his work to re-establish the fairy legend as the primary oral genre of Irish folklore. I then shift to the elision of the Anglo-Irish folk song in Sharp's Appalachian collection and his encounters with a singer named Jane Hicks Gentry. Finally, Chase's collection of a genre called the Jack tale and a contemporary storyteller named Orville Hicks reveal a similar neglected tradition of Jack tales in Ireland. Below are more detailed descriptions of my four chapters and final conclusion:

My study begins with the early folklore writings and collections of W. B. Yeats, including his *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888), *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), and "What is Popular Poetry?" (1901). "Yeats and 'the commonwealth of faery'" argues that Yeats's interest in Irish folklore was informed by his personal desire to experience vision through contact with the Irish peasantry as well as his nationalist desire to relate this encounter to the rest of Ireland. Because they had been protected from modernity, Yeats argued that the rural poor of western Ireland had access to a pre-Christian and pre-colonial spiritual system through which the modern subject, if exposed to peasant folk traditions, might achieve visionary experience. Yeats hoped to confer Irish

peasant beliefs onto the people of Ireland and turn the nation away from divisive politics based on difference toward unity based on a shared past. For him, the folklore that would give birth to and define the Irish nation was thus supernatural, and his essays and collections reveal a preference for the Irish fairy legend—wherein the teller claims visionary experience as fact. This genre gains priority in *The Celtic Twilight*, Yeats's most influential folklore collection, while other genres are relegated to the back of the volume or expunged from the record.

After examining Yeats's folkloristic project, my second chapter, "Revising the Folk: Synge, Gregory, and the International Tale," compares volumes by two Revivalists who collected folklore after Yeats. Synge's *The Aran Islands* (1907) challenged Yeats's focus on the fairy legend by revising his visionary peasant into a figure engaged with the international folk tales popular on the Continent. Synge's ethnographic volume resists Yeats's romantic quest for the supernatural and represents the Irish peasant imagination as international rather than national—and fascinated with violence rather than vision. Unnerved by Synge's dramatic work on the Abbey stage and his disruption of Yeats's folkloristic aesthetic, Lady Gregory published *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (1920) to reorient the focus of the Literary Revival back to Yeats's notion of visionary peasant belief. Gregory's work ultimately refutes Synge's perspective and establishes "Irish folklore" as a solidly national and supernatural tradition immune from foreign influence.

My third chapter, "Irish Folk Songs in 'Anglo-Saxon' Appalachia," re-examines oral traditions from Ireland as a tradition without cultural or national borders. This chapter interrogates the work of Cecil Sharp, an English folklorist and contemporary of

the Irish Revivalists whose nationalist politics led him to elide Irish texts in his English and American collections. In his English collections and theoretical works, Sharp labors to define the English racial character against other races, most notably Celtic identities within the British Isles. In his seminal collection, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (1917), Sharp claims the American folk song tradition for England and applies his theories of race to Appalachian populations. Sharp approached the Appalachian Mountains as a reservoir of English tradition, and he omitted various songs that imply Irish derivation in order to construct his desired image of pure Anglo-Appalachian culture. Because of Sharp's influence, both collectors and scholars of the region largely have ignored or denied the occurrence of Irish folk forms. My work uncovers various folk songs that coexist in both Appalachia and Ireland and contends that these texts likely arrived in the region via the culturally hybrid populations of eighteenth-century Ulster Scots immigrants.

After examining Irish texts brought to the United States by Ulster Scots groups, my final chapter, "Jack in Ireland: The International Tale at Home and Abroad," considers another American folk genre, the Jack tale, which I suggest was brought to the United States by native Irish immigrants of the colonial era. The Jack tale is a sub-genre of the international tale that has appeared in Irish collections of folklore since the nineteenth century but has yet to be treated by Irish scholars as an important component of native tradition. Through comparative analysis of Appalachian texts and archival material from the National Folklore Collection in Dublin, I conclude that the Jack tale is native to Ireland and particularly significant within Traveller populations. Richard Chase, who published his collection *The Jack Tales* in 1943, defined the tradition as English-

derived but thoroughly American in its perspective. I make the case that the American Jack tale comes in part from an Irish tradition and should be considered a form of native and transatlantic Irish folklore. Tracing the genealogical history of Chase's primary storytellers, the Hicks family, to seventeenth-century indentured servants in Virginia and identifying a number of Appalachian tales with multiple variants in Ireland, I contend that Irish immigrants likely had significant influence over the American Jack tale tradition.

I conclude by reflecting on the origins of this project—my own experiences growing up in the Appalachians alongside my longstanding interest in Irish studies—and suggest how it can be a model for imagining Ireland in a global context. While I began this work expecting my connections between Appalachia and Ireland to be forced and tenuous, I was constantly surprised by the many links were illuminated once the two folk traditions were put into comparison. But surely Appalachia is not the only unlikely location with connections to Ireland; indeed, this project is a model for others who might want to investigate the movements of Irish oral traditions (or any cultural influences) abroad. If we are to move Irish studies into twenty-first-century conceptions of the global world, then the work must be done to place Ireland in an international context. This project contributes only a small piece of that global Irish perspective.

¹ Griffin uses this language in his “Irish Migration to the Colonial South: A Plea for a Forgotten Topic.”

Chapter One:

W. B. Yeats and “the commonwealth of faery”¹

W. B. Yeats is by no means Ireland’s most notable folklorist, but his influence as the national poet and general purveyor of Irish culture has allowed him to define what Ireland and the world perceive to be Irish folklore. For Yeats, uncovering Irish folklore was foundational within his project to establish an Irish literary tradition—and, indeed, his own work—as equal among other great national literatures. “Folk-lore,” he wrote, “is at once the Bible, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and the Book of Common Prayer, and well-nigh all the great poets have lived by its light. Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, and even Dante, Goethe, and Keats, were little more than folk-lorists with musical tongues” (*Uncollected Prose* 284). From the mythological sagas of Cuchulain to the Irish fairies that remain within the landscape of the national imagination, Yeats mined Irish folklore for magical events, feeding his own desire for inspiration, for vision, and for a spiritual system that was specific to Ireland.

Yeatsian folklore is almost always supernatural, and so Irish folklore is, as a result, perceived to be supernatural as well. The continuing popularity of Cuchulain, Yeats’s preferred mythological hero, attests to his continuing influence, with Thomas Kinsella’s 1969 translation of *The Táin* being followed by Ciarán Carson’s translation in 2007. Additionally, Marie Heaney’s *Over Nine Waves* (1994), which offers translations of the Mythological, Ulster, and Fenian cycles, contributes to the ongoing popularity of the sagas Yeats valued. The Yeatsian preoccupation with the medieval sagas remains to

this day, marked by an aura of cultural nationalism, as artistic renderings of Cuchulain appear both in the General Post Office on Dublin and on the murals of East Belfast.

For Yeats, the Irish peasantry were the living inheritors of ancient Ireland, and their oral traditions offered a conduit through which Ireland might regain the culture of its heroic past. The Irish fairies dominate Yeats's folklore collections chiefly because they are, in his view, the remains of the mythological aristocracy that was captured within the saga literature. In one of his accounts, Yeats claims that the fairies are the remnants of the ancient Irish race the Tuatha De Danaan, who, after being driven underground, were "no longer worshipped and fed with offerings, [and] dwindled away in the popular imagination, and now are only a few spans high" (*Fairy and Folk Tales* 3). The fairies, accessible only through the peasantry, are the mythological aristocracy that Yeats hoped to restore to the Irish nation, and thus his essays on and collections of folk traditions are primarily devoted to fairy lore.

Given Yeats's focus on this particular strand within the Irish oral tradition (and his neglect other strands), the fairies have become the main staple of contemporary renderings of Irish folklore. Evidence of this preoccupation with the fairies can be seen in contemporary academic studies and folklore collections as well as in the Irish tourism trade. Eddie Lenihan, a prominent folklore collector turned professional storyteller, focuses his work almost exclusively on the legends of the Irish fairies. His most popular collection, *Meeting the Other Crowd: The Fairy Stories of Hidden Ireland*, gives over three hundred pages to various fairy legends that Lenihan has collected since the 1970s. Lenihan has made headlines with his attempts to save pieces of the Irish landscape traditionally considered sacred to the fairies, first in 1999 when he successfully

campaigns against the destruction of a whitethorn tree and more recently in his attempt to halt the routing of the M3 road through Tara (Prendeville). Lenihan's conservation efforts are commendable, as are his pains to preserve oral traditions and keep them in popular circulation, but his exclusive embrace of fairy lore, and his public declarations of fairy belief, mark him as the contemporary inheritor of Yeats's folkloristic persona.

In addition to Lenihan's efforts to keep the fairies within the national mindset, the worldwide success of Angela Bourke's *The Burning of Bridget Cleary* (2000) also attests to the global fascination with the Irish fairies and the peasant culture from which they spring. This crossover academic text, which focuses on the fairy belief of a family in Tipperary and the resulting murder of a woman suspected to be a fairy changeling, brought Irish folklore to popular audiences in Ireland, Britain, the United States, and elsewhere. Bourke's work is masterful, as she weaves archival research with her own fieldwork and knowledge of fairy belief. In contrast to her work on the "Oral Traditions" section of *The Field Day Anthology*, volume IV, this popular text represents the Irish oral tradition as almost exclusively a fairy tradition within a Yeatsian paradigm. Bourke rarely discusses other major genres of folk text that circulated in Ireland at the time of the 1895 Cleary murder and uses fairy belief to color and add dimension to her analysis.

The Irish tourism trade has also taken full advantage of the worldwide fascination with the Irish fairies. For example, visitdublin.com advertises a regular storytelling session at The Brazen Head, Ireland's oldest pub, where listeners can learn about the post-Famine peasantry. Visitors are invited to "[e]xplore their beliefs and superstitions surrounding the other world of the fairies" and "Listen to the magical stories they told as they gathered around the fire at night. Come back with us to the fascinating world of

Ireland long ago when the culture was one of the mind, spirit, and the imagination and where the unseen world was never far away” (“An Evening”). The description is particularly Yeatsian, with its focus on the beliefs of the peasantry, the magical elements of their stories, and on the spiritual quality and unity of their worldview. Other, less magical types of folk text go unmentioned in the advertisement, and untold at this Dublin tourist venue.

The chapters that follow investigate three genres from the Irish oral tradition that are not exclusively supernatural and that therefore do not figure prominently in Yeats’s folklore canon or in popular contemporary accounts of Irish folklore. These include the international folk tale, the Anglo-Irish folk song, and the Jack tale. This chapter, however, aims to explore the fairy legend as Yeats viewed it and to understand why he was attracted almost exclusively to this genre. Yeats preferred supernatural traditions because they fulfilled both his personal desire for vision and his political desire to offer Ireland a unifying system of belief. The oral traditions he sought were therefore supernatural and particular to Ireland. For Yeats, the peasant who claims to have experienced the fairies and who can tell stories about them is the vehicle to magic, and therefore the peasant figure he creates through the folklore he publishes is primarily visionary. While Yeats encountered various genres of oral folk text, he promoted the fairy legend—in which the visionary experience is claimed by the peasant as fact—as the most valuable type of Irish folklore. Yeats’s political strategy in portraying the Irish peasant as having access to an ancient spiritual perspective has a direct impact on the types of folk texts he preferred and tended to publish in his collections. Because Yeats defines the value of Irish folk material in terms of its proximity to an otherwise lost

ancient religion, he grants authenticity to texts that reveal visionary experiences and prove the persistence of this ancient system. Belief, therefore, becomes central to his discussion of folklore—the belief of the peasant, the collector, and the reader—and vision becomes the indicator of real belief and evidence of access to ancient and valuable wisdom. Folk texts that offer evidence of either peasant belief or vision, then, make their way into his collections—particularly in his most popular work, *The Celtic Twilight* (1893, 1902)—while other less magical texts do not.

The Paradox of Authenticity

For Yeats, authentic folklore came from the peasantry, whose knowledge of magic he believed was uncorrupted by modern influences. The search for folklore is often a quest for authenticity, and, of course, Yeats was not unique in his desire to uncover the real through contact with the primitive. Early European folklore collecting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries resulted from what Ian Duncan calls a “disjunction from origins” (40), wherein the rapidly changing culture of the industrialized urban centers looked to the oral lore of the rural peasantry for access to an ancient and unchanged tradition. Thus, the instability of modern life was assuaged by the imagined stability and simplicity of the countryside. Modernization was viewed as a corrupting force on these traditions, and so early folklore collectors, including the Revivalists, valued the lore of peripheral populations over those whose traditions had been contaminated by industrialization. The truly primitive became a desirable commodity that enhanced the value of a collector’s work, and oral lore of the most isolated rural communities was viewed as more authentic than that from populations nearer to or in the

cities. The folklorist of the urban center—where publishing and audience inevitably lay—was in a position of considerable power when publishing the material he found within the primitive periphery, and folklorists often altered oral texts and the personae of their tellers to fit audience expectations. The question of authenticity is often at the core of folkloristic debate.

With the publication of folk texts, claims of authenticity often become problematic. Early nineteenth-century collectors like the Grimms of Germany and Thomas Crofton Croker of Ireland manipulated their collections in order to fit the tastes and expectations of their urban middle-class audiences. In the words of Carl Lindahl, “each ‘collector’ became a self-appointed ‘corrector’ and in the process the sole author and explicator of the folktale” (“Sounding” 71). The Grimms censored their tales or republished their collections with the offending material removed. On the other hand, Croker aimed to fulfill his English audience’s expectations of the Irish character, which was, in the nineteenth century, often simplistic and stereotypical. While the Grimms practiced elision, Croker’s collections were overwhelmingly invented.

In reaction to these sins against authenticity, later folklorists like John Francis Campbell of Scotland and Ireland’s own Douglas Hyde² advocated for the importance of the precise recording of the words and names of informants in order to ensure that the collector did not undermine the collection’s authenticity. Revealing his distaste for such practices, Hyde writes that Croker’s “manipulation of the original” folk texts is “the defect of all who have followed him.” He goes on to explain, “The fact is that [Croker] learned the ground-work of his tales from conversations with the Southern peasantry ... and then elaborated this over the midnight oil with great skill and delicacy of touch, in

order to give a saleable book, thus spiced, to the English public” (xi). In Hyde’s view, authenticity lay with the informant while the collector was the source of potential corruption.

As folklore studies progressed into the twentieth century, confidence in the authority of informants was often troubled by “fakelore,” which Richard Dorson defines as “a synthetic product claiming to be authentic oral tradition but actually tailored for mass edification” (*Folklore and Fakelore* 5).³ If anything, the specter of fakelore for collectors during the middle of the twentieth century reveals a similar anxiety about the loss of authenticity to modern influences that nineteenth-century folklorists faced. The saturation of modernity in contemporary western culture makes the authentic subject, as defined by nineteenth-century folklorists, nearly extinct. Colin Graham points out that authenticity is “at least partially ‘lost’ in postmodernity” (9), and, in the study of folklore, this becomes true when the informant is privy to the desires of the collector, as is increasingly the case. Dorson’s anxiety over authenticity led late twentieth-century folklorists to embrace a much broader definition of the term “folk,” who according to Alan Dundes, can comprise “*any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what this linking factor is” (*Folklore Matters* 11). Dundes’s definition has allowed contemporary folklore to expand beyond the realm of the peripheral countryside into a much broader and richer field; however, the disciplinary need to look beyond the culture of the rural poor reveals how troubling that culture is to central concepts of the authentic.

The search for authenticity, both in and outside of the realm of folklore, is often a conflicted process for those who search and for those who reveal, and this chapter and the

one that follows it focus on what we can glean of that troubled interaction from Revivalist texts. Regina Bendix points out, “The notion of authenticity implies the existence of its opposite, the fake, and this dichotomous construct is at the heart of what makes authenticity problematic” (9). The folklorist’s search for the authentic is simultaneously a search for the inauthentic and is predicated by prescribed notions of the real and the false. Along this vein, Graham, who works to locate the search for authenticity in an Irish context, points to the work of Jean Baudrillard, who “sees authenticity adopting a role in the fantasy of representation.” Graham goes on to quote Baudrillard at length: “When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity ... there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential” (14). The search for and the production of authenticity, therefore, are not based in a familiarity with the real but with a constructed memory or idea of what the real must have been. The collection of folklore in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has overwhelmingly been a search for the pre-modern, and collectors in the field have depended on a nostalgic notion of their subjects because the collector’s modern knowledge of them is second-hand and based on imagined concepts. According to Oona Frawley, the national search for the pre-modern, and in Ireland’s case the pre-colonial, past involves a collective nostalgia “that revolves around a longing for lost culture or theoretically unrecoverable past” (*Irish Pastoral* 3). The search for the authentic, inevitably rooted in nostalgia, is essentially a paradox because it is predicated on preconceived and often romantic notions of an already unrecoverable subject.

Ironically, because authenticity is a concept manufactured at a distance from its subject, the actuality of that subject will nearly never fulfill the requirements of authenticity without some kind of inauthentic performance. Even the most “authentic” informant becomes self-consciously performative (and thus inauthentic) when approached by the folklorist. In essence, authenticity is a phantom always just beyond the collector’s reach that occurs only in his absence. But authenticity seems to arise when the informant conforms to what the collector imagines authenticity to be. “Authenticity,” then, often becomes a performance on the part of the informant who seeks only to please by reflecting the image that the collector seeks. Or, if the folklorist’s nostalgia is left unsatisfied, he simply constructs authenticity later as he attempts to create a vision of the authentic in his collection by the process of imagination, elision, and selection. Either way, the “real” is both interrupted and interpreted by the manipulating lens of the collector who seeks his conception of an authentic product, which will be sold to fulfill the nostalgic desires of a modern audience.

The Search for Authenticity within the Revival

To understand Yeats’s search for authenticity, we must locate his desire for real Irish folklore in context with contemporaneous movements in the field of folklore as well as his own personal and political nostalgia for the folk. Yeats unapologetically defined his folkloristic interests as opposed to those of comparative folklorists who studied peasant lore in order to support Darwinian theories of human history. In contrast to the Yeatsian concept of “the filthy modern tide,” such scientific folklorists subscribed to a teleological view of human history that progressed always toward the modern pinnacle of

scientific advancement. Known as the “savage folklorists,” followers of E. B. Tylor such as Andrew Lang, Edward Clodd, and Alfred Nutt combed folk texts for “survivals” of ancient practices that proved the savagery of the earlier stages of human history. Dorson explains: “According to the doctrine of survivals, the irrational beliefs and practices of the European peasantry, so at variance with the enlightened views of the educated classes, preserve the fragments of an ancient, lower culture, the culture of primitive man” (*British Folklorists* 193). This generation of folklorists used folk texts to prove the Darwinist theory of progress and argued that belief in magic and the supernatural was merely the first step in a cultural evolution that culminated in the scientific enlightenment of the Modern era.

Yeats’s approach to folk texts in some ways echoes that of the savage folklorists. For example, he too sought evidence of ancient beliefs in the lore of the peasantry. But Yeats approached both the peasant and his ancient religion with a readiness to believe, whereas the “savage folklorists” dismissed contemporary and ancient belief with scientific skepticism. Furthermore, in Yeats’s view, history’s progression toward modern enlightenment and scientific advancement was not evolution and improvement but rather decay into chaos. The golden age of man was not in the present but rather the distant past, and through folklore Yeats hoped to reconnect with those valuable traditions and so resist modern degradation. Sinéad Garrigan Mattar charts the progressive view of history held by the savage folklorists that starkly contrasted the value Yeats placed on magic and the positive role he believed it could serve in a corrupt modernity. According to Garrigan Mattar, the savage folklorists argued that “magic came first, followed by myth and then religion, and all were finally to be superseded by science” (*Primitivism* 8). In contrast to

these contemporary folklore theorists, Yeats “was seeking a myth to reply to the myth of progress, but, as the child of a scientific century, he was also seeking a science to support that myth.” She points out that Yeats desired an Irish folklore reproduced in a literary style that would provide “a Book of Evidence: a testament to the direct apprehension of the supernatural by the Irish peasantry” (42). Yeats’s ambiguous relationship to scientific folklorists alongside his desire for magic—and for magic to be primitive rather than savage—guides his folkloristic collections and observations.

Because Yeats wanted to counter the style of scientific folklore, his methods of collection and reproduction locate authentic value in folk texts that elicit his own nostalgia for the visionary peasant lore of his youth. Yeats recognized that his search for folklore was a personal quest for both nostalgia and vision, and he consciously employed a highly subjective and imaginative style, especially in *The Celtic Twilight*. Scientific renderings of folk text were in Yeats’s view wholly inauthentic because they denied the possibility of belief for both the informant and the folklorist and lacked the necessary skill of the artist to render the experience of encountering the folk truthfully. In an 1890 letter to the editor of *The Academy*, Yeats decried the methods of the scientific folklorist who “lacks the needful subtle imaginative sympathy to tell his stories well.” Instead he argues that the folklorist who labors to reproduce “the most quaint, or poetical, or humorous version” of a tale comes closer to capturing the essence of the folk object in question. “What lover of Celtic lore,” asks Yeats, “has not been filled with a sacred rage when he came upon some exquisite story, dear to him from childhood, written out in newspaper English and called science?” (quoted in Dundes, *International Folkloristics* 48). For Yeats, the ideal folklore collection relays the experience of encountering the folk

as a sacred moment through which the collector made contact with ancient belief and, simultaneously, satisfies the reader's pastoral nostalgia. For him folklore gains authenticity not by way of accuracy, as Hyde suggested, but in its reproduction of nostalgic feeling for those who have experienced the real Ireland first hand and for others who are willing to believe in its ancient systems. For Yeats, folklore should simultaneously push the reader backward toward a more ideal moment in human history and forward towards vision.

Though at once spiritual and personal, Yeats's approach to folklore was also undeniably national. While he valued the western peasant and his state of untouched primitive existence, he wished to convey the beliefs of the peasantry to the rest of the nation so that it could embrace a specifically Irish, and therefore unifying, spirituality. Mary Helen Thuente points out that Yeats's subjective commentary "would involve the presentation of his own visions and beliefs" (122). She goes on to write, "rather than criticise Yeats for thus 'embellishing' the authentic oral materials he had collected, the reader should realise that Yeats was simply using himself as an informant. ... [*The Celtic Twilight*] included descriptions of how he and his friends, and even how middle-class clerks, had had contact with the fairies" (123). Thuente charts Yeats's progression from a collector of folklore in his early publications to a visionary writer imagining a system of belief that could be transferred from the peasant of the periphery to the educated classes in Dublin. Yeats's method, as he progresses from *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* to the second edition of *The Celtic Twilight*, involves a narrowing search for a specific kind of folk text that proves the possibility of vision because it is rooted in his own experience. If an Anglo-Irishman can adopt Irish peasant belief, then that belief

would be transferrable to the rest of Ireland where it might serve as a unifying force within a politically divided nation.

While political, Yeats's idea of the visionary premodern folk of the West is still highly personal and rooted in his nostalgic memories of Sligo that he recalls in *Reveries Over Childhood and Youth* (1916). Growing up there with the family servant, Mary Battle, who according to Yeats "had the second sight," he recounts that, "She could neither read nor write and her mind ... was rammed with every sort of old history and strange belief. Much of my *Celtic Twilight* is but her daily speech" (84). Mary Battle, then, and Yeats's closeness to her during his childhood signify his claims to the greater authenticity of the oral lore that he published than that of the scientific folklorists he despised. His efforts in folklore collection and publication were to relocate and recreate the tone and content of his childhood memories so that the reader might experience and desire the real Ireland for himself. Through folklore, Yeats attempted to reproduce his own experience—indeed, his own self—so that the rest of the nation might model itself after his spiritual quest. Yeats's early essays on folklore and *The Celtic Twilight* in particular unapologetically offer the collector's point of view, often to the point of obscuring the informant, and these early writings prefer romantic memories of a somewhat gothic picture of reality rather than objective observation and exact reproduction of oral texts.

The Search for "the real voice of Ireland": Yeats's Early Folklore Essays

The very number of essays written by Yeats that engage with his interest in Irish folklore attests to his immersion in the subject from the late 1880s until about 1902. In

addition to numerous essays explaining or reflecting on the beliefs of the peasantry, Yeats published reviews of folklore collections and contemporary literary works that engaged with the tropes of Celtic mythology. Such outlets offered Yeats the opportunity to develop his theories of the Irish peasantry and their traditions that he would expand upon in his books of folklore and his poetry. Yeats's success publishing his early folkloristic work indicates the great interest of Irish (and other) audiences at this time and their readiness to have Irish folklore defined in national terms. The early Revivalist folklore movement was saturated by Yeats's opinions and observations about the beliefs of the rural poor, and his influence on his folkloristic contemporaries and successors is undeniable, especially as he projects the movement he envisions onto others.

In an 1894 review of William Larminie's *West Irish Folk-Tales*, Yeats argues that the contemporary movement in Irish literature "has been largely a folk-lore revival, an awakening of interest in the wisdom and ways of the poor." He contrasts this movement, of which he is a part, to

[p]ast Irish literary movements [that] were given overmuch to argument and oratory; their poems ... were noisy and rhetorical, and their prose ... ever too ready to flare out in expostulation and exposition. So manifest were these things that many had come to think the Irish nation essentially rhetorical and unpoetical, essentially a nation of public speakers and journalists, for only the careful student could separate *the real voice of Ireland*, the song which has never been hushed since history began, from all this din and bombast. (*Early Articles and Reviews* 238, my emphasis)

Here Yeats attacks the literary style of the Young Ireland movement of the 1840s (*Early Articles and Reviews* 564), a movement that he considered more political than aesthetic in its literary motivations. His characterization of the two styles claims that by valuing rural western Ireland, the new Literary Revival provided the nation with an authentic version of itself while the “din and bombast” of Dublin, the seat of Young Ireland, was somehow false, a misrepresentation of the nation’s essence. Yeats sets the oral traditions of the rural poor, their “wisdom and ways,” against the calculated and written traditions of the city’s “public speakers and journalists.” Through the medium of folklore, Yeats begins to explore his preference for cultural nationalism, which was concerned with understanding and promoting a new aesthetic based on the imagination of a people, over political nationalism.

Yeats proposed that, instead of turning to contemporary divisive politics for inspiration, writers should embrace the oral lore of the countryside because of its potential to unify both Catholics and Protestants, indeed all Irish people willing to embrace ancient Irish traditions. Yeats conceived of fairy belief not as a collection of superstitions but a legitimate spiritual system through which one might experience the nation’s ancient native religious beliefs. In 1898 he wrote, “None among people visiting Ireland, and few among the people living in Ireland, except peasants, understand that the peasants believe in their ancient gods, and that to them, as to their forbearers, everything is inhabited and mysterious” (*Early Articles* 372).⁴ Only through the peasants could modern Irish people achieve an understanding of this unifying mysticism, which would reveal Ireland’s uniquely spiritual landscape.

Ronald Schuchard argues that Yeats's interests in folklore prompted him to conceive his "dream of a spiritual democracy in Ireland, a democracy in which a rich imaginative culture would once again be shared equally by all classes of people" (35). In "What is Popular Poetry" (1901), Yeats explains his theory of how the contemporary class system divides the Irish populace from its ancient spiritual inheritance. He begins by explaining of the peasantry, "they cannot separate the idea of an art or a craft from the idea of a cult with ancient technicalities and mysteries" and that "they are fond of words and verses that keep half their secret to themselves" (*Early Essays* 10). According to Yeats, members of the Irish peasantry do not divide art from religion; moreover, they create spiritual mysteries specifically through the "words and verses" of their orally crafted literature. Through its embrace of urban materialism and the modern class system, contemporary Ireland had lost touch with this traditional worldview that commingled the spiritual and the artistic. Yeats further writes,

Indeed, it is certain that before the counting-house had created a new class and a new art without breeding and without ancestry, and set this art and this class between the hut and the castle, and between the hut and the cloister, the art of the people was as closely mingled with the art of the coteries as was the speech of the people that delighted in rhythmical animation, in idiom, in images, in words full of far-off suggestion, with the unchanging speech of the poets. (*Early Essays* 10)

The poets here are the masters of popular poetry—that is the peasants who keep the oral tradition alive; but Yeats argued that the role of contemporary poets of the written word should be as mediators between the "hut" and the and the rest of the nation. According to

Deborah Fleming, “Yeats believed that Ireland could become a land directed by pastoral mythmakers, inspired by images of past nobility and greatness” (10). These images were provided by the beliefs and traditions of the peasantry, but the nation required the Irish poet to re-imagine and re-figure them. By translating the beliefs of the peasantry into a national literature, Irish writers would return to the nation its ancestral religion, thereby granting the larger national populace access to an ancient spiritual perspective inaccessible to the modern urban individual. The peasant practiced this ancient religion in his daily life, and Yeats believed that it was the onus of Irish writers to recover such beliefs and make them available to the rest of the nation in order to achieve cultural unity.

“What is ‘Popular Poetry’?” is one of Yeats’s most important early essays. In it he builds on ideas he had formulated earlier in reaction to Matthew Arnold’s *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867). In “The Celtic Element in Literature” (1898), Yeats engages with the racial schema developed by Matthew Arnold’s essay, where he famously argued that the Celtic race was imaginative, irrational, and inherently feminine. In his essay Yeats negotiates Arnold’s ideas with his own notions of folkloric value and subtly refigures Arnold’s vision of the Celtic race. Marjorie Howes explains, “Yeats’s earliest Celtic writings repeated, both overtly and covertly, the imperial gendering of the Irish as feminine, but in rejecting colonialism’s (and Irish nationalism’s) equation of femininity with inferiority and subordinate status they suggested a profound, though incomplete, departure from the axiomatics of imperialism” (18). Yeats’s gendered perspective of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic races is problematic, especially when considered in terms of class. But what Yeats values in the Celtic perspective is its proximity to pre-Christian Ireland and the unchanging nature of peasant belief. Yeats writes, “The ancient farmers

and herdsmen were full of love and hatred, and made their friends gods, and their enemies the enemies of gods, and those who keep their tradition are not less mythological” (*Early Essays* 134). He argues that the contemporary peasantry is essentially the same as the peasantry that existed before Christianity and colonization—indeed, the same peasantry that existed during the time of the mythological sagas. He goes on to claim that the characters of ancient myth “are, I think, a little nearer even to us modern Irish than they are to most people” (*Early Essays* 135). Thereby Yeats positions himself and all Irish people, both Catholic and Protestant, alongside the Irish peasant who has access to ancient mythological beliefs. Gregory Castle explains that Yeats’s strategy here is to “revalue” the Celt by insisting on his “ability to maintain in the present a connection with an ancient ... ‘religion of the world’.” He explains that Yeats alters the definition of the “Celtic people” away “from a racial to a temporal plane, in order to make a bold claim for the spiritual superiority of a ‘timeless’ people” (50). Thus members of the Irish peasantry are authentic in terms of their temporality—their timelessness and cultural closeness to ancient Irish beliefs. By aligning themselves with these ancient traditions, modern Irish people can become more authentically Irish themselves, and anyone who embraced the mythological point of view native to the Irish peasant could define himself as Celtic, as Yeats at this point in his career often did himself.

In “What is ‘Popular Poetry’?” (1902), Yeats encourages Irish writers to dedicate themselves to learning “the unwritten tradition which binds the unlettered ... to the beginning of time and to the foundation of the world” (*Early Essays* 7). By binding the Irish peasant to lost traditions of the otherwise unrecoverable past, he allows the Irish

nation to transcend the feminine role ascribed by Arnold but fixes the peasant in the role Yeats imagines he has always inhabited. Ironically, this role is already feminized within Yeats's ideal society, where the peasant remains the lesser and often powerless counterpart to the aristocrat. This motif runs throughout Yeats's canon, from his Cuchulain plays where the fool and the blind man exist dependent on but separate from the realm of the aristocratic heroes, to Yeats's final "dream of the noble and the beggarman." More importantly, Yeats's peasant, because he is the direct source both art and spirituality, is always represented in a single, stagnant state—as the natural artist and the pure visionary. The fairy legend, the primary text of Yeats's collections, proves the peasant's feminine place in Yeats's spiritual democracy.

The Collections: *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* and *The Celtic Twilight*

Between 1888 and 1902 Yeats published three volumes of folklore, one of which he revised, expanded, and republished. Though these volumes are often overlooked by scholars in favor of his later poetic and dramatic works, they, in fact, provide the basis for his theories of poetry and class as well as his goals as a cultural nationalist, and thus they deserve closer attention. *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*⁵ was Yeats's first collection of folklore, published in 1888, and was comprised of tales and legends published previously by collectors such as Croker and Lady Wilde as well as poetry and ballads about such subjects from Samuel Ferguson, William Allingham, and Yeats himself.⁶ This volume includes Yeats's taxonomy of fairy types as well as introductions written by him to all but the last section. His second volume, a children's book called *Irish Fairy Tales* (1892) with illustrations by Jack Yeats, was much in the same vein,

though he included some tales that he collected himself, although the majority were again from published sources. The third volume, *The Celtic Twilight*, was his only volume of strictly oral lore collected by him and Lady Gregory in the West. Yeats published it in a slim volume in 1893 and expanded it in 1902. He reissued the volume three more times during his lifetime and, as Richard Finneran points out, “The very bulk of the revisions to *The Celtic Twilight* ... indicates ... the strong interest which Yeats maintained in this particular collection” (104).

In some ways, Yeats’s collections are diverse, offering many genres of folklore. Of his first collection, Yeats writes, “I have tried to make it representative, as far as so few pages would allow, of every kind of Irish folk-faith” (*Fairy and Folk Tales* xxx). Nonetheless, the Irish fairies are given priority and dominate his collections, with the first four sections of *Folk and Fairy Tales* given to various fairy types, such as “the trooping fairies”—as Yeats calls them—and changelings. The volume then moves on to other supernatural beings like ghosts, witches, the devil, and giants. He also gives space in this first collection to a selection of international tales or *märchen*—tales whose basic narrative structures and tropes appear across cultures—in the section “Kings, Queens, Princesses, Earls, Robbers.” Tellingly, this section comes last in the collection and is also the only one to lack an introduction. Thunert explains, “Yeats had originally intended to include only legends in his anthology. ... [A] mistake in the publisher’s calculations about the finished length of the book caused him to add folktales as filler” (80-81). These international folk tales were, according to Thunert, “added out of necessity rather than choice” (83), and their place in the collection evinces Yeats’s lack of enthusiasm for them as they do little to bolster his spiritual or nationalist theories about Irish folklore.

Garrigan Mattar confirms that Yeats “rejected ‘Märchen’ (fairy tales of the ‘far, far, away’ variety) and favoured tales that engaged with the presence of the supernatural in the world” (“Folklore” 249).

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Yeats includes both folk tales and legends involving the fairies in this first collection. The difference between these genres is subtle and requires some definition. A folk tale involves a stylized, traditional narrative technique where a defined and fictional protagonist encounters obstacles and comes to some kind of resolution. Traditional international tales like “Cinderella” or “The Brave Little Tailor” are, in their oral forms, defined as folk tales. Douglas Hyde’s “Teig O’Kane and the Corpse,” which appeared for the first time in Yeats’s *Folk and Fairy Tales*, is a specifically Irish example of a traditional folk tale. The story tells of a man who refuses to marry a girl whom he had “ruined the character of” and is as a result plagued by a group of malicious fairies (21). The fairies punish him by attaching an occasionally animated corpse to his back and force him to walk from graveyard to graveyard looking for the body’s proper resting place. After the harrowing night, wherein each graveyard presents a different supernatural obstacle, the protagonist agrees to marry the girl in order to avoid further displeasure from the fairies. This story has all the hallmarks of a traditional narrative folk tale—a defined yet uncomplicated main character, a lesson, a plot that involves repetition and adventure, and, finally, a happy ending. “Teig O’Kane and the Corpse” is a fictional folk tale that involves the fairies and was thus embraced by Yeats and placed early in the collection, even though it is not a fairy legend.

A legend, as defined by Linda Dégh, “does not have a polished style, its frame and form do not coordinate narrative elements into a logical chain.” Legends are,

according to Dégh, didactic forms that “archive the prehistory of a people” and “dramatize superstition” in order to relate “extraordinary experience[s] or event[s] believed to be true” (73). Seán Ó Súilleabháin argues, reflecting Yeats’s attitude, that legends “reflect the inner mind and behavior of peoples more closely than do folktales, and they offer a fairly sure key to the ways and thoughts of our ancestors” (quoted in Thuente 136-37).⁷ Oftentimes, legends are short, fragmented, and less likely to carry traditional narrative patterns like distinct characters, a stylized plot, and repetition. Nor are they exclusively supernatural, as legends often relay historically based events that are recorded by oral tradition. However, the Irish fairy legend is given wholly to interpreting daily events through a supernatural lens. Fairy legends can be extremely brief, with a teller sometimes simply describing an encounter with a fairy or telling of someone once stolen by them with little detail or explanation. On the other hand, they can be more stylized, and Yeats’s first two volumes showcase some fairy legends that have been transformed into folk tales, either by their tellers or by the collectors who recorded them. *The Celtic Twilight* offers fairy and other supernatural legends in their oral form, in both their brief and lengthier iterations.

The most critical element of the legend is that it is told as fact, as opposed to the tale, which is told as fiction. Thus the supernatural legend deals with issues of belief. The teller declares that his tale is true, often citing his own experience, and asks the listener to believe what he says, despite the fact that it is fantastic. If he is successful, a kind of faith is established both in the teller and the fairies themselves. For Yeats moment of belief on the part of collector aligns him with the peasant worldview and prepares him for the possibility of vision. Because he wished to convey this moment of belief to his

readership, Yeats represented Irish fairy belief as absolute, even (or especially) amidst other types of doubt. In the third section of *The Celtic Twilight*, called “Belief and Unbelief,” he records the fairy faith of one of his informants:

There are some doubters even in the western villages. One woman told me last Christmas that she did not believe either in Hell or in ghosts. Hell was an invention got up by the priest to keep people good; and ghosts would not be permitted, she held, to go ‘trapsin’ about the earth’ at their own free will; ‘but there are faeries and little leprechauns, and water-horses, and fallen angels.’ (*Mythologies* 6)

Here Yeats pleads for his skeptical, modern audience to align itself with the woman because she, too, is critical of supernatural beliefs and doubts the fantasies of both religious authority and superstition. That he allows her final testament of belief to slip into his own text without identifying her as its source allows the speaker of the quotation to become momentarily ambiguous and for her belief and the collector’s to appear as one. “No matter what one doubts,” Yeats concludes, “one never doubts the fairies, for, as [one] man ... said, ‘they stand to reason’” (*Mythologies* 6). Finneran points out that, as Yeats revised *The Celtic Twilight*, he attempted to diminish his own statements of belief in the fairies in order to develop “a more skeptical attitude by the narrator towards the objective validity of ‘Fairyland’” (99). And Thuente argues that between the first and second editions of the collection, Yeats moves from an interest in the fairies to a more precise investment in the peasants themselves. Nonetheless, she contends, the “Irish peasant is still presented as visionary” (135). While Yeats eventually separated himself from his own expressed fairy belief, his early explorations of the visions of the peasantry

provided the foundation for his more lasting interest in the possibility of the supernatural within his own everyday experience.

Yeats's insistence that the peasantry believed in the fairies uncritically, and that he believed in their belief, may have been a narrative technique that he acquired from his informants. One method through which the oral storyteller gains his audience's attention is to insist that his tales are true, even if they are wholly fantastic; convincing his skeptical auditor is one source of the storyteller's power. But we must not assume that rural audiences were a homogenous group that believed in the fairies uncritically, as Bourke explains:

Even the most skilled storyteller could not expect to convince all the people all the time. Some people in rural Ireland certainly believed some things about fairies some, or even most, of the time; however, even a willing suspension of disbelief offered more skeptical listeners the aesthetic reward of hearing a story. And the stories were exciting, for *the struggle against disbelief* whetted the storyteller's skill, and made them craft narratives with structure, style, and elegance. (*Burning* 54-55, my emphasis)

Yeats's aim was to reproduce not only authentic Irish legends but also his own authentic belief at the moment of their telling. In an imitation of what he likely heard from his informants in the West, Yeats adopted the storyteller's insistence that the fairies are real, writing about them with a tone of authority and veracity in an attempt to provide that authentic experience of belief to his readership. "Do not think the fairies are always little," he declares early in *Fairy and Folk Tales*, "Everything about them is capricious,

even their size. They seem to take what size or shape pleases them” (4). There is no tone of doubt here, and nor does Yeats credit this as the belief of the peasantry but, instead, he states it as fact, just as a storyteller would. He attempts to harness the power of the oral tale—the declaration of, the insistence on, and the audience’s (momentary) submission to belief.

Unfortunately for Yeats, the immediacy of the oral storyteller’s performance lends the tale told a texture unattainable on the written page. The storyteller often plays with his audience’s doubt and forces them to vacillate between believing in and rejecting the veracity of his tale. After gaining a degree of their faith, the storyteller continues to push his audience members toward a belief in the fantastic, inevitably forcing some listeners to lose their faith along the way. Moreover, while part of the performance is to insist on the truth of the tale, part of the storyteller’s reputation is that he is full of lies. “Telling stories” is synonymous with lying, although, according to Hugh Nolan, a storyteller from Fermanagh, such lies are not harmful because “you’d know before it was fully told that it *was* a lie” (Glassie, *Stars* 109). The ability to push an audience toward belief and, at the same time, work to dispel that belief is part of the storyteller’s art—part of the “nod and the wink” of the craft. The storyteller derives his power over his audience from his ability to manipulate—or play with—its capacity to believe. A hierarchical relationship forms between teller and audience because, while the teller always knows what is true and what is false, the audience reels under his ability to simultaneously elicit belief and doubt.

According to Anne Markey, “Yeats’s early prose suggests that he saw himself as a modern storyteller whose approach to folklore revealed its artistic and spiritual

relevance to a changing world” (37). His dedication to that spiritual relevance and his desire to illustrate his own belief in vision leads the Yeatsian persona of *The Celtic Twilight* to profess his full belief. Because this claim employs none of the ambiguity and play that an oral storyteller would, it loses the power of the oral performance, which depends on the physical presence of the storyteller who claims the truth and simultaneously implies a lie. Instead, Yeats attempts to convey the absolute belief of the storyteller, the peasant audience, and himself, and thereby loses much of the original texture of the material that he wishes to convey. Ironically, in his attempt to display authentic belief—both in the fairies and in the informants themselves—the narrator’s belief seems too subjective and thus inauthentic to many of the folklorists who have come after him. Richard Dorson’s judgment of the volume is typical; he writes that Yeats’s “own fancy played upon folk fancies” and that *The Celtic Twilight* was “full of folklore reverie” (*British Folklorists* 439). Additionally, the Irish peasant as Yeats conceived of him has struck many of his readers as false, which depletes further the aura of authenticity Yeats wished to convey.

The Voice of the People: Paddy Flynn as Peasant Prototype

The Irish peasant remains an important figure in Yeats’s poetry and drama throughout his literary career long after folklore ceases to provide him with inspiration. In his self-commemorative “Under Ben Bulbin,” Yeats reiterates his “dream of the noble and the beggarman” when he instructs Irish poets to “Sing the peasantry, and then / Hard-riding country gentlemen” (*Collected Poems* 327). A problematic figure, Yeats’s anonymous and often idealized peasant has incurred for Yeats (and the Revival) much

negative criticism. According to Edward Hirsch, the Revivalist idea of the peasant was for middle-class Irish Catholics associated “with a strong and debilitating sense of cultural inferiority” (“Imaginary Irish Peasant” 1123) and thus “few major Irish writers have not felt compelled to demythologize the peasant figure that was first imagined by the Revivalists” (“Imaginary Irish Peasant” 1116). Maurice Harmon also accuses the Revivalists of “transform[ing] peasants into angels in red petticoats” (quoted in Thuente 154-55), and although this criticism is clearly targeted more closely at Synge, Yeats’s tendency to imagine an ideal peasant is implied.⁸ Folklorists like Richard Dorson and Kevin Danaher have also critiqued Yeats’s idealized notion of the Irish peasant. Danaher argues that Yeats brings to his work “an air of mystical moonshine which is very far from the clear black and white of folk tradition, in which magic is only one more of the hard facts of life” (155).⁹ Thuente, in her study of Yeats’s folklore, argues that Yeats’s literary and folkloric collections dealing with the peasantry “qualify such conclusions” and reflect both “ignoble as well as noble aspects of peasant life. His major concern had been with the ‘abounding vitality’ of a peasant life which included brutal and earthy as well as pleasant and visionary dimensions” (155). Nonetheless, Yeats’s peasant is problematic—not because he is inauthentic—but because Yeats’s sense of the authentic peasant prioritized and limited the types of oral text he published. Yeats rarely named his oral informants, but one named figure who recurs in both *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* and *The Celtic Twilight* is Paddy Flynn, a storyteller Yeats records encountering in Sligo. The following section examines the moment of contact between Yeats and this informant, how Yeats reconstructs their meeting and characterizes Flynn

in his prose, and the effect this characterization had on the folk texts Yeats preferred as a result.

Gale Schricker argues that in *The Celtic Twilight* Yeats develops an early version of his dual literary persona and that throughout the volume he participates “in both the intuitive subjective nature of ... [the] peasant folk ... with whom the tales originate, and the rationalist objective nature of those educated men and women of the world who are likely to be the book’s audience.” According to Schricker, “The opening tale ... serves to disabuse Yeats of responsibility for the veracity and rationality of the tales that follow by attributing them to” Paddy Flynn, the storyteller to whom he credits much of the volume (*A New Species of Man* 51). Paddy Flynn, the subject of the section of *The Celtic Twilight* titled “The Teller of Tales,” is Yeats’s only named informant within the volume, although it is unclear which stories, if any, belong to him. He also appears in Yeats’s introduction to *Fairy and Folk Tales*, with much of the same information that is conveyed in *The Celtic Twilight*. In *The Celtic Twilight*, Yeats writes that Flynn was

a little bright-eyed old man, who lived in a leaky and one-roomed cabin in the village of Ballisodare, which is, he was wont to say, ‘the most gentle’ — whereby he meant faery — ‘place in the whole of County Sligo. ... The first time I saw him he was bent above the fire with a can of mushrooms at his side, the next time he was asleep under a hedge, smiling in his sleep. He was indeed always cheerful, though I thought I could see in his eyes (swift as the eyes of a rabbit, when they peered out of their wrinkled holes) a melancholy which was wellnigh a portion of their joy; the visionary melancholy of purely instinctive natures and of all animals.

... I asked him had he ever seen the faeries, and got the reply, 'Am I not annoyed with them?' I asked too if he had ever seen the banshee. 'I have seen it,' he said, 'down by the water, batting the river with its hands'.

(*Mythologies* 5)

Yeats constructs Flynn, with his "visionary melancholy," as a reflection of himself and also, as Schricker argues, a kind of antiself whose belief stands opposed to Yeats's implied doubt. Yeats uses Flynn to authenticate his otherwise subjective volume of folklore at a time when folklorists like Hyde were advocating for less interference by collectors and more focus on reproducing the oral text accurately. *The Celtic Twilight* follows none of Hyde's prescriptions, laid out in the introduction to his 1890 volume *Beside the Fire*. Instead, Yeats uses Flynn to resonate authenticity with his urban audience and act as a representative of the peasantry as a whole.

The figure of Paddy Flynn is an early version of the peasant that otherwise anonymously inhabits Yeats's poetry. He embodies the romantic primitivist notion of the West as a region that is financially poor yet rich in native beliefs. Flynn's leaky hovel and his meager diet authenticate him as a true peasant, devoid of the material concerns of the middle class, but these poverties do not keep him from his "cheerfulness" and "joy," the source of which is his closeness to nature and the supernatural. Flynn's visionary eyes are both the eyes of an animal, "swift as the eyes of a rabbit," and are animals themselves, peering "out of their ... holes," and his closeness to the natural world is what allows Flynn not only to see the fairies, but also to be annoyed with how many inhabit his vision. Whereas most accounts of the fairies are exceptional, Flynn's experience of them

is everyday. Thus, he is Yeats's ideal informant and perhaps his ideal self, the true visionary untroubled by doubt.

For the reader, however, doubt encompasses Paddy Flynn, specifically surrounding the question of whether or not he provides any of the material in *The Celtic Twilight*. Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey explain that Yeats probably met Flynn in Sligo in September 1887. They contend, "Nothing, however, is known about him except that it is not the man who took WBY rowing on the Garavogue telling him 'old yarns mainly fairy yarns'" (212-13). We learn nothing new about Flynn in the first edition of *The Celtic Twilight* that Yeats does not tell us in *Fairy and Folk Tales* (xxvi-xxvii); however, in the 1912 edition, Yeats included a new paragraph explaining Flynn's death of alcoholism and Yeats's regret that "the blank pages at the end [of the notebook almost filled with his tales and sayings] will never be filled up" (*Mythologies* 441). Despite this nearly full notebook, none of the stories in *The Celtic Twilight* are ascribed directly to Flynn and are instead credited to anonymous individuals whose descriptions do not match the one Yeats cites above. Moreover, in *Reveries Over Youth and Childhood*, he credits Mary Battle with much of *The Celtic Twilight* (84).¹⁰ In her introduction to the 1987 edition of *The Celtic Twilight*, Kathleen Raine does not mention Flynn when she accounts for Yeats's sources. She writes, "Some of the 1902 material comes from Mary Battle ... but most he owed to his friendship with Lady Gregory and his visits to County Galway" (8). Neither of these accounts for Flynn, who is a Sligo teller. Like authenticity itself, Yeats's "teller of tales" is somewhat of a phantom whose status as an informant might have been wholly or partly fictitious. But he fulfills the Revivalist image of the western peasant better than the figure of Mary Battle, whose relatively comfortable status as the

Pollexfen's long-time servant defined her as a different class of person than Flynn and the peasants he represents. Finally, by citing Paddy Flynn and eliding Mary Battle, Yeats places himself in the position of the authoritative folklorist rather than as an Anglo-Irish child listening to fairy tales in his nursery. Therefore, in 1893, Paddy Flynn seems like a choice that will authenticate Yeats as a folklorist and prove his access to the peasantry.

In his earliest writings about the Irish peasantry, Yeats depicts them as an antidote to nineteenth-century urban industrialism. In *Fairy and Folk Tales*, Yeats pits the traditions of western Ireland against the "Spirit of the Age," or the forgettable trends of the urban centers, which he records as a series of deaths. He suggests that modern trends are little "more than froth," and that "whole troops of their like will not change the Celt much" (xxiv). According to Yeats, the people of western Ireland remain unmoved by the fashionable turns of modern history: "The Celt, and his cromlechs, and his pillar-stones, these will not change much" (xxiv). The West, Yeats argues, has not been seduced by the hollow promises of modernity and has, instead, kept its traditions intact and is superior to the modern urban realm. He attempts to turn a common paradigm on its head, making the superstitious beliefs of fairy lore solid and permanent while the trends of the modern age are merely "froth"—inconsequential and easily forgotten.¹¹ The passing fads of modern materialism pale, in Yeats's view, in comparison to the lasting promises of ancient wisdom that the traditions of the West could offer to the nation. But with this assertion comes the assumption that rural populations and individuals remain unaffected by the tides of history and are uninterested in the life of the cities and the international trends that influence them. Yeats's peasantry does not look beyond its "cromlechs and pillar-stones" because it is satisfied with the unchanging culture of which it has always been a

part. Yeats asserts that the peasantry, in its immutability, is of one unified mind, hence the ability of its individual members to stand in for the whole class.

Because he collapses the impoverished people of western Ireland into a homogenous group, Yeats fails to consider hierarchical differences within their society, such as those between the different types of storytellers and between the storyteller and his audience. Furthermore, because he conflates the storyteller with the average peasant, Yeats also fails to consider the Irish storyteller as a source of other types of lore and locates the major source of his craft in the dissemination of fairy legends. But James Delargy notes, “a story-teller, whose reputation has been made on his skill in telling old-time Fenian tales or other märchen, is, as a rule, somewhat scornful of these short trifles and must be pressed to recite them” (quoted in Bourke, “Virtual Reality” 8). While the traditional Irish storyteller could use the fairy legend as part of his otherwise vast repertoire, the form was mostly circulated within everyday contexts by anyone willing to tell it.

As Bourke’s work attests, fairy belief belongs almost exclusively to the domestic sphere and is devoted to the explanation of events that disturb the home space. Fairy legends often serve as vehicles for medical knowledge, problem solving, and rationalizing misfortune at the level of the social microcosm. The more lighthearted fairy legends, for example where men are taken for an evening to participate in fairy sport and are returned exhausted though unharmed the following morning, may have served to excuse many a night out drinking or other anti-domestic activities. Henry Glassie also explains that fairy stories could be used as a form of control over the young: “Young people want to go out at night, and fairy tales, tales of children carried away, were told to

scare them ... to keep them ‘in dread and fear,’ strictly under the supervision of their parents” (*Stars* 298).¹² Fairy legends, therefore, attend to the problems of the everyday. Their intended audience is local, if not domestic; their aims are mundane and their tone is far from lofty.

Within a largely oral society, the storyteller holds a unique position of authority that reaches far beyond the quotidian and domestic microcosm. He is privy to the complexities within the oral tradition, which required a wide understanding of the world at large. According to Walter Benjamin, the function of the storyteller is to provide counsel through his tales. Thus, “the storyteller joins the ranks of the teachers and sages. He has counsel—not for a few situations ... but for many, like the sage. For it is granted to him to reach back to a whole lifetime” (108-09). Benjamin indicates that this lifetime encompasses both the storyteller’s own experience and the hoard of experiences he can express through the oral tradition he has inherited. Within the Irish context, Bourke points out two well-documented storytellers, Tadhg Ó Buachalla and Éamon Liam a Búrc, whose stories are recorded in the National Folklore Collection in Dublin. Of them she writes, “Throughout both their repertoires runs a theme of resistance to the dominant culture, along with a skepticism that belies the credulity often ascribed to those who talk of fairies. Both storytellers also maintain a lively, if unconventional, interest in current international news” (*Burning* 67). Therefore, the storyteller is a public figure of authority and wisdom whose concerns extend well beyond the domestic problems confronted by fairy legends.

Yeats’s Flynn, a figure of ridicule for local children rather than a man of authority, fails to fit either Benjamin or Bourke’s description of the role of the storyteller.

Additionally, Delargy explains the Gaelic system of storytelling on a hierarchical scheme:

The Gaelic story-teller, properly so called, is known usually as *sgéalaí* or occasionally *sgéaltóir*. *Seanchaí* (also *seanchasaí*) is applied as a rule to a person, man or woman, who makes a specialty of local tales, family-sagas, or genealogies, social-historical tradition, and the like, and can recount many tales of a short realistic type about fairies, ghosts, and other supernatural beings. ... These types of tales are still to be found in their thousands all over the country. But the number of persons—usually men—who can tell the *sean-sgéal* (*märchen*) is gradually being reduced (6)

If Paddy Flynn fulfills either of these roles, it would be the *seanchaí*, the lesser of these two types of Irish storytellers. Flynn—the man who appears on Yeats’s page, rather than the storyteller who may have existed—does not seem to represent the authoritative power of either type of storyteller who speaks from a well of diverse texts. Instead, Yeats collapses him into a representative of the peasantry, whose understanding of this knowledge was elementary in comparison with the storyteller who had mastered it. Yeats’s storyteller, with his overwhelming interest in the domestic fairies, is essentially a feminized subject divested of the professional power and position of the sage-like traditional storyteller. According to Howes, Yeats conceived of the peasant as “less of an artist than a vessel through which ancient traditions gave birth to new literary artifacts” (36). She goes on to argue that the “poverty [of the peasant] performed several of the same functions that femininity had performed in imperial Celticism; it demanded material

(political or economic) subordination” (37). Paddy Flynn then is the feminized Celt of Arnoldian racial theory who, while morally superior to the populations of the urban centers, cannot enter their realm without corrupting his essence, as Yeats imagined a peasantry that was either wholly fixed or that was wholly corrupted if it changed its status. Thus he develops his theories of the middle class, who are, after all, peasants whose authenticity has been altered by the modern influences of capitalism and urban life. His imagined storyteller desires none of these things and thus keeps his eyes on the fire in front of him and his mind on the fairies.

The fairies, and not the storyteller himself, were most valuable to Yeats, which is why he prefers the fairy legend—the genre of the peasant—over the international tale—the genre of the storyteller. The international tale was less useful to Yeats for two reasons; it was neither specifically Irish nor specifically supernatural. On the other hand, the fairy legend was inherently supernatural and was also, Yeats attempted to argue, inherently Irish, giving Irish audiences a unique connection to their own national system of ancient belief. The fairies, then, became central to Yeats’s vision of a unified Ireland and to his sense of cultural nationalism.

Nationalism, the Fairies, and “A Remonstrance of Scotsmen”

The majority of *The Celtic Twilight* contains supernatural legends that lend support to Yeats’s quest for a visionary spirituality. The tales are recounted from the perspective of a Yeatsian persona in a style that aims to engage the reader with the ethereal and, for the most part, non-threatening tone that is set by Paddy Flynn. There are two exceptions, however, that resist some of the major themes and tropes that bind this

collection together. The first of these is the essay “A Remonstrance with Scotsmen for having soured the Disposition of their Ghosts and Faeries,” which will be the focus here. This essay is important because it marks Yeats’s interest in the fairies and was the first ever published chapter of *The Celtic Twilight*, appearing in *The Scots Observer* on 2 March 1889 (Gould and Toomey xxvi). The second exception is his inclusion of an international Jack tale, which Yeats calls “Dreams that Have no Moral”; this tale will be addressed in part in chapter two and at length in chapter four, where I discuss the significance of the Irish Jack tale. “A Remonstrance of Scotsmen,” however, stands out as unique within the collection because of its argumentative, even hostile tone and its overtly nationalist claim that the fairies have thrived best in Ireland.

Yeats only occasionally acknowledges that the fairies are a transnational phenomenon. For example, he begins his introduction to *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* by explaining that the fairies are a tradition that Ireland shares with England while simultaneously rejecting that England has maintained that tradition. Yeats writes, “Dr. Corbett, Bishop of Oxford and Norwich, lamented long ago the departure of the English fairies,” identifying “Queen Mary’s time” as the last period in which the English people lived among them. With pride Yeats then claims, “In Ireland they are still extant, giving gifts to the kindly, and plaguing the surly” (xxiii). Thus the national border of Ireland is defined as a haven for the ancient spirits that originally inhabited all of the British Isles. Yeats’s argument here accounts for the appearance of the fairy traditions in Renaissance-era literature and their subsequent absence from the English imagination. It also aligns the colonial policies of the British Empire with the loss of their native spiritual

system and makes the Irish fairies a symbol of Ireland's national unity, its deeper traditions, and its cultural difference.

Scotland, however, proves more of an obstacle to claiming the fairies as an Irish symbol of spiritual unity, as Scotland's fairy traditions are closely related and quite similar to those of Ireland. According to John Francis Campbell, who published the four volume collection *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860-62), the Scottish fairy tradition

might be extended to fill volumes; every green knoll, every well, every hill in the Highlands, has some fairy legend attached to it. In the west, amongst the unlearned, the legends are firmly believed. Peasants never talk about fairies, for they live amongst them and about them. In the east, the belief is less strong, or the believers are more ashamed of their creed. In the Lowlands, and even in England, the stories survive, and the belief exists, though men have less time to think about it. In the south the fairy creed of the peasants has been altered, but it still exists, as is proved occasionally in courts of law. (71)

The second volume of Campbell's collection offers a selection of fairy stories that could easily appear in any Irish folklore collection, including legends of changelings, fairy encounters, and fairy malice and gratitude (55-72).

In "A Remonstrance of Scotsmen," Yeats agrees that the Scots share a system of fairy belief with Ireland, but he claims that they have mistreated their supernatural neighbors and thus have gained their ire. He begins,

Not only in Ireland is faery belief still extant. It was only the other day I heard of a Scottish farmer who believed that the lake in front of his house was haunted by a water-horse. He was afraid of it, and dragged the lake with nets, and then tried to pump it empty. It would have been a bad thing for the water-horse had he found him. An Irish peasant would have long since come to terms with the creature. For in Ireland there is something of timid affection between men and spirits. (*Mythologies* 70)

Yeats goes on to tell various fairy legends to prove his argument that the Scots are cruel to their fairies and that, as a result, the supernatural beings there perform “deeds of terror” and create a “gloomy” tradition (*Mythologies* 70-71).

Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey, the editors of the 2005 annotated edition of *Mythologies*, do not allow Yeats to keep his easy assessment of Scottish fairy lore—or of Irish lore, for that matter. As part of his evidence, Yeats retells one of Campbell’s stories, in which a kelpie or water fairy is captured and tortured to death by her human keeper. Gould and Toomey write, “WBY’s assumption that such things could not happen in Ireland is mistaken, as a parallel legend was collected by George Petrie” (288). They also note, “WBY’s attack on Scottish culture inevitably mobilised a challenge from the eminent Scottish folklorist and anthropologist Andrew Lang, who, when reviewing *The Celtic Twilight* (1893) questioned WBY’s polarisation of the two fairy cultures saying, ‘but they do deeds of terror in Ireland too’” (288).¹³ Furthermore, Yeats “unrepentantly pressed this argument on Ulster folklorists in November 1893, saying that unlike Irish folklore, Scottish folklore ‘excelled in terror’ and was characterised by ‘touches of horror’” (288).¹⁴

Yeats's unusual interpretation of Scottish fairy belief in *The Celtic Twilight* contrasts with his other essays of the 1890s. Specifically, his reviews of Fiona Macleod's (aka William Sharp's) work insist on the similarity of oral traditions in Ireland and Scotland. In his 1897 review of her *Spiritual Tales*, he writes, "I read *The Washer of the Ford* ... on the deck of an Aran fishing-boat and among the grey stones of Aran Island; among the very people of whom she writes, for the Irish and Highland Gael are one race; and when I laid down the book I talked with an Aran fisherman of the very beliefs and legends that were its warp and woof" (*Early Articles and Reviews* 337).¹⁵ Even though Yeats would eventually distance himself from Macleod's work and become disenchanted by the Pan-Celtic movement, his professed ideas here seem at odds with those in "A Remonstrance of Scotsmen," in which he characterizes the Scottish temperament as "too theological, too gloomy" and derides the Scots for having "denounced [the fairies] from the pulpit" (*Mythologies* 70-71).

There are perhaps two ways that we may interpret Yeats's contradictory stance on Scottish fairy belief, both of which lead back to his original argument that Ireland's unity and cultural difference lie in the nation's special connection to native supernatural traditions. First, his praise of Macleod is centered on her particularly spiritual connection with the folk traditions she collected and reinterpreted. He writes that "she, like all who have Celtic minds and have learnt to trust them, has in her hands the keys of those gates to the primeval world, which shut behind more successful races, when they plunged into material progress" (*Early Articles* 338-39). What sets Macleod's perspective apart from the majority of her fellow Scotsmen is that she has embraced a Celtic instinct and has learned to trust her "Celtic mind." She has rejected modern progress for ancient wisdom,

while the majority of Scots have rejected their native traditions in favor of a prohibitive Calvinist belief system. Looking at the two accounts of Scottish folklore together, Yeats seems to be telling the Scots that the way to Celtic identity is through the spiritual connection with the true Celtic tradition. The loss or abuse of that tradition means taking the path of the English and slipping toward spiritually bereft modernity. While this view seems to be Pan-Celtic, and thus transnational, it is essentially telling the Scots to follow the superior example of the Irish (or the example that Yeats hopes to set for the Irish) in order to achieve their own national unity.

There is evidence, however, that the intended audience of “A Remonstrance of Scotsmen” is not the Scots of Scotland but rather the Ulster Scots of Northern Ireland, which accounts for the essay’s acerbic, reactionary, and even spiteful tone. The essay was first published in 1889 in the *Scots Observer*, which was edited by W. E. Henley, an “Imperialist and Unionist in politics and [who] was inflexibly hostile to all aspects of Irish nationalism” (Gould and Toomey 288). Yeats makes his attack on the Ulster Scots obvious when he addresses an eighteenth-century witch trial in County Antrim. He claims that Scotland has “burnt all the witches” it has put on trial; Ireland, however, has left its witches alone, with the exception of “the ‘loyal minority’ [who] knocked the eye of one with a cabbage stump on the 31st of March 1711, in the town of Carrickfergus. But,” Yeats reminds us, “the ‘loyal minority’ is half Scottish. You have discovered the faeries to be pagan and wicked. You would like to have them all up before the magistrate” (*Mythologies* 70-71). Here Yeats makes the case for the essential difference between the Irish Protestants of the north and the rest of Ireland, likely in a reaction against growing loyalist sentiment in Ulster, which helped defeat the Home Rule Bill of

1886 and, with it, the political career of Charles Stewart Parnell. Yeats justifies his political animus against the Ulster Scots, who destroyed his dream of a spiritually or politically unified Ireland, by claiming that their essential difference lies their betrayal of the very thing that, in Yeats's view, makes one Irish.

Conclusion:

What "A Remonstrance of Scotsmen" reveals is that Yeats's quest for vision and spiritual unity is partly political, and that Yeats used Irish folklore for political means. By embracing the Irish fairy tradition and claiming that it was unique to Ireland, he asserted that the Irish nation's difference from and superiority to its neighbors. Despite his interest in Pan-Celticism, his goal was always to define the Irish nation and to define Irishness through folklore and to use Irish folklore to reveal a national essence. He imagined that the border of the nation was marked by the Irish fairies and those who believed in them. The result of this choice was twofold. First, Ireland became associated with the supernatural traditions of the peasantry that Yeats preferred, and, in turn, other folk genres that exist in Ireland were neglected. The rest of this project investigates three other genres of oral tradition in Ireland that depart from Yeats's vision of Irish folklore, as they are neither national nor specifically supernatural. They are folk traditions that have come to Ireland from abroad and that have moved abroad from Ireland.

¹ This quotation comes from Yeats's Foreword to *The Celtic Twilight (Mythologies 32)*.

² I am passing over many of the early Irish folklorists who collected between the eras of Croker and Hyde. For detailed accounts of these, see Hyde's introduction to *Beside the Fire* and Anne Markey's essay "The Discovery of Irish Folklore" (29-36), which offers a

critical account of the movements within Irish folklore studies since the nineteenth century and their impact on the Revival.

³ Markey details the literary history of one Irish example of fakelore, the folk tale, “The Soul Cages.” First Croker and then Yeats included the story, which tells of a fisherman who meets a merrow that keeps the souls of dead fishermen in lobster pots at the bottom of the sea. The story resembles one of the tales collected by the Grimm brothers and is, Markey finds, a literary transplant inserted by one of Croker’s collaborators and made to appear as authentic oral lore (26-28).

⁴ This quotation comes from Yeats’s essay “The Prisoners of the Gods,” which appeared in *The Nineteenth Century* in January 1898. The essay deals with the folk materials he had gathered with Lady Gregory (*Early Articles* 372).

⁵ *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* appears on my works cited page as *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, as Paul Muldoon renamed it for his 2003 edition of the collection, perhaps because, as Edward Hirsch points out in his essay “The Imaginary Irish Peasant,” the term is considered derogatory, especially by Irish Catholics. Hirsch writes, “The word *peasant* was [...] in disrepute [...] among] middle-class Catholic Dublin [because] the so-called peasant was almost always a figure out of their own recent family past” (1123).

⁶ For an excellent account of the compilation of Yeats’s anthologies, see Thuente, 74-105. She describes Yeats’s tendency to choose folk texts “on the basis of their imaginative extravagance” (89) and to edit previously collected texts in order to omit “[a]uthorial commentary and superfluous literary atmosphere which did not support Yeats’s presentation of uniquely Irish subject matter free from stale English literary conventions” (93).

⁷ Thuente cites Ó Súilleabháin from his *Legends from Ireland* (Totowa, 1977), page 11.

⁸ The pagination here refers to Thuente’s text. She quotes from Harmon’s “Cobwebs before the Wind,” page 130.

⁹ The pagination here refers again to Thuente’s text. She quotes from Danaher’s “Folk Tradition and Literature” pages 71-72.

¹⁰ According to Gould and Toomey, “The Devil” (237), “Happy and Unhappy Theologians” (238), “And Fair, Fierce Women” (252), “Concerning the Nearness Together of Heaven, Earth, and Purgatory” (280), and “War” (291) all have their source in Mary Battle. They credit “A Visionary” to George Russell (216) and “Aristotle of the Books” to the wife of a woodcutter named John Ferrell (259). “The Swine of the Gods” likely came from Robert Johnson of Belfast or D. Mark Ryan (Gould and Toomey 260). Yeats credits “The Friends of the People of the Fairy” to a Martin Roland, though Gould and Toomey claim that Lady Gregory called the informant “Michael Barrett” (297).

¹¹ Yeats’s strategy here is similar to another hierarchical reversal that Marjorie Howes points out. She argues that in his early negotiations with Arnoldian Celticism Yeats attempted to reverse the negative value of femininity often applied to the Irish temperament. She writes, “Yeats’s earliest Celtic writings repeated, both overtly and covertly, the imperial gendering of the Irish as feminine, but in rejecting colonialism’s (and Irish nationalism’s) equation of femininity with inferiority and subordinate status they suggested a profound, though incomplete, departure from the axiomatics of imperialism” (18). Howe’s essay charts Yeats’s further negotiations of gender within Arnoldian Celtic theory and finds that he eventually rejected this radical concept of the

feminine. However, his preference for the permanence of ancient thought and custom over modern innovation persists and far outlives his early embrace of the feminine Irish identity.

¹² Glassie describes a conversation with one of his informants Peter Flanagan in Ballymenone, Co. Fermanagh. Therefore, “dread and fear” are Flanagan’s words.

¹³ Lang’s review appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, 23 December, 1893, on page 802).

¹⁴ Gould and Toomey cite the *Proceedings of the Belfast National Field Club*, 1893-4, page 46.

¹⁵ This quotation comes from Yeats’s review of Fiona Macleod’s *Spiritual Tales*, which appeared in *The Sketch* on April 28, 1897.

Chapter Two:

Revising the Folk: J. M. Synge, Lady Augusta Gregory, and the International Tale

In 1937, nearly thirty years after Synge's death and five years after Lady Gregory's, Yeats described the unity of purpose among his fellow Revivalists with regard to collecting folklore and using it for literary inspiration. In "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" he recalls,

John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory, thought
 All that we did, all that we said or sang
 Must come from contact with the soil, from that
 Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong.
 We three alone in modern times had brought
 Everything down to that sole test again,
 Dream of the noble and the beggarman. (*Collected Poems* 321)

Here Yeats imagines himself, Synge, and Gregory—three writers aligned but otherwise “alone in modern times”—drawing on the lore of the common people for literary inspiration for all that they “said or sang.” Yeats insists that Synge's and Gregory's folkloristic work—their “contact with the soil”—is unified with his own struggle against the deadening influence of modernity, and together, according to him, they test *everything* against the idealistic dream of the noble and the beggarman.

The vision of unity in “The Municipal Gallery Revisited,” similarly promoted elsewhere in Yeats's canon, might lead us to the misconception that Synge and Gregory agreed with Yeats and each other about the purpose of folklore in the Literary Revival. It

is not difficult to assert that both Synge and Gregory were more nuanced in their folklore collecting in comparison to Yeats; they both acquired Irish, unlike Yeats, (though they seemed to have collected in English more than Irish), and they were more precise in their English transcriptions and translations. However, they were radically different both from Yeats and each other in their methods of publication.

This chapter contends that Synge's *The Aran Islands* (1907) revises Yeats's collections and theories about Irish folklore and that Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (1920), in turn, revises Synge's reproach to Yeats. *The Aran Islands* engages with and critiques *The Celtic Twilight*, while Gregory's collection stands as a challenge to Synge's because it fails to conform to Yeatsian notions of the Irish peasantry and their oral traditions. A comparison of the two volumes illuminates the struggle between Synge and Gregory to define a national Irish folklore based on their individual notions of folkloristic authenticity. Comparing these two writers' collections reveals their disagreement over the type of folk text that best represents the Irish people and that should therefore be embraced by Irish cultural nationalism. What follows is a seemingly innocuous duel between two folk genres—the international folk tale and the Irish fairy legend—that in fact represents conflicting visions of the Irish national character. Synge promoted the imaginative genre of the narrative folk tale, which derives from a body of international fictional texts that circulate “from Ireland to India” (Thompson, *The Folktale* 14). On the other hand, Gregory insisted on Yeats's vision of Irish folklore as exclusively national and supernatural, and in *Visions and Beliefs* she published supernatural legends almost exclusively.

The international tale and the fairy legend coexist in the Irish oral tradition, but each collector, because he or she approached the texts with personal and political aims and assumptions, eschews one type of lore for the other. Yeats himself incorporated various genres of folk text into his three folklore collections, but he always made the fairies a priority. In *The Celtic Twilight* he ultimately advocated a folklore steeped in a belief in the supernatural and set the Revivalist standard for what constituted Irish folklore—folklore that helped define Ireland’s Irishness against the folklores of other nations. Synge, on the other hand, was not enamored of fairy lore and in *The Aran Islands* disrupts the continuity of focus on the supernatural that Yeats’s, and later Gregory’s, work on oral lore represents. Instead, Synge focused on international tales that showcase the peasant as imaginative rather than visionary and introduced a type of Irish oral tradition that is not specifically national.

Gregory’s last folklore collection, *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, attempts to reposition the fairy legend as the primary text of the Irish folklore canon in an effort to reestablish Yeats’s notion of the visionary Irish peasant who is specifically Irish. *Visions and Beliefs* was conceived of by Yeats and was, in the beginning, his own folklore project. On December 22, 1898, he formally asked¹ Gregory for her help on the collection, writing, “Would you agree to collaborate with me in the big book of folk lore? One hand should do the actual shaping & writing — apart from peasant talk — & I would wish to do this” (*Collected Letters* 2.323). Over the course of twenty years, however, the collection became Gregory’s work alone, with Yeats’s contributions relegated to the footnotes, but his influence over the overarching theory of the volume remained. Despite her allegiance to Yeats, Gregory’s work in this final volume challenges his style by

limiting the voice of the collector and thereby subtly crafting the authentic peasant voice that is at once visionary and a wellspring of specifically national lore. In this sense, Gregory creates a folklore dependent on manufactured authenticity, in which the visionary peasant appears to speak while the mediating voice of the collector is subordinated. A comparison of Gregory's work to Synge's, however, reveals the profound influence of both collectors on the "authentic" voices of their informants.

Central to this chapter is not the question, "What is Irish folklore?" but rather, "What is Irish folklore after the Revival?" Synge and Gregory (like all collectors) practiced the politics of selection, whereby the texts they chose to publish reflect their desires and assumptions. Collections of any kind distort audience perceptions of the larger body of texts supposedly being represented and can, depending on their degree of influence, have lasting effects on popular and scholarly attention. What is perceived to be authentic Irish folklore today has much to do with what the Revivalists chose to promote within literary and folkloristic mediums. In turn, the texts the Revivalists selected for their authenticity in fact reveal more about the collector than they do about the breadth of lore that was being circulated in Ireland around the turn of the twentieth century. In other words, the concept of Irish folklore as it exists today is more an invention of the Revival than a representation of the whole body of oral lore that existed and continues to exist in Ireland.

This chapter owes much to the work of Angela Bourke, whose *The Burning of Bridget Cleary* offers a comprehensive and illuminating study of Irish fairy belief around the turn of the twentieth century. Her book, and the work of other illuminating collectors of contemporary fairy legend like Eddie Lenihan,² proves the enduring influence of the

Revivalist struggle on which this chapter focuses. Had Yeats and Gregory's notion of authentic Irish folklore not overshadowed that of Synge, contemporary perceptions of Irish folklore would be different. While this chapter does not deny the importance of the fairy legend within Irish oral lore, it does point out the political and cultural motivations that obscured other traditions that thrived around the turn of the twentieth century and have since been largely neglected.

In the Shadow of the Twilight: *The Aran Islands*

Yeats mythologized his own influence over *The Aran Islands*, and the literary career to which the volume gave rise, in his introduction to Synge's *The Well of the Saints* in 1905. There, famously, Yeats recalls that he met Synge at the Hotel Corneille and told him, "Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression" (*Early Essays* 216-17). Presumably with Synge's approval, Yeats claimed responsibility for this foundational moment in Synge's career. After his death in 1909, Synge appears in Yeats's poetry as an equally mythic—and now romanticized—figure. "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" eulogizes the dead playwright and inscribes him within Yeats's supernatural folk landscape:

And that enquiring man John Synge comes next,
 That dying chose the living world for text
 And never could have rested in the tomb
 But that, long travelling, he had come
 Towards nightfall upon certain set apart

In a most desolate stony place,
 Towards nightfall upon a race
 Passionate and simple like his heart. (*Collected Poems* 133)

Here Yeats imagines Synge, who when alive was defined by the fact that he was dying, in a liminal space between the living and the dead; resisting the tomb, Yeats's ghostly Synge travels toward the "desolate stony" landscape of Aran. Synge's "passionate and simple" heart echoes the "wise and simple" peasant fisherman who appears later in *The Wild Swans at Coole* and drives Yeats toward a poetry "as cold / And passionate as the dawn" (*Collected Poems* 148-49). Yeats codes Synge's legacy within the realm of the peasantry and the supernatural world they promise. In close succession, Yeats twice imagines Synge's ghost travelling "Towards nightfall," inscribing Synge's memory within the aesthetics of the Celtic Twilight. But *The Aran Islands*, while written in the shadow of Yeats's folkloristic work, resists his notion of the peasantry and the supernatural folklore that they produce.

Synge and Yeats, in the years they were collecting folklore, are often discussed in somewhat binary terms. Most commonly, Yeats is figured as a romantic while Synge confronts the Revival with modernism and realism and thus frees Yeats to move toward modernism himself. For example, in Sinéad Garrigan Mattar's *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival*, she argues that Yeats's folklore evinces "romantic literary primitivism" while Synge's folklore collecting, influenced by comparative science, becomes modernist in its approach. Similarly Gregory Castle's *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* argues that Synge's modern perspective, honed on Aran, moved early romantic Yeats "closer to his mature modernist aesthetics" (84).

But of course, in many ways, *The Aran Islands*, though strikingly different in effect than *The Celtic Twilight*, results from many of the same romantic desires and assumptions that led Yeats to collect folklore. Deborah Fleming describes the mutual origins of their folkloristic work:

Yeats and John Millington Synge disliked the urban, industrial world, although they spent most of their adult lives in the artistic centers of Dublin and London. Both had spent much of their youth in the country, which they learned to love (Yeats in Sligo, and Synge in Wicklow); both had been amateur naturalists as children. Thus, having learned to identify their nationality with the countryside, they turned to folklore to find images and themes for literature. (10)

According to Nicholas Grene, Synge's early drafts of the book reflect his romantic aesthetic as he attempts "to describe the natural in terms of the artificial; he is the aesthete whose cultivated senses nature gives the ultimate artistic sensation" (*Synge*, 23). Grene details Synge's struggle to rid his prose of such romantic gestures, but Synge's impetus for studying the Aran Islands is inherently romantic and thus his approach to his subject echoes Yeats's *The Celtic Twilight*. In his text Synge engages with many of the folkloristic and literary methods of Yeats's early period, even if he produces one of the earliest texts of Irish modernism. The following section will investigate how *The Aran Islands*, like *The Celtic Twilight*, sets out as a subjective and nostalgic text that seeks Irish authenticity above all and engages with idealized notions of the pre-colonial nation. In order to understand Synge's challenge to Yeats's folklore, we must first understand how his project grows out of Yeats's and then how it begins to depart from it.

In an imitation of Yeats's subjective narrator in *The Celtic Twilight*, *The Aran Islands* locates the persona of the collector at the center of the quest for folkloristic authenticity. As in Yeats's work, in *The Aran Islands* we see the desires of the author come to the fore more readily than in other more objective folklore collections. *The Celtic Twilight* and *The Aran Islands* are similar texts primarily because of their literary and folkloristic ambiguity. Neither text conforms to the trends of folklore publication that were dominant at the time, in which a collector was expected to offer an introduction and perhaps some notation to the texts provided but otherwise conceal himself. On the contrary, Synge follows Yeats's narrative strategy by putting himself (or his persona) at the center of the text and narrating his quest for folk material as a personal journey.

Because both volumes depart from the dominant trends in folklore, they have been treated as literary texts that nonetheless resist classification by literary genre. Edward Hirsch describes *The Celtic Twilight* as "a curious hybrid of the story and the essay, the accurate notation of the folklorist and the fictional reminiscence of the imaginative writer. It is neither a book of short stories nor a straightforward collection of folk- and fairy tales" ("Coming into the Light" 1). Similarly, Arnold Goldman argues that "*The Aran Islands* subsumes literary genres" and is "a work elusive of genre classification, like those of other authors who needed to discover a personal form of expression and to propel themselves into a new future" (7). We can see these two authors conflating and, in some ways, confounding both literary and folkloristic styles, thus creating two works that resist classification yet reflect each other and beg comparison.

Much like Yeats, Synge sought on Aran a kind of temporal authenticity that would reveal the state of Irish culture before colonization. Yeats believed that the Irish

peasantry was culturally close to Ireland's pre-colonial and even ancient inhabitants, and thus revealed a temporally authentic view of Irish culture, tradition, and belief. In this same vein, Synge's notebooks from his first visit to the islands reveal both his concern for finding the real, pre-colonial Ireland on Aran, but, departing from Yeats, they also show his awareness of the potential pitfalls of its representation and the impossibility of temporal authenticity. He writes, "I read [Emily Lawless's] *Grania* before I came here and enjoyed it, but the real Aran spirit is not there." Rather than a claim for the superior authenticity of his findings, this statement shows Synge's anxiety as he considers the task of representing Aran in his own future text. Contemplating the difficulty of recreating "the real Aran spirit," he writes, "I cannot yet judge [the] strange primitive natures [of Inishmaan] closely enough to divine them" (quoted in Greene 87). Here Synge's early concerns focus on the importance of his account's authenticity and points to the troubling inauthenticity of Lawless's inaccurate description of the tradition of kelp burning on Aran. Synge, a disciple of Hyde and Campbell who advocated for complete accuracy in folklore collecting, feels the weight of his obligation to portray the culture of the islands precisely and to avoid the careless, largely imaginative renderings of his nineteenth-century predecessors.

But, as is discussed earlier in Chapter One, the quest for authenticity rarely produces an accurate image of reality and instead is a reflection of a collector's preconceived notions and desires. So Synge's desire to find the real Ireland—the lost culture of the mainland—quickly follows his assessment of Lawless and reveals that his aims, though less spiritual, are similar to Yeats's quest to find the ancient Irish system of belief. Synge's notebook entry continues:

The thought that the island will gradually yield to the ruthlessness of “progress” is as the certainty that decaying age is moving always nearer to the cheeks it is your ecstasy to kiss. *How much of Ireland was formerly like this* and how much of Ireland is today Anglicized and civilized and brutalized? (quoted in Greene 87, my emphasis)

The real Ireland here is the object of Synge’s desire, and while his metaphor is sexual, it is also temporal. Oona Frawley argues that in *The Aran Islands* “Synge opts to create an ancient Irish world that has been untouched by time except for the most immediate natural cycles, resulting in the presentation of a world untouched by *evolutionary* time” (86). Therefore, the culture of Inishmaan is young, i.e., *primitive* within the anthropological discourse that colors Synge’s text throughout.

That Synge views the specter of progress as a kind of death inevitable to the pristine youth of the islands owes much to what Garrigan Mattar calls literary primitivism, or the “idealization of the primitive” through literary aesthetics (*Primitivism* 3). She argues that Synge’s engagement with the comparative scientific study of culture through folklore and myth released him “from the dead-end of romantic primitivism” embraced by Yeats. But, regardless of his early studies with Continental Celticists and his later embrace of realism, Synge’s initial purpose on Aran does not escape the romantic lure of authenticity, which is always predicated on imagined and preconceived notions of the object sought. Primitivism is, according to Garrigan Mattar, “always more reflective of the person ... doing the idealization than it is of the people or culture being idealized” (*Primitivism* 3). Being wholly dependent on conceptions of culture manufactured at a distance, concepts of primitivism are inextricable from the problems of

authenticity. Garrigan Mattar goes on to explain that the tendency among urban intellectuals to become dissatisfied with civilized society “leads to primitivisms in which the positive outreach to a primitive sphere is motivated by a negative recoil from the present, with the primitive providing a monitory counter-image to the horrors of ‘nowadays’” (*Primitivism* 4). Synge joins Yeats in reversing the hierarchy between the primitive and the civilized and viewing history as a process of decay rather than one of progress. His romantic metaphor situates the islanders as representatives of the essence of Irishness, and they are thus in a state of youth and beauty, while the culture of the mainland has been corrupted and has begun to decay.

Synge’s sexual/temporal metaphor for the island, the object of “your” (i.e. his) desire that will inevitably yield to the brutal decay of civilization, echoes his own desire for a connection with the people of the islands who inhabit this pristine Irish state. But Synge understands that the real Aran is hidden from him when he writes, “To write a real novel of the island life one would require to pass several years among the people” (quoted in Greene 87). At the end of his first visit, Synge figures his relationship with Aran as sexual because he knows that his methods must be a kind of courtship and that for the islanders the process will be one of shy revelation. Synge, like Yeats, fails to avoid the Arnoldian worldview born of gendered and hierarchical concepts of cultural interaction that are made palatable as romance. Synge also does not escape the colonizing gaze of the scientific ethnographer who wishes not to tame the primitive but to convince it to reveal itself unadorned by civilized pretense.

Synge’s impulse to manufacture authenticity brings him in conflict with one of his most valuable informants, Michael of Inishmaan. In Part Three, Synge explains, “We

nearly quarrelled because he wanted me to take his photograph in his Sunday clothes from Galway, instead of his native homespuns that become him far better, though he does not like them as they seem to connect him with the primitive life of the island” (101). Synge wants to portray Michael in a manner that fits his desired image—as well as that of his audience—and his declaration that the homespuns are more becoming again figures the primitive into a state of feminized and youthful beauty. Michael’s resistance and his own desire to control how he is perceived is not remarkable, as surely many informants have felt wary of the ethnographer’s controlling gaze. But Synge’s record of his resistance is striking evidence of his own failure to play the part of the wooing ethnographer effectively. The passage reveals Synge’s awkwardness among the islanders and Michael’s lack of patience with his romantic primitivist notions. But it also records Synge’s impulse toward fabricated romantic aesthetics, which, in turn, lends his prose the seeming authenticity of realism.

As early as Part One of *The Aran Islands*, Synge admits his failure to find the authentic Aran of his desire. He writes with palpable regret, “it is only in the intonation of a few sentences or some fragment of melody that I catch the real spirit of the island, for in general the men sit together and talk with endless iteration of the tides and fish, and of the price of kelp in Connemara” (35-36). The real Aran that he imagines fails to emerge and remains a phantom, a spirit that Synge can catch only in fragments, while the reality of Aran existence is far more quotidian. Evidence of the youthful culture he imagines is burdened by what Synge views as cultural decay, as modern capitalist concerns of the mainland—the price of kelp and fish—occupy the men’s minds. Here Synge confronts the folly of seeking temporal authenticity among primitive subjects who nonetheless live

in the modern era. Despite its promise of idealized pre-colonial Irish culture, Aran is not innocent of modern, middle-class concerns that, Synge argues, come from the corrupting influence of the mainland.

Synge's notion of the decay of mainland Irish culture is evident in his account of his time spent in the Congested Districts of Connemara. In this twelve-part essay, published in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1905, his grim description of mainland labor practices starkly contrasts with his romantic depiction of life on Aran. According to one of the more romantic passages in *The Aran Islands*, work there remains idyllic, whereas in Connemara labor practices have been altered by well-meaning but misguided attempts by the British government to offer aid to the poor. He describes labor on Aran as communal and seasonal with each man being able to fish, farm, burn kelp, make pampooties, mend nets, build and thatch houses, and make a cradle or a coffin. Of the able-bodied man on Aran, Synge explains,

His work changes with the seasons in a way that keeps him free from the dullness that comes to people who have always the same occupation. The danger of his life on the sea gives him the alertness of a primitive hunter, and the long nights he spends fishing in his curagh bring him some of the emotions that are thought peculiar to men who have lived with the arts.

(100)

Synge describes communal labor on Aran as “a kind of festival” (99), and romanticizes the danger of fishing that he elsewhere explores with such terrifying realism. Here we see Synge participating in the “romantic literary primitivism” that Garrigan Mattar ascribes mostly to Yeats (*Primitivism* 3). Synge, in his description of the fishermen, fails to

recognize the realities of the Aran Islanders' everyday existence and romanticizes them in a manner that is clearly self-reflexive. The Aran fishermen evince the artistic temperament that Synge envisions for himself but do so in a way that is natural and primitive rather than urban and intellectual.

Synge's depiction of labor on Aran starkly contrasts the practices he finds on the mainland. *In Connemara* describes the labor prescribed by relief works projects in terms of colonial oppression:

. . . we came in sight of a dozen or more men and women working hurriedly and doggedly improving a further portion of this road, with a ganger swaggering among them and directing their work. Some of the people were cutting out sods from grassy patches near the road, others were carrying down bags of earth in a slow, inert procession, a few were breaking stones, and three or four women were scraping out a sort of sandpit at a little distance. As we drove quickly by we could see that every man and woman was working with a sort of hang-dog dejection that would be enough to make any casual passer mistake them for a band of convicts.

(Collected Works 296)

Synge's description of the exhausted and uninspired Connemara laborers contrasts directly with the festival-like labor of Aran, directed by and for the immediate benefit of the community. Here the laborers, working on what began as a Famine road, appear as convicts under the control of a ganger whose unsympathetic authority forces them to work swiftly without joy. Whereas Aran laborers are "free from the dullness that comes to people who have always the same occupation," the Connemara poor work with a

“hang-dog dejection” of those exhausted and uninspired by work they have done too long. Synge’s style may be somewhat exaggerated here, as he indicates in a letter to Stephen MacKenna that “my commission was to write on the ‘Distress’ so I couldn’t do anything like what I would have wished to do as an interpretation of the whole life” (*Collected Works* 283).³ Nonetheless, he allows his essays about Connemara to prove his argument that cultural practices on Aran are more pure than those of even the western coast, and he thus supports Yeats’s romantic notion that Irish authenticity increased as one traveled further westward.

While Yeats readily admits that his folkloristic quest is rooted in nostalgia, Synge’s nostalgic desire on Aran is more difficult to locate. For each writer, folklore collecting attempted to recapture the fantasies of youth and was entangled with their autobiographies and early literary personae. According to Eamon Hughes, Irish autobiography is “a version of the nation narrative,” and he argues that “[a]utobiographies of the Revival period can be productively read as a series of meditations on and arguments about Ireland and Irishness” (28). In addition to the traditional autobiographies to which Hughes refers, folklore collecting is also a meditation on Irishness and the self. As Synge and Yeats explored both self and nation through the realm of folklore, they each relied on their particular preferences and desires and projected those onto the rural people of the west.

According to Declan Kiberd, the self and the nation are often refigured by Revivalist writers to be within parallel progressive narratives. He writes,

Most writers of the Irish Revival identified their childhood with that of the Irish nation: those hopeful decades of slow growth before the fall into

murderous violence and civil war. In subsequent autobiographies, childhood was identified as a kind of privileged zone, peopled with engaging eccentrics, doting grandmothers and natural landscapes.

(Inventing Ireland 101)

Synge, alongside Kiberd's primary example, Yeats, employs this allegorical structure in his own *Autobiography*, in which he also reveals his scientific conceptions of the primitive. In this text Synge reveals that his image of the primitive, while informed by scientific folklore, anthropology, and philology, was also constructed during his childhood and was tinged with personal nostalgia. He begins by reflecting on the value of autobiography: "the contemplation of childhood, [which is,] I believe, linked in a way with the early stages of our race, has a singular value for those of us who are interested in primitive peoples and in folk-lore" (13). He goes on to explain, "What is elemental and untamed seems always to have drawn me, and as a boy I studied the arabs of the streets. They provided one of the clearest examples of the links that are thought to exist between primitive man and the child" (16). In his correlation between "early man" and childhood, Synge reveals that he shared in the teleological view of progressive human history that was at the heart of nineteenth and early twentieth-century scientific anthropological discourse. Through this correlation paired with his similar (though sexual) metaphor for Aran culture as a beautiful young woman, we can see that "evolution" from childhood to adulthood did not equal progress in Synge's mind. This passage also reveals that Synge's visit to Aran likely kindled feelings of nostalgia for the "street arabs" who had fascinated him so much as a boy and first defined for him what "primitive" life might have been like.

Synge approached the Aran Islands with a Yeatsian desire for temporal authenticity and attempted to locate in their culture an example of pre-modern Irishness that aroused his nostalgia. His approach to the islands was within a Yeatsian mode, but his broader influences were, as Garrigan Mattar and Castle point out, scientific and Continental. Synge's text, while it was prompted by Yeatsian aims, manages to resist and challenge those aims and critique Yeats's criteria for selection. Critical to this departure is Synge's reflection on his own position among the western peasants. Unlike Yeats, who in his collections, is "at no pains to separate [his] own beliefs from those of the peasantry" (*Celtic Twilight* 32), Synge encountered on Aran a wholly foreign culture, a fact to which he admits quite honestly in the first volume of *The Aran Islands*. He relays that the islanders speak with a "slight foreign" (6) and "delicate exotic intonation" (10), and describes the Aran women in their red dresses, who never cease to elicit his interest, as giving "off an almost Eastern richness" (16). Finally, and perhaps most jarringly, he recalls his first meeting with the storyteller Pat Dirane in the following passage where the old man appears to him nearly inhuman: "He was dressed in miserable black clothes which seemed to have come from the mainland, and was so bent with rheumatism that, at a little distance, he looked more like a spider than a human being" (18).

Instead of conveying his own closeness to the peasantry in these passages, Synge demonstrates his constant alienation from them and his persistent inability to understand their beliefs and culture fully. Castle argues that the convergence of desire and alienation in *The Aran Islands* marks Synge's persona as a modern subject. Focusing on Synge's sexual desire for the native women, Castle writes, "Synge's desire for a sexualized native subject salves the alienation he feels in the modern cities of Europe, but it also marks him

as irredeemably modern precisely because of his difference from the native subject whose primitive traditionality he desires” (125). Unlike Yeats, who wishes to display his participation in native tradition, Synge consistently betrays his lack of closeness to and understanding of the native islanders. While his collection seeks the authentic Ireland of the unrecoverable past, it instead finds the Islands to be wholly foreign and in contrast to Yeats’s concept of domesticated rural Irishness. Here, I want to focus on how Synge’s acceptance of this alienation and the foreignness of the islanders affected the folk texts he chose to publish.

As a member of the Anglo-Irish gentry, Synge has little or no experiential point of reference for the islanders, so he relies on the anthropological discourse he engaged with during his studies in France to describe the culture he encounters. Garrigan Mattar argues that Synge’s intense engagement with scientific studies in nineteenth-century philology and anthropology liberates and differentiates him from his Revivalist contemporaries (*Primitivism* 130). The strategies of the scientific folklorists that Yeats despised have a much greater impact on the type of oral lore Synge was attracted to on Aran. Celtologists like Henri d’Arbois de Jubainville and comparative folklorists such as James Frazer used mythological and folk texts to draw connections among cultures rather than as demarcations of national difference, and Synge was deeply engaged with their work at the time of his visits to Aran. His interest in Irish folklore, while nationalist, does not preclude comparison and parallels with the folklores of other nations. Unlike Yeats, who seeks a specifically Irish culture through which the nation can define itself, Synge seeks a folklore valuable by the standards of comparative Continental folklore studies—that is, oral texts that readily lend themselves to comparison with the traditions of other nations.

Synge desired Irish folklore to engage with international folklore, and the tales he was most attracted to were not the exclusively domestic traditions that Yeats so valued.

In light of these differences between Synge and Yeats, it is important to re-evaluate the poet's claim on the young playwright's decision to study Aran. Of the famous meeting at the Hotel Corneille, Yeats recalls, "I said: 'Give up Paris. You will never create anything by reading Racine, and Arthur Symons will always be a better critic of French literature. Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression'" (*Early Essays* 216-17). Within the context of my discussion of Synge and authenticity, it is somewhat ironic that Yeats's statement, offered by him as a direct quotation, is much contested. According to Grene, Yeats's account is a "marvelously colorful but inherently unlikely story" ("Yeats" 48). He points out that Yeats in fact advised Synge on their first meeting to continue studying French literature and likely did not advise him to go to Aran until their second meeting in 1899, after Synge had already visited the Islands and was considering writing about them ("Yeats" 48). Richard Fallis suggests that Synge's work with Continental Celticists "did a good deal more to send Synge toward Aran than the famous meeting with Yeats at the Hotel Corneille" (quoted in Castle 109). Castle concludes that "Yeats regarded Synge's sojourn [on Aran] in terms that reflected his own artistic concerns" (109), and through this perspective we can see Yeats again manipulating Synge's literary career and persona to create an outward appearance of unity with his own. Yeats's professed advice to Synge, if anything, attempts to bifurcate Synge's Continental interests from his interests in Ireland as he instructs him to give up Paris for Aran, give up his Continental perspective for a purely Irish one. But, as Fallis points out,

Synge carried his Continental Celticism with him to Aran and embraced comparative folklore collectors like Hyde and Campbell whose folkloristic theories and methods Yeats opposed. As a result, Synge was open to recording the genre of the international folk tale that interested Yeats far less.

Despite Synge's romantic impulses, *The Aran Islands*, in fact, is a response to Yeats, engaging with his folkloristic theories in a struggle over Irish authenticity. *The Celtic Twilight* and *The Aran Islands* produce two conflicting depictions of the rural poor and the oral traditions they maintained in the west of Ireland. While Yeats's Irish peasant is a wholly local being, committed to a visionary and supernatural worldview, Synge's peasant looks always to the world outside Aran both in his everyday interests and in the fantasies of his folk tales. Yeats's peasant is invested in magic and vision, while Synge's is more enamored with complex narrative and fantasy, and so the folk tales that these two collectors published reflect divergent notions of authentic life on the western Irish coast. Yeats's peasant would be embraced by the nation, even by the early de Valerian government, while Synge's would be rejected, both by Abbey audiences and Lady Gregory, whose *Visions and Beliefs* has the last word on the Revival's notion of the Irish peasantry.

Synge and the Peasant of the Western World

Synge began writing *The Aran Islands* in 1901, a year before Yeats's first revision of *The Celtic Twilight*, and Synge's text engages with Yeats's by repeating tropes established by his text and then challenging them. Specifically, Synge takes issue with Yeats's depiction of the persona and traditions of the storyteller and the relationship

between collector and informant. The first part of *The Aran Islands* charts Synge's search for his own ideal informant who contrasts greatly with Yeats's ideal peasant, Paddy Flynn. Because Synge was interested in the international folk tales that Yeats for which Yeats had little use, the type of storyteller he sought is more of a skilled artist than a natural visionary and thus disrupts Yeats's theory of Irish folklore and its peasant.

As Synge opens *The Aran Islands*, it is clear that he is both influenced and tempted by Yeats's notion of the storyteller. Synge begins his first volume by echoing Yeats's "The Teller of Tales" when he immediately records his first encounter with a storyteller. Upon landing on Aranmor, he is introduced to an "old dark man" who, he has been told, would instruct him in the Irish language (7). The old man, whom Synge at this point leaves nameless, cites his past interactions with folklore collectors like William Wilde and Jeremiah Curtin, and thus attempts to establish himself as a real storyteller and confirm to Synge his authenticity based on his previous experience with collectors. The old man, in effect, offers Synge his credentials and attempts to legitimate himself both by their authority and by the "superiority of his stories over all other stories in the world," which he claims for himself (7). Synge's first full description of him reads: "As we talked he sat huddled together over the fire, shaking and blind, yet his face was indescribably pliant, lighting up with an ecstasy of humor when he told me anything that had a point of wit or malice, and growing somber and desolate again when he spoke of religion or the fairies" (7).

The anonymous storyteller here is the visionary—the blind seer—of Yeats's imagination, full of humor for wit and malice. Like Flynn, the old man is also fairy-

ridden, describing to Synge “how one of his children had been taken by the fairies” and then narrating the following legend:

One day a neighbor was passing, and she said, when she saw it on the road, ‘That’s a fine child.’

Its mother tried to say, ‘God bless it,’ but something choked the words in her throat.

A while later they found a wound on its neck, and for three nights the house was filled with noises.

‘I never wear a shirt at night,’ he said, ‘but I got up out of my bed, all naked as I was, when I heard the noises in the house, and lighted a light, but there was nothing in it.’

Then a dummy came and made signs of hammering nails in a coffin.

The next day the seed potatoes were full of blood, and the child told his mother that he was going to America.

That night the child died, and ‘Believe me,’ said the old man, ‘the fairies were in it.’ (7-8)

Through the inclusion of this story Synge introduces fairy lore into his collection within the first few pages, and the fragmented events the old man recounts contain all the markers of a classic fairy legend. The woman’s transgression, a mixture of Catholic ritual and pagan superstition, is visited on the child; it is wounded on the neck, the same bodily location where the woman’s blessing choked, and thus begins her punishment by invisible forces. The household is then visited by three supernatural events—the

unexplained noises, the dummy miming hammering nails into a coffin, and a strange rot in their crops that changes them to blood. The old man relates these visions as if they are unremarkable, much in the way Paddy Flynn's experience of the fairies is everyday. Finally, death and fairy abduction are conflated as they often are in fairy legend. The story also seems to carry many markers specific to life on Aran, for example, the vital need to maintain neighborly bonds by following the rituals of politeness,⁴ memories of the Famine, and a preoccupation with emigration to America as an alternative to the harsh life on the islands.

The old man's tale is exactly what so many folklore collectors in Ireland have sought—the perfect balance of local and national lore—and Synge, as soon as he lands on Aranmor, finds what he is presumably looking for. But as the rest of *The Aran Islands* makes clear, fairy legend does not interest Synge overmuch, and he is ultimately more attracted to the less supernatural elements of island life. Perhaps this is why soon after landing on Aranmor he, “[i]n spite of the charm of my teacher, the old blind man,” decides to depart for the middle island, Inishmaan, not long after their first meeting. In fact, there is something too fortuitous in Synge's encounter with the old man, who has, after all, already told his tales to the folklorists of the previous generation. And as Francis Shaw unabashedly states, “It is notorious ... that the Irish peasant will go to great lengths to ensure that the seeker after fairies be not disappointed” (266). Indeed, the old blind man has presumed that Synge wanted to hear about the fairies and even assumes that they are still what Synge seeks, despite his decision to leave Aranmor. He tells Synge during their last meeting before his departure to Inishmaan, “You'll have an old man to talk with you over there ... and tell you stories of the fairies” (13). Synge never states his

disappointment in the old blind man's performance, likely because he knew that the people of Aranmor would read his book, or have it read to them. Synge, always concerned with politeness and thankful for the generosity of his hosts, does not deride the old blind man for his presumptions. But he does choose to record this claim, which directly contradicts the tales he will record from Pat Dirane, the storyteller on Inishmaan, who rarely speaks of the fairies except when Synge presses him (42). Synge seems to find something inauthentic in the ready performance of the old blind man, whom the text finally and unceremoniously reveals to be named Morteen. Ironically, his naming intersects with the texts' dismissal of his value as an informant. Citing his desire for a greater authenticity, Synge sets off for the middle island, "where Gaelic is more generally used, and the life is perhaps the most primitive that is left in Europe" (11).

The life he finds on Inishmaan, however, surprises Synge, and before he meets Pat Dirane, he encounters a number of men who are eager to talk with the new visitor. His conversations with them reveal, not the small, isolated perspective of the peasant sheltered from the modern world, but instead a great desire to be engaged with international concerns. Synge writes that the men favor talk of foreign wars and that "the conflict between America and Spain is causing a great deal of excitement" (17). Not surprisingly, many of the families on the island have relatives in America from whom they receive shipments of bacon and flour; however, their international attention is not simply pointed across the Atlantic. The men also have interests in the Continent, having met linguistic students from all over Europe who come to the island, like Synge, to study the Irish language. One man tells Synge, "I have seen Frenchmen, and Danes, and Germans.... Believe me, there are few rich men now in the world who are not studying

the Gaelic” (18). Because of the influx of Continental visitors, the men, Synge finds, are at least trilingual, speaking the native language in addition to English and French. He records, “They sometimes ask me the French for simple phrases, and when they have listened to the intonation for a moment, most of them are able to reproduce it with admirable precision” (18). There is something of the paternalistic ethnographer here, teaching the natives to speak and, in proclaiming his admiration for their precision, revealing his own doubt about their intellectual abilities. But compared to Yeats’s image of the peasant, with “his cromlechs, and his pillar-stones [who does] not change much” (*Fairy and Folk Tales* xxiv), Synge’s is a departure that seeks to redefine the Irish peasant’s perspective from insular to international. The people of Inishmaan may be primitive to Synge, but they are not isolated, at least not within their imaginations and their knowledge of “the big world,” as he consistently refers to it in his plays.

Perhaps most noticeably, the men of Inishmaan do not speak to Synge of the fairies, and Synge uses their international interests combined with this elision to set the tone for Pat Dirane’s introduction to the text. Synge encounters Dirane as he did old Morteen—beside the fire in the small cottage where Synge is lodging—the authentic site of storytelling performance that echoes Hyde’s collection of tales, which Synge took with him to the islands.⁵ By aligning himself with Hyde, Synge covertly opposes Yeats. While Yeats praised Hyde’s literary style, his methods were those of the scientific folklorist whom Yeats despised. More importantly, however, in *Beside the Fire* Hyde collected international tales and paid little attention to the fairy legends in which Yeats invested much of his folklore.

Synge introduces Dirane as a wholly different kind of storyteller than Yeats's fairy-ridden Irish peasant. Whereas Morteen is blind and has had collectors visit him, Dirane has traveled beyond the island and thus, "spoke English with remarkable aptness and fluency, due, I believe, to the months he spent in the English provinces working at the harvest when he was a young man" (19). This image of the able-bodied and mobile young man contrasts with the previous image of Dirane, crippled and walking with two sticks like a spider, and reveals, not a man who has lived an insulated and simple life on the islands but one who has lived through flux and change. Dirane's fluency in English, and Synge's deficiency in Irish, is clear during their first sustained meeting. Synge writes, "he asked me is I liked stories, and offered to tell one in English, though he added, it would be much better if I could follow the Gaelic. Then he began" (19). Furthermore, his mastery of both languages is evident later in the text when Synge records Dirane's claim that he had "lived in a fine college, teaching Irish to the young priests!" (66). Synge's punctuation of this information shows his own disbelief at finding this crippled old peasant to have been part of urban collegiate life—indeed the life of which Synge himself was so much a part. In addition he adds, "They say on the island that he can tell as many lies as four men: perhaps the stories he has learned have strengthened his imagination" (66). Synge's statements of disbelief may seem to discredit Dirane, but, as Synge records his own tendency toward disbelief in this moment, we are reminded that the storyteller's capacity to lie is the source of his power. Synge resists Yeats's tendency to profess unhampered belief in his informant's claims and participates in what Angela Bourke calls "the struggle against disbelief" through which the master storyteller hones his art and power (*Burning* 55). Only Dirane knows if his information is true, and Synge's

vacillation between belief and doubt illustrates Dirane's ability to seduce his audience despite his reputation on the island as a great liar.

Dirane, unlike Paddy Flynn and old Morteen, does not volunteer information about the fairies. Instead, upon their first meeting, he tells Synge a story that turns out not to be a legend but, instead, a long narrative international folk tale. The story Dirane tells is "The Tale of the Faithful Wife," or Aarne-Thompson international tale type 888. This tale type depicts a wife whose fidelity is tested during her husband's absence; she remains chaste but must devise a way to disprove his doubt and, through faith, diligence and ingenuity, is victorious in the end. The tale was collected by the Grimm brothers in Germany, and iterations of it can be found in various cultures and nations across Europe and beyond. Declan Kiberd notes Synge's interest in international tales and argues, "It is precisely this emphasis on comparative study which distinguishes Synge's contribution to Irish folklore" from his fellow Revivalists (*Synge* 153).⁶ In the years before his first trip to Aran, Synge had studied with de Jubainville, whose work on ancient Celtic literature compared it to Greek myth and other national folklores (Garrigan Mattar, *Primitivism* 62). De Jubainville, who was critical of many Revivalist writers, including Standish O'Grady and Lady Gregory (Garrigan Mattar, *Primitivism* 37-39), was opposed to popular and literary renderings of folklore that did not hold themselves accountable to the academic rigors of comparative scientific study. He writes of Hyde's *Beside the Fire*, which in fact does hold itself accountable to comparative folklore, that "despite its incontestable value, [it] is the work of a literary rather than an academic man" (Garrigan Mattar, *Primitivism* 35). By primarily publishing international tales, Synge aligns himself with Continental comparative folklorists like de Jubainville and reveals his own theory of

Irish peasant society, thereby challenging Yeats's folkloristic theories and concepts of the Irish peasantry.

International folk tale types are found in various oral traditions across the world, and it is not surprising that Synge found them on Aran. In 1973 Seán Ó Súilleabháin noted that “[t]he Irish catalogue listed about 43,000 versions of seven hundred or so international tale-Types (about one-third or so of all international Types), which had been found in oral currency or in print in Ireland up to the end of 1956. Since that time, this large number of versions has been added to considerably, and other tales of an international variety, as yet uncatalogued, may also have been recorded” (“Synge” 13). The great number of international tales that have been recorded in Ireland in both Irish and English, many of which are housed at the National Folklore Collection in Dublin, prove the vast popularity of the genre within the oral tradition. Though internationally circulated, the tales that have thrived in Ireland have accumulated national characteristics and variations. Despite the continuity of the basic plot types, the substance of the tales changes as they appear in different national and regional locations, and, thus, they can reveal cultural traits that are worth analysis. The traits that Dirane's tales reveal are those of a people focused, not on the smallness of their isolated lives, but rather on the wideness of the world beyond the island and Ireland itself.

What Dirane's version of “The Tale of the Faithful Wife” reveals to Synge reflects what he learns from the other men on Inishmaan—that the “big world” is very much part of the Aran imagination. The story tells of a man named O'Connor who desires to marry a rich farmer's daughter. Having not enough money to offer her father, he makes a deal with a “little man” who loans him gold with the condition that “you'll

pay me back in a year the gold I give you, or you'll pay me with five pounds cut off your own flesh" (20). O'Connor agrees and is able to marry the farmer's daughter. Early in their marriage, a ship wrecks on the shore and the captain of the ship joins the couple for dinner, during which O'Connor is called away to attend a funeral. Before he leaves the captain bets him twenty guineas that "no man comes near [your wife] while you'll be away on the journey" (20-21). O'Connor agrees, leaving the captain with his wife, and the captain then bribes an "old hag," one of lady O'Connor's serving women, with fifteen guineas to let him have access to her room. That night, he steals two rings from her chamber, which he shows to O'Connor upon his return as evidence of her infidelity. O'Connor then pushes his wife from their castle, down a cliff, and into the sea, and then he goes "away into the land" (22). The wife survives her fall and is rescued by an old woman who dresses her in rags. Lady O'Connor then sets off to look for her husband, whom she eventually finds reaping in a field. He does not acknowledge her (and perhaps does not recognize her in her new guise),⁷ but the field owner forces O'Connor to accompany her back home. On the way, they encounter the little man with whom O'Connor made the initial bargain for gold, and this meeting offers the wife an opportunity to prove her faithfulness. She acknowledges the fairness of the deal, but then asks if the little man had bargained for any of O'Connor's blood. The man replies, no, and the wife says, "Cut out the flesh ... but if you spill one drop of his blood I'll put that through you," showing him a pistol (23). The little man then goes away and is no longer a threat. Once they arrive back home, lady O'Connor invites the captain, the old hag, and the old woman who pulled lady O'Connor out of the sea to dinner and asks everyone to tell their stories. The old woman's and the captain's versions of events make clear to her

husband that lady O'Connor has been maligned, so she shoots the old hag with her pistol, and they throw her body into the sea.

Synge remarks on the international sources for the tale, reflecting, "It gave me a strange feeling of wonder to hear this illiterate native of a wet rock in the Atlantic telling a story that is so full of European associations" (24). Dirane becomes Synge's major source for most of Part One of *The Aran Islands*, and he grows significantly in Synge's view from an "illiterate native" into a far more complex figure with the ability to craft an elaborate and enthralling body of tales, some of which Synge will use as the basis for his own literary work. Synge's choice of words here seems to be ironic (his description of the otherwise idealized Inishmaan as merely a "wet rock" is equally so). As Synge constructs an account of his perceptions of Dirane, he reflects on his own initial ignorance and begins to construct his relationship with the storyteller as one between two artists, one a master and the other a novice.

According to Castle, Synge's text "conforms in significant ways to the protocols of the emerging discipline of ethnography ... [and] simultaneously subverts those protocols by dramatizing a desire for the Other that has no place in the ethnographer's scientific account" (100). Synge's relationship with Dirane expresses this ambivalence, as Synge treats him both as a scientific object of study—an illiterate native—as well as a fellow artist whose work will propel his own. Though always *other* to Synge, Dirane's status as a master storyteller within Synge's text allows him to transcend being merely an object of study. Instead his texts, like those of the literary master, become the central focus rather than the man, and thus he is further defined from Yeats's storytellers whose texts are obscured from their sources. At this point in *The Aran Islands*, Synge works

against his own preconceived notions of the Aran peasants, gained from both nineteenth-century anthropology and representations of the Irish storytellers from writers like Yeats. Synge consistently chooses to end his textual renderings of Dirane's tales with the tag, "That is my story" (27, 40, 65, and 74), and resists the tendency among Revivalists to make his sources anonymous. According to Castle, Synge thereby grants Dirane a kind of "experimental authority" (115). Through this choice, Synge allows the storyteller to claim of authorship of the text, leaving no doubt about the source of Synge's material and challenging the Revivalist impulse to leave informants anonymous.

If Synge, in part, resists Yeatsian theories of the peasant, then his efforts to depict the island imagination as international rather than insular is a large part of this resistance. Beyond the tale's participation in international folk tropes, which Synge identifies as English, German, and Middle Eastern, Dirane's version of "The Tale of the Faithful Wife" also shows that the storyteller and his rural Irish audiences have significant interests in the world outside western Ireland. In fact, the construction of one of the tale's most striking images asks its audience to imagine the west coast of Ireland as both a crossroads of international influence and a seat of mobility rather than insularity. After the couple's marriage, Synge's text of Dirane's story reads, "One day when [O'Connor] went up with his wife to look out over the wild ocean, he saw a ship coming in on the rocks, and no sails on her at all. She was wrecked on the rocks, and it was tea that was in her, and fine silk" (20). The couple's perspective here is anything but interior; they look out over the sea habitually throughout the narrative, symbolizing their interest in the world beyond their domestic realm. And within their scope appear European traders with Eastern goods—tea and silk—attempting to make their way back to port, reminding us

that ocean currents washed up the wrecks and remnants of Spanish ships, like those in the Armada, onto Irish western shores for centuries.

As the narrative continues, the couple is also revealed to be highly mobile, as O'Connor sets out first "to go away on a long journey" at the death of a friend and then immediately departs again after his wife's alleged infidelity (20, 22). Lady O'Connor, too, is not fixed to her homeplace, as she then goes, "searching for him," going "here and there a long time in the country" (22). The tale positions itself, and the perspective of the Irish peasant, within two currents that are at once ancient and modern, international and intra-national. Synge writes of tales such as this one, "It is hard to assert at what date such stories as these reached the west. There is little doubt that our heroic tales which show so often their kinship with Grecian myths, date from the pre-ethnic period of the Aryans" (quoted in Kiberd, *Synge* 152).⁸ Synge imagines that the tale arrived in Ireland through the ancient migrations of Aryan tribes, which Garrigan Mattar points out, was a major tenet of comparative philology (*Primitivism* 6); however, Dirane's telling is also quite modern, as it incorporates the characters' familiarity with products of Eastern trade as well as lady O'Connor's striking use of a pistol to resolve both conflicts in the narrative. Dirane's tale is not simply a *survival* preserved from the ancient tribal times during which Synge locates its source but rather a modern retelling of a tale that carries markers of how it has changed over time. Instead of Yeats's peasant who does not change much, Synge represents western Irish people as being in a state of constant flux—like their urban counterparts—with the tides of history.

From this story, and from the other international types that Synge collected on Aran, he began to construct a counter-image to Yeats's peasant that had been embraced

by the larger nationalist movement. None of the international tales from *The Aran Islands* find their way to the Abbey stage, except *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903), which derives from Dirane's version of "The Tale of the Unfaithful Wife." *In the Shadow of the Glen* met with harsh nationalist criticism from the likes of Arthur Griffith and Maud Gonne, who lambasted the play specifically for its foreignness and its lack of nationalism. Antoinette Quinn explains that Synge's play "outraged nationalists such as Maud Gonne, Maire Quinn, Douglas Hyde, James Connolly, and Arthur Griffith, because its construction of Irish peasant femininity was considered either untruthful or otherwise inappropriate in a national theater." Gonne found the play so offensive that she, along with other prominent nationalist women of the Abbey, walked out on its premier performance (48). Additionally, according to Ben Levitas, who finds the roots of the *Playboy* riots in the *Shadow* controversy, Arthur Griffith objected to *The Shadow of the Glen* "not simply [because] it was a calumny against Irish women, but [because] it was a pastiche of Greek decadence foisted on Wicklow" (577). In the *United Irishman*, Griffith rejected the play because of its likeness with Continental folk texts when he wrote that the play was "no more Irish than the Decameron" (quoted in Levitas 577). Gonne's reaction to the play was similar, and no less ironic, given Synge's source. She argued that "[i]n Ireland [a national theatre] must draw its vitality from that hidden spring from which the seven fountains of Gaelic inspiration flow" (quoted in Levitas 576). Synge's play was, of course, derived from that same spring whose source was at once Gaelic and international, but the nationalist notion of Irish folklore did not consider that Irish oral tradition could be both simultaneously.

Like the people he met on Aran, the characters that inhabit Synge's plays have an international worldview that disrupts the concept that the Irish peasant is a wholly local being. In *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), Pegeen Mike figures Christy Mahon as a the heroic figure from an international tale when she says to him: "You should have had great people in your family, I'm thinking, with the little small feet you have, and you with a kind of quality name, the like of what you'd find on the great powers and potentates of France and Spain" (22). In her imagination, Christy is royal, as so many of the characters in the international tales are or aspire to be, and he derives, not from Irish blood, but from the lineage of the Continent. Christy, then, is not the playboy of the West of Ireland but, in Pegeen's mind, the playboy of the western *world*. She uses the term in its modern sense of Western Europe and westward toward America rather than the insular "world" of the western Irish coast.⁹

When urban middle class Dublin audiences rioted against *The Playboy*, they perhaps vocally objected to its indecency, but they likely were also disturbed by Synge's disruption of the fantasy of the Irish peasant otherwise promoted by the Revival. Synge's peasants seemed inauthentic because they failed to fulfill the audience's nostalgic and romantic visions of the mythologized West, which included a notion that the peasant was singularly Irish. The word "shift" may have prompted the riots, but we should note that the image that accompanied the word involves an international sexual fantasy. Christy says to the Widow Quinn, "It's Pegeen I'm seeking only, and what'd I care if you brought me a drift of chosen females, standing in their shifts itself maybe, *from this place to the Eastern World*" (75, my emphasis). The image that Christy conjures is perhaps rooted in the Cuchulain myth, but it certainly stretches far beyond the Irish border and

imagines half-naked Irish women in an exotic context. Synge allows Christy to echo his own perception of the Aran women's Eastern richness; more importantly, however, Christy matches Pegeen's own imaginative capacity that is at once erotic and international. Grene argues that it is the contamination of disparate elements in the play that prompted nationalist offence: "Again and again necessary distinctions, differences and the ideological labeling that went with them were jumbled in unsorted contiguity. Such contamination of confused categories was a deeply disturbing affront to the middle-class nationalist community whose self-image depended on just such moral classification" (*Politics* 86). Synge's vision of an internationally minded Irish peasant was an abomination as unrecognizable as his sexualized Irish women and his cast of rural characters hungry for aestheticized violence.

The rioters likely were unaware that aestheticized violence is at the heart of the international tale tradition that Synge found so valuable and that was very much enjoyed by the Irish rural poor. Grene goes on to argue that *The Playboy* "is no realistic picture of Irish country life as it is lived" (*Politics* 95); nonetheless, it is a realistic picture of Irish country imagination as it played out in the international tales that were so popular among Irish country populations. While fairy legends conveniently eschew vulgarity and violence by turning it into metaphor and euphemism, international tales and their tellers often revel in violence and obscenity. The violence that concludes the "Tale of the Faithful Wife," where O'Connor pushes his wife into the sea and where lady O'Connor shoots her serving woman without letting her tell her side of the story, reveals the tale to be inhabited by a group of characters who will quickly and, with only small reason, turn on one of their own, much like the cast of characters who turn on Christy. Moreover, both

Morteen and Dirane revel in sexual fantasies and dirty tales; in fact, Synge fails to record the last tale Dirane tells him because it is merely, in his words, “a rude anecdote not worth recording” (86). Thus Synge explodes the myth of the “wise and simple” peasant of the urban eastern Irish imagination and reinvents him as something less savory to his Irish nationalist theater audience but, nonetheless, based in Irish folk traditions.

Yeats, of course, defended Synge’s rendering of the peasant from the stage of the Abbey Theatre, in his poetry, and in his prose. In “J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time,” written the year after Synge’s death, Yeats writes, “As I read *The Aran Islands* right through for the first time since he showed it me in manuscript, I come to understand how much knowledge of the real life of Ireland went to the creation of” his dramatic works (*Early Essays* 236). By this time, the fairies had receded in Yeats’s writing and the peasant was no longer central, and here he strikingly defines Synge’s folkloristic work in terms of its authenticity. After Synge, Yeats himself would begin to promote the value of a less insular Ireland, an Ireland that looked to the culture of the Continent and the East for artistic inspiration and cultural comparison. However, this phase in Yeats’s development occurs after he stops publishing folklore, and so the canon of his folklore collecting remains specifically national and the business of collecting falls to Lady Gregory.

Aran Real and Ideal: Lady Gregory’s Challenge to Synge

In 1901, after Lady Gregory read the typescript of *The Aran Islands*, she wrote to Synge to express what she and Yeats believed would improve the book’s chances for publication. Speaking “with [Yeats’s] authority,” she wrote, “The book would be greatly

improved by the addition of some more fairy belief” (quoted in Greene 121). Alongside Synge, Gregory also published a book of folklore in 1907. *A Book of Saints and Wonders* is a slim volume mostly of legends surrounding Ireland’s native saints. It was not until 1920 that she published her most influential collection, *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*.¹⁰ This volume is the last major folkloristic publication of the Revival period, and it consists of her collections from around Coole but also from the Aran Islands. The volume is by far her most important collection of oral tradition, or as she called it, borrowing from Yeats’s phrase,¹¹ her “big book of folklore” (*Visions and Beliefs* 5), valued above all her other, much smaller collections by Yeats and by scholars of her work. Of the volume, Elizabeth Coxhead writes that it “is the principle record of the folklore-collecting which furnished the Renaissance with so much of its inspiration and material” (5). And Patricia Lysaght claims that *Visions and Beliefs* “is Lady Gregory’s most substantial and powerful collection of folklore,” which, she argues, has not garnered enough attention or respect as an important document of the Irish oral tradition (261). Not only does *Visions and Beliefs* counter Synge’s focus on the international tale by focusing singularly on the supernatural legend, but it also contains a subtle challenge to Synge’s claims to authenticity by revising the texts and persona his major source for folk tales, Pat Dirane, whom Gregory met and collected from as well. Gregory presents Dirane not as a storyteller of the international tradition but rather as a visionary who is tapped into the well of fairy lore. Before examining the rival texts, we must understand Gregory’s own ethnographic project in order to account for this strange discrepancy.

Like Yeats, Gregory collected a variety of oral lore, though none of it seems to have captured her imagination like the fairy legend. Her collections include only one

short volume of international tales called *The Kiltartan Wonder Book* (1910), which contains folk tales in Gregory's Kiltartanese with heavy Irish localization. According to Lucy McDiarmid and Maureen Waters, Gregory's folklore collecting "was grounded in the national and the local" and her interest in the international approach folklore was slight (xxvi). Furthermore, Lysaght notes "Lady Gregory's own admission that 'she never cared much for' the ordinary folk tale (what she called 'the long rambling stories')" (266). In *The Kiltartan Wonder Book*, Gregory published one story called "Shawneen," a version of a widely known international tale in which a young man of low birth kills a family of giants and then slays a dragon in order to marry a king's daughter (a combination of Aarne-Thompson types 1640 and 300). This tale gives us an opportunity to see how Gregory altered her international tales into stories that fit the aesthetics and mores of Irish cultural nationalism.

Gregory claims that she collected a version of this tale "in a workhouse" and that it was "continued at my own door by a piper from County Kerry" (*Kiltartan Book*, 210), though from whom exactly she does not report. According to Mary Helen Thuente, Gregory shared this tale with Yeats, as it is nearly identical his "Dreams that Have No Moral" in *The Celtic Twilight*. In her brief textual note to the volume, Gregory claimed, "I have not changed a word in these stories as they were told to me, but having heard some of them in different versions from different old people, I have sometimes taken a passage or phrase from one and put it in another where it seemed to fit" (*Kiltartan Book*, 210). However, Thuente implies that in "Shawneen" Gregory replaced the protagonists' names—Jack and Bill as Yeats records them—with the standard Irish ones, Shawneen and Shamus, ensuring that the international tale appeared native to Ireland, and she notes

Gregory likely collected the tale in English, rather than Irish (150-52). Thunete further points out that Gregory likely bowdlerized the original oral version, as Yeats's contains an episode in which one of the heroes sleeps with the other's wife (Thunete 152; *Mythologies* 90).

Clearly Gregory's claims to accuracy are subject to much dispute, and the volume presents itself more like a children's book than a serious collection of folklore. It includes color illustrations by Margaret Gregory and a dedication to her son Robert Gregory, which reads: "To R. R. G. A Kiltartan Child."¹² Gregory confirms her intended audience when she writes in the text's note: "And who can say whether these have travelled from east to west, or from west to east, for the barony of Kiltartan, in common with at least three continents, holds fragments of the wonder tales told in the childhood of the world" (*Kiltartan Book* 210). She may acknowledge the international tropes of the tales she publishes in *The Kiltartan Wonder Book*, but at the same time she has clearly labored to domesticate them into Irish tales for Irish children by removing the vulgarity and, perhaps, the internationality that Synge found so prevalent on Aran.

Regardless of how they have been marketed in the twentieth century, international tales (fairy tales, as they are often called) were not aimed exclusively at children in the oral cultures where they thrived. Henry Glassie explains that the genre comes in two iterations: "The example, illustrating human failings, is one genre for children. The other is the 'fireside tale' — ... the fairytale, the *Märchen*, the lengthy fiction of wide distribution" (*Stars*, 230). Many of these adult fireside tales are extremely bawdy and violent; they are instructional, like the children's tales, but they deal with far more complex perspectives and problems. In largely oral cultures these would not have been

hidden from children, but they failed to fit the standards of Victorian taste and sensibility and would have been considered inappropriate for young audiences. Synge's "rude anecdote" may be an example of this type of tale, and through his omission of it we can see that he too was not immune to the Victorian impulse to censor. But his tales of the faithful and unfaithful wives certainly are not meant to pique the interest of children and engage instead with issues of infidelity and domestic violence as key themes.

Another key difference between the international tales that appear in *The Kiltartan Wonder Book* and Synge's *The Aran Islands* is their engagement with the supernatural. Wonder tales, a large subset of the international tale, are by definition supernatural and juxtapose a spare fictional realism with magical events. The most popular international tales today (those that have been incorporated into children's literature and film), are in fact wonder tales, and all but one of the tales Gregory collects fall into this category.¹³ *The Kiltartan Wonder Book* abounds with talking animals that transform into human beings and magical objects that help the heroes toward their goals, as these are the staples of the wonder tale tradition. But not all international tales showcase the supernatural, as Synge's tales attest. Two of his tales, "The Giant Slayer" (similar to Gregory's "Shawneen") and "The Goose that Lays the Golden Eggs" incorporate supernatural elements, but "The Tale of the Faithful Wife" and "The Tale of the Unfaithful Wife" contain no magical events. Unlike the wonder tale, which often ends in marriage for the hero, these tales deal with issues of marriage and fidelity rather than courtship and adventure. Inevitably, they appeal to a more specifically mature audience, while the wonder tale traditionally appeals to audiences of diverse ages. Gregory was attracted to the wonder tale because it fit more comfortably into her book of tales from

“the childhood of the world,” but the genre was also more congruous with the magical landscape imagined in the fairy legend that she and Yeats promoted as endemic to authentic Irish folklore. The non-magical international tale does not appear in Gregory’s canon as it does in Synge’s (and even Yeats’s),¹⁴ and the genre as a whole is given little attention in her folkloristic career in favor of fairy legends, political ballads, and, of course, the mythological sagas.¹⁵

We do not know if Gregory collected any of the tales she published in *The Kiltartan Wonder Book* on Aran, as she does not record the names of her informants or their locations. But Gregory, coincidentally, was on the Aran Islands at the time of Synge’s first visit in June of 1898 when he was collecting tales from Dirane. She had first visited Aran in 1887 and had begun collecting folklore there in 1893 (Pethica, ““A Young Man’s Ghost”” 4). The two writers did not meet each other on Aran but did so later that month at Coole Park when Synge was invited there at Yeats’s suggestion. Gregory later recalled in *Our Irish Theatre* (1913),

I first saw Synge in the north island of Aran. I was staying there, gathering folklore, talking to the people, and felt quite angry when I passed another outsider walking here and there, talking also to the people. I was jealous of not being alone on the island among the fishers and sea-weed gatherers. I did not speak to the stranger, nor was he inclined to speak to me; he also looked on me as an intruder, I only heard his name. (73)

Gregory, alongside Yeats, would become Synge’s colleague at the Abbey Theatre, but these early interactions indicate the profound tension at the foundation of their relationship. Evidence of Gregory’s personal distance from Synge shows in her calling

him both an “outsider” and, perhaps most jarringly, a “stranger.” One cannot help but hear the pejorative resonances of this term from *Cathleen ni Houlihan*’s colonial metaphor of “strangers in the house.” It seems unlikely that Gregory, ruminating on Synge some thirteen years later, uses the word unaware of such allusions, and in doing so she reveals her lasting sense that he had trespassed on her folkloristic turf. In her diaries, which are full of detailed and often colorful descriptions of the people she hosted at Coole, she notes their first meeting with a noticeably terse entry, “[June] 27—Mr. Synge came, from Aran—” (187). The details of his stay at Coole she otherwise keeps to herself.

James Pethica has recently traced Synge’s ambivalence toward Gregory, as well as her outright hostility toward him, and Pethica locates the seed of this hostility in Gregory’s “significant possessiveness about the islands” (“A Young Man’s Ghost” 4). Of Gregory’s critique of Synge’s 1901 draft, which included other recommendations such as leaving the Aran Islands unnamed in order to lend “a curious dreaminess” to the work (quoted in Greene 121), Pethica argues that she reveals her project to depict the islands as both “spiritually rich (and distinctively Irish)” (“A Young Man’s Ghost” 5). According to Pethica, she wished to recruit Aran “as a representative, almost generic, repository of Irish folklore and literary inspiration, and as a place which might serve her own and Yeats’s broader agenda of portraying rural Ireland as the source of an unbroken oral tradition, of pre-Christian belief, and as an unsullied well-spring of imagination” (“A Young Man’s Ghost” 5). Pethica’s assessment aligns Gregory’s interests directly alongside those of Yeats, and, in fact, her folkloristic project began as an effort to kindle a close relationship with the poet and support his literary and political interests.

Gregory began collecting folklore before she met Yeats, though her earliest work appears to have been lost.¹⁶ Nonetheless, her early curiosity in the subject was tempted further by Yeats's publication of *The Celtic Twilight* in 1893. Upon first meeting him in 1894, she wrote, "I met Yates [sic.] looking every inch a poet, though I think his prose 'The Celtic Twilight' is the best thing he has done" (*Diaries* 32). In 1896 she met him again and was equally drawn to him and his engagement with folklore, writing that he was "full of charm & interest & the Celtic revival—I have been collecting fairy lore since his visit—& am surprised to find how full of it are the minds of the people—& how strong the belief in the invisible world around us—" (*Diaries* 118). Clearly her desire for folklore is entangled with her desire to foster her relationship with the young poet, and as early as March of 1897 she began sharing her fieldwork with him (*Diaries* 137). Later that year she even allowed one of his folklore articles to take the place of one of her own in the journal *The Nineteenth Century*, perhaps first establishing her pattern of self-erasure for Yeats's literary benefit (*Diaries* 156). According to Sinéad Garrigan Mattar, "for many of the first years of their relationship she willingly sacrificed the material she collected on the altar of Yeats's genius. He produced six long folklore articles at the end of the nineties based on her notes" ("Folklore" 252). While Gregory would depart greatly from Yeats's subjective methods, her aims in collecting were in part to attract his interest, to support and promote his particular brand of Irish folklore, and to bolster his literary and spiritual aspirations. Unlike Yeats and Synge, whose desire for authenticity colors their collections, Gregory tended to be less concerned with finding the real Ireland among the peasantry and more intent on finding the Ireland Yeats imagined.

According to Garrigan Mattar, Gregory viewed the peasantry “as authentic but voiceless constituents of a harmonious, varied, and rugged landscape. They are ‘a picturesque people’, needing care as a child needs care, and as such she can admire them and control them” (“Wage” 58). If Yeats, as Howes suggests, feminized the peasantry (37), then Gregory’s impulse was to infantilize them, which may have been a function of both her gender and her position in the Ascendency. Gregory’s diaries evince her sense of proprietorship over the peasants around Coole and their traditions, especially when she writes of “the simplicity & sincerity of *my people’s* fairy talk” (125, my emphasis). Gregory’s perspective of the rural poor aligns closely with Yeats’s, and she labored to fit the traditions she discovered within his vision of Irish peasant lore. She too was interested in the fairies and the supernatural beliefs of the rural poor, sometimes using the term “fairy lore” exclusively, especially early in her diaries (118, 124-25). The legends of the average peasant were her focus and the narrative traditions of professional storytellers rarely impact her folkloristic perspective. Even the storytellers who provided her material for *The Kiltartan Wonder Book* were, according to Padraic Colum, “not professionals” (Foreword 6), and she does not mention in her diaries anything of this widespread tradition.

Lady Layard, one of Gregory’s visitors who accompanied her while collecting folklore in the Burren region, offers a record of Gregory’s desire for supernatural legends and her selective methods for finding them. She reveals that Gregory likely asked her informants specifically for fairy legends, as she detailed Gregory’s search for “stories of the fairies of which she is trying to collect a quantity for publication. They are firmly believed in by all the peasants hereabouts, & Mr. Dhooly who is our present cook spins

long yarns about them & gives Augusta valuable accounts which she immediately writes down” (*Diaries* 147, footnote 122). If Gregory went looking specifically for “stories of the fairies” she no doubt found them in abundance. Gregory also only troubled Yeats to join her if she found “stories worth having” (*Diaries* 151), indicating not only her selectivity but also her desire to match her findings with Yeats’s interests.

That Synge failed to make the changes to *The Aran Islands* that Gregory suggested indicates his early resistance to Yeats’s influence and Gregory’s conformity. While Gregory made it her purpose to provide support for Yeats, Synge’s motivations were far more centered on his own notions of Irish folklore, regardless of whether these aligned with or opposed Yeats’s literary and folkloristic goals. The year after Synge’s death in 1909, Gregory wrote the following to Yeats, confirming that her animosity only grew with Synge’s success as a playwright:

one ... doesn’t want to say what was true, he was ungracious to his fellow workers—authors & actors—ready in accepting praise, grudging in giving it. I wonder if he ever felt a moment’s gratitude for all we went through fighting his battle over the Playboy? On tour he thought of his own plays always, gave no help to ours—if he repeated compliments sometimes, they were to his own. (quoted in Pethica, “A Young Man’s Ghost” 17)¹⁷

As Pethica points out, Gregory’s feelings disturb Yeats’s fantasy of unity among the three writers. Folklore was another point of division. Gregory intended *Visions and Beliefs* to be, in part, a corrective text to Synge’s dramatic and folkloristic work, one that sought to reestablish the supremacy of the supernatural within Irish folklore, as Yeats depicted it. Like Yeats, Gregory places fairy belief in the foreground of her most extensive collection

of folklore. Even though the volume treats various subjects, from folk medicine to ghosts, Gregory gives her preface wholly over to educating her audience about Ireland's fairy belief and thereby sets the tone of the collection. With an air of Twilight mysticism, she concludes the preface by placing herself as the mediator between those who know the fairies and her modern readership: "This is the news I have been given of the people of the Sidhe by many who have seen them and some who have known their power" (11). She aligns her book with Yeats's earlier philosophy of the Irish peasant in his terms of both vision and belief and establishes herself against Synge's hasty rejection of such traditions.

If Synge's collection, by showcasing Pat Dirane's international tales in favor of fairy legends, suggests that Yeats neglected a vital component of Irish folklore, then Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs* challenges Synge's depiction of storytelling on Aran more directly by giving her own account of that very teller. In perhaps the most intriguing section of the collection, "Seers and Healers," where Gregory offers the fascinating legends surrounding the life of Bidy Early, she also offers a sketch of a "seer" on Aran whom she calls Old Deruane of Inishmaan. Gregory describes their encounter:

He was one of the evening visitors to the cottage I stayed in, when the fishers had come home and had eaten, and the fire was stirred and flashed on the dried mackerel and conger eels hanging over the wide hearth.... The men would sit in a half-circle on the floor, passing the lighted pipe from one to another; the women would find some work with yarn or wheel. (73)

The scene Gregory describes nearly matches Synge's description of his encounter with Dirane, whose fireside tales entertained both Synge and members of the island community who crowded into the kitchen of the house to hear him tell the "Tale of the Faithful Wife" (21). It is quite likely that "Old Deruane" and "Pat Dirane" are, in fact, the same storyteller. That the two surnames are spelled slightly differently should not be discouraging, as the proper spelling of Synge's storyteller's name is already a disputed point. According to Edward J. O'Brien, "The old story-teller whom Synge met on his first visit to the islands ... is vividly remembered by the people whom I have met, as Pat Doran, who 'could tell more lies in a day than four of us could in a month'" (x). Shifts in the language may be to blame for the discrepancies in the storyteller's recorded name, as Irish surnames might be spelled differently as they are anglicized entirely or partly. Additionally, in largely oral societies, one wonders if proper spellings of family names even apply. Nonetheless, both collectors may have recorded the name incorrectly either on purpose out of respect for the old man's privacy or unintentionally due to the unfamiliar accents of the islanders.

Despite the slightly differing surnames, many of the details Gregory offers of Deruane's life match those of Synge's storyteller. Both speak English fluently because of time spent away from the island. Gregory's informant tells her, "I went to earn in England in the hard times, and I was for five quarters in a country town called Manchester" (73-74). Synge accounts for Dirane's fluency with less precision, saying it was "due, I believe, to the months he spent in the English provinces working at the harvest when he was a young man" (19). Later in Synge's account Dirane also claims to have "wandered when he was a young man," though where exactly the text does not say

(66). Small, seemingly insignificant details also make it clear that the informants are the same. Gregory's Deruane describes himself more than once as living in "my little tent" (74, 75), which echoes Synge's description of Dirane's living quarters at their last meeting: "He ... took me into 'his little tint,' a miserable hovel where he spends the night" (66). Moreover, Synge's storyteller, as he describes early in his account of Aran, is lame and walks with two sticks, while Gregory's Deruane tells her that "*they* [i.e., the fairies] have given me a touch here in the right leg, so that it's the same as dead" (79). Synge, on the other hand, explains that Dirane was crippled "by an attack of the 'old hin' (*i.e.* the influenza), and had been complaining ever since in addition to his rheumatism" (19). Finally, that Gregory ascribes a surname to her informant indicates that he died since her encounter with him, as she does not give the names of living informants (202), and according to Synge, Dirane died between his first and second visits.

If the informant Gregory describes is in fact Synge's storyteller, then we have a unique opportunity to see how folkloristic claims of authenticity are unreliable; while Pat Dirane and Old Deruane (and Pat Doran) appear to be one in the same, their texts, as compiled by these two collectors, at once reflect but are at odds with each other. Synge gives priority to Dirane's international tales, offering four that take up a considerable portion of Part One of *The Aran Islands*; they include not only "The Tale of the Faithful Wife" and "The Tale of the Unfaithful Wife," but his version of "The Giant Slayer" and "The Goose that Laid the Golden Eggs" as well (19-24, 31-33, 46-51, and 55-57). Nonetheless, Synge does record some fairy legends from Dirane that the storyteller seems to have told to Gregory as well.

After recounting two of Dirane's lengthy international tales, Synge explains, "at times I turn the conversation to his experiences of the fairies" (42). He goes on to catalogue Dirane's fairy encounters:

He has seen a good many of them, he says, in different parts of the island, especially in the sandy districts north of the slip. They are about a yard high, with caps like the 'peelers' pulled down over their faces. On one occasion he saw them playing ball in the evening just above the slip, and he says I must avoid that place in the morning or after nightfall, for fear they might do me mischief.

He has seen two women who were 'away' with them, one a young married woman, the other a girl. The woman was standing by a wall, at a spot he described to me with great care, looking out towards the north.

Another night he heard a voice crying out in Irish, 'A mháthair tá mé marbh' ('O Mother, I'm killed'), and in the morning there was blood on the wall of his house, and a child in a house not far off was dead. (42)

Synge accounts for Dirane's fairy belief in three short paragraphs, following them with the old man's secret for protection against them: "Take a sharp needle ... and stick it under the collar of your coat, and not one of them will be able to have power over you." Gregory does not record the detail about the protective needle, and the belief attracts Synge perhaps the most because he finds it fit for international comparison, remarking, "Iron is a common talisman with barbarians" and that the sanctity of the needle is similar to "a folk-belief that is common in Brittany" (42).

Gregory's account of Old Deruane repeats the same legends that Synge records, in addition to many others, and does so with far more detail. Deruane also tells of "two fine women" who were stolen by the fairies, and Gregory fleshes out Synge's truncated version of Dirane's description of the "woman ... standing by a wall ... looking out towards the north." Dirane's account of the woman, according to Synge, is told "with great care," and Gregory respectfully reproduces it more fully and corrects Synge's somewhat careless elision of its details. Deruane tells her:

I saw her pattern walking on the north side of the wall, on the road near me, but she said nothing. And my body began to shake, and I was going to get to the south side of the wall, to put it between us; but then I said, "Where is God?" and I walked on and passed her, and she looked aside at me but she didn't speak. And I heard her after me for a good while, but I never looked back, for it's best not to look back at them. (74)

If the informant is the same, then in these two collections we can see the imprint of each collector on the storyteller's text. Synge's lack of interest in the fairies is evident in the single sentence he provides in mere reference to this legend, despite the care his informant takes to tell it to him. Synge may not have been interested in the teller's reliance on Christian belief, which, in turn, likely attracted Gregory. One gets the sense from Synge's text that the storyteller is detached from the legends he tells, as they seem somewhat by rote, the same as many that have been told to collectors before. Gregory's account of the tale, however, reveals the personal and immediate terror that her storyteller felt when he encountered this woman's "pattern" as well as his intense belief in the supernatural event that occurred before him.

Gregory's record of Deruane's other legends offers various revisions of Synge's limited text, including a more detailed account of the disruptive noises that he heard one night that resulted in "great splashes and drops of blood" on the flagstones of a woman's house (*Visions and Beliefs* 75). Some small details between the collectors' accounts do not quite match, as is the case in Gregory's version of this legend, which places the blood on flagstones instead of a wall and does not record the subsequent death of a child as Synge's does. Nonetheless, the similarities in the two accounts far outweigh the minor differences, which again may be evidence of manipulation by the collectors or simply their (or the teller's) forgetfulness of small details. Because Synge admits to editing Dirane's fairy legends, conveyed with great care but hastily retold, it is tempting to assume that Gregory's account is the more accurate; but, in fact, neither collector may claim an authentic portrayal of the storyteller.

Synge's methods may seem careless in this section, but they reveal his own strategy for challenging Yeats's selectivity. Synge includes his request for Dirane's fairy legends, and with this seemingly unimportant detail he unmask the selective methods of previous collectors and thereby critiques Yeats's preference for the single genre. By asking Dirane for fairy legends and recording them (although with an evident lack of interest), Synge demonstrates how the collector's expressed desires can affect the content provided by his informant. Synge's inclusion of his request for fairy lore provides one explanation for why Gregory and Yeats's account of oral folk traditions differs so greatly from his own. In the search for the supernatural, Yeats and Gregory likely asked informants for the types of lore they sought. Fairy legends, no doubt, would have satisfied their sense of Irish folkloristic authenticity, and, in asking for them, they may

have failed to request other types of lore, especially lore that seemed inauthentic. One can only wonder whether Deruane told Gregory any of his international tales and, if so, if she simply failed to publish them. And perhaps Synge, himself, asked Dirane specifically for this genre, as it satisfied his desire for comparative folklore and international connections. Nonetheless, Synge's request for fairy lore at this moment in the text is important because, while collectors are often at pains to record and recount the texts of their informants, they are less likely to relate their own words with the same precision and reveal their own preferences and notions of authenticity. Yeats and Synge, because their collections are subjective and include the persona of the collector, sometimes choose to reveal such requests, as Synge does here and Yeats does when he asks Paddy Flynn if he has ever seen the fairies.

As Pethica points out, Gregory's methods diverge significantly from Yeats's, and subsequently the tone and style in which she presents her folk texts is distinct. Pethica writes, "Whereas Yeats's primary interest in folklore was always the possibility of finding confirmation of 'actual experience of the supernatural' (*Autobiographies* 400), Lady Gregory's interest was primarily anthropological, focusing on the manner in which peasants explained supernatural experiences and integrated them into their view of the world" ("Our Kathleen" 215). Pethica remarks that Gregory's anthropological desire to understand the peasant world view tempered Yeats's impulse to stage the supernatural, thereby making *Cathleen ni Houlihan* a far more successful play than Yeats's other supernatural dramas. In this same vein, Gregory's anthropological approach allowed *Visions and Beliefs* to stand as a far superior folkloristic document than any of Yeats's collections. Because her text is objective and largely obscures the part of the collector,

Gregory hides her own manipulations and protects herself from much of the criticism launched at both Yeats and Synge for their collector-centered work. But Gregory's seeming objectivity simply obscures her influence over her own text.

The legends in *Visions and Beliefs*, organized by loose categories but otherwise recorded as a fragmented collection of oral accounts of supernatural experience, appear to flow unadulterated from the source of authentic Irish lore. Gregory's style may challenge the subjective, collector-centered work of her male counterparts by making the informant's text primary in her collection, but her methods ultimately work toward proving Yeats's ends. Yeats's influence over the collection is marked by his own commentary through footnotes and, indeed, through his actual presence in the text wherein Gregory describes his seeking treatment from a traditional healer. She also allowed two of his essays to be included at the back of the collection. But Yeats's voice, now more concerned with using folklore to prove his occult interests, is made to seem peripheral, and Gregory follows Hyde's injunction to record informants words precisely, even though she often fails to record their names. Gregory achieves a seeming authenticity by the sheer number of voices of the peasantry reproduced unencumbered by the folklorist's perspective. But the collection is undoubtedly a selection of these voices that speak only to prove the folklorist's theory of the visionary peasantry. As always, Gregory is the invisible manipulator of texts who enables the voices she finds most valuable to speak clearly by erasing her own influence. *Visions and Beliefs* is not an authentic view of the Irish peasantry any more than is *The Aran Islands* or *The Celtic Twilight*. Instead, each collection is a reflection of its author who, in the end, has the power to choose and reject what he or she publishes and calls authentic lore.

Conclusion:

Why did the overarching Revivalist view embrace the fairies and reject the international tale? From an Anglocentric perspective, fairy belief is wholly foreign and arcane, its logic obscured behind a system of taboos and euphemisms. Its laws seem to have little reason behind them, and it is not an easily discernable system. Ironically, the belief in the seemingly random authority of the fairies (the “gentry,” as they are often called) seems to derive in part from the random authority of colonialism, where nonsensical rules must be obeyed regardless of whether or not they make sense to the person obeying them. The gentry, after all, do strange things, like invite themselves into your home and pose specific though unexplained demands. Yeats and Gregory’s fascination with legends served to exoticize the belief system within its own culture. The Anglo-Irish Revivalists sought in Irish oral traditions a version of Irishness that was wholly *other*, through which the nation might become fascinated with itself and thereby seize the culture of its past.

Since the publication of Yeats’s three books of folklore and Gregory’s *Visions and Beliefs*, the fairy legend has become a genre of considerable heft in Irish folklore collections, not to mention academia and the tourism trade. As a result of their efforts, throughout the twentieth century fairy belief has dominated the discussion of Irish folklore. Indeed, it is an alluring system, seductive in its glamour and contradictions, which begs attention and analysis, but it invited the nation to look inward at itself rather than outward for a more global perspective. Ireland would remain inward-looking into independence, and, in many ways, the nation maintains its resistance to international or

foreign influence. Irish oral traditions, in particular, are still often viewed as valuable only in their ability to reflect the nation's essence, while transnational traditions—their migration into and out of the nation, their crossing of national and cultural borders—are much neglected.

The remainder of this project takes a cue from Synge and considers the Irish oral tradition from a transnational perspective. I reject the notion that Irish folk traditions are singularly national. This is not to say that Synge's approach was correct and that Yeats and Gregory's was flawed. Both perspectives are valuable, but unfortunately only one has been embraced. The following chapters examine two genres of folk text claimed by nations and regions other than Ireland that are nonetheless part of the Irish tradition. Coincidentally, these genres were largely neglected during the Revival and remain so in popular perceptions of what constitutes Irish folklore today. My aim, from this point, will be to examine the pre-national comingling of folk traditions and the spread of Irish oral traditions to other nations through groups whose Irishness is under suspicion and doubt.

¹ James Pethica remarks on the formality of this particular letter, as by this point Yeats and Gregory had established a more casual rapport. See “Our Kathleen,” page 208.

² Lenihan's *Meeting the Other Crowd* is perhaps the best contemporary collection of Irish fairy legends from living or recently deceased informants. Lenihan's collection, at once modeled on and highly critical of Thomas Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, offers the names and verbatim texts of his informants followed by commentary that objectively explains the legends in the context of fairy culture. Croker's legends (though not verbatim and much elaborated by the collector) are followed by similarly objective commentary that explains his texts to his English audience in the context of the equally foreign and fantastic culture of rural Ireland.

³ Alan Price, the editor of the *Prose* volume of Synge's *Collected Works*, offers this letter in a footnote to *In Connemara*. The letter is dated July 13, 1905 (*Collected Works* 283).

⁴ Glassie argues that this was the primary function of folk tales within poor isolated communities. He writes, “In this life, confidence is the reward. While extending hospitality to the neighbors round about, I repetitively ratify a contract of mutual support. It is not that I like the neighbors or that the neighbors like me. ... I will meet them tomorrow, on the lane, in the bog. ... When troubles come, the neighbors help” (*Stars*, 25).

⁵ Kiberd notes that Synge took Hyde’s volume as well as his notes on Scottish folklorist John Francis Campbell’s work with him to the Aran Islands (151). While Yeats embraces the artistry of Hyde’s folklore collecting, he found Campbell’s uninspiring, despite its closeness to much of what Yeats and other Revivalists were uncovering in Ireland. Garrigan Mattar notes that Yeats found Campbell’s collections “boring” (*Primitivism* 61).

⁶ Garrigan Mattar points out that Kiberd fails to consider Douglas Hyde as a Revivalist equally committed to comparative folklore (*Primitivism* 168).

⁷ This is the case in some iterations of the tale, but Dirane’s tale does not make this explicit.

⁸ According to Kiberd, this quotation comes from Synge’s note that accompanied the original publication of this tale in the *New Ireland Review* in November of 1898, titled “A Story from Inishmaan” (152).

⁹ We cannot forget that, according to one of Synge’s source stories for *The Playboy*, the patricide escapes to the United States.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Coxhead quotes Gregory from her journals in her Foreword to the 1970 edition of *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, page 5.

¹¹ See Yeats’s letter, December 22, 1898 (*Collected Letters* 2.323). Also included in my text on page 3 of this chapter.

¹² Colum does not include this dedication in his version of *The Kiltartan Wonder Book*, which concludes his collection, which also includes *The Kiltartan Poetry Book* and *The Kiltartan History Book*. However, a 1911 Dublin edition contains the dedication “To R. R. G. A Kiltartan Child” and can be viewed the internet archive of the American Library Association:

<<http://www.archive.org/stream/kiltartanwonderb00gregrich#page/n9/mode/2up>>

¹³ The exception is “The Woman that Was a Great Fool,” which tells of a wife that keeps giving the household money and food provisions away. She makes a series of similar errors until the couple has no food left, and they decide to leave home to beg on the roads. On the way out, the husband tells her, “Let you draw the door after you” (*Kiltartan Books*, 192), and she takes it off its hinges and takes it with her. A group of robbers moves into the house and the man and woman drop the door on them in the night. The frightened robbers run away, leaving their booty behind, and so the wife’s foolishness felicitously leads the couple to great wealth.

¹⁴ Yeats includes a version of international tale type 1535 in his *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* with “Donald and His Neighbors,” which will be treated at greater length in Chapter Three. He also includes Patrick Kennedy’s “The Haughty Princess,” which tells of a stubborn princess who refuses to marry but is married by her father to a beggarman. Her new husband makes her do domestic work in order to humble her and eventually reveals himself to be a king. The tale has clear (though kindlier) echoes of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Another tale, “The Jackdaw,” involves a man teaching a bird to

speak, and while the premise is somewhat fantastic, it seems he uses no magic in doing so.

¹⁵ I suspect that another reason Gregory and Yeats paid little attention to narrative folk tales is that the sagas provided them with a more ancient (and thus, more authentic) source for the narrative oral tradition. Indeed, many of the Irish hero tales contain tropes from the Fenian Cycle and may derive from it. It may have seemed that the manuscripts were closer to the source while the surviving oral tradition had been diluted over time.

¹⁶ A diary entry from November-December 1893 reads, “I wrote out my notes on Arran—they ought to make a good magazine article” (18). Pethica’s note for this entry reads, “There is no evidence to suggest she completed the proposed article, nor do her ‘notes’ on the trip appear to have survived” (18).

¹⁷ Pethica’s source for this quotation reads: “Lady Gregory to Yeats, ?12 April 1910, Berg Collection” (20).

Chapter Three:

Irish Folk Songs in “Anglo-Saxon” Appalachia

In 1916 an English folklorist named Cecil Sharp arrived in the southern Appalachian region of the United States in order to collect English folk songs from its rural inhabitants. Today Sharp is known as one of the earliest and most influential collectors of Appalachian folk material, but he is also accused of having various biases against types of musical traditions within the Appalachian Mountains that did not match his agenda. Sharp, who collected folk songs chiefly in Somerset before coming to the Appalachians, was interested primarily in English musical traditions, and his collections elide other national and racial musical strains. Many of these strains have been recovered in Sharps’s wake, but scholars have failed to examine fully the Irish musical traditions that exist in the Appalachian region. Sharp’s racial bias against so-called Celtic music, and against Irish music in particular, accounts for the gap in our knowledge about Irish music in Appalachia. Until now, scholars of Sharp’s work have looked at his English and Appalachian collections separately, with English folklore scholars often dismissing the importance of his Appalachian period¹ and Appalachian scholars focusing primarily on his work in the United States.² The aim of this chapter will be to examine Sharp’s collecting on both sides of the Atlantic, to reveal how his project both mirrors and resists the Celtic Revival, and to make clear the impact of his assumptions on subsequent Appalachian folklore scholarship and collecting.

Understanding Sharp’s nationalist motivations and his racial taxonomy of musical traditions within the British Isles uncovers the political impetus behind his methods of

collection and publication on both continents. Sharp's impulse to locate cultural purity through folk song betrays his resistance to the hybridity of culture inevitably engendered by migration and settlement of diverse peoples across the British Isles. Moreover, his Darwinist theories of musical evolution reveal his nationalist project to construct a culturally homogenous vision of England uncorrupted by foreign and modern influences. In his collections from both sides of the Atlantic, Sharp left much Irish influenced material highly edited or unpublished. In his English collections he removed Irish references altogether, but his Appalachian collection reveals his anxiety over the so-called Celtic strains of the songs he collected both there and in England. Sharp's argument that Appalachian folk songs were purely English in origin is troubled by a number of songs in the Appalachian tradition that also exist in the Irish canon. Despite (or perhaps because of) his status as an English nationalist, Sharp's project parallels that of Yeats and Gregory, who likewise denied the hybridity of Irish folk traditions and omitted certain folk forms in favor of others. And like Yeats, Sharp's blindness to the importance of Ulster Scots traditions—their hybrid composition that reveals a fertile comingling of Irish and British cultures—betrays the nationalist bias of his arguments for pure Englishness of Appalachian folk song.

While there are a number of conduits through which Irish immigrants or the influence of their traditions might have entered the Appalachian region, Ulster Scots settlers and their descendents are the most likely transmitters of these songs to the region. While he was collecting songs, Sharp ignored the presence of the so-called "Scots Irish," a cultural group descended from Ulster Scots immigrants who settled heavily the Appalachian region; furthermore, American scholars and collectors since have assumed

the pure cultural Britishness of the descendents of these immigrants. Reconceptualizing Scots Irish identity in terms of cultural hybridity rather than ethnic purity allows us to realize their role in disseminating Irish as well as British song traditions in America. Considering the historical presence and cultural ambiguity of Ulster Scots immigrants unveils the lacunae in Sharp's and subsequent collectors' perceptions of the origins of Appalachian folk song. The following analysis investigates four folk songs that coexist in the Irish and Appalachian oral traditions. Two of these, "Molly Bán" and "Barbara Allen," Sharp collected, published, and identified as English in origin, while two others, "Rose Connolly" and "The Moonshiner," he collected in the Appalachians but failed to publish.

"Rose Connolly" Revisited

In 1979 American folklorist D. K. Wilgus published an essay titled "'Rose Connolly': An Irish Ballad," where he argued that a murder ballad popular in the oral traditions of the southern Appalachian region of the United States, generally thought to be an American composition, was in fact from the Irish oral tradition. The song "Rose Connolly," also known as "Down in the Willow Garden," tells the story of a young woman who is poisoned, stabbed, and finally drowned by her lover, who eventually hangs for his crime. The murder ballad is no longer popular in Ireland, and there are far fewer records of its presence there than have been reported in Appalachia. But Wilgus presents convincing evidence of the song's Irish roots, which leave its point of origin nearly indubitable. He points to Edward Bunting's *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840), which contains an air called "Rose Connolly" collected from a harper in Coleraine in

1811 (Bunting ix, 14). Bunting published no lyrics with the air, but Wilgus notes, “The melody is an unusual but recognizable form of ‘Rosin the Beau,’ the tune to which ‘Rose Connoley’ is invariably sung in the United States” (172-73). Wilgus also offers a twentieth-century version of the song that he located in the National Folklore Collection in Dublin. This version, collected by Mairtin O Mainnin from Joe Joyce in Galway in 1929, is below (Wilgus 173-74; NFC 633) alongside an Appalachian version of performed by Frank Proffitt and Nathan Hicks in Sugar Grove, North Carolina in 1939 (White 248-49):

Rosy O Connell (Irish traditional):

It was on a Saturday morning
 my true love and I did meet
 Yonder a soddely garden
 our sorrows we did relate

2

A bottle of poison I brought her
 of which she did not know
 which made me murder my darling
 all under the banks below

3

Rosy O Connell she loved me
 as dear as she loved her life
 It was my whole intention
 to make her my loving wife

4

When it was the devil's temptation
 that soon entangled me
 which made me murder my darling
 all under the ivy tree

5

My mother she reared me tenderly
 for seven long years and more
 But seldom ever she thought of
 that the gallows would be my store

6

My father often told me
 that money would set me free
 But now I am found in this country
 and its hung I will surely be

7

I live in a castle of comfort
 a little beyond the fair
 grief it is my comfort
 and sorrow is my care

8

My bolsted feathers are dinging
 the whole lenght of day
 I have but the cold floor to walk on
 to pass the time away

9

My father stood at the hall-door
 with a watery eye
 looking at his own dear son
 hanging on the gallows so high

10

I leave it written on my tombstone
 to read as they pass it by
 That my name is James Mullrooney
 that murdered Rose Conolly

Rose Connally (Appalachian traditional):

Down in the willow garden
 Where me and my love did be,
 There we sit a-courting;
 My love dropped off to sleep.

I had a bottle of the burglar's wine
 That my true-love did not know,
 And there I poisoned my own true-love,
 Down under the banks below.

I drew my saber through her,
 Which was a bloody knife;
 I threw her in the river,
 Which was a dreadful sight.

My father always taught me
 That money would set me free
 If I'd murder that pretty little miss
 Whose name was Rose Connally.

He's sitting now at his own cabin door,
 A-wiping his weeping eyes,
 A-looking at his own dear son
 Upon the scaffold high.

My race is run beneath the sun,
 Tho hell's now waiting for me.
 For I did murder that pretty little miss
 Whose name was Rose Connally.

Wilgus makes a strong case for the ballad's Irish origin, but the tone of his argument is somewhat tenuous. Early in the essay he admits, referring to the Joyce text, "The recovery of the song in Ireland, particularly an isolated text, does not necessarily indicate Irish origin, or even transmission through Ireland to North America. Flow of material between the Old and New Worlds has been reciprocal" (174). Despite the number of songs in the contemporary Irish oral tradition that were, indeed, composed in the United States, Wilgus maintains his thesis that "Rose Connolly" is an Irish song within the Appalachian canon, but he is still puzzled by its appearance in the region. He concludes, somewhat hesitantly,

One looks for and finds Irish songs in abundance in eastern Canada and the northeast and northcentral United States. But the circulation of "Rose Connolly," prior to media influence, has been basically southern Appalachian.... It is as if an Irish local song never popularized on broadsides was spread by a single Irish peddler on his travels through Appalachia. (188-89)³

Wilgus's suggestion that the song may have been spread by an isolated Irish peddler indicates his assumption that there has been no large-scale Irish influence on the Appalachian region and that European immigrants and their descendents who settled there carried no Irish traditions with them. The following section investigates Wilgus's claims further and attempts to bolster his thesis that the Appalachian "Rose Connolly" was originally composed within the Irish musical tradition. The larger purpose is to investigate the source of Wilgus's hesitancy when claiming Irish origins for songs in the

Appalachian tradition as well as the widespread resistance among Appalachian collectors and scholars to suggestions of Irish influence on the region's cultural makeup.

Regardless of this resistance, Appalachian folk songs are rife with references to Ireland. In *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* volume dedicated to "Folk Ballads," there are a number of songs, in addition to "Rose Connolly," that can be quickly identified as Irish in origin or subject matter. He includes "William Riley" (White 363), a song of widespread popularity in Ireland,⁴ as well as "Pretty Susie, the Pride of Kildare" (White 369),⁵ and "Three Leaves of Shamrock" (White 370).⁶ Other songs in the volume also contain Irish localizations, indicating perhaps some Irish influence on their transmission. In the song "John Reilley," a sailor returns home to his beloved, whom he describes as "a young Irish lady" (White 305-06),⁷ and in "Barney McCoy," the singer tells his lover Nora to "Bid your friends and old Ireland goodbye" (White 346).⁸ There are also a number of songs listed that are solidly established in both British and Irish traditions, such as "The Gypsy Laddie" (White 161-68)⁹ and "Johnny Doyle" (White 365). But Brown, like many scholars, manages to dismiss the notion of Irish origins for these songs and instead prefers to promote English or Scottish source-claims for Appalachian material. Of "Pretty Susie, the Pride of Kildare," he writes, "This presumably Irish ballad has become a folk song of a sort in England" (White 368), thereby dismissing the probability that the song arrived in the Appalachian region via Ireland.

Like Brown, most scholars of Appalachian folk song assume that that the majority of the tradition comes from Britain and fail to consider Irish origins, even when they are implied by the material collected. Mellinger E. Henry cites two West Virginian versions

of a song called “The Wexford Girl” (250-52), the Irish version of a British murder ballad called “The Oxford Tragedy” (Kennedy, *Folksongs* 731). Nonetheless, he maintains that the song finds its source in “the traditional ballads of England and Scotland” (247) and fails to consider the possibility of a connection to Irish folk song traditions. Other collectors of songs with strong Irish localization are also quick to dismiss Irish connections. Sandy Paton writes of a folk song called “In Dublin City,” collected on Beech Mountain, North Carolina, “The ballad is generally considered to be of Irish origin, notwithstanding the frequency of its appearance in England” (21). Thus Paton rationalizes the appearance of an Irish folk song in Appalachia by implying it was transmitted from Ireland to England before traveling to the United States. Other scholars are more inclusive, as is the case with G. Malcolm Laws, who acknowledges that American populations who have maintained European traditions derive from English, Scottish, and Irish immigrants. Nonetheless, when speaking about the American folk song generally, Laws refers to them as “British,” marginalizing perceptions of the impact of Irish traditions on American song.

When he published his essay on “Rose Connolly,” Wilgus had been unable to locate an Irish text of the song’s lyrics that predates media influence. He notes that the ballad was first recorded by G. B. Grayson and Henry Whitter on 9 October 1928, and distributed by the Victor Recording Company (180). The Joyce text from Galway was collected the following year on 7 July (174). It seems unlikely that the Grayson-Whitter sound recording would have influenced Joyce, but the possibility haunts Wilgus’s argument. He attempts instead to connect “Rose Connolly” to two other similar Irish folk songs, “The Wexford Girl,” which tells of a similar murder, and “The Rambling Boys of

Pleasure,” which contains wording similar to the opening lines of “Rose Connolly.”

Wilgus concludes, somewhat wistfully, “I hope that further research will provide needed information concerning the Irish ballad ‘Rose Connoley’” (189).

What Wilgus lacked were the lyrics to the 1811 Bunting air that the nineteenth-century collector censored from his published collection.¹⁰ Donal O’Sullivan and Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin published these for the first time in 1983 in their collection of Bunting’s manuscripts. In addition to the original English and Irish-language titles of Bunting’s air, they offer two more titles that they uncovered: “Rosey Connolly” and “Róisín Ní Chonilláin.” These two additional title variants suggest that the song may have been widespread in Ireland in the early nineteenth century and that an Irish language version may have at one point existed. But all we have is a fragment of Bunting’s English-language lyrics that were collected along with the air from an anonymous source in 1811:

All you young men and Maidens I pray you take warning by me,
And never court your true love anunder a Hozier Tree.
The devil and his temptations is was that came over me,
And I murdered my Rosey Connolly anunder a Hozier Tree. (21)¹¹

This fragment contains motifs from both the Joyce and the Hicks/Proffitt versions maintained on both sides of the Atlantic for over a century. Joyce’s song sustains the “devil and his temptations” as the reason for the singer’s crime, although the tree shifts from a “Hozier Tree” to an “ivy tree.” Both the Joyce and the Hicks/Proffitt ballads contain the singer’s reference to Rose Connolly as his “true love” as well as his final confessional tone wherein he confirms that he, indeed, murdered his beloved. O’Sullivan and Ó Súilleabháin’s accompanying note indicates another connection between Bunting’s fragment and the Appalachian ballad, namely that word “Hozier” means ozier, “a form of

willow” (21). The Hicks/Proffitt version preserves this detail, albeit in simile, despite its geographical and cultural distance from the source.

Without this key piece of evidence, Wilgus is left to make comparisons to materials within the twentieth-century Irish tradition, including Yeats’s early poem, “Down by the Salley Gardens,” the first line of which uncannily echoes the opening lines of the Appalachian ballad. Yeats’s poem tells the story of a failed romance rather than a murder:

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears. (20)

“Salley” comes from the Irish *saileach*, meaning “willow,” so that motif recurs here as it does in the Hicks/Proffitt and Bunting texts. And although the Hicks/Proffitt version of the song begins somewhat differently, many Appalachian versions begin much like Yeats’s poem: “Down in the willow garden / Where me and my love did meet.”¹² Yeats’s source and the accuracy of his lyrics are ambiguous, as he claimed that his poem “is an attempt to reconstruct an old song from three lines imperfectly remembered by an old peasant woman in the village of Ballysodare, Sligo, who often sings them to herself” (477).

As a result, scholars debate the actual source of Yeats’s poem. Michael Yeats claims that his father altered a folk song called “Salley Gardens,” which contains essentially the same words with the addition of a third stanza, in which the singer wishes

he were with beloved and that he had “money aplenty to keep her in good company” (159). Hugh Shields claims that Yeats’s poem derives from another song called “The Rambling Boys of Pleasure,” which seems related to the song Michael Yeats cites but lacks the mention of the willow tree; instead the lovers meet in “flowery gardens.” It also ends with the singer longing for both his beloved and more money with which to please her (“Yeats” 24-25).

“The Rambling Boys of Pleasure,” which contains the critical lines, “She bid me take life easy just as the leaves fall from yon tree / But I being young and foolish with my own darling did not agree” (Shields, “Yeats” 25), seems the closest source for “Down by the Salley Gardens.” However, there are some vital similarities between Yeats’s poem and the Appalachian “Rose Connolly” that beg some mention. The first lines are, of course, nearly identical, although they repeat in “The Rambling Boys of Pleasure.” It is quite common for different folk songs to share stock lines, motifs, refrains, and imagery,¹³ but the entirety of Yeats’s opening line is not as common or as simple as most of these stock phrases. All three songs are about romantic love that fails with varying degrees of disagreement and consequence. Yeats’s poem is vague, as the two lovers simply do not agree on their philosophical approaches to life and love and the speaker is left alone in tears. “The Rambling Boys of Pleasure” cites money as the issue between the lovers when the singer explains, “Gold is the root of evil although it wears a glittering hue: / Causes many a lad and lass to part though their hearts like mine be e’er so true” (Shields, “Yeats” 25). The song’s preoccupation with monetary wealth is markedly un-Yeatsian, and it is surprising that he would be attracted to a song with such materialist themes.

“Rose Connolly,” like “Down by the Salley Gardens,” offers a similarly vague romantic disagreement, as many versions have lost (or their singers or collectors fail to include) the detail of Rose Connolly’s pregnancy.¹⁴ But the unbridled passion of romantic love and its undesired consequences might have appealed more to the young Yeats than petty disagreements over love and money. There are also some details in Yeats’s poem that echo “Rose Connolly,” even if he does not reproduce them in full. “Down by the Salley Gardens” contains the all-important river by which the lovers meet and where their love affair ends, whereas most versions of “The Rambling Boys of Pleasure” lack this detail.¹⁵ The speaker’s tears in “Down by the Salley Gardens” also echo the tears that are almost always shed by the singer’s father in “Rose Connolly.” Finally, the regret with which Yeats ends the poem is closer related to the singer’s penitent last lines in the murder ballad than to the almost celebratory lines that close “The Rambling Boys of Pleasure”: “Hard fortune ne’er would daunt me for I am young and the world is wide” (Shields, “Yeats” 25).

About Yeats’s source for “Down by the Salley Gardens” we can only speculate. But his publication of the lyrics in *Crossways* in 1889 and his subsequent international fame as a poet and folklorist would have made the words to the song known beyond Ireland, especially among other folklorists interested in folk song collecting. Michael Yeats notes the song’s subsequent fame after Yeats published it, and explains that, after Arthur Percival Graves set the lyrics to music in 1894, “the song ... gained popularity, and has quite displaced the folk original” (158-59). At the beginning of the twentieth century, knowledge of “Down by the Salley Gardens” as a popular Irish song would have

spanned literary, folkloristic, and perhaps even popular audiences across Ireland and Britain.

Twenty-seven years after Yeats first published “Down by the Salley Gardens,” Sharp arrived in the southern Appalachians to collect the musical traditions of the region. Sharp was a leading figure of the English Folk Revival (1890-1920), an influential member of the Folk-Song Society, and had been collecting folk songs in England since 1903. In 1915 he was shown a small, unpublished collection of Appalachian ballads that had been recorded by Olive Dame Campbell of Asheville, North Carolina. According to David Whisnant, “Within a few days, Sharp became convinced that investigating southern mountain ballads ‘would be particularly congenial for me ... because it would in a sense complete the work upon which I have been engaged so long in England’” (113). Sharp’s three visits to the Appalachian region between 1916 and 1918 produced two volumes of published folk songs. The first, containing 122 songs, was *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (1917), which Sharp shared credit for with Campbell. The second, under the same title, was published after his death by his assistant, Maud Karpeles, in 1932 and contained 274 songs. Neither of these collections contains the murder ballad “Rose Connolly.”

According to Sharp’s field notebooks, he did, in fact, encounter the song and recorded two versions: one from Francis Richards of Callaway, Virginia, and the other from Margaret Callaway of Burnsville, North Carolina (*Autograph Notebook Collection* reels 7 and 8).¹⁶ Both of these were taken down in 1918 toward the end his third and last Appalachian expedition. But scholars argue that Sharp’s notebooks are not a complete record of what he encountered in the region. Benjamin Filene writes, “For every ballad

Sharp collected, he ignored countless other songs offered by the mountaineers” (26). And Whisnant explains Sharp’s “preference for the [British] ballads canonized by Francis J. Child and ... consequent disinterest in other materials occurring in profusion in the same ‘field’ —religious music, popular music, instrumental music, and recently composed ballads and songs” (115). Indeed, he notes that before publication of their joint collection, Sharp omitted sixteen of the songs originally collected by Campbell (119).

Whisnant also explains that Sharp’s final visit to the mountains was disappointing to him:

Except for about five months he spent, mostly in Virginia, on his final collecting trip to the mountains in 1918, Sharp’s Appalachian work was over. Virginia proved a disappointing field. Shenandoah County he found ‘too Dutch and German to yield songs....’ ... A brief foray into southern West Virginia was unproductive, as were visits to other communities in the south central counties of Virginia (124).

The two versions of “Rose Connolly” that Sharp recorded he encountered on his way back from these disappointing expeditions into northern Virginia and, after exposure to such uninspiring material, he may have been more amenable to this non-British ballad. We cannot say definitively whether or not he encountered it before 1918, but given the song’s popularity in the region, it seems unlikely that his informants were unaware of the murder ballad.

Regardless of Sharp’s record of his belated encounter with “Rose Connolly,” the song had already been collected by early folklorists in the region and persists today in regional and family traditions Sharp found most valuable. In 1911 Hubert Gibson Shearin

and Josiah Henry Combs included a description of the murder ballad in their pamphlet, *A Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Songs*, under the heading, “Songs of the Murderous Lover.” Their entry reads, “Rose Colalee (Colleen?) ... She is murdered on the bank of a river, by her lover, who, intoxicated with Burgundy wine, is persuaded by his father’s promise of money, to slay her” (28). Unfortunately, Shearin and Combs offer no music or lyrics, but the story of “Rose Connolly” is unmistakable. Unlike Sharp’s collections and those that have followed them, Shearin and Combs’s pamphlet does not betray an exclusively Anglo-centric approach. In fact, of the fourth section, they write, “The songs in this group find their common bond in their reference to Ireland, where some of them undoubtedly had their origin” (13).¹⁷ The collection also contains other songs strongly established in the Irish tradition¹⁸ or with notable Irish localizations.¹⁹

The archival records of the W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, contain another early version with a complete record of the song’s lyrics. This version was taken down on 11 October 1914, by Carrie Walker in Butler, Tennessee. The accompanying note records that she set the lyrics down on paper “for Boyd Walker,” who lived, according to the archival record, from 1890 to 1986 and would have been fourteen-years-old at the time. Like the Shearin and Combs version, the name of the murdered woman was somewhat of a puzzle for Carrie Walker, who typed it as “Rose Camelee.” By each instance of the name, “[Conolee (?)]” is hand written in the margins of the text, either by Walker or some later reader.

John Harrington Cox was the first to publish the text of “Rose Connolly.” He collected two versions of the song in West Virginia, one in 1915 and the other in 1917,

and published them in his 1925 collection *Folk-Songs of the South*. He reported that the song “was popular in the oil fields of Wetzel County about 1895” (314-15).

Today the song remains greatly popular within the extended family of Sharp’s most valuable informant, Jane Hicks Gentry, whom he collected seventy songs from in Madison County, North Carolina.²⁰ Gentry is a distant relative of both Nathan Hicks and Frank Proffitt, who performed the version of the song included in this chapter.

Additionally, Sheila Kay Adams, a seventh-generation ballad singer from Madison County also includes the song in her repertoire (Patterson 115).²¹

If we believe that Sharp encountered “Rose Connolly” for the first time in 1918, then it makes sense that the song fails to appear in his and Campbell’s collection, published the previous year. But what *is* puzzling is the song’s omission in Karpeles’s larger edition of Sharp’s work, which contained 152 more songs—more than twice that of the Sharp-Campbell collection. Karpeles, who traveled with Sharp throughout the Appalachians and took down lyrics while he noted tunes, was, according to Georgina Boyes, “the most devoted of his many ‘disciples’” (44). Karpeles has been largely responsible for the continuation of Sharp’s legacy, publishing not only a larger edition of his Appalachian collection, but also a two-volume collection of his English fieldwork called *Cecil Sharp’s Collection of English Folk Songs* (1974). In her introduction to the English collections, Karpeles noted that songs collected “from Irish immigrants in Marylabone Workhouse, London, which I considered to be alien to the English idiom,” were excluded from the posthumous catalog of his work (xvii).²² Karpeles also deemed “Rose Connolly” unfit for publication in Sharp’s English collection of Appalachian folk songs.

The reasons for Sharp and Karpeles's rejection of "Rose Connolly" can only be a point of speculation, but it is safe to say that neither would have identified the song as English. Wilgus notes that Appalachian collectors have assumed the song's native composition because of its absence in the British record. Sharp may have agreed, but he would have surely heard Irish resonances in the song. Connolly is an Irish surname, and Rose is a popular female name within popular Irish folk songs such as "Dark Rosaleen." It seems likely enough that Sharp knew Yeats's "Down by the Salley Gardens," but there is no evidence of this knowledge. Sharp may also have been acquainted with the tune and the title, though not the words, from Bunting's *Ancient Music of Ireland*, which he criticizes harshly in his theoretical work, *English Folk Songs, Some Conclusions* (23).²³

Sharp's collections of Appalachian folk songs were overwhelmingly important and influential within the field of Appalachian folklore. Of his work, Whisnant writes, "His collaboration with Campbell had indeed produced a remarkable document: the first major, carefully documented collection of music that could be heard among mountain people, presented in a dignified way, with the integrity of text and tune preserved" (118). But Filene maintains that Sharp's influence was largely harmful to mountain music traditions. He concludes his analysis of Sharp's work:

The picture of the mountains that the early folklorists [like Sharp] meticulously documented and enthusiastically propounded represented a choice on their part, whether conscious or not, to define America's folk music tradition in a certain way. Whatever inconsistencies the myth may have enveloped, in its time it had coherence and, for several decades, power. (27)

Sharp's collection carries his biases with it, and these are derived from his nationalist politics, which he applied first to the folk song traditions of the British Isles. Only within this context can we begin to understand why Sharp would have been so eager to promote Appalachian folk song as English and omit Irish (and other) song traditions.

Cecil Sharp and the Irish "Race"

In England Sharp recorded songs mainly around the rural areas of Somerset and published a five-volume collection of that material entitled *Folk Songs from Somerset* (1904-09). In recent years he has received harsh criticism from English folklore scholars like Dave Harker, Georgina Boyes, and Stefan Szczelkun for his bowdlerization of working class texts in order to make them palatable for middle class drawing rooms.²⁴ Discussions of Sharp's censorship and editing have focused narrowly on issues of class specifically within Britain, and, therefore, scholars have failed to recognize that, in addition to the removal of bawdy material, Sharp also stripped his English informants' songs of Irish references before publication.

Some evidence of Sharp's censorship of Irish motifs within English songs exists in Karpeles collection of his unedited fieldwork, *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*. In the fifth series of *Folk Songs from Somerset*, Sharp includes a song he calls "The Robber" (51-53), which is better known as "The Rambling Boy" or "The Newry Highwayman." Karpeles includes three versions of "The Rambling Boy" in her collection of Sharp's work and thereby allows some insight into Sharp's source texts (160-163). The unedited texts reveal that his informants each provide a first verse that he omits in "The Robber." Two begin by identifying the singer²⁵ as Irish, being from either Newry or

Dublin, while another simply identifies himself as “a wild and wicked youth” (161). Sharp’s editing produces a song that is somewhat bland in its anonymity but safely Anglicized for his readership.

Sharp’s study of English folk forms both at home and in the United States was motivated by his desire to preserve English heritage in the face of the modern age, which he regarded as corrosive to national culture. The language of race, which dominated British international discourse around the turn of the century, pervades his major theoretical work, *English Folk Song, Some Conclusions* (1907) and reveals his anxiety over “Celtic” influences within English culture. He explains that folk song “is essentially a communal as well as a racial product. The natural musical idiom of a nation will, therefore, be found in its purest and most unadulterated form in its folk music” (165). According to Dave Harker,

What Sharp felt *folksong* offered his liberal audience is well expressed in an interview he gave to the *Post*. ‘Our traditional songs’ he says, are ‘a great instrument for sweetening and purifying our national life and for elevating and refining popular taste.’²⁶ What he and his audience wished for, in a period of burgeoning class-warfare, was a ‘return’ to a mythical, homogeneous English culture, when ‘there existed no dividing line between the Artist and the Community in which he lived’²⁷ (Harker 55).

Strikingly, Sharp’s folkloristic purpose here aligns with that of Yeats’s quest for a spiritual democracy in Ireland and a native poetry wherein the poet served as a mediator between the peasantry and the rest of Irish society (*Early Essays* 10).

Furthermore, we can see that Sharp's removal of Irish references from English folk songs was an attempt to return them to their purest form, even though this, ironically, required much adulteration of the source material on his part. Even in the introduction to *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, his tone reveals a desire to provide his nation with a blueprint for cultural purity:

Moreover, remembering that the primary purpose of education is to place the children of the present generation in possession of the *cultural achievements* of the past, so that they may as quickly as possible enter into their *racial inheritance*, what better form of music or of literature can we give them than these folk-songs and folk-ballads *of the race to which they belong, or of the nation whose language they speak?* To deny them these is to cut them off from the past and to rob them of that which is theirs *by right of birth.* (xx, emphasis mine)

Sharp's goal, then, was to offer his nation a method for maintaining cultural boundaries at a time when Englishness was under threat, as wars on two fronts challenged assumptions of British supremacy. He proposed that native folk song would provide English children with the tools to differentiate themselves racially from other groups that loomed both within and beyond the border of the nation. Writing about the nationalist potential of the materials he collected, Sharp advocated that folk songs "must be of the same nationality as that of the children [to whom they are taught]: English folk songs for English children, not German, French, or even Scottish or Irish..." (*English Folk Songs, Some Conclusions* 171). His goal was to differentiate folk traditions and the people to whom they belonged; the English border, even within Britain, was to be maintained by and reflected in the

material taught. But the border was becoming more permeable by outside influences, both foreign and modern. Irish immigration to England, as many of Sharp's collected songs attest, had already infiltrated the nation's "natural musical idiom." Songs like "The Croppy Boy,"²⁸ "Brennan the Moore,"²⁹ and "The Shooting of His Dear" ("Molly Bán")³⁰ are examples of songs of likely Irish origin that Sharp collected in England.

Sharp's theories were similar to both the German and the Irish folklore movements that placed nationalism and a conservative recovery of national traditions at the center of their discourse. Sharp wished to reacquaint the English people with the lost culture of the nation—not England in its modern identity as the imperial world power, inevitably, though violently, inviting cultural hybridity, but rather the nation as a single, enclosed unit grounded in native folk tradition. Sharp aspired to use folk song to help England re-imagine itself through the lens of its cultural past. The threat to English culture for Sharp was certainly modernity, just as it was for Yeats. But the lure of Celticism, which defined much of Great Britain as decidedly un-English, threatened Englishness as well. Sharp's goal was to prove the merit of English culture within the new nationalist framework of folklore, which valued primitive traditions and could determine a country's or a region's distinct culture against the threat of a hybrid and homogenous modernity.

The English Folk Revival came on the heels of a parallel, yet more successful Revival in Ireland. By 1904, the year Sharp published his first collection of folk songs, the Irish Revivalists had launched a National Theatre, the Abbey, which would stand at the center of a nationalist and cultural revolution. The written record of Sharp's early work rarely if ever acknowledges the efforts of his contemporaries in Ireland, though it

seems unlikely that he was wholly unaware of their similar projects to document and use oral tradition within a political context. While his desire to define an English national character through folklore echoes the nationalist aims of the Irish Revivalists and despite evidence in the English song tradition that suggest some Irish influence, Sharp's perspective was myopically English and, at its most inclusive, British when he occasionally acknowledged the vibrant Scots traditions.

The revival of folklore in Ireland worked to bolster the political movement for Irish Home Rule in the British Parliament and to redraw the borders of the British Union. In his published scholarship, Sharp rarely makes direct references to Ireland beyond the generalizations about his perceptions of Celtic strains of folk song. In a rare moment, he reveals his somewhat ambiguous feelings toward the Irish independence movement in an 1893 letter to his future wife:

I don't feel *very* strongly about the question of Home Rule.... I always read the speeches of the Irish because they are orators, and their remarks breathe human sympathy as well as logic—moreover, they are not puritanical and for ever protesting, which is one thing I hate in the English and Scotch character.... The Irish have their faults, which, however, are too easily discernible to do much injury, and on the other hand they have art power, and are generous in their sympathies. (Strangeways 22-23)³¹

Sharp's profession of hatred for parts of the British character and fondness for some elements of the Irish one echo Matthew Arnold, and Sharp's comments here engage subtly with Arnoldian theories of race. Arnold argued that the Celts were essentially a feminine people who required the tempering discipline of the masculine Anglo-Saxon

and that, in turn, the Anglo-Saxon required the Celtic influence in order to maintain racial vigor. Thus Anglo-Saxon and Celtic nations should maintain their “marriage” for the political viability of both. In his essay, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), he writes of the political tendencies of the Celtic peoples that Sharp echoes in his letter:

The Celt, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature, but out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader, that is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits, but retaining an inalienable part of freedom and self-dependence; but it is a temperament for which one has a kind of sympathy notwithstanding. And very often, for the gay defiant reaction against fact of the lively Celtic nature one has more than sympathy; one feels, in spite of the extravagance, in spite of good sense disapproving, magnetised and exhilarated by it. (86-87)

Sharp’s notion that Irish politicians display logic resists some of Arnold’s ideas, but his insistence that they have “art power” aligns directly with Arnold’s depiction of the Celtic political disposition being “lively” and gaily defiant “against fact.” Both Sharp and Arnold imply that the Irish politician relies on emotion rather than reason and is, therefore, faulty in his political zeal. Like Arnold, Sharp is attracted to (magnetised) and “exhilarated” by Irish orators; he has “sympathy” for the artful style and emotion of their oration, but not necessarily for the cause for which they so enthusiastically speak. Like Arnold, he sees little promise and little threat in the political temperament of the Irish people, their racial flaws being “too easily discernible to do much injury.”

Like Arnold, Sharp views Irish and British as two distinct racial types, but it is important to note that he diverts from Arnold's theories about the political need for racial heterogeneity. Sharp, at least in the case of English folk song, desired none of Arnold's proposed mixing of Anglo-Saxon and the Celtic cultures. In *English Folk Song, Some Conclusions*, he admits the hybridity of some of his Somerset informants, saying that some nearer to the West were "partly Celtic" in their singing style, but then insists that the majority of them sang "rugged and forceful" tunes "that typify the Anglo-Saxon" (38). Intermittently throughout this volume, he labors to differentiate the English musical style as separate and largely different from the Celtic styles of Scotland and Ireland. "The Celt," he explains using Arnoldian racial types, "will, in all probability, be attracted by those variations which are primarily sensuous, and which satisfy his somewhat ornate feeling for beauty; whilst in the case of the Anglo-Saxon those variations which make for self-expression will be given the preference" (38).

Sharp transferred his desire for English racial purity onto the culture he found in the Appalachian Mountains. Upon arrival in the region in July 1916, he wrote, "The people are just English of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. They speak English, look English, and their manners are old-fashioned English. Heaps of words and expressions they use habitually in ordinary conversation are obsolete, and have been in England a long time" (Yates). In the midst of the First World War, Sharp's exploration of mountain culture reveals nostalgia for his ideal England, unhindered by modern industry and warfare. Indeed, Sharp reveals his romantic primitivist approach to the populations of Appalachia, where he found the England of the idealized past he had imagined and the England to which he wished his nation would aspire. In England Sharp had only collected

folk song from the very old, while the rest of the nation had little native knowledge of the tradition. But in Appalachia everyone “young and old” could sing folk songs and ballads. The region came to represent his “ideal society” where “every child would ... learn to sing the songs of his forefathers in the same natural and unselfconscious way in which he now learns his mother tongue” (*English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* viii). In this way, Appalachia serves Sharp’s England much the way the West of Ireland served the Revival. Peripheral and preserved, Appalachian culture offered Sharp a view of a pure reservoir of uncorrupted Englishness.

Recent critics of Sharp’s work have lambasted his selective methods in Appalachia, particularly his blindness to songs outside of the English tradition. Benjamin Filene finds fault in Sharp’s collection because it treats the so-called native folk songs, those composed and sung exclusively in America, as secondary, and he explores the influence of African-American music and dance on Appalachian traditions that Sharp consciously ignored. Filene writes, “The key to Sharp’s attraction to the Appalachian mountaineers’ culture was that they fit (or could be constructed to fit) his conception of old-time England. In his depictions of the mountain people he encountered, Sharp reinforced myths about the Britishness of America’s folk song heritage” (23). Some scholars, especially in England, have decried Sharp as a racist. Even Michael Yates, who labors to treat Sharp’s legacy with care, nonetheless reproduces some startling moments from Sharp’s Appalachian diary. Sharp wrote of one arduous expedition in North Carolina, “We tramped—mainly uphill. When we reached the cove we found it peopled by niggers.... All our troubles and spent energy for nought.” Yates excuses Sharp’s pejorative term by concluding that it “would not have been considered out-of-place by his

contemporaries, especially by Southern white people.” He concludes that Sharp’s lack of interest in African-American music had more to do with his greater interest in the English tradition and cites examples of Sharp collecting from other black and mixed race singers who knew English folk songs. But Sharp’s conceptions of race influenced the informants he sought, and here we see him using his earlier exclusion of Irish songs from his English collections as a model for his methodology in Appalachia.

Black singers were not the only informants whom Sharp avoided in Appalachia; he also had little interest in informants whose cultural heritage appeared to him to be Irish. Sharp’s Appalachian diary notes two distinct moments when he felt he was confronted by Irishness in the musical heritage of the region, and while his reactions are not as hostile as when he was confronted by African-American music, his interest clearly waned when approached by musicians that he identified as Irish. Yates writes of one encounter with a fiddle player in North Carolina in August 1916:

Sharp spent about four weeks in Madison County, often being driven in Mitchel Wallin’s car. Today Mr Wallin is remembered as a good local fiddle player. Sharp, however, found him, ‘a bad singer and a very difficult fiddler to note from.’ After noting the tune High March, Sharp wrote that: ‘Wallin began by playing several times occasionally making the 4th crotchet E or D below, then broke into the tune when the fancy took him. He rested the fiddle on his knee, while he sat down. He played well but was perpetually improvising in detail. He said “All my tunes are changeable”. His mother was a Franklin. He must have Irish blood in him.’

In *English Folk Songs, Some Conclusions*, Sharp suggests that the majority of English singers and musicians abstain from heavy improvisation, and he asserts that musicians from Celtic nations “often bury their tunes in a profusion of ornament,” of which he may have seen evidence in Wallin’s style (32).

During an encounter with another fiddle player, Sharp exhibited his need to define Irish descendents living in Appalachia as distinctly *other*. On 14 March 1917, he attended a fiddling convention in Knoxville, Tennessee, that, according to his diary, was “[a] most interesting and amusing affair” where Sharp met one of the competition winners named Mr. Julian (Yates). Of the meeting, Sharp wrote, “He said he was an Irishman and he undoubtedly was.... I questioned him about his name, which he said used to be Julian. No doubt it was originally Doolan.” Sharp noted two “Nice tunes” from Mr. Julian: “The Cuckoo’s Nest,” which, according to Yates, originates from Ireland, and “Turkey in the Straw.” Sharp’s desire to uncover Mr. Julian’s “undoubted” Irish heritage, to the point of questioning the fiddle player about the original spelling of his name, reveals his desire to separate himself and his project from the music that the man played. That Sharp goes so far as to rename the fiddle player “Doolan” smacks of imperialist assumptions of authority. Sharp’s reaction to the man’s performance is markedly mild, “interesting” and “amusing” being polite but unenthusiastic adjectives. That he calls Mr. Julian’s tunes “nice” also hints at his lack of interest in his work. After all, Sharp was in search of English folk songs, especially the Child ballads, and fiddle tunes were simply beyond the pale.

Cecil Sharp, the English Ballad, and Musical Darwinism

Francis J. Child, a professor of Renaissance literature at Harvard, collected British ballads during the latter half of the nineteenth century and compiled his findings into the ten-volume collection, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-1898), which included over three hundred ballad types. According to Child a ballad is “a narrative song, a short tale in lyric verse.” He also points out that, despite its etymology, the word does not imply a dance tune, as the style in which ballads are sung nearly prohibits dancing (*Johnson’s Universal Cyclopaedia* 1.464). Working from the United States, Child collected ballads from broadsheet archives and sent assistants to the United Kingdom to do fieldwork. Nonetheless, Child’s collection is extensive and serves as the foundation for almost all British ballad collecting that has followed.

Sharp primarily sought Child ballads, and, as Filene points out, thirty-seven of the fifty-five ballads he collected in Appalachia were of Child’s canon, and he placed these at the forefront of his collection in order to emphasize the volume’s English inheritance (21). Child’s ballads are narrative folk songs that deal with various romantic, tragic, and mytho-historic themes that, especially as he collected them, are undoubtedly British in origin. But even the Child ballads are not immune from Irish co-option and influence. In the eighteenth century, while the English language was taking hold in Ireland, ballad singing in English flourished. Irish singers borrowed tunes circulating in England, including many Child ballads, and composed many of their own songs in English. In turn, Irish immigrants to England brought native Anglo-Irish compositions as well as localized Irish versions of English ballads with them.

One of the most popular of the Child ballads, “Bonny Barbara Allen,” or Child type 84, has been collected in Scotland, England, and Appalachia and has also thrived in the Irish tradition. According to Hugh Shields, “Barbara Allen” is the first English-language ballad to show itself in the written record in Ireland when Oliver Goldsmith recollected his dairy-maid singing the song during his childhood (*Narrative Singing* 42). More recently, Elizabeth Cronin, a traditional Irish singer from west Cork whose work was collected by her grandson in the middle of the twentieth century, includes a fragmented version of “Barbara Allen” in her repertoire (Cróinín 76). A more complete, unpublished version from County Wexford is below and is one of five versions of “Barbara Allen” housed in the National Folklore Collection in Dublin. It was collected by Elizabeth Jefferies, who explains, “As everyone knows this is a very old song and their [sic.] are many versions of it. I learned this from my own later mother. R. I. P. She never called it Barbara Allen but Barbery Ellen. This is the version that I have”:

Verse 1

It was all in the Autumn time
 When the leaves they were a falling
 A young man from the North Countrie
 Came a courting Barbery Ellen

Verse 2

T'was in the merry month of May
 When green buds they were a swelling
 This young man on his deathbed lay
 For the love of Barbery Ellen

Verse 3

He sent his servants to the town
 To the place where she was dwelling
 Saying arise arise young maid they cried
 If your name be Barbery Ellen

Verse 4

But slowly slowly she arose
 And slowly she went with them
 Until she came to where he lay
 And se said young man youre a dying

Verse 5

Oh yes he said I'm very ill
 And death is oer me stealing
 But if you will give me one kiss
 I'm sure it will cure me.

6th verse

One kiss from me you ne'er shall get
 Nor no other young man a [?]
 One kiss from one you ne'er shall get
 Supposing you're poor heart was breaking

7th verse

Do you remember not long ago
 You were in an ale-house drinking
 You drank a health to your true-love
 And you slighted Barbery Ellen

8th verse

Go down he said to yonder room
 There you'll see a napkin hanging
 There get my gold watch and my gold chain
 And give them to Barbery Ellen

9th verse

He then turned his face unto the wall
 As death and love were a dwelling
 Saying adieu, adieu to you my friends
 And he [?] to Barbery Ellen

10th verse

She had not gone one mile or more
 Till she heard the death bell a tolling
 And every stroke that dead bell gave
 Seemed to say hard hearted Barbery Ellen

11th verse

As she was walking in her father's [?]
 She saw his funeral coming
 Lay down Lay down that corpse she cried
 Till I get one look upon him

12th verse

The more she gazed the more she cried
 Till her heart it broke with sorrow
 Saying Mother Mother make my bed
 For I shall die tomorrow

13th verse

Yes one of them died just like to day
 And the other died tomorrow
 One of them died of pure pure love
 The other died of sorrow

14th verse

They buried them bothe in the old churchyard
 Side by side they lie together
 Out of Williams grave there grew a rose
 Out of Barbery's grew a briar

15th verse

They grew and climbed the old church wall
 Till they could climb no higher
 They entwined themselves in a lovers knot
 And the Rose grew round the Briar
 (NFC 1869, 87-89)

The final image of the entwined vines has particular Irish resonances. The image is common enough in Irish folk tales and mythology that the *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature* lists it as motif E631.0.1: “*Twining branches grow from graves of lovers*” (Cross 220). Seán Ó Súilleabháin explains that folk versions of the Deirdre story often end with the image of the twining branches growing out of the lovers’ graves (“Synge’s,” 22). There is also an Irish-language song called “*Snaidhm an Ghrá*” (“The Love Knot”) that treats similar themes of love and death and also contains the image of the twisting branches (Vallely 19). Sharp collected hundreds of versions of “Barbara Allen” in England and Appalachia, but given the Irish circulation of the song it is unlikely that all of these escaped Irish influence.

Sharp, however, viewed musical style in an evolutionary hierarchy of progression that differentiated and kept separate the musical traditions of the British Isles. He developed a Darwinist theory of music that evoked nineteenth-century theories of philology and anthropology, which assumed England’s cultural pre-eminence and relied on scientific categorization to define various strains of otherness as progressively inferior.³² In his introduction to *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, Sharp explained that in primitive tribal societies “the singer was content to chant his song in monotone, varied by occasional excursions to the sounds immediately above or below his single tone.... Eventually, however, he succeeded in covering the whole octave, but, even so, he was satisfied with fewer intermediate sounds” (xv). From here, Sharp applies his evolutionary theory of music to the peoples of the British Isles, finding the habits of English musicians to be most advanced. He explains,

Indeed, there are many nations at the present day which have not yet advanced beyond the two-gapped or pentatonic scale, such as, for instance, the Gaels of Highland Scotland.... A further development in this direction was, however, eventually achieved by the folk-singer, though ... the two medial notes, required to complete the scale, were introduced speculatively and with hesitation. There are many instances in Irish folk-music, for example, in which the pitch or intonation of these added sounds is varied in the course of one and the same tune. This experimental and transitional period, however, eventually came to a close and the final stage was reached ... when the diatonic scale, i.e. the 7-note scale ... became definitely settled. And this is the scale which is commonly used by the English folk-singer of the present day. (xv)

Sharp's theory assumes that the use of the standard Western diatonic scale, constituting the whole octave (*do re mi fa so la ti do*), reveals the superior evolutionary station of a nation's musical development. The pentatonic scale used by the Celtic cultures contains two "gaps" in the octave because it skips two of the tones used in the seven-tone scale (*fa* and *ti*). Thus Sharp argues that musicians who use this scale are less evolved because they have not yet "reached" the diatonic scale. The use of tonal variation or ornamentation by Irish musicians, according to Sharp, aspires toward these missing tones but is unstable and "experimental." Therefore, he argues that the Irish style is "transitional" within the British Isles' musical hierarchy; it is more complex than the musical styles of other Celtic peoples but not as advanced as the English style, which unwaveringly employs the seven-note scale.

According to Vallely, ornamentation is a “general label applied to specific techniques involved in traditional music performance” that allow “individual creativity ... and fluidity.” Vallely explains further, “a single player may never play a given tune in exactly the same way twice.... The player is free to choose from the common stock of these [ornaments] (cuts, tips, rolls, trebles, cranns and triplets) and to apply them to the melodic outline where they are considered appropriate” (*Companion*, 290). In *English Folk Songs, Some Conclusions*, Sharp observes that Irish and Scottish folk singers employ an overabundance ornamentation, while English singers, use “ornamental devices more sparingly” (32).

In his introduction to *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, Sharp acknowledges the apparent “Celtic” influence on the singers he met there, many of whom apparently did not sing in the “final stage” of his musical evolutionary scheme and instead remained in the pentatonic stage of development. He offered two theories for how these musical habits might have arrived in Appalachia. First, he notes that Appalachian settlers may have come from the North of England and Lowland Scotland, and, therefore, might have had some Celtic influences from their northern and western neighbors. But he then revisits his thesis that the Appalachian settlers were of pure English stock when he proposes another evolutionary explanation for their seemingly Celtic undertones in the terms of musical Darwinism: “For all that we know ... the English folk-singer of the eighteenth century may still have been using the gapped scale and may not have advanced to the understanding and use of the 7-note scale until the following century. And if this supposition be made ... we may argue that the ancestors of our mountain singers hailed originally from England” (xviii-xix). Thus he justifies the title of his

collection, marginalizes northern English and Scots influences, and neutralizes the possibility of Irish elements in Appalachian musical traditions. Furthermore, he imagines Appalachian culture in stasis, preserving eighteenth-century Englishness without the cultural and historical agents of change that had altered England itself. Nowhere else in Sharp's writing does he go to such lengths to define English music against the Celtic style. He gives only cursory time to such arguments in his theoretical work, where his evolutionary theories of music are simply assumed or implied. That he takes the time here to delineate his Darwinist theories of music in order to argue for Appalachia's Englishness reveals his considerable anxiety over the seemingly Celtic strain of music he found there.

The Ballad in Ireland, Britain, and Appalachia

Traditional ballad singers in both the British Isles and Appalachia usually sing solo at a slow pace and require neither accompanying music nor trained voices. Ballad singing sounds closest in form to the *sean nós* tradition, which Vallely describes as "a personal, ornamented and usually unaccompanied style of solo singing" in the Irish language (*Companion* 337). But Vallely notes, "Songs in English are also sung in this style but, while there are similarities between traditional singing in English and traditional singing in Irish, they are two different traditions and are generally celebrated as such" (*Companion* 336). Of the English-language ballad in Ireland, Hugh Shields writes, "It is certain that [the old or Child ballads] were made orally: that is, writing was no more a requisite skill for their poets than reading is for their singers. Of course, words handed down in writing from the past have been necessarily influenced by the

intervention of literacy, which in the first instance preserves them” (*Narrative Singing*, 34). The preservation of these songs that Shields notes owes much to the dissemination of broadside ballads, a term G. Malcolm Laws describes:

As generally used the term refers to printed journalistic pieces which were widely sold in the British Isles and elsewhere over a period of nearly four hundred years [between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries].

Compositions of this new type were largely ephemeral and topical.... A small percentage of the printed broadsides, however, had sufficient appeal to be remembered and passed on from one generation to the next. These were subjected to those variations which creep into all folksong, and few of them became almost indistinguishable in quality from some of the better Child ballads. (2)

Broadsides, according to Valley, “were sold in bulk to street peddlers—who may have done a round in rural areas—and to singer-sellers (‘patterers’) who might also sell through performing in the pubs, at fairs, or in the street” (*Companion*, 43). The ballad singer-seller could transmit a song both orally—to non-literate audiences or others who listened but did not buy—and through the sale of his wares to literate individuals who could afford to purchase them. Ballads were therefore enjoyed by both literate and oral members of society and were passed around both by means of the broadside and by oral transmission, with both oral and written versions having influence on both spheres.

The circulation of both broadside ballads and the oral versions of the songs explain how certain ballads like “Barbara Allen” became ubiquitous across Britain and Ireland. Collections of ballads from oral informants in tandem with broadsides and other

written records reveal that, as the songs were disseminated, they were apt to change. Mellinger E. Henry explains that ballads tend to show localization as they travel to different geographical locations: “Each version of the same song usually bears some mark of the dialect, social habits and customs, or even the topography of the community in which it has been sung” (247). The same story may be sung to somewhat different tunes or the same song may be sung with different proper names. Place names are the most apt to change, as Peter Kennedy explains that the murder ballad, “The Oxford Girl,” which tells of a young woman beaten to death and thrown into a river by her lover, “goes under many titles, and the towns named are Oxford in England, Wexford in Ireland and Knoxville in the United States.... A fine six-verse Irish version of the ballad collected from Mary Doran, a tinker, gives the girl as belonging to Dublin” (731). Localization, however, is not ubiquitous, and some ballads retain place names despite their migration away from a geographical source.

“Molly Bán”

There are a number of ballads recorded in the Appalachian region that also have their source in Ireland but are sung across Britain, revealing the migration of texts and the hybridity of their collective composition. The song “Molly Bán,” about a young man who mistakes his lover for a swan and shoots her dead, has obvious Irish resonances. The young woman’s name is Irish, *bán* meaning white or fair, which contributes to her being mistaken for the white bird. The earliest record of this ballad is in Robert Jamieson’s *Popular Ballads and Songs*, published in Edinburgh in 1806, though Jamieson first obtained a copy of the song in 1799 and claimed to have heard it as a child (O’Connor).

Hugh Shields suggests that the song may tell of actual events, perhaps between Molly Bán Lavery, a Catholic, and James Reynolds, a Protestant, in County Down sometime before the eighteenth century (“Some ‘Songs and Ballads’” 8). There are also a number of nineteenth-century broadside versions of the ballad in the Irish record,³³ and both Shields and Jennifer O’Connor, who has studied Canadian versions of the song, identify the ballad as having an Irish origin.

The occurrence of a woman being mistaken for (or perhaps being transformed into) a swan has various Irish mythological echoes, the most obvious of which is “The Children of Lir” of the Mythological Cycle. But the ballad has even greater likeness to the minor story of Cuchulain and Dervorgill, a princess who attempts to court the hero in the form of a bird. Like the young man in “Molly Bán,” Cuchulain is unaware of her human identity and shoots her with his slingshot, though he subsequently saves her life.³⁴ Traditionally, it is considered bad luck to kill a swan in Ireland (O’Connor) and, as creatures that are believed to traverse both worlds, swans are often associated with death. They maintain their mystique in twentieth-century Irish folklore and literature, mostly through Yeats, who revived their mythological and cultural currency.

Sharp denotes “Molly Bán” by its British title, “The Shooting of his Dear,” which he encountered in Somerset and does not record the titles his Appalachian informants might have used. Nonetheless, he published five versions of the song from across the region. Below is the first version he includes, by Jane Hicks Gentry of Hot Springs, North Carolina:

Jimmy Dannels went a-hunting
 Between sunset and dark.
 Her white apron over her shoulder,
 He took her for a swan.

He threw down his gun
 And to her he run.
 He hugged her, he kissed her
 Till he found she was dead.

Then dropping her down
 To his uncle he run.
 Good woe and good lasses,
 I've killed poor Polly Bam.

O uncle, O uncle, what shall I do?
 For woe and good lasses,
 I've killed poor Polly Bam.
 Her white apron over her shoulder,
 But woe and good lasses,
 It was poor Polly Bam.

Stay in your own country
 And don't run away.

.....

The day before trial
 The ladies all appeared in a row.
 Polly Bam 'peared among them
 Like a fountain of snow.

Don't hang Jimmy Dannels,
 For he's not to blame.
 My white apron over my shoulder
 He took me for a swan;
 But woe and good lasses,
 It was me, poor Polly Bam. (159)

Gentry's version is fragmented and at times her meaning is ambiguous or indiscernible, as is often the case with oral variants. The possessive pronoun that introduces the central figure of the ballad has no antecedent, even though her name, as it is here Polly Bam, persists throughout the refrain. It seems that the lines that would introduce Polly and establish the scene have been lost or were forgotten at the moment of performance. Additionally, the repeated lament, "Good woe and good lasses" makes little sense. The three versions of "The Shooting of His Dear" that are included Sharp's English collection offer no echo of this repeated outcry by the singer, and nor do these English versions contain the peculiar comparison of Molly's ghost to a "fountain of snow" (Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp* 1.235-36).

Only when we compare the Appalachian ballad to a Northern Irish one do these ambiguities begin to make sense. Below is a 1926 version of “Molly Bán” included in *Sam Henry’s Songs of the People*:

I will tell you a story that happened of late,
 About Molly Bawn Lowry, that beautiful maid,
 She being going to her uncle’s when a shower came on,
 She went under a hawthorn the shower to shun.
 *With her apron pinned around her, I took her for a swan,
 And oh and alas, it was my own Molly Bawn.*

It’s when he ran up and found she was dead,
 A well full of tears for his true love he shed.
 He ran home to his father with his gun in his hand,
 Crying, ‘Father, dear father, I have shot Molly Bawn.’

His old father jumped up, his head being grey:
 ‘Stay at home in your country, do not run away,
 Stay at home in your country, let your trial come on,
 For before you be condemned I will lose all my land.’
 At the day of the trial Molly’s ghost did appear,
 Crying, ‘Uncle, dear uncle, James Reynolds is clear.’

Now the girls of this country they are all glad for to hear
 It’s Molly Bawn Lowry the flower of Glenkeer,
 For if all the young girls were placed in one row,
 Molly Bawn she would appear as white as the snow.
 Now come all you sharp shooters that handle a gun,
 Beware of sharp shooting at the setting of the sun,
 For it might happen with you as it happened with me,
 For to shoot your own true love right under a tree.
 (Huntington 143)³⁵

Gentry’s words “Good woe and good lasses” have clearly developed from “*And oh and alas*” into a kind of nonsense placeholder. Furthermore, the appearance of Molly’s ghost in the Irish version is also more protracted and lends explanation to Gentry’s surreal “fountain of snow” simile. In the Irish version above, Molly appears in ghostly form in order to defend her beloved at his trial; however, her appearance also triggers the memory of her unique beauty that persists in her community and further explains James

Reynolds mistake: “Now the girls of this country they are all glad for to hear / It’s Molly Bawn Lowry the flower of Glenkeer, / For if all the young girls were placed in one row, / Molly Bawn she would appear as white as the snow.” Molly Bán, as her Irish name reiterates, is a Snow White figure, whose legendary beauty elicits envy from the girls to whom she was compared.

Jane Hicks Gentry (1863-1925) was a somewhat distant member of the Hicks family of Beech Mountain, a family that is known for its long and continuing line of exceptional storytellers. She was herself a remarkable folk singer and storyteller. Sharp collected seventy songs from her, returning to visit her a number of times, and she was also the first to tell her family’s now famous Jack tales to a folklore collector. Jane Hicks was born near Beech Mountain in Watauga County, but her father moved the family south to Madison County when she was a child (Smith 23). She married Jasper Newton Gentry, and in 1898 they moved their family to the town of Hot Springs, in order for their children to attend the Dorland Institute, a Presbyterian school established by New England missionaries (Smith 4). She was a somewhat distant relative of both Frank Proffitt and Nathan Hicks, whose version of “Rose Connally” appears earlier in this chapter.

The origins of the Hicks family and their traditions are markedly vague. The first Hix, as the name was initially spelled, came from an unknown point of origin in Britain some time in the seventeenth century, and it is generally assumed that the family’s ballads and tales derive from this first immigrant source.³⁶ The repertoire of songs and tales that the Hicks family maintains, however, challenges the common assumption among scholars that that the family line is purely English. W. F. H. Nicolaisen notes that

the first Hicks possibly came from London, but then points out evidence that the family came from either the north of England, which he doubts, or Somerset, which he thinks is more likely (“The Teller” 126-27).³⁷ On the other hand, Jane Hicks Gentry’s biographer, Betty N. Smith, argues that the family was likely from the north of England, but also notes a possible Scottish connection evident in Gentry’s ballads and points out that twenty-one of her songs are from the Scottish tradition (78). Alan Lomax, however, claims that “Hicks is a Scots-Irish name” and that the Hicks family “came from Northern Ireland” (*Appalachian Journey*). Sharp notes that many of Jane Hicks Gentry’s songs are in the “gapped” or pentatonic scale, which he associates with the Celtic strain of balladry and not with the musical traditions of Somerset.

The Hicks or Hix name is common all over Britain, but census records from Ireland show a number of families with the surname, especially in the northern counties of Antrim and Down and around Dublin. In fact, Hugh Shields notes that in Dublin, “The first noticed advertisement by a [broadsheet] ballad-seller [was by a] John Hicks of ‘Smoke-Alley’” in 1708 (*Narrative Singing* 44). This same Hicks is documented twice in the Dublin records, once here in the *Flying Post* and again in 1712 in his will, which identifies his profession as a ballad singer (Shields, *Narrative Singing* 44-45). One is tempted to make a connection, but the name is so common that this Hicks and his repertoire of songs is likely not related to the family in North Carolina, at least not directly. Nonetheless, records of individuals with the Hicks or Hix names moving from Ireland to England, Scotland, and the United States show that individuals with the surname were migrating around the British Isles for many centuries and may have been

part of the uniquely hybrid culture that Richard Cunningham argues spread from Ulster through Scotland to northern England.³⁸

Regardless of their point of departure from Britain, the Hicks family has been singing and telling tales in Appalachia for a long time and are today considered primary bearers of tradition in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. It is unlikely that the tales and songs that they have performed in the twentieth century have been transmitted directly down the Hicks line without influence or interruption from other sources. Jane Hicks Gentry's daughter, Maud Long, who carried on the ballad and tale tradition in Hot Springs, says of her mother's ballads, "She added others to the ones she had always known by learning others from various sections of the mountains near our home" (Smith 75). Indeed, singing and storytelling are both domestic and community activities, maintained and passed down in the home but also shared in the public sphere. The Watauga County family has married with other families in the Beech Mountain area, including the Harmons and Wards, who are of German origin, and the Presnells and Proffitts, who are of unknown origin. The Scots Irish, who settled heavily in the areas around both Beech Mountain and Hot Springs, surely have had some impact on the extended family tradition, even if the family can not be directly tied to a Ulster Scots ancestor.³⁹

Reimagining the Scots Irish within the Irish Diaspora

Largely because of Sharp's legacy, the perspective of many Appalachian folklore collectors over the twentieth century has been Anglo-centric, much to the detriment of other folk traditions within the region. According to David E. Whisnant, the cultural

traditions of the Appalachian region have been largely been repackaged for large-scale American consumption, and thus the “manipulation of culture” is at the heart of many early studies of the region. In the Nineteenth and early twentieth century, those wishing to resist savage regional stereotypes often domesticated, feminized, and Anglicized folk beliefs and practices (Whisnant 8-12). But contemporary scholars have pointed to the mixed origins of the folk traditions of the Appalachian Mountains and have successfully recovered German,⁴⁰ African American,⁴¹ and native traditions (i.e., those developed in America and not derived from Europe). But few scholars have re-examined the supposedly English folk songs of Appalachia for source locations other than Britain, despite the historical record of settlement of the region by immigrants from Ireland.

Because the most memorialized group of Irish immigrants—Irish Catholics who located to America after the Great Famine—rarely settled in the southern Appalachian Mountains, both Irish and American scholars have failed to consider the region as a viable source for Irish-American oral traditions. The Irish immigrants who, in Patrick Griffin’s words, “would identify themselves and be identified by the moniker ‘Irish American’” (“Two-Migrations” 244), seem to have for the most part bypassed the southern Appalachian region. David T. Gleeson notes that nineteenth-century Irish immigrants “were not prepared for the isolation of the southern backcountry” and instead settled in the larger towns and cities of the piedmont and coast (23). Scholars such as Griffin, Gleeson, and Kieran Quinlan have recently challenged the assumption that Irish immigrants avoided settling in the American South all together; however, Southern Appalachia rarely features in their extensive analyses, likely because of the region’s geographically marginal location and its cultural otherness from the larger South.

As a result of the singular view of Irish-America as post-Famine Catholic immigrants who migrated to urban centers, Irish influence on Appalachian culture has been neglected by scholars of the Irish diaspora. But in the century before the Famine, large numbers of Protestant emigrants relocating from Ulster migrated south and west from Pennsylvania. The Appalachian Mountains, today home to the so-called “Scots Irish” (or “Scotch Irish”), were the final destination for many Ulster Scots immigrant communities as well as a handful of native Irish immigrants. The American Scots Irish, who emigrated from Ireland largely in the eighteenth-century, were not a monolithic group wholly analogous to contemporary Ulster Scots populations in Ireland. Instead, they are a culturally ambiguous group that carried hybrid strains of oral tradition. In the eighteenth century, the years during which the Appalachians were largely settled by white populations, anywhere from one hundred thousand (Horn 31) to four hundred thousand (Miller, et. al., 4) emigrants relocated from Ireland to North America, although the larger figure may be an overestimation (Wokeck xxx). According to Kerby A. Miller, et. al., “Perhaps two thirds of these were Presbyterians, with the rest more or less evenly divided between Catholics and other Protestants.... The overwhelming majority of Presbyterians, along with perhaps half the Catholics and many of the Anglicans and other Protestants, emigrated from Ulster” (4). Additionally, Miller, et. al., contend that during this period, British emigration to America waned (7). Exact numbers of Ulster immigrants or their descendents settling the southern Appalachians are difficult to discern, largely because early census records only account for individuals of Irish or Scots lineage rather than the hybrid “Scots Irish” identifier (Campbell 54). Regardless of their demographic ambiguity, emigrants from Ulster and their descendents likely made up

one-third or more of Appalachian settlers and may have been greater in number to English settlers in the region (Campbell 71; Cunningham 79-80).

Because of their perceived cultural otherness, collectors and scholars of American and Irish folklore rarely conceive of the song traditions these immigrants carried as Irish-derived. Claims of national and cultural separateness from Catholic Ireland made by twentieth-century and contemporary Ulster Scots may account for scholars' and collectors' assumptions that eighteenth-century Ulster Scots brought purely British traditions to America. Starting around 1605, immigrants began settling Ulster from Lowland Scotland and northern England, and the degree to which these settlers mixed with native Irish remains ambiguous and much contested. Patrick Fitzgerald suggests that, while intermarriage was rare (though not unheard of) among Protestant settlers and Catholic Irish, "cultural influences mixed relatively freely. . . . [T]he development of a society that bore traits unique to Ulster began early and that a century after the beginning of British settlement it was not easy to identify people who were in any meaningful sense genetically or culturally 'pure'" (75). Oral folk texts, which often lack political and religious affiliation and are therefore culturally neutral, would have been a part of the "cultural influences" to which Fitzgerald refers. Furthermore, if we accept Edward Said's notion of "all culture as hybrid . . . and encumbered, or entangled and overlapping with what used to be regarded as extraneous elements" (317), then the cultural practices the Ulster Scots carried with them to America were likely a mixture of Scots and Irish traditions.

Within the thousands of Ulster Scots who immigrated to America, many of whom migrated into the Appalachians, there are examples from the historical record of United

Irishmen emigrating to Appalachia whose cultural hybridity is readily obvious. In their study of Irish immigration letters and memoirs, Miller, et. al., record one notable example of John Nevin, a Presbyterian captain in the United Irishmen who trained soldiers in County Antrim and marched rebel troops to Ballymena in the 1798 Rebellion. When the rebellion collapsed, Nevin “was smuggled through Coleraine in a barrel, made his way to Magilligan, County Derry, and, disguised as a sailor, took ship for America.” He settled in Knoxville, Tennessee, where he became an “Indian trader . . . exchanging flour and what he called ‘other articles’ (probably—and illegally—including whiskey) for the cattle that he drove down the French Broad River into North and South Carolina” (604). Nevin is atypical, as Miller, et. al., point out that many of the Scots Irish communities he encountered in Appalachia did not share his politics. But his example reminds us that the Scots Irish of America were not a homogenous group and that they brought diverse beliefs and traditions with them.

Immigration of native Irish to the Appalachian region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while not nearly as large in scale as Ulster Scots, did occur. Gerald Milnes offers two examples of likely Irish immigrants to West Virginia. He observes the case of Adam O’Brien, a native Irish musician “who settled around 1800 in what is now Calhoun County” (*Play of a Fiddle* 29-30). Milnes also details the musical traditions of the Mollohans, who “were Irish and were early settlers of the region.” He notes that “Irish Catholics were rare on the early American frontier,” but cites a study that records thirty-eight Scots Irish and seven Irish surnames in one county in West Virginia (*Play of a Fiddle* 67).⁴² Additionally, Cecelia Conway records the history of the Sweeney family, three American brothers of native Irish descent who performed in minstrel shows in

Virginia and North Carolina and who played in Britain for Queen Victoria and in Dublin in 1844 (107-09). Furthermore, Kerby Miller suggests there is evidence that some potentially native Irish have been erased from the historical record in Appalachia. His analysis of one nineteenth-century account of life in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley reveals the practice of "Ulsterization," wherein a Scots Irish demographer altered native Irish names so that "Cullen had been changed to 'Coulter,' Quinn had become 'Green,' and so forth" ("'Scotch-Irish' Myths" 75-76).

Given the heavy influx of Ulster Scots settlers and their descendents, it is unlikely that the European folk song tradition in Appalachia is purely British. Emigrants from Ulster undoubtedly carried songs they learned in Ireland to the United States and further on to the Appalachian region. In turn, Appalachian singers passed these songs around communities and down through the generations, and the songs have changed over time, mixing with other variants. The purpose of this chapter is not to imply that songs sung in both Ireland and Appalachia belong to the Irish tradition. On the contrary, the nature of the orally transmitted folk ballad is to resist ownership, to cross borders, to mutate, but always to leave a palimpsest of its previous form. My aim is not to claim Appalachian ballads for Ireland but rather to suggest that an Anglo-centric approach to Appalachian folk texts forecloses a more interesting cultural exchange. Such considerations further our understanding of the diverse origins of Appalachian cultural heritage; more importantly within my project, they also trouble the notion of a national Irish (or any) oral tradition as they point to patterns of transmission that cross national, cultural, and religious borders.

Shared Traditions: Ulster Protestants and Irish Music

One of the most contentious debates within Appalachian and southern studies in the United States is whether or not the Scots Irish can be considered “Celtic.” Grady McWhiney in his book *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* attempts to argue that Ulster Scots immigrants to the South carried various Celtic cultural traits and practices that have led to a distinctive Southern culture in America. While McWhiney’s book contains some interesting research, its thesis and analysis are heavily burdened by a desire to define the “ethnic background of white southerners” as Celtic, and thus a distinct cultural group oppressed by the Anglo-Saxon descendents of the North (2). His conception of the “conflict between the English and the Celtic inhabitants of the British Isles,” which he attempts to transplant to the United States, is a romantic notion that this project rejects.⁴³

Discussions of Celtic ethnicity, in either the southern United States or the British Isles are often fruitless and needlessly harmful within the political contexts of both geographical locations. The goal of this chapter is not to define the ethnicities of either region. Instead, what interests me is the movement of folk texts across cultural borders made evident in Appalachian texts that imply Irish origins or influence. If the twentieth-century descendents of Protestant Ulster Scot immigrants in Appalachia sing songs also sung by twentieth-century (predominantly) Catholics across Ireland, then Irish folk song can be identified as a shared tradition between the two politically, culturally, and religiously diverse groups that today claim to have diverse folk traditions.

Donald Harman Akenson begins his study of cultural difference in Ireland by summing up what is for many the obvious: “One of the things that everyone knows is that

Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants were, and are, fundamentally different from each other” (*Small Differences* 3). Akenson’s tone is somewhat ironic, as his study attempts to delineate how such attitudes constitute “a mass of folk beliefs about the differences between Protestants and Catholics” (*Small Differences* 108) that he proves to be false. After disproving a number of stereotypes, for example that Catholic populations were poorer, had larger families, and were more prone to having children out of wedlock than Protestants, Akenson concludes:

there was found to be no empirically verifiable evidence that cultural factors caused a differentiation between the two religions on major social and economic axes. Neither in family structure, nor in economic behavior, nor the treatment of women was there any compelling evidence for major differences, and, in some instances, there was positive evidence of fundamental similarities. What differences there were in these matters were much more plausibly ascribed to class than to culture.... Though simply stated, that fact is no small matter. It changes profoundly the way one views nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Irish social history and raises an entirely new set of questions. One of the most important of these is: how was it possible to keep apart these two such similar groups of people? Why did they not blur together? (*Small Differences* 108-09)

The record of ballads in Appalachia indicates that they perhaps did blur together—or at least their song traditions did.⁴⁴ In fact, Rodger Cunningham calls Ulster, Lowland Scotland, and Northern England a “transitional territory [that] has been subject to population movements in both directions for a millennia” (67) and that shows evidence of

a hybrid culture that predates and survives James's Plantation of Ulster. Such studies as these complicate what "everybody knows" about cultural borders in northern Ireland before political differences of nationalism and unionism held sway.

The musical traditions of the Appalachian region, which, despite Sharp's theories, show influence from both Irish and British song, offer us some evidence that Protestant immigrants shared folk traditions with their Catholic neighbors before leaving for America. As we have seen, ballads and other songs of Irish origin appear in Appalachia, along with other cultural practices, including fiddling, storytelling, wakes, and folk medicine techniques. It is important to establish how native Irish folk songs came to be sung by the descendents of the planted Protestants who regarded the native Irish, and whom the native Irish regarded, as culturally different.

The traditional ballad, or narrative folk song, belongs exclusively to the secular realm in both Ireland and Appalachia. Hugh Shields observes that, by the sixteenth century, "[t]he seditious ballad sheet is ... already associated in Ireland with Catholicism." But he also contends that Protestants embraced the form, and that Belfast Presbyterian leaders took offence at the circulation of "obscene ballads" among their parishioners (*Narrative Song* 43). The subject matter of the songs, which often deal with romanticized notions of love, sex, death, and crime, found condemnation from Catholic leaders as well, despite their popularity among Catholic believers. The ballad thus became a form of secular resistance to the puritanical religious expectations of both groups.

Fintan Vallely points out that musical expressions in contemporary Northern Ireland—i.e., traditional dance music for Catholics and marching music for Protestants—

have “come to be pragmatic signifiers of opposing identities” today. Nonetheless, he argues that both forms of musical expression were “once part of the self-entertainment of all religions” (*Tuned Out 2*). Valley locates this shared tradition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a time when many Ulster Protestants were beginning to emigrate to the United States:

the ordinary folk in seventeenth-century rural, Gaelic, Scotland and eventually those of them in the Lowland centres to which they migrated in response to industrialisation, probably enjoyed for recreation much the same music as that in vogue in rural Ulster, if not all of Ireland, at that time. Therefore, the original recreational music of all the inhabitants of Ulster, native or settler, Catholic and Protestant alike, had more similarity than difference. (*Tuned Out 109-10*)

Valley locates evidence of the willingness among contemporary Protestants to embrace this shared tradition within contemporary pub culture. He offers the following statement about traditional nationalist songs being sung in Protestant pubs from Gusty Spence, a prominent loyalist:

They were singin’ in the public houses and all the old songs were sung, and in some of the public houses some of the old songs are still sung. Irish songs... I remember when *Galway Bay* came out at first, I was a wee bit hypersensitive about ‘The strangers came and tried to teach us their ways’—y’know? But you got over it—‘The women in the uplands pickin’ praties, speak a languages that the strangers do not know’? You would’ve got people’s heckles rized a bit. Whenever I would have had ‘one or two’

maybe—which is not too often—I would give a renderin’ myself. I’m very fond of *The Rose of Tralee...*” (28-29).

The dissemination of such songs in the middle twentieth century through radio play would not have been too different than the sharing of songs during previous centuries, when oral dissemination in addition the circulation of ballad sheets would have made secular songs available to both communities. And, as Spence points out, good tunes are infectious regardless of their subject matter or affiliation. So Protestants and Catholics have succumbed to the enjoyment of each other’s songs for centuries—especially, as Spence points out, after “one or two.” Indeed, Ciaran Carson notes that “the skeletons of many of the so-called ‘Orange’ tunes resemble those in the ‘Green’ family cupboard. ‘The Boyne Water’ is precisely the same tune as ‘*Rosc Catha na Mumhan*’ (‘The Battle-cry of Munster’).... Tunes, of themselves, have no ideological message, and what constitutes a ‘party’ tune depends on verbal labels and the perception of the hearer” (185-86). Traditional secular ballads and folk songs, unlike the songs Carson notes, also have the benefit of having no clear political affiliation, and so would have been even more likely to cross political and religious boundaries.

Whiskey Subcultures

If the secular ballad was a shared tradition practiced by both Catholics and Protestants, then this fact may offer some explanation why many Irish songs, maintained in the twentieth century by Catholic singers, also appear in the Appalachian canon, likely brought there by Protestant immigrants. A shared tradition, however, does not necessarily indicate cultural exchange. In this final section, I would like to suggest one possible

location of cultural exchange between Catholics and Protestants in seventeenth and eighteenth century Northern Ireland where ballads could have been transmitted from one group to the other.

Akenson's *Small Differences* concludes by examining how Catholics and Protestants have kept themselves separate in Ireland by affiliating with two segregating institutions: marriage and education (108-26). What Akenson fails to consider are the subcultural spaces that form out of a resistance to institutional power structures and that tend to embrace heterogeneous populations in any culture. In the following section I will examine one subcultural space that has thrived in both Ireland and Appalachia that is removed from, though it co-exists with, religious and political institutions and taboos.

The production of illicit whiskey occurs in both Ireland and Appalachia, and I propose that the subculture that it produced in Ireland may be one avenue of cultural exchange for the ballads discussed here. In both Ireland and Appalachia drinking songs, especially those about whiskey, proliferate. Irish standards like "Whiskey in the Jar,"⁴⁵ "Whiskey is My Name,"⁴⁶ and "The Curiskeen Lawn"⁴⁷ reflect a similar cultural preoccupation as Appalachia's "Little Stream of Whiskey,"⁴⁸ "Give the Fiddler a Dram,"⁴⁹ and "Whiskey before Breakfast."⁵⁰ This in itself is not remarkable, as most cultures that enjoy music and drinking will produce a canon of drinking songs.

But the musical traditions of both regions also celebrate illicit whiskey production and consumption, and many scholars argue that Appalachian methods for making moonshine derive from the older practice of making Irish *poitín* in private stills in Ulster. Joseph Earl Dabney, chronicling the history of Appalachian moonshine, explains, "in Ulster, the inquisitive Scotch-Irish had learned everything possible from the distilling art

(in addition to what they already knew) from the renowned Irish poteen makers. While the structure of Irish society in effect prohibited the Scots from intermarrying with the Irish, the separation did not extend to the area of whiskey production” (38). These Scotch Irish, Dabney concludes “brought their strong convictions to America, including a love of whiskey” (41). C. Anne Wilson also contends that the “Scots and Irish who emigrated to North America took with them distilling skills related to the production of spirits from barley malt or malt and grain.... [And while] the American spirit [was] based on corn with only small amounts of rye and barley added, [it] was called ‘whisky’” (249-50). Irish visitors of the Appalachian region are often quick to draw connections between the two cultural practices of illicit whiskey distillation and enjoyment. In his book about Irish traditional music, Ciaran Carson opens his chapter called “The Humors of Whiskey,” not with the lyrics to an Irish drinking song but those to one called “Rye Whiskey” that he learned in western North Carolina: “If water was whiskey and I was a duck / I’d jump to the bottom and never come up” (65). He tells of his first experience with American moonshine in Hickory, North Carolina, and concludes, “It is like and not like poteen” (73).

Before I examine the whiskey subculture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Northern Ireland, some definition of the term subculture is required. Subcultures usually arise when groups of individuals embrace “self-imposed exile” from normative conservative culture in order to participate in taboo or illicit lifestyles or activities (Hebdige 2). Ken Gelder notes that subcultures are often regarded by the cultural center “as largely parasitical and self-interested, [and] in pursuit of financial gain and ‘extravagance’” (10). Gelder explains that subcultures often disavow class affiliations,

disassociate themselves from property ownership, and remove themselves from the domestic center in order to adopt taboo or illegal lifestyle practices. In turn, they are shunned by the larger culture of which they are a part (3-4). In Northern Ireland during and after the time of Scottish settlement, subcultural groups of various persuasions surely formed on the margins of society. If, as Gelder suggests, subcultural groups tended to contain persons of diverse class affiliations, then in Northern Ireland such groups may have attracted persons of diverse religious and political background, as well.

The subcultural history of Northern Ireland, like that of other marginalized groups, remains largely unrecorded, and the historical record of *poitín* production across Ireland is scant. E. B. McGuire offers perhaps the best account of illicit whiskey making in Ireland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but also writes, “Understandably there is practically no information about illicit distilling [before] the first half of the eighteenth century” (392). This scarcity of information unfortunately coincides with the largest waves of Ulster Protestant immigration to the United States. Nonetheless, McGuire’s description of the practice, gleaned from British legal documents, reveals it to be on the margins of rural society. According to McGuire, illicit stills were most often hidden “in an area where the excise or revenue police were [not] very active” and “were in open country, either mountainous or bogland” (399). The few descriptions available of illicit distillers reveal them to be marginal to mainstream society, even within poorer populations. McGuire describes them as “often men of no property, ‘a species of migrating contrabandistes’” (401).⁵¹ Elsewhere he writes, “energetic measures combined with townland fines made little impression on illicit distilling itself, but did result in confining the practice to the lowest social classes to whom prison was no stigma” (409).

The best account McGuire offers of the cultural climate of the illicit trade comes from an 1823 inquiry in which a witness attested, that “private distilleries are meeting places for all the loose and disorderly characters in the neighborhood, where, half intoxicated, they discuss politics and regulate rents, tithes and taxes” (410). McGuire also points out that the production of *poitín* was geographically marginal, with illicit distillers largely concentrated in the western and, to a greater extent, the northern parts of the island. While he can find no single explanation for this marginal concentration, he suggests, “One minor reason was the influence of Scottish immigrants in Ulster, for illicit distilling had been a major problem in Scotland” (415).

The perspectives McGuire records are noticeably outside the subculture, and the voices of those within it are largely unavailable. What we do have is a song tradition that defiantly sings of the production and enjoyment of illicit whiskey on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the folk songs from this tradition that appears strikingly in both locations is the song “The Moonshiner,” the lyrics of which are below:

The Moonshiner (Irish Traditional):

I've been a moonshiner for many a year
 I've spent all me money on whiskey and
 beer
 I'll go to some hollow and start up me still
 And I'll make you a gallon for a ten
 shilling bill

Refrain:

I'm a rambler, I'm a gambler, I'm a long
 way from home
 And if you don't like me, just leave me
 alone
 I eat when I'm hungry, I drink when I'm
 dry
 And if moonshine don't kill me, I'll drink
 till I die.

Oh moonshine, Oh moonshine, Oh how I
 love thee
 You killed me poor father and now you'll
 try me
 God bless all moonshiners, God bless all
 moonshine
 Their breath smells as sweet as the dew on
 the vine.⁵²

**The Moonshiner (Appalachian
Traditional):**

I have been a moonshiner ever since that
 I've been born
 I've drunk up all of my money and stilled
 up all of my corn
 I'll go up some dark hollow and put up
 my moonshine still
 I'll make you a gallon for a five-dollar
 bill
 I'll go up some dark hollow and get you
 some booze
 If the revenues don't get me, no money
 I'll lose
 Come all you moonshiners and stand in a
 row
 You look so sad and lonesome, you're
 lonesome, yes, I know
 God bless them pretty women, I wish
 they were mine
 Their breath smells so sweetly, like good
 old moonshine⁵³

The blessing of the moonshiner in the Irish version apparently also appears in some Appalachian variants. *A Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Song* describes a whiskey song with the following quotation: "For seventeen years I've made moonshine whiskey for one dollar per gallon, at my still in a dark hollow. I wish all would attend to their business and leave me to mine. God bless the moonshiner!" (19).

With "The Moonshiner" we encounter a perennial problem in folk song collecting that derives partly from Sharp's influence, namely that Appalachian collectors flatly deny Irish source claims for the song. The Clancy Brothers popularized "The Moonshiner" in Ireland after recording it on their 1959 album, *Come Fill Your Glass With Us* and claimed that it was a traditional Irish folk song. But folklore collectors encountered the song in the Appalachian region well before that date.⁵⁴ Today the song remains more popular in Ireland than it does in America, but American scholars dismiss the claims by the Clancy

Brothers and other Irish singers that the song has Irish origins. The following assessment of the song's origin by Jeff Place is typical. He argues that it was probably composed in America during Prohibition and that "it is also an example of reverse migration: in the 1940s, the song immigrated to Ireland, where it has become a standard" (17-18). This reaction to perceived connections between Irish and Appalachian folk song is common among American scholars, who often argue that the popularity of American folk music during the middle of the twentieth century has had undue influence on contemporary popular Irish folk music. That "The Moonshiner" may have emigrated first from Ireland is a conclusion few American folklorists take seriously, probably because it does not appear in print in Ireland until the middle of the twentieth century.⁵⁵ But Peter Kennedy suggests that the American song may derive from "The Wild Rover," a drinking song popular across the British Isles (633). If the song *does* have an Irish root, it would not be surprising for the folklorists of the Revival period and before to have left it unrecorded, as political songs and songs that rectified the national character were of far more interesting to them than drinking songs, which only reified Irish stereotypes.

Admittedly, the term "moonshine" is widespread in Appalachia but is far less so in Ireland—the song being perhaps the only instance in which it is commonly used. The absence of the term "moonshine" in the Irish lexicon lends some credence to the argument for the song's American origin, but the term does have British roots. According to Francis Grose's third edition of *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1796), "The white brandy smuggled on the coasts of Kent and Sussex, and the gin in the north of Yorkshire, are ... called moonshine" (154). That the term was used north of Yorkshire may indicate that it extend into Lowland Scotland, and if so it would have been applied to

local illicit whiskey. In turn, Scottish immigrants to Ireland could have carried the term there and then onwards to America where it took hold. Ireland and Appalachia do share other words common to whiskey terminology, the most important of which is the spelling of the liquor itself. The Scottish spelling of “whisky” omits the *e*, whereas the majority of American distillers choose the Irish spelling, “whiskey.” Also, “mountain dew” is a common term for illicit whiskey in both Appalachia and Ireland, and songs like “The Real Old Mountain Dew”⁵⁶ echo in twentieth century Appalachian compositions like “Good Old Mountain Dew.”

Conclusion:

Cecil Sharp collected “The Moonshiner” in Appalachia but, as he did with “Rose Connolly,” he chose not to publish the song (*Autograph Notebook Collection* Reel 7).⁵⁷ Of the practice he said, “I have heard ... that there is a good deal of illicit distilling of corn spirit by ‘moonshiners’, as they are called, in defiance of the State excise laws; but of this ... I personally saw nothing and heard little. Nor did I see any consumption of alcohol in the houses I visited” (*English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* vi). Illicit whiskey distillers would not have fit with Sharp’s vision of old-time England, as the practice was far more common in Scotland and Ireland and associated with Celtic, rather than Anglo-Saxon, culture.

In his lifetime, Sharp had to relinquish his thesis that Appalachia was a reservoir of pure Englishness. Asked to comment on the demographic makeup of the region by his friend John Campbell, the husband of Sharp’s co-author of *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, Sharp wrote the following:

The racial origin of the inhabitants of the Southern Appalachians, so far as I know them, is an extremely intricate problem and one which I am quite sure is not going satisfactorily to be solved by speculative generalizations on the part of haphazard travellers like myself. The elucidation of the problem needs the assistance and careful investigation of ethnologists, anthropologists, as well as the examination of land titles and other legal documents considering the settlement of the mountain regions.... My first observation, and perhaps the one upon which I feel that I can speak with some certainty, is that what ever may be the racial origin of the mountaineers, their predominant culture is overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon, or, perhaps, to be more accurate, Anglo-Celtic. That is to say, whatever admixture of races there may be in the mountains, the Anglo-Celt has managed pretty completely to absorb them, to take them into his own orbit without himself being appreciably infected by them.... The majority of the names of my friends in the mountains are English, or Scottish; the Irish names are very few, and the German names still fewer. But here again one stands on shifty ground, because the pronunciation of names is perpetually changing. (60-71)

Campbell elicited this response from Sharp and included it at the end of a lengthy section of *The Southern Highlander and his Homeland* (1921) wherein he argued that the Scots Irish were just as important to Appalachian culture as English immigrants and their descendents. Here Sharp relinquishes some major tenets his argument, though these are given hesitantly. His strong proclamation that the mountaineer's culture "is

overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon” is followed by his admittance of Celtic influence, which is flecked with a series of somewhat fussy commas: “or, perhaps, to be more accurate, Anglo-Celtic.” His assertion that the Appalachian Anglo-Celt has resisted *infection* from other cultural influences recalls an earlier, contradictory statement in *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. Reflecting on the possible Scottish influence on Appalachian music, there he wrote,

the Appalachian tunes, notwithstanding their “gapped” characteristics, have far more affinity with the normal English folk-tune than with that of the Gaelic-speaking Highlander ... and may, therefore, very well have been derived from those who, dwelling on the borders of the Highland Kingdom, had become *infected* to some extent with the musical proclivities of their neighbors.... For folk-lorists will, I think, agree, *England and the English-speaking parts of Scotland must ... be regarded as one homogenous area.* (xviii-xix, my emphasis)

Sharp’s assertion in 1917 that homogenous English-speaking Britain had successfully resisted infection from Celtic influences and transferred itself to Appalachia falls apart in Campbell’s text, where Sharp not only concedes Anglo-Celtic hybridity in Appalachia but also admits, even more grudgingly, German and Irish influences. Sharp was likely trying to please his friend, who had hosted him in North Carolina and who perhaps, as his surname suggests, had some stake in considering the Scottish origins of Appalachian culture.

The culture that “The Moonshiner” reveals is also hybrid, not in terms of race but rather in terms of shared idioms and folk traditions. It shows the movements of folk song,

folk practice, and even terminology across and among Ireland, Britain, and Appalachia. While we cannot say whether this song—or any of the songs covered here—were transmitted by immigrants from Ireland, we also cannot say that all the immigrants who brought typically British songs like “Barbara Allen” learned them in a British context. Such is the nature of oral material and folk transmission to be capricious and deny answers to questions of origin. But two conclusions do arise from the persistence of these songs in Ireland and Appalachia. First, that Irish oral traditions, even when they originated in Ireland, cannot be considered national or nationalist because they do not confine themselves to the nation nor to nationalist groups. Second, the Irish nation not impermeable to the oral traditions of other nations; indeed the Irish oral tradition is a hybrid of various international folkloristic strains. Furthermore, we must conclude that, in order to understand the oral traditions of other nations, we must recognize the importance of Irish folklore and simultaneously understand that there is no such thing as a national Irish folklore.

¹ David Harker fails to include Sharp's Appalachian period in his survey of Sharp's career in "May Cecil Sharp Be Praised?" and Georgina Boyes only mentions his Appalachian period in passing in her *Imagined Village* (97).

² David Whisnant offers only a brief overview of Sharp's career collecting in England before moving on to his trips to Appalachia (113), and Benjamin Filene writes generally about Sharp's desire to replace popular song in England with folk song (22-23) but otherwise focuses on his Appalachian efforts.

³ The media influence to which he refers comes from the popularity that the song has gained since the American Folk Revival. Musical acts like the Everly Brothers have recorded versions of the tune, and it has since become a folk and country music favorite.

⁴ From James York, Iredell county, 1939. For an Irish version of "William Reilly," see Colum, pages 21-23. According to Sam Henry, "William Reilly" is an "Ulster ballad of the early nineteenth century. Founded on fact" (Huntington 436-37).

⁵ In Ireland, songs that identify exceptional young women and men as "the pride" of a certain town flourish. For an example that is similar to the Appalachian "Pretty Susie, the Pride of Kildare," see "Mary, the Pride of Killowen," which features a similar smitten singer who has left his beloved behind (Huntington 250).

⁶ The text given is inexplicably from Pennsylvania. But Brown notes that the song is also "known in North Carolina both on the coast and in the mountains." Though he does not offer the text, he notes one version from Eugenia Clarke of Caldwell County (White 370).

⁷ The text of "Johnny Reilly" was originally collected by I. G. Greer and was sung by J. F. Spainhour of Burke County in 1921 or 1922 (White 306).

⁸ Brown does not offer a European source for "Barney McCoy." The text printed is from Edith Walker of Watauga County.

⁹ Brown offers seven versions of this Child ballad, the first of which is from Isabel Rawn of Cherokee County, 1915 (White 161). For an Irish version of this song, see Huntington page 509-10.

¹⁰ Helen O'Shea notes that Bunting altered and edited the materials he collected (9-10).

¹¹ I owe the discovery of this detail to John Moulden, who kindly shared with me the text of his presentation "Country Music is Ulster Music" from the Ulster-American Heritage Symposium, June 2002.

¹² The 1959 version by the Everly Brothers contains these key lines, but versions collected in the field also contain lines that are similar. One of the earliest collected versions of the song from 1917 contains the line: "Down under the willow garden, me and my true love was to meet" (Cox 315). Wilgus also cites a 1939 version that follows a similar pattern: "Down in the willow garden, / My true love and I did meet" (175).

¹³ In fact, O'Sullivan and Ó Súilleabháin's collection of Bunting's work includes a song called "The Banks of Claudy," which opens: "As I roved out one evening, being in the month of May, / Down by the sally garden I carelessly did stray" (67)." The song goes on to tell of a lover who approaches his beloved in disguise after a long absence. He tries to tempt her to betray him by appealing for her love and telling her that her lover is not coming home to her. She refuses his advances and denies his claims, proving her true love, and is rewarded for her loyalty when the lover reveals his identity at the end of the

song. The plot motif is popular in both Ireland and Appalachia and applies itself to various tunes.

¹⁴ Wilgus notes that in most of the “murdered sweetheart” ballads the beloved is “stated or assumed to be pregnant” (172).

¹⁵ Admittedly, Michael Yeats’s version of “Salley Gardens” does contain the river (159), but this seems to be a rare version.

¹⁶ Richards’s performance was on August 16, 1918, and Callaway’s was on September 16, 1918.

¹⁷ These include “Irish Molly O,” “William Riley,” “Roving Irish Boy,” “The Waxford Girl,” “Paddy on the Canal,” “Molly,” “Johnnie Came from Sea,” and “Irish Girl” (13-14).

¹⁸ These include “Rosin the Bow” (19), which in Ireland appears as “Old Rosin the Bow,” “Rosin the Beau,” or “Rosin a-Beau” (Huntington 51); “All on the Banks of Clauda” (24), which in Ireland appears as “The Banks of Claudy” and, according to Sam Henry, is “the premier ballad of Ireland [...] sung all over” (Huntington 313); “Johnny Doyle” (27); and “Polly Vaughn” (28)

¹⁹ For example, “Nora O’Neil” (22) and “The Waxford [Wexford] Girl” (13).

²⁰ “Rose Connolly” is a favorite among the Hicks family of Beech Mountain, where Jane Hicks Gentry was born. She moved with her parents to Madison County when she was twelve (Smith 23). Barbara McDermitt conducted interviews with four members of the extended Beech Mountain Hicks family in the summer of 1982—including the famous storyteller Ray Hicks—and recorded five versions of the song: two from Ray Hicks (3,8), two from Frank Proffitt, Jr. (22), and one from Stanley Hicks (29). Her only female informant, Hattie Presnell, did not sing that ballad in particular, but, according to McDermitt’s notes, Presnell explained that women were more likely than men to carry on the ballad tradition (43). In his conversation with me on July 8, 2008, Orville Hicks remembered his mother, Sarah Harmon, singing the song when he was a child, and he sang all but the first stanza of the song.

²¹ For Sheila Kay Adams’s discussion of the song, and murder ballads in general, see the film *Madison County Project: Documenting the Sound*, produced by Martha King and Rob Roberts, 2005, at <http://www.folkstreams.net>.

²² Sharp published these separately in 1914 in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* under the title “Irish Songs” (Gilchrist, et. al.).

²³ Sharp chastises Bunting for claiming that, while words to different versions of songs change as they are transmitted orally, “A strain of music [...] once impressed on the popular ear, never varies.” Sharp responds, “This statement asserts too much. Singers vary their tunes as well as their words—at any rate according to my experience. That they do this also in Ireland, anyone can see who will take the trouble to examine the *Petrie Collection of Ancient Irish Music*” (23).

²⁴ Harker gives the most concrete examples of Sharp’s bowdlerization on pages 53-54 of “May Cecil Sharp Be Praised?”

²⁵ Here the term “singer” is analogous to the word “speaker” in discussions of poetry. Therefore, I do not mean that Sharp’s informant is Irish but, rather, than the first person speaker conveyed by the song is Irish.

²⁶ Quotation comes from the *Morning Post* 19.4.1906.

²⁷ Quotation comes from Sharp Collection: lecture notes — .3.1905.

²⁸ “The Croppy Boy” is a well-known political song in Ireland, and Padraic Colum included it in his 1913 collection *Broad-Sheet Ballads* (52-53). Sharp encountered the song in Oxfordshire, sung by Shepherd Haden, in 1909 (Karpeles, *CSEFS*, vol 2, 338-39).

²⁹ According to Ray Cashman, “Brennan the Moore” tells the story of a historical figure named William Brennan, a highwayman who “was born in Kilmurry [...] in Co. Cork and was tried and executed for his crimes at Clonmel, Co. Tipperary in 1804 (200). Cashman dates the ballad’s composition as early nineteenth century and notes that it is widely documented in Irish broadsides and in the oral traditions of Scotland, America, Canada and Australia (201). Sharp encountered the song in Somerset from Tom Sprachlan in 1903 and in Oxfordshire from William Pittaway in 1923 (Karpeles, *CSEFS*, vol 2, 166-68).

³⁰ Sharp himself noted the “Celtic origin” of the song as well as “certain Irish characteristics in the tune.” He then undercuts this Irish connection when he writes, “At the same time, the idea of changed shape is more Norse than Celtic, and such ballads as ‘Cold blows the wind,’ and ‘The cruel ship’s carpenter,’ shew that the supernatural element is not necessarily un-English” (*Folk Songs from Somerset*, 1.65)

³¹ The date of the letter is January 20, 1893.

³² For more on how philology and anthropology affected English theories of supremacy, see Cairns and Richards’s *Writing Ireland*, pages 42-57.

³³ Jennifer O’Connor mentions one version in an 1820 Galway chapbook as well as an 1854 broadside from Cork, among various others. The song has remained in the oral tradition through the twentieth century and appears in O Lochlainn’s *Irish Street Ballads* (58-59) and *The Songs of Elizabeth Cronin* (Ó Cróinín 151-53).

³⁴ The story of Cuchulain and Dervorgill occurs in “The Courting of Emer.” According to Lady Gregory’s *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, Cuchulain first encounters Devorgill on his way back from training with Scathach. He saves her from impending attack but is wounded, and she gives him a strip of her dress to bandage his wound. Her father offers her in marriage to Cuchulain, but he insists on returning to Ireland. Once there she follows him, and the text reads: “It was one day at that time he went down to the shore of Lough Cuan with Laeg, his chariot-driver, and with Lugaid. And when they were there, they saw two birds coming over the sea. Cuchulain put a stone in his sling, and made a cast at the birds, and hit one of them. And when they came to where the birds were, they found in their place two women, and one of them the most beautiful in the world, and they were Devorgill, the daughter of the kind of Rechrainn, that had come from her own country to find Cuchulain, and her serving-maid along with her; and it was Devorgill that Cuchulain had hit with the stone. ‘It is a bad thing you have done, Cuchulain,’ she said, ‘for it was to find you I came, and now you have wounded me.’ Then Cuchulain put his mouth to the wound and sucked out the stone and the blood along with it. And he said, ‘You cannot be my wife, for I have drunk your blood. But I will give you to my comrade,’ he said, ‘to Lugaid of the Red Stripes.’ And so it was done, and Lugaid gave her his love all through her life, and when she died he died of the grief that was on him after her” (48).

³⁵ Henry cites that collector Maud Houston got “half the ballad” from Peggy McGarry of County Antrim and that the “complete” ballad comes from Hugh Clarke of Coleraine (Huntington 143). Other Irish versions of this song can be found in O’Louchalinn (58-59) and Ó Cróinín (151-53).

³⁶ The record of which Hix family member was the first to immigrate is contested. Smith claims that a Samuel Hix came to the Chesapeake Bay area in 1637 as an indentured servant, and her genealogical data seem to be the most accurate and complete (12). W. H. F. Nicholaisen contends that David Hicks was the first to immigrate much later, around 1760. See “The Teller and the Tale: Storytelling on Beech Mountain,” *Jack in Two Worlds*, ed. Patrick B. Mullen, (Chapel Hill, 1994), 126.

³⁷ Nicolaisen does not explain his thesis that the Hickses came from Somerset. Most studies of immigration patterns to the American South find that English immigrants to the region came almost exclusively from the North. So again we see a bias aligned with Sharp’s assumptions, which are more the product of a desired connection between southern England and Appalachia than any real evidence of migration.

³⁸ See <http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/>, search “Hicks” or “Hix” in “Advanced Search” and limit the search to “Ireland.”

³⁹ For brevity’s sake, I will generally refer to the extended family’s traditions under the Hicks name, mainly with deference to Ray Hicks who, even after his death in 2003, is arguably the family’s most prominent member.

⁴⁰ In his book, *Signs, Cures, and Witchery: German Appalachian Folklore*, Gerald Milnes argues that German folk traditions have been neglected in favor of British traditions. He offers a fascinating study of German folkways and beliefs that persist in the Appalachian Mountains.

⁴¹ Cecilia Conway has stressed the importance of African-American populations within the region and the widespread influence of African-derived cultural traditions. Her book *African Banjo Echoes in Appalachia* traces the roots of the banjo, an instrument largely associated with white Appalachian culture, to Africa and the musical traditions of the descendents of black slaves.

⁴² The study Milnes cites is William Griffiee Brown’s *History of Nicholas County* (1955).

⁴³ For critiques of McWhiney’s work see Rowland Berthoff’s essay, “Celtic Mist Over the South” and Kieran Quinlan’s *Strange Kin*, pages 39-44.

⁴⁴ Akenson would contest my assertion that Catholics and Protestants in Ireland “blurred together.” He maintains that, while the groups essentially behaved the same, they were self-segregating.

⁴⁵ Though this song is very popular and has been recorded by various artists, including the Dubliners, a folk version by Séamus Ennis can be found in the *World Library of Folk and Primitive Music* series CD, *Ireland* (volume two.) This version was recorded by Alan Lomax in 1951.

⁴⁶ There are two versions of this song in Gale Huntington’s *Sam Henry’s Songs of the People*. One is from Mrs. Strawbridge and the other is from Harriet Brownlow; both sources are of Coleraine (512-13).

⁴⁷ Padraic Colum includes a version of this dual-language drinking song in his 1913 collection *Broad-sheet Ballads* (37-38).

⁴⁸ The Digital Library of Appalachia lists four recordings of this folk song. One is housed in the sound archives of Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, North Carolina. The other three are at Berea College in Kentucky. <<http://www.aca-dla.org/index.php>>

⁴⁹ A recording of this lively fiddle tune can be found in the collection *Back Roads to Cold Mountain* from Smithsonian Folkways Records. The song is performed by James Crase.

⁵⁰ There are ten versions of this tune, often played on the fiddle, at the Digital Library of Appalachia. <<http://www.aca-dla.org/index.php>>

⁵¹ McGuire quotes from the *Report on Distilleries in Ireland*, 1812-13.

⁵² This version appears in the pamphlet *Irish Songs*, compiled by William J. Parkes. I found this pamphlet in the Irish Traditional Music Archive in Dublin. It has no date but is clearly mid-twentieth century. It lists no sources for the songs. "The Moonshiner" is number 11.

⁵³ *Classic Mountain Songs from Smithsonian Folkways*, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2002.

⁵⁴ Sharp took down the song in 1917.

⁵⁵ The Irish Traditional Music Archive in Dublin has twenty entries for "The Moonshiner" in their database. Six of these have no exact date listed. The earliest dated version is from 1956.

⁵⁶ A version of this song is included in Colm O Lochlainn's *Irish Street Ballads*, page 128-29. In the accompanying note, O Lochlainn writes, "I first heard this song at a meeting of newly released political prisoners in December, 1916. I am told it was written by Phil O'Neill of Kinsale. I have since heard it sung to the air of 'Are you there Moriarity.' There is a Regal record of it made by John Griffin" (224).

⁵⁷ Sharp's source was Lizzie Abner of Oneida, Kentucky, on April 20, 1917.

Chapter Four:

Jack in Ireland: The International Tale at Home and Abroad

In the same Appalachian traditions that preserve Irish folk songs like “Rose Connolly,” there circulate international tales akin to those Synge collected on Inishmaan. Indeed, in the southern Appalachians, folk tales that have been recorded in Ireland since the eighteenth century, and told long before, circulate among some of the most prominent family traditions. The Hicks family of Beech Mountain, North Carolina—famous for its multiple generations of talented and prolific storytellers and folk singers—maintains a number of tales that appear, not only in Synge’s collection, but also *The Royal Hibernian Tales* (circa 1825), in Patrick Kennedy’s *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* (1866) and *Fireside Stories of Ireland* (1870), and in the National Folklore Collection. The most popular genre of folk tale passed down by the Hicks family is called the Jack tale, which has been embraced in the United States as a thoroughly Americanized folk genre with roots going directly back to England. In the Irish oral tradition, however, Jack tales also thrive, even though collectors have rarely if ever given them consideration or thought of them as such.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the little-known tradition of the Irish Jack tale, its persistence in Ireland, and its migration within and beyond the Irish border into America. The oral Jack tale thrives and is most recognized today in the southern Appalachian Mountains of the United States, where it was first collected in the 1920s by Isabel Gordon Carter and later popularized by Richard Chase in his collection *The Jack Tales* (1943). Jack tale telling continues in Appalachia, both in private family traditions

and publically through professional storytellers such as Ray Hicks (1922-2003), Orville Hicks, and Donald Davis. The seeds of the American Jack tale come, in part, from the Irish oral tradition, probably via the influence of seventeenth-century Irish immigrants whose impact on American folk traditions is largely overlooked by folklore scholars. Furthermore, in Ireland the Jack tale thrives in various traditions, but it is most strong among Irish Travellers, whose nomadic culture has helped to circulate English-language Irish oral traditions across the British Isles for centuries. The impact of these two groups—seventeenth-century Irish immigrants to America and Irish Travellers who have moved within and beyond Ireland for hundreds of years—cannot be ignored when considering the possible origins of the Appalachian tales. The co-existence of similar Jack tale traditions in both Ireland and Appalachia, and the dearth of evidence of English antecedents, strongly suggests Irish roots for some of Appalachia’s most popular Jack tales. The evidence of these origins lies in the published record of Irish folk tales from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries and in the recordings of Irish folklorists housed in the National Folklore Collection in Dublin.

The Jack Tale Sub-Genre

In the American tradition, a Jack tale is any international tale or *märchen* in which a poor young male protagonist named Jack encounters overwhelming obstacles and through luck, skill, or trickery emerges victorious. The protagonist may be a boy—as Richard Chase often imagined him—a teenager, or a young man, but he is rarely past middle age. He might begin his tale as the only son of a widow, the son of poor parents, or one of three brothers; sometimes he begins his tale married, but more often he is

single. He always begins poor and usually goes on a journey, declaring his intent to seek his fortune in the world away from home. His obstacle is usually magical, though not always; he might receive help along the way from a mysterious old man, a beautiful young woman, or a talking animal. His climatic success involves the acquisition of money, land, a beautiful wife, or kingship, or any combination of these objectives. When a number of Jack tales are considered together, it becomes clear that Jack is not a character with a fixed persona but rather a vehicle for his adventures whose personality and situation morph to fit the needs of the narrative. W. F. H. Nicolaisen explains that Jack is “steadfast, compassionate, hard-working, quick-witted, lucky, practical, kind, as well as lazy, boastful, lying, cowardly, roguish, and gullible” (“English,” 31). Regardless of his shifting personality, Jack is always sympathetic, always the hero, although he is usually not “good”; he is a trickster figure who aims to help himself first and whose violence is masked by his charm and familiarity to the audience.

Most Appalachian scholars contend that the canon of Jack tales that circulates throughout the region originated from English stories, both printed and oral. The first trace of the tradition appeared in the fifteenth-century English fabliaux, “Jack and his Stepdame,” a poem that narrates events surrounding a boy named Jack, the son of a farmer, who runs afoul of both his stepmother and a friar. Jack, having earned his stepmother’s ire, is sent to the fields by his father to watch over his herds. He encounters a hungry man and shares his dinner with him, and in return the man gives Jack three wishes. Jack receives a bow and arrows that cannot miss their mark; a horn that, when blown, makes people dance; and the ability to make his stepmother fart uncontrollably when she looks at him. The stepmother enlists a visiting friar to torment Jack, but he

takes his revenge by making the friar dance with his magic horn. The poem ends with Jack playing the horn in the streets to everyone's delight, with the exception of the friar, who has been tied up at his own request to keep him from dancing, and of course the stepmother, who receives her humiliation twofold. The poem describes Jack's punishment of her: "The goodwyfe cam all behynde. / She began to lepe and wynde / And sharpely for to shake. / But when she lokid on litill Jak, / Anon her arsse to her spake / And loude began to crake" (Furrow 130).

Contemporary Jack tales share many motifs with this first source; Jack often oversees livestock, shares his meals with an individual who gives him magic gifts, and exacts revenge on his enemies. Carl Lindahl explains that the contemporary tradition, highly censored and domesticated by modern folklore collectors, maintains its roots in this bawdy tradition. He writes, "'Jack and his Stepdame' testifies that Jack's name has figured in off-color adventures for nearly six centuries, and Appalachian tales just now finding their way into print ... affirm that the Jack of oral tradition is sometimes a character shared by adults but off-limits to children, enjoyed among men but largely concealed from women" ("Introduction: Jacks" xiv). The more famous Jack tales, both the oral and literary, have had such offending material removed, but both the Appalachian and the Irish oral traditions carry on bawdy motifs like the ones in "Jack and his Stepdame," even though the genre has largely been co-opted in America for sale to young audiences.

The figure of Jack appeared in England again, this time in prose, in a 1711 chapbook titled "The History of Jack and the Giants." This tale follows a dashing young hero who begins his tale overseeing a herd of cattle and is approached by a series of

giants. From them Jack steals magical objects, including a sword, which he uses to slay each giant and then to slay a dragon in order to save a young woman. In the Irish oral tradition, this tale is vastly popular. Yeats,¹ Gregory,² and Synge³ each collected and published versions of it, and the National Folklore Collection contains 652 records of this tale type (Ó Súilleabháin and Christainsen 58-62). “The History of Jack and the Giants” was closely followed by another chapbook detailing the adventures of Jack; in 1734 “Jack Spriggins and the Enchanted Bean” first appeared and introduced the familiar storybook motifs of magic beans, towering beanstalks, and a giant who cries, “Fee-Faw-Fum! / I smell the Blood of an Englishman” (Merryman 45). In this story Jack again faces the wrath of a maternal figure, this time his ill-tempered and enchanted grandmother who chases him up the beanstalk and falls to the ground, leaving Jack to his adventures with a giant and a beautiful princess. These two tales were widely disseminated in chapbooks and, according to Lindahl, they became “the signature stories of the English storybook tradition that flowered in the nineteenth-century” (“Introduction: Jacks,” xv). Lindahl explains further, “As the cheaply priced chapbooks of the eighteenth century became the elaborate storybooks of the nineteenth, the farmer’s son invaded the nurseries of wealthy Victorians. All English people knew something of Jack” (“Introduction: Jacks” xvi). No doubt this English Jack who exists in print influenced oral traditions throughout the British Isles. Nonetheless, the Jack tale in England, while it may have its roots in an oral tradition, has been mostly a print and print-derived tradition since the eighteenth century.

The first record of the Jack tale tradition in the Appalachian Mountains appears in 1824, when Reverend Dr. Joseph Doddridge recalled hearing the tales during his childhood in West Virginia in the 1760s. He writes,

Dramatic narrations, chiefly concerning Jack and the Giant, furnished our young people with another source of amusement during their leisure hours. Many of those tales were lengthy, and embraced a considerable range of incident. Jack, always the hero of the story, after encountering many difficulties and performing many great achievements, came off conqueror of the Giant.... These dramatic narrations concerning Jack and the Giant bore a strong resemblance to the poems of Ossian, the story of the Cyclops and Ulysses in the Odyssey of Homer, and the tale of the Giant and Great-heart in Pilgrim's progress, and were so arranged as to the different incidents of the narration, that they were easily committed to memory. They certainly have been handed down from generation to generation from time immemorial. (quoted in Lindahl, "Introduction: Representing" 8)

From Doddridge's description, we can ascertain a number of characteristics of eighteenth-century Appalachian Jack tales. The Jack tale of the Appalachian region carries many motifs from its literary European predecessors, but it differs from the popular English tradition in that it was, until the twentieth century, exclusively oral in its transmission and thus has expanded to local various tropes and narratives and, as Dodderidge points out, has motifs akin to Ossianic tales of the Irish Fenian Cycle. Indeed, in contemporary renderings, Appalachian Jack, unlike his literary English cousin,

confronts a variety of adversaries and obstacles in addition to giants and does not always encounter magic. He outsmarts witches, fire-breathing men, the devil, unicorns, wild animals, unscrupulous kings and farmers, bands of robbers and other unsavory types, and even his own brothers. Since at least the eighteenth century, Appalachian Jack has certainly limited himself to the plot motifs of the English chapbook tradition.

The socio-economic situation of Appalachian Jack also diverges from that in English tradition. Paige Gutierrez points out, “In the majority of the [Appalachian] Jack Tales poverty, which implies a lack of things necessary for survival, is the motivating force behind the action of the story” (91). Gutierrez argues that *lack*, rather than the actions of a villain, is the impetus for most of Jack’s adventures. Furthermore, Lindahl claims, “Poverty ... fuels the machinery of Märchen justice by giving Jack a need to succeed.... The focal drama of [many oral versions of the tales] lies in the tension between poverty and fear” (“Sounding” 79). Jack often begins his tale hungry, as is the case in “Jack and the North West Wind,” where Jack and his mother begin starving and cold, and he sets out to plug the hole from which the west wind blows. Or Jack’s tale begins when his father decides he is old enough to leave home and gives him only a meager sum of money to start a life, as is the case in “Jack and the Heifer Hide,” where Jack only inherits a young cow while his brothers gain livestock and land. Appalachian Jack’s extreme poverty differentiates him from the Jack of English literature, who is far more financially secure. In “Jack and his Stepdame,” Jack’s father is referred to as a “goodman,” which the *OED* defines as a “master or male head of a household or other establishment.” In addition to being a farmer with a herd of “bestes,” Jack’s father is also a successful innkeeper, housing the friar and a host of others whom he lodges and feeds.

The Jacks of the chapbook tradition are equal in their financial comfort, as Jack is described as the son of a “wealthy farmer” (2) in “The History of Jack and the Giants,” and in “Jack Spriggins and the Enchanted Bean,” he lives with his grandmother whose enchantment, it seems, keeps her from poverty.

Lindahl points out yet another structural feature common to the Appalachian Jack tale when he argues that the tradition consistently “presents a tension between home and the road. Beginning in a quiet, unremarkable place—such as the simple hearth where poor Jack and his widowed mother worry about their next meal—the story only gradually opens to the magic world” (“Introduction: Jacks” xviii). Sometimes Jack returns home and sometimes he finds a new home of his own, and in the process comes of age, but the conflicting lures of domesticity and the public sphere always influence Jack’s narrative. In this same vein, Lindahl defines the American tradition as a “little” or “shy” tradition of the domestic space (“Introduction: Jacks” xix). Many American collectors report the unwillingness of informants to tell tales to an outsider and their greater ease when given an audience of children from their own families. But Lindahl also locates the tradition within a shy style of performance:

Like Irish storytellers described by James Delargy, who turn their backs to the audience or even speak out, audible but invisible, from another room, British-American storytellers tend to speak out, but not to act out, their tales, eschewing gesture and confining drama to the voice. For their part, listeners tend not to watch the storyteller. Informants have told me that they listened in the dark—or in front of a fire, staring at the flames, to

become hypnotic subjects in an environment where only the voice mattered. (“Introduction: Jacks” xix)

Until the twentieth-century, the Jack tale in Appalachia belonged almost exclusively to the domestic sphere and was shared among family and community members privately.

The earliest of the American Jack tales were recorded in *The Journal of American Folklore*, where three versions of “Jack and the Robbers,” or AT type 130, appeared in 1888. These tales came not from the Appalachian Mountains, but from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Ohio, indicating that, before the twentieth century, Jack tales were not exclusive to the Appalachians, but were maintained by oral traditions throughout the United States.

Despite their evidently wide circulation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the American record of Jack tales in the twentieth century has been almost exclusively Appalachian. In 1925 Isabel Gordon Carter, the first collector to give the tradition lengthy consideration, published ten different Jack tales alongside thirteen other folk tales in *The Journal of American Folklore* under the title “White Folk-Lore: Tales from the Southern Blue Ridge.” Carter’s source for the Jack tale material was Jane Hicks Gentry of Hot Springs, North Carolina, who had been a major source of folk song material for Cecil Sharp a decade before. These early collections are aimed at academic audiences and, therefore, did not find readership beyond folklore studies. The most popular collection of Jack tales came from a literary collector and folk performer named Richard Chase, who, for better or worse, brought the tradition to general audiences throughout the United States in the middle of the twentieth century.

Richard Chase and the American Controversy

Chase published his widely successful collection *The Jack Tales*, aimed largely at young audiences, in 1943. Like many popular folklorists who came before him, Chase crafted his own versions of the tales, which were highly edited and bowdlerized and were the combination of various sources. His main informants were the extended Hicks/Ward/Harmon family of Beech Mountain, North Carolina, as well as numerous sources from Wise County, Virginia; the latter were painfully elided in Chase's introduction in favor of the family traditions of Beech Mountain, which Chase promoted and mythologized throughout his lifetime.⁴ The Hicks family has continued to tell Jack tales, most notably in through career of the late storyteller Ray Hicks, and the family has both inherited and resisted Chase's influence.

Chase's collection presented the Jack tales as a cohesive and uniquely American folk tale cycle. He does not make an overt European source claim for the tales he records, but in his introduction he does point out his debt to Sharp's efforts to record "Anglo-American folk music" (vii). Chase describes the Hicks family as descendents "from the earliest settlers of [the] region" and points to Sharp's work and John C. Campbell for demographics of the Appalachians. Sharp wrote that "the original settlers ... were emigrants from England and, I suspect, lowland Scotland" (*English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* iv). In turn, Campbell claimed that "Scotch-Irish" and "Anglo-Saxon lineage—meaning thereby pure English" were the "two elements that are the strongest in the mountain population" (71). Most scholars of Appalachian folklore agree that the tales are a mixture of British and American oral tradition, though the degree to which these cultural influences shape the American tales is a subject of controversy.

Much of the difficulty of discerning the American tropes from the European ones has to do with Chase's methodology of selection. According to James Taylor Adams, who worked with him in Virginia, Chase wanted to "take the tales we have collected in Wise County and rewrite them, making them into more readable stories, adding touches of completeness so that they will appear as found in 16th and 17th century collections" (quoted in Perdue, "Old Jack" 114). Charles L. Perdue, Jr., concludes that Chase likely added European tropes to the American tales to make them appear more cohesive. Nonetheless, Chase promoted the materials as pure Americana and argued in his introduction, "It is through this natural oral process that our Appalachian giant-killer has acquired the easy-going, unpretentious rural American manners that make him so different from his English cousin, the cocksure, dashing young hero of the 'fairy' tale" (ix). Chase's confused approach, relying both on Old World sources for cohesion while laying claim to Appalachian Jack's unique American-ness, has produced a subsequent body of scholarship that agrees neither on either the Jack tales' origins nor their status as artifacts of a specifically American culture. Nonetheless, in the Jack tale scholarship that has succeeded Chase, there is a persistent assumption that the tradition has its roots in England while strongly evident Irish connections are rarely interrogated. Indeed, the Irish Jack tale tradition also produces an unpretentious rural hero that contrasts with the heroic Jack of the English chapbook tradition, so Chase's claims that these are specifically American attributes is flawed.

Chase's *The Jack Tales*, with its cohesive group of eighteen stories and illustrations of Jack, depicted consistently as a young teenager in overalls in an idyllic frontier American setting, has influenced both scholars and tellers of Jack tales in the

latter half of the twentieth century. In “Is Old Jack Really Richard Chase,” Perdue contends that Chase’s Jack is simply a reflection of the collector himself. Perdue argues that Chase’s Jack is more likely to have a family and to return home at the end of his tale, indicating Chase’s obsession with his own exile from his family (118-19), and he is more “likely to be a braggart, ... [which is] not inconsistent with Chase’s well-known, sizable ego” (120). Furthermore, according to Perdue, “Chase’s Jack is more often a thief, more apt to dupe others, and is more than twice as likely to kill his opposition in the tales” (121). Perdue’s palpable loathing of Chase, evident here and elsewhere,⁵ may influence his argument somewhat; on both sides of the Atlantic, Jack fulfills these character traits and familial situations. But Perdue is correct in asserting that Chase created a lovable boy hero by manipulating the oral materials to fit his desire for a sanitized and infantilized Jack tale canon that would be marketable to the anxious members of white America nostalgic for an uncorrupted vision of Anglo-American heritage.

Joseph Daniel Sobol argues that Chase’s “view or, rather, his manifest desire that the hero of his book should be experienced as a single figure through all of his episodic adventures predetermined many of his authorial choices” (“Whistlin’” 11). Sobol argues that one tale in particular, “Wicked John and the Devil,” reveals Chase’s resistance to Jacks who fail to fit his conception of the mischief making boy hero. The protagonist of this tale is a blacksmith who outwits and tortures the devil. Upon death, he is denied entrance to both heaven and hell and must wander the earth eternally in the form of a light. According to Sobol, “in one of Chase’s original sources [from Mrs. Jennings L. Yowell of Charlottesville, Virginia] the character of Wicked John was actually called Jack as well” (“Whistlin’” 5 and 10). In Ireland, this tale is vastly popular. Henry Glassie

explains of the tale type, Aarne-Thompson number 330, is “especially common in Ireland, where hundreds of examples have been collected and published since the early nineteenth century” (*Stars* 233). Edmund Lenihan published one of these examples titled “Jack o’ the Lantern,”⁶ and so the hero’s status as Jack persists on both sides of the Atlantic. Sobol argues that Chase changed the name of the protagonist, whose age and wicked demeanor did not fit the persona he created for his protagonist. He published the story in a later volume called *Grandfather Tales* (1948), consisting exclusively of non-Jack tale material.

Chase’s collections have also had some influence on the oral Jack tale tradition, specifically within the extended Hicks family. Sobol argues that Ray Hicks learned at least three tales, including “Wicked John and the Devil,” from Chase or from his books (“Whistlin’” 10). Maud Long, Jane Hicks Gentry’s daughter, also altered her family’s versions of the tales to fit more closely with Chase’s canon. Bill Ellis explains that when Long visited the Library of Congress in 1947 to record her family’s tales, she “modeled [them] after Chase’s versions” (105), removing bawdy material and choosing Chase’s plot motifs when they varied from her mother’s versions. Even when material comes from the oral tradition, it is not immune from Chase’s influence.

As a result of Chase’s impact on the Hicks and other family traditions, some folklore scholars have agreed with his assessment that the Jack tales, while derived from European sources, have become an essentially American tradition. Gutierrez argues the Hicks family Jack tales are “a cohesive cycle that centers on the thoroughly Americanized farmboy-hero Jack ... ; he is a recognizable individual who moves with equal ease through clever stories and magical stories” (85). Joseph M. Carrière makes a

similar generalization when he writes, “Unlike the dashing and self-confident Jack, whom one meets so commonly in English and Irish folktales, the Jack of American folklore is a quiet, unassuming mountain boy who can face success or adversity with equal serenity” (quoted in Nicolaisen, “English Jack” 29). Nicolaisen contends that such descriptions of Appalachian Jack are derived from Chase’s influence as well as “stereotyping, born from wishful thinking” (29), and he argues that Jack in America shares many of the various tropes and personality traits with the Jack of the British tradition. But, as the title of his essay, “English Jack and American Jack” suggests, Nicolaisen, like many other American folklorists, assumes that the Jack tales come exclusively from an English tradition.

Jack in Colonial Virginia: Irish Catholic Immigrants and the Hicks Family

Despite many indications of Irish derived material in Appalachian Jack tales, scholars consistently elide Irish influence, oftentimes while simultaneously alluding to it. The earliest published American Jack tales were three versions of “Jack and the Robbers,” which appeared in the *Journal of American Folklore* under the title, “English Folk-Tales in America I.” Why the collector, W. W. N., identifies the tales as English is curious, as he admits in the accompanying note, “No version appears to have been recorded in England. The Irish tale given by Kennedy, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts*, p. 5, may be compared with our third version, except that it has the same hero Jack, who appears in our first and second versions” (233).

The appendix to Chase’s *The Jack Tales*, compiled by Herbert Halpert, also offers far more Irish parallels than English. In addition to “Jack and the Robbers,” which

Halpert admits “I have found no report of it from England” (191), he also lists seven other tales without English variants while providing various parallels for these in Ireland, Scotland, and America. The lack of evidence of an English origin may simply be that the storytelling tradition has not thrived there as it has elsewhere. In fact, according to Stith Thompson, “Folklorists have always remarked on the scarcity of the authentic folktale in England. Popular narrative has had a tendency to take the form of the ballad” (19). The absence of certain Jack tales in the English record is one issue that troubles assumptions of English origins that few folklorists address. Instead, they are quick to overlook such inconsistencies and maintain their references to the American tales as English or British derived, likely because Appalachia is conceived in the American imagination to be a strictly Protestant culture. Even studies that have investigated German and African American cultural forces in the region have not challenged the notion that Appalachia is immune to Catholic influence.

Most scholars agree that the Hicks line of the extended family is English in its ancestral origin. Betty N. Smith, Jane Hicks Gentry’s biographer, has the most complete and accurate account of the family’s American ancestors. She writes, “The Hicks family has its roots in England. ... The first member of the Watauga line of the Hicks family appears to have arrived in Virginia in 1637. Samuel Hix came as an indentured servant to a plantation at the mouth of the Rappahannock River in lower Chesapeake Bay” (12).⁷ If the first Hicks ancestor arrived in the Chesapeake Bay area, then he would have been among English as well as Irish Catholic immigrants.

Early settlement of colonial Virginia was interconnected with the seventeenth-century plantation of Ireland, which resulted in the arrival of Irish Catholic immigrants in

the New World (Quinlan 246). Sixteenth and seventeenth century settlement of English and Scottish subjects around Dublin, Cork, and Ulster caused unrest in Ireland and trouble for the English monarchy. According to Aubrey Gwynn, “as early as 1607 English statesmen were thinking of [Virginia] as a possible solution for their difficulties in Ireland” (157). He offers one manuscript from that date wherein the writer describes “such Irish of note whose Septs or stocks have been factious and nourishers of Rebellion.” The text goes on to explain,

In Ireland there are certaine kinde of swordmen Called kerne : descended from Horseboyes, Idle persons and unlawfull propigation. They are base, apt to follow factions, and live allwaies by yr spoyle, and will never be brought to other Conformitie there : but if they might be drawne from thence, and imployed to ye planting of Virginia : the Countrie should be well freed, and tyme elsewhere Eate them oute or amend them. The number of these people in Ireland I suppose will not exceede 7 or 8000. (Gwynn 157-58)⁸

Other documents reveal Irish prisoners who were sent to Virginia in 1620 to be dispossessed Irish landowners whose idleness in Wexford proved troublesome to recent English settlers there. One, written from Dublin, describes men “who have lately vexed his [majesty] . . . wth their clamours against the distribution of the lands there” and who “terrifie others of the same unquiet spirit, from attempting to disturbe his [majesty’s] best & greatest works here, wth the lyke suggestion of impudent untruths.” The writer suggests that a solution to such troublesome persons in Ireland would be “to send them

into Virginia” (Gwynn 159),⁹ though it is unclear whether any of these Irish rebels landed in the New World.

Some of the Chesapeake Bay’s earliest and most important landowning settlers were colonial transplants from Ireland who, having been granted land there, extended their sights to further opportunities in Virginia. One of these landowners was Sir William Newce, from whom Newport News, Virginia, derives its name. Newce was an English soldier whose family was granted land in Ireland. He fought in the Battle of Kinsale in 1605, was accused of leading a company of Irish soldiers into Spanish service (charges of which he was acquitted), was the mayor of Bandon in County Cork, and founded Newce’s Town, a port on the Bandon River in County Cork. According to an essay in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, “In April, 1621, he offered to transport a thousand emigrants to Virginia, and his offer was accepted by the London Company” (“Newport News,” 233). It appears, however, that only about one hundred Irish laborers arrived, many of whom died in an Indian attack in Newport News (Akenson, *If the Irish Ran the World* 16). Newce was followed by fellow Cork landowner, Daniel Gookin, who also settled in Newport News later that year. Gookin first sailed with fifty servants and thirty passengers from Ireland (Gwynn 160). In January 1622, the governor and council records chronicle his arrival:

There arrived here about the 22d of November a shipp from Mr. Gookin out of Ireland wholly upon his own adventure, without any relation at all to his contract with you in England, which was so well furnished with all sortes of provisione, as well as with cattle, as wee could wyshe all men would follow their example; hee hath also brought with him about fifty

men upon that adventure, besides some 30 passengers. Wee have according to their desire seated them at New-port's News, and we doe conceive great hope, yff the Irish Plantation prper (prosper), yt from Ireland great multitudes of People will like to come hither. (quoted in "Newport News" 234)

A year later, Gookin's settlement in Newport News was massacred by Indians, though he resisted and survived. John Smith explains Gookin's counterattack: "Only Master *Gookins* at *Newport-newes* would not obey the Commander's command [to depart], though he had scarce five and thirty of all sorts with him, yet he thought himself sufficient against what could happen, and so did to his great credit and the content of his Adventurers" (quoted in Gwynn 161).¹⁰ Census records report that in 1625, "Newport News was occupied solely by 'Daniel Gookin's muster'" ("Newport News" 234-35).

Many of the individuals brought over by Newce and Gookin would have been indentured servants procured from their estates in Ireland. The Virginia State Land Office has on record nearly three hundred and fifty names of Irish immigrants who landed between the years of 1623 and 1666. These include individuals such as Teague Allen, who arrived in 1653, Bridget Carey, who settled in 1654, and Patrick O'Crahan, who landed in 1656 (O'Brien, "Early Immigrants" 209-12). Michael J. O'Brien also notes that, in addition to this list of confirmed Irish names, "there is a large number of immigrants named Allen, Bryan, Collins, Cunningham, Donnell, Farley, Flood, Fludd, Ford, Gill, Garrett, Griffin, Gwyn, Hart, Haies, Harrington, Moore, and Neale who may have been Irish" (213). Furthermore, Patrick Griffin explains of later settlements, "thousands of Irish [...] settled in the Chesapeake in the 1680s, as the supply of servants

from England began to dry up and before planters turned to Africa for their labor source. It was not unusual in these years for ships from England to stop at Irish ports to pick up a cargo of servants for Virginia” (“Irish Migration” 22). Russell R. Menard contends that most of these indentured servants from Ireland “spoke English and were thus at least partly anglicized before moving to the colonies” (114).

As an indentured servant himself, Samuel Hix would have been of the same class as these early Irish settlers and would have mixed with them. After his arrival, Hix remained in the Chesapeake Bay area, and the family was in the region for three generations (Smith 12). Therefore, the family was in the Chesapeake Bay area during the heaviest era of early Irish settlement.

Most scholars claim that the Hicks family is English,¹¹ though there are a handful who have suggested Scottish¹² or Ulster Scots¹³ origins. The departure point of the Hicks family may never be uncovered and is lost to history. But the Hicks family itself is only a small piece of the Jack tales puzzle, even within that family’s specific traditions, because a plethora of cultural influences have shaped their Jack tales over time. From whatever port Samuel Hix embarked in the seventeenth century, the colony in which he arrived would have contained immigrants from other locations with whom he interacted. If he was, as most scholars suggest, the source for the family tales and songs (Nicolaisen, “The Teller” 126 and 140; Thompson, “The Origins of the Hicks Family Traditions” 27), then he would have been a man of great oral and aural skill who may have shared his tales with others and who encountered tales that he incorporated into his own repertoire. Before settling in the Beech Mountain community, where the family has married almost exclusively with a small group of other local families, there were three generations of

Hicks men who lived and married in Virginia, perhaps bringing different national traditions into the family that are mistakenly attributed to the first Samuel Hix. It is unlikely that Hix and his successors passed on a homogenous and fixed tradition of purely English folk tales; instead, the Appalachian Jack tales are a hybrid tradition that has absorbed motifs and narratives over time and perhaps even arrived in America already carrying diverse national strains of oral tradition.

Appalachian scholars who are not wedded to the tradition's Englishness have suggested that the tales, both from the Hicks and other regional family traditions, carry evidence of other cultural influences. Lindahl explains, "Beyond England's borders other Jacks thrived. In Scotland and Ireland, even among Gaelic-speaking narrators, Jacks figure prominently in the earliest printed folktales" ("Introduction: Jacks" xvi). Lindahl offers three Scottish collectors who include characters named Jack, Jock, or Jake in their stories, but unfortunately offers no Irish examples. He also confirms that "Scottish and Irish settlers brought their Jacks [to the United States] as well, and these oral traditions too would find expression in American tales" ("Introduction: Jacks" xvii). What Lindahl means by Irish Jack tales is also ambiguous, as midway through his essay he stops using the term "Irish" and replaces it with "Scots-Irish," ultimately referring to the Old World Jack tale tradition as "English, Scottish, or Scots-Irish" ("Introduction: Jacks" xxxii). Thus, he imagines the European tradition as exclusively British (or perhaps exclusively Protestant) and elides native Irish Jack tale traditions.

Sobol also argues for the hybridity of American Jack, writing, "the stories would have been common property among folk of English, Scottish, Irish, German, or French ancestry all over the new nation" ("Introduction" 12). Unlike Lindahl, Sobol offers a

concrete example of an Irish tale in the Appalachian canon. He writes, “The Beech Mountain tale ‘Hardy-Hardhead’ was once woven around the Irish hero Finn MacCool” (“Introduction” 14-15). When arguing for the inclusion of “Wicked John and the Devil” in the Jack tale canon, Sobol makes even stronger comparisons between that tale and Irish mythology. He argues that wicked John the blacksmith “is also a direct descendent of Lugh, the divine smith of Celtic mythology” and that “Jack too is related to Wicked John, much as the Goban Saor, the Irish ‘Jack of all trades,’ was related to his mythic elders Gaibhde and Lugh” (“Whistlin’” 5).

Despite their general tendency to assume Jack’s English roots, scholars of the Appalachian Jack tales are not as resistant to suggestions of diverse origins as scholars of the Appalachian ballad; while Chase may have followed Sharp’s assumptions, he was not as adamant as Sharp nor did he enter into discussions of racial inheritance. Moreover, Chase’s unfavorable reputation among collectors and tellers alike has modified his influence significantly. While some scholars operate under the assumption that Jack is purely Anglo-American, many others are open to connections between the Appalachian tales and Irish, Scottish, Welsh, German, African-American, and Caribbean traditions. However, serious inquiry into the Irish Jack tale tradition and its possible influence on the Appalachian tales has not been undertaken, an oversight this project seeks to correct.

Jack Tales in Ireland

The international tale, as I discussed in chapter two, is not a popular genre among collectors and publishers of Irish folklore; nonetheless, ever since international tales have been collected in Ireland there have been Jack tales among them. Patrick Kennedy, who

collected folklore in Wexford, was the first to give serious attention to Irish *märchen* in two of his collections, *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* (1866) and *Fireside Stories of Ireland* (1870). The first collection contained five sections: “Household Stories,” “Legends of the ‘Good People,’” “Witchcraft, Sorcery, Ghosts, and Fetches,” “Ossianic and Other Early Legends,” and “Legends of the Celtic Saints”; thus it was more diverse in genre than the Revivalist collections that would come after it. The first section of “Household Stories,” borrowing the term from the Grimm’s *Hausmärchen*, was made up of ten international tales, three of which are Jack tales.¹⁴

The first tale in the collection is “Jack and his Comrades,” the version of “Jack and the Robbers” referred to in the 1888 collection of Jack tales in the *Journal of American Folklore*. Kennedy’s tale begins,

Once there was a poor widow, and often there was, and she had one son. A very scarce summer came, and they didn’t know how they’d live till the new potatoes would be fit for eating. So Jack said to his mother one evening, “Mother, bake my cake, and kill my cock, till I go seek my fortune; and if I meet it, never fear but I’ll soon be back to share it with you.” (4)

These stylized opening words, quite common among Irish Jack tales, share many similarities with various tales told by the Hicks family in Appalachia. For example, Ray Hicks begins one of his tales with a similar, though more spare, opening: “Jack and his mother, they got all out of anything to eat, and he started out on a job, and he got out in the woods and he got lost” (Lindahl, *American Folktales* 134).¹⁵ Orville Hicks, who since

Ray Hicks's death has taken his place as the family's public storyteller, also begins one of his tales with a similar scenario:

Well Jack, he lived way back up in the mountains there with his mama. And they got up one morning and wanted to get something to eat and looked, didn't have a bite to eat in the house. Didn't have nothing. And Jack's mama said, "Son," said, "you're going to have to go out and find some work." Said, "Don't, and we're going to starve to death." Well Jack, he didn't like to work too good if you get by with it. He finally headed down the road looking for work. (*Mule Egg Seller*)¹⁶

A Jack tale can begin with a small number of narrative formulae, and tales that begin with Jack being the only son of a widow are common in Appalachian and particularly popular in Ireland. Jack's hunger, also a widespread motif in the Appalachian tales, is often found at the beginning of many Irish tales, which is not surprising as Kenney published his collection less than twenty years after the Great Famine. The Famine, however, did not give us this motif, as hunger is a common trope among international tales from various national locations, but it may have increased its occurrence as a narrative device among Irish storytellers.

Kennedy's second collection, *The Fireside Stories of Ireland*, contains four more Jack tales, including two tales that are found in Chase's collection.¹⁷ One of these is "The Three Gifts" (Kennedy 25-30), which strikingly resembles the popular Appalachian tale, "Jack and the North West Wind" (Chase 47-57). In this tale, a version of Aarne-Thompson type 563, Jack leaves home and encounters a person who gives him three magic gifts: a hen that lays golden eggs, a table cloth that, when spread, is stocked with

food, and a stick or club that beats when it is told to do so. On successive trips back home, Jack's gifts are stolen when he spends the night at a house of unscrupulous people. Chase's version calls them "awful rowdy boys" (49) and in Kennedy's version they are a family of swindlers who boast of their exploits cheating others (26). They take the first two gifts, replacing them with a common hen and tablecloth, which fail to perform when Jack arrives back home. The third time Jack spends the night in their house, he uses the newly acquired stick (Kennedy) or club (Chase) against them until they give up the other two magic gifts, and Jack returns home victorious. The Irish version is far closer to the Appalachian one than the common English tale of the "The Ass, the Table, and the Stick," which replaces the smaller, more portable hen and table cloth with larger more cumbersome magical objects (Jacobs 215-19).

Richard M. Dorson explains that Kennedy's approach was unique among Irish folklore collectors of his time because he expanded Irish folklore collecting into an array of oral genres: "Where Croker had noticed one segment of oral Irish tale-telling [i.e., fairy legends], Kennedy now illuminated the spectrum of oral prose traditions in Ireland. ... Few forms of folk narrative escaped Kennedy." However, Dorson argues that Jeremiah Curtin, who collected in the 1880s, gathered a superior kind of Irish folklore: "Curtain had advanced over Kennedy in two ways: he had collected not recollected and in Gaelic not English" (Foreword xi). Working in Irish, Curtin collected Fenian tales, which Dorson identifies as more authentically Irish than Kennedy's English-language folk tales, "recollected" versions of Continental folklore types. In this assessment of living Irish folklore, Dorson views the parts of the Irish oral tradition in a distinct

hierarchy, where Irish language tales with identifiably native Irish subjects are viewed as superior to traditions circulating in English.

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, a contemporary folklorist, writer, and contributor to *The Field Day Anthology: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions*, points out another characteristic assigned to international tales, whether in Irish or English, that has allowed collectors and readers to assign the genre an inferior status, namely that they are coded as feminine and associated with women tellers and domestic audiences. She describes an Irish-language international tale recorded in *The Western Island* by Robin Flower. The tale, “*Purty Deas Squirey*,” was told by a woman named Gobnait Ní Chinnéide of the Great Blasket Island off the coast of County Kerry. Ní Dhuibhne describes Ní Chinnéide’s reluctance to tell the tale because it “was only fit for children,” but she also records the collector’s eventual persuasion. When the woman finished the tale, a man in her company named Seán spoke the following judgment: “Well, well, well ... it’s a good tale enough, but we wouldn’t have called it a tale at all in the old times. Devil take my soul, it’s long before I’d put a tale like that in comparison with the long Fenian stories we used to tell” (1214). Seán, presumably a native of the Blaskets as well, shares Dorson’s assessment as well as that of many other collectors who have elided the international Irish folk tales in favor of the seemingly more authentic and robust Irish saga traditions. Ní Dhuibhne notes the “clash between the masculine and the feminine traditions” at this moment in Flower’s text and goes on to analyze the episode at length:

Seán is scornful of Gobnait’s story. It is a fairytale, one of the great genres of oral narrative, mainly told by men in Ireland, but a tale of a particularly feminine kind: a version of “Cinderella”, a story of particular appeal to

women. Seán compares it to the “Fenian” tales or *Fiannaíocht*, epic tales of adventure, told by men in the traditional society. Women were discouraged from telling these stories. He indicates that the good old days, when men told them, are over, and that only insignificant tales, which even a woman can tell, are to be heard now. (1214)

Even though Jack is a masculine character, Jack tales inhabit the feminine tradition Ní Dhuibhne identifies because they are often associated with the domestic sphere and specifically with children. Furthermore, there are stories in which Jack is a male Cinderella figure, such as in Synge’s version of “The Dragon Slayer.” In that tale the princess whom the hero saves clips a lock of his hair and later uses it to identify her beloved against a host of suitors who claim falsely to have saved her life. Jack’s hair is thus akin to Cinderella’s slipper. Like Ní Chinnéide’s tale, Jack tales are also often identified with the domestic sphere and specifically with children. Therefore, in Ireland, too, international tales have become a part of the “little tradition” that Carl Lindahl associates with the Appalachian tellers.

Ní Dhuibhne's analysis and her collection of Irish-language international tales in *The Field Day Anthology*, volume IV, make clear that the *märchen* tradition in Ireland is native. Therefore, the tales that Kennedy collected in English, just like the ones Synge collected from Pat Dirane on Inishmaan, are texts that survived the transition from Irish to English; they may be circulated in English, but that does not mean that they are imported tales from England. No doubt the English chapbook tradition has had some impact on Irish storytelling, but the influence of old Irish-language traditions is just as

strong. Kennedy's Jack tales, then, are part of the native tradition that passed into English by way of storytellers willing to preserve them in the new language.

The Field Day Anthology's section on "Oral Traditions," edited by Angela Bourke, holds yet another clue that may explain the movement of Irish Jack tales across Ireland, their existence in English, and, perhaps, their connections to the Appalachian tradition. Most of the sections contain a majority of Irish language texts translated into English. The section on Traveller traditions, Bourke explains, is unique:

Traveller traditions are a special case, at once part of and apart from the wider currents of song and story in Ireland. Irish Travellers' lives traditionally include extended periods of nomadism, both in and outside Ireland.... 'Storytelling Traditions of the Irish Travellers' includes examples of both the international folktale and the legend, *all told in English*. (1192, emphasis mine)

Travellers, whose livelihood before modern commercial industry depended on interactions with various groups, both English and Irish speaking in and outside of Ireland, would have been one of the first native groups in Ireland to communicate in English. Travellers, then, might be responsible for the early dissemination of Irish oral traditions in English and the dissemination of Irish oral traditions abroad.

Irish Travellers are nomadic family groups who, according to Bairbre Ní Fhloinn, traditionally served Irish communities "as tinsmiths (whence the name 'tinker'), pedlars, chimney sweeps, horse dealers and casual laborers" ("Storytelling" 1264). Ní Fhloinn explains that Travellers are associated in Ireland with traditional storytelling, singing, and

healing traditions, and she offers the following account of Travellers before Ireland shifted to a mass-market, consumer society that rendered their services obsolete:

In those days, poor travelling men and women were nearly always welcome to a bed on the settle.... Each poor traveller had a certain house to face and stop in every night, and when they came at night they were welcome almost as a member of the family whom they had not seen for some time. For the people liked to hear the news the poor traveller had brought from outside districts, and listen to the long fireside stories.

(“Storytelling” 1265)

The stories told by Travellers are, according to Ní Fhloinn, essentially the same as ones told by settled Irish storytellers; the differences that “do exist between the repertoires of Travellers and settled people appear to be ones of style and emphasis, rather than of content” (“Storytelling” 1268).

Jack appears prominently in the Traveller traditions, and the value system that Ní Fhloinn suggests is particular to Travellers and expressed by their tales is similar to the one expressed in the Appalachian Jack tale tradition:

A number of stories recorded from Travellers extol the virtue of charity, illustrating that we should give generously to the less well-off, and that such generosity will bring its own rewards. Oney and John Power’s stories are full of examples of the rich getting their comeuppance, while the poor end up doing well. ... The business of travelling also features prominently in many Traveller stories; the Powers’ stories are full of accounts of people off on journeys. Mother-love is graphically illustrated in Oney

Power's story "Jack from Tubberclare", where the hero of the tale brings his wife home to his mother at the end of the story. ("Storytelling" 1269)

These same themes—generosity, distrust of the wealthy, journeying, and mother-love—are all predominant themes within Appalachian Jack tales. Ní Fhloinn does not include "Jack of Tubberclare" in her selection of tales for *The Field Day*, but she does offer another of Nora "Oney" Power's tales called "The Fiery Dragon," a version of "The Dragon Slayer" that, like Synge's, Yeats's, and Gregory's versions of the tale, includes giants and a dragon that the hero must defeat in order to save a young woman. In Power's tale, which Pádraig Mac Gréine collected in 1930, the hero is referred to as Jack, the widow's son.

Oney Power's tales are housed in the National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin and were collected by Mac Gréine, a schoolteacher who worked for the Irish Folklore Commission and collected from Travellers in County Longford. Mac Gréine was an extensive folklore collector and a life-long advocate for the cultural value of studying and preserving Traveller traditions to Ireland (Ní Fhloinn, "Storytelling" 1264). In 1932 he published a seminal essay titled "Irish Tinkers or 'Travellers': Some Notes on their Manners and Customs, and their Secret Language or 'Cant,'" which was one of the first serious studies of Traveller life. Mac Gréine's career as a collector of both Traveller and non-Traveller oral traditions spanned nine decades, from the 1920s until after the turn of the twenty-first century, and he lived to be 106 years old. His work is contained in the National Folklore Collection in Dublin, and his essays and collected materials have been published in the journal *Béaloidéas*, in the collection *To Shorten the*

Road: Traveller Folktales from Ireland (1978), and in *The Field Day Anthology*, volume four. Of the quality and importance of his work, Ní Fhloinn claims,

some of the finest collections and versions of international tales recorded in this country in the English language are the result of Pádraig's efforts.... Indeed, Pádraig's collections are rendered all the more valuable by the fact that international folktales and wonder tales, of a kind that hark back to the middle ages and beyond, are usually associated with Irish-speaking areas, making Pádraig's collection of such materials from the midlands — and in such excellent versions — all the more significant.

(“Pádraig Mac Gréine” 289-90)

At age 97, thirty-two years after retiring as a teacher in the National School system, he directed a “memorable seminar” in the Department of Irish Folklore at University College Dublin, and in 2002 the National University of Ireland, Galway, awarded him an honorary Master's degree (Ní Fhloinn, “Pádraig Mac Gréine” 291). And as late as 2005 he was still taking part in academic discussions of Traveller culture at the University of Limerick (“UL Library”).

Oney Power was one of Mac Gréine's most important informants and was a formative resource in his early career. He explains their first meeting:

I was cycling around a bye-road one day. It must have been in the mid 1920s, and I saw this poor dilapidated tent. A poor tent on the roadside and a little old woman sitting by a stick fire. I stopped for curiosity more than anything else and I started to talk to her. So I asked her who she was and she told me, ‘A Power.’ I said, ‘Do you know any stories?’ ‘Ah,’ she

says, 'I could tell you stories from this day to this day week.' (Ní Fhloinn, "Storytelling" 1267-68)

Two examples of Power's tales that are housed in the National Folklore Collection and were collected by Mac Gréine are "The Fiery Dragon" (NFC 81, 169-90) and "Jack the Ghost" (NFC 81, 223-39). Both are identifiable as Jack tales, with a protagonist named Jack, the son of a widow, who sets out to find employment away from home and encounters danger, adventure, magic, and success.

"Jack the Ghost" does not have a direct plot parallel in the American tradition, but the tale carries many motifs that exist in the Appalachian Jack tales. In the story Jack sets off from home three times, each time encountering a "a big tall man" whom he greets and, getting no response, then fights. After the third encounter, Jack continues on and is employed by a king, who asks him to spend the night in an abandoned castle, with the promise to pay him five pounds. Jack stays in the castle three nights, each morning being offered increasing sums of money by the king. The first night "a big tall man" comes to the castle, and Jack invites him in, feeds him, and plays a game with him. The next morning the king asks Jack, "Are ye alive?" and Jack responds, "Was that the fella sint to kill me? He's the most harmless fella ever I met" (NFC 81, 231). The next night the tall man brings another tall man with him; the third night the two arrive with a third man in a coffin. Jack attempts to warm the dead man, first by putting him in a bed and then by getting in the bed with him. The dead man responds, "Well Jack ... yes the bravest man in the world, an' I'll make y' up all the days o' yer life, an' make yer mother up, for no wan ever could release me only a man that never commit sin or never done harm" (NFC 81, 236). The dead man explains that he is the king's father, that the other two men are

his father and grandfather, and that they are “held spirits” who have killed every man who has stayed in the castle (NFC 81, 238). They spared Jack because of his sinless state, and, it seems, Jack’s hospitality has freed them to move on to the afterlife. As a reward, Jack is given his choice of the king’s three daughters. Before he will marry, Jack demands that the king bring his mother to the castle, and once he retrieves her the story ends.

Beyond the basic Jack tale introduction of the young man off to seek his fortune, “Jack the Ghost” carries a number of motifs that appear in Chase’s canon of Jack tales. In numerous Appalachian tales Jack is employed by a king; “Jack and the Giants’ Newground” (3-20), “Jack and the Varmints” (58-66), and “Big Jack and Little Jack” (67-75) each have a similar character called “the King” who hires Jack to do life-threatening tasks, often increasing his pay each time he succeeds. In another tale called “Sop Doll!” a miller hires Jack to spend the night in a house where all other previous visitors have died (76-82). In that tale, Jack encounters a coven of witches who have transformed themselves into cats. Jack cuts off the paw of one and survives the night, and the next morning the miller reacts similarly to the king in “Jack the Ghost”: “Well! I wasn’t expectin’ to see you alive, Jack. Thought I’d be buryin’ you today” (Chase, *The Jack Tales* 80).

Mac Gréine also collected from Oney Power’s son, John Power, who told such tales as “Jack the Cobbler the Widow’s Son from Ireland,” a tale follows the standard widow’s son, rags-to-riches tropes. John Power’s tales, which according to Mac Gréine he learned from his mother, also expand beyond the “widow’s son” motif, including stories like “The Wonderful Sword” (NFC 81, 2-23), wherein Jack has both his parents

and is characterized as lazy, duping the king and others into paying him sums of money. In this tale, Jack has various adventures, travelling to London, slaying giants, and eventually marrying a beautiful young woman. John Power also tells a tale called “Horse, Hound, and Hawk” (NFC 81, 27-50) wherein Jack and his brothers are the sons of a king; this tale is a version of “The Dragon Slayer” and closely resembles Yeats and Gregory’s version.

“The Rich and the Poor Peasant”: An Appalachian Tale Type with Irish Roots

There is one tale in particular in Ireland and the Appalachian Mountains that has thrived within both oral traditions yet has been largely elided by collectors with nationalist aims because of its failure to depict an idealized pastoral perspective. “The Rich and the Poor Peasant,” or Aarne-Thompson type 1535, has been enjoyed by rural audiences in both cultural locations for centuries, despite or perhaps because of it resists nationalist aesthetics that have successfully domesticated other folk forms. The published record and oral accounts of “The Rich and the Poor Peasant” in Ireland are extensive, and in Appalachia, especially among Hicks family tellers, the tale type thrives equally well, usually under the title “Jack and the Heifer Hide.” Few scholars, other than Glassie, have noted the tale’s predominance in both locations.¹⁸ I contend that, more than any other story in the Appalachian Jack tale canon, “The Heifer Hide” reveals the strongest evidence of origins in the Irish oral tradition.

Most critically, however, the linkage between the Irish tradition of telling “The Rich and the Poor Peasant” and the Appalachian tradition of the tale uncovers the disconnection between the desires of the folklore collector and the desires of the folk

teller. The collector seeks to control and confine the folk tradition within a palatable nationalist framework, while the storyteller, and his local audience, take pleasure in oral traditions that defy middle-class mores and nationalist objectives. The tale fails to represent an idealized Appalachia, ready for consumption by white, Protestant, middle-class American children, and it certainly does not uphold Lady Gregory's nationalist goal to "show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism" (*Our Irish Theatre* 379). There is no idealism in the Irish versions of this tale, and according to Glassie, it is diametrically opposed to Revivalist and Twilight aesthetics:

The tale's horrific violence and grotesque delights ... take on [a] hyperbolic, deadpan humor ... when they are set solidly here, among us, *and not in some fey realm of enchantment*. In workaday fantasy, inhibitions vanish, decent restraint collapses, the feelings within become actions in the world, and the story stands as the dream of some poor farmer in a place like Ballymenone who wishes destruction upon his noisome neighbors. (*Stars* 248, emphasis mine)

In Ireland the tale first appeared in print in an undated and anonymously compiled pamphlet called *The Royal Hibernian Tales*, as "Donald and his Neighbors" (61-66). Séamus Ó Duilearga calls the pamphlet "the earliest known collection of Irish popular tales or *märchen*, as well as ... one of the rarest books in the field of Irish folklore" (148) and suspects that the collection was compiled in either the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. In 1888 Yeats republished the tale in his *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, in the final section of international tales that was never meant for

publication (Thuente 80-81). And in 1889, Synge collected a rare fragment of the tale from Pat Dirane on Inishmaan and transformed it later into the much-protested *In the Shadow of the Glen*.

“Jack and the Heifer Hide”: A Hicks Family Favorite

Within the Hicks family tradition, “Jack and the Heifer Hide” has a history of being told and recorded much but being published little; the tale also, it turns out, has been heavily censored, if not by folklorists then by tellers themselves, who perhaps viewed its extreme violence and implied sexuality with a degree of shame. Even in its censored state the tale is problematic within Chase’s vision of Jack’s domesticated personality. Indeed, many of the tale’s features resist Jack tale motifs altogether.

The standard, censored version of the Appalachian tale finds Jack one of three sons who inherits only a heifer from his dead father, while his brothers get the rest of the family’s herds and land. In this tale, Jack is often characterized as lazy and is thus despised by his hard working brothers, who punish him by killing the heifer. Jack skins, dries, and sometimes stuffs the heifer’s hide and sets off down the road with it. He comes to a house where a woman reluctantly welcomes him to spend the night, explaining that her husband is away and that Jack can sleep in the loft. From above, Jack watches the woman serve a feast to another guest, a man who is not her husband and who is often referred to as “the passenger.”¹⁹ When her husband comes home she hides the passenger in a chest and also hides the remains of the food. In contrast to the hospitality she showed the passenger, the woman offers her husband only a meager meal. As the husband eats, Jack brings attention to himself by making noise with the heifer hide by beating or

shaking it; the husband enquires about the noise, and the wife explains that there is a boy spending the night in the loft. The husband invites Jack to dinner, and Jack brings his heifer hide with him. While they eat the meager food, Jack causes the hide to make noise again and claims that it is speaking. The husband asks Jack to translate, and Jack explains that the heifer hide has told him that there is better food and drink hidden around the house. The husband looks where Jack tells him and finds the feast, which he insists the woman serve to him and Jack. Thinking the hide is magical, the man offers to buy it, and Jack bargains for a large sum of money and the chest in which the passenger is hiding. Jack leaves the house with his spoils and threatens to throw the chest in a well. The passenger offers Jack money to save his life, and Jack accepts it through the keyhole but fails to release the passenger from the chest. Upon returning home, Jack tells his brothers that he received his money, by now an impressive sum, by selling his heifer hide in town. They kill their finest livestock and attempt to do the same, unsuccessfully of course. They return home to kill Jack for his trickery, placing him in a sack and taking him to a river where they leave him with a promise to return. An elderly shepherd approaches Jack and asks him why he is in a sack, and Jack tells him that he is waiting for two angels to take him up to heaven. The shepherd begs to take Jack's place in exchange for his herd of sheep and Jack agrees, leaving with the sheep; the brothers reappear and throw the sack into the water, killing the shepherd. Jack then returns with the herd and tells his astounded brothers that he collected the beasts at the bottom of the river. The brothers beg Jack to throw them in the river so that they can gather sheep, too, and Jack does, leaving them drown and returning to his newly acquired home with his wealth.

Even in its censored state, “Jack and the Heifer Hide” outstrips most Jack tales in overt violence and covert sexuality. The dominant metaphor of the episode with the passenger, where the wife gives her lover a “feast” while only giving her husband stale leftovers, is designed to lead adult listeners to obvious assumptions. Even if the two “meals” are taken literally, the wife in the tale is unambiguous in her infidelity. There are sexual metaphors to be found in other Jack tales²⁰ but none so blatant as the one here. However, violence, and not sexuality, is what marks “The Heifer Hide” as unique among the Jack tales. Jack is inevitably violent, but his lethal violence is rarely visited on the non-monstrous. That is, he only kills his supernatural enemies and out-of-control animals. Jack’s human enemies—robbers, the king, or his cruel brothers—receive their comeuppance in the form of non-lethal violence or, more commonly, humiliation as a result of Jack’s success. Jack, simply put, does not kill people, except in “The Heifer Hide” where he kills his brothers, the shepherd, and possibly the passenger, whose status remains unresolved. The shepherd’s death is perhaps the most incongruous, as Jack’s trickery is rarely aimed at those who help him (although it is not incongruous within the tale, as Jack also tricks the husband who offers him a portion of his dinner). Within the Jack tale tradition, the murder of his brothers, however, is the most unsettling aspect of the censored version of the tale. Family in Jack tales is dually a source of strife and comfort for Jack; his father often forces him to leave home, his brothers often beat him, but home is almost always a place of comfort and often a place of return. Jack’s casual act of fratricide, which brings him the ultimate success of inheriting the family farm in addition to his new herd and wealth, creates a far more sinister character than in any of the other standard tales.

The violent and sexual content of “Jack and the Heifer Hide” is perhaps what has led many Appalachian collectors to omit the tale altogether, despite the Hicks family’s obvious enjoyment of it. The tale takes a prominent place in Carter’s collection and is, in fact, the second tale included, indicating perhaps Jane Hicks Gentry’s preference for it. Chase, on the other hand, buried “The Heifer Hide” toward the back of his collection, perhaps indicating his lack of enthusiasm for it. However, Halpert’s notes to Chase’s volume reveal the tale’s immense popularity among the extended Hicks family tellers; he lists five sources for “The Heifer Hide”: R. M. Ward, Miles A. Ward, Ben Hicks, Stanley Hicks, and Mrs. Grover Long (199). No other tale in the collection has as many sources from a single family. Halpert also encountered the tale himself in 1939 in Tennessee when he recorded Samuel Harmon, a relative of the Beech Mountain Hicks family. Lindahl describes Halpert’s field recording of “The Heifer Hide”: “it appears to be the overall favorite of the Hicks-Harmon family. Halpert asks, ‘Mr. Harmon, will you tell us a story?’ Samuel Harmon answers, with transparent eagerness, ‘Yes, sir’” (*American Folktales* 21).²¹ Jane Hicks Gentry’s daughter, Maude Long, also repeatedly named “The Heifer Hide” as one of her favorite tales (Ellis 94). In addition to sharing the tale with Chase, Bill Ellis explains:

In 1941 Long recorded “Jack and the Calf Hide” on a borrowed disk cutter for private collector Artus Moser ... and early in 1947 she recorded it again for the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. In 1954, as Duncan Emrich prepared to release two LPs based on the recordings, Long was asked if she had any preferences: two were included in the set, while the third, “The Heifer Hide,” remained unissued. (94)

The Jack tales have, since Chase's collection, been viewed as heritage material for "all audiences" and as "family friendly" fare. "The Heifer Hide" simply does not fit into the wholesome image that most Jack tale collectors and public tellers, including Maud Long and Ray Hicks, have plied as part of their craft. Despite its obvious status within the family tradition, most collectors have demonstrated their preference for more light-hearted tales.

"The Heifer Hide" also poses problems for scholars who have difficulty locating its origins beyond the family tradition. While most scholars agree that the tradition is likely English, derived from the Hicks line, some suspect that the tales may be Continental and derived from the family's German ancestors, the Harmons. Nicolaisen argues that the whole Jack tale tradition maintained by the Hickses is English, rather than German, and he points to "Jack and the Heifer Hide" for evidence of that origin, coming directly down the Hicks, rather than the Harmon, line. He points to multiple versions of "The Heifer Hide" told by different members of the Hicks family that use *guineas* as the currency of exchange between Jack and the cuckolded husband ("The Teller and the Tale," 141). Nicolaisen argues, "The use of guineas as currency is the most persuasive pointer to the English origins of the story" ("The Teller and the Tale" 142).

Unfortunately, the evidence of the tale's existence in England is slight. Nicolaisen identifies only one English version ("The Teller and the Tale" 126), which Katherine M. Briggs includes in her *Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language*. The text of the tale is not available, and the collection only offers a description: "a young man, Jack, whose two elder brothers wanted to get rid of him as he was supposed to be as simpleton, was originally told to T. W. Thompson by a gypsy, Durham Lees, at

Oxenholde, near Kendal in the English Lake District on September 7, 1914” (quoted in Nicolaisen, “The Teller and the Tale” 126). The evidence that this is “The Rich and the Poor Peasant” is dubious, since in many Jack tales the brothers wish to rid themselves of Jack. More importantly, the fragment reveals a gypsy, or more likely a Traveller source, rather than an English one. And finally, Nicolaisen’s argument about the use of guineas in the tale pointing to an English origin fails to consider that guineas were in use throughout the British Isles, including Ireland, since the seventeenth century.

There are other versions of the tale type in England, but none is terribly close in content to the Appalachian version. For example, Petrie Winifred’s *Folk Tales of the Borders* (1950) contains a tale called “Three Jolly Friars,” which was recorded on the border between England and Scotland. It is not a Jack tale but a fabliaux satirizing the archetypal figure of the lusty friar. The heifer hide and the farm motifs are wholly missing, as is the sheep gathering episode. The version does maintain the unfaithful wife, the spying visitor, the returning husband, and the lover hidden in a trunk. Jack’s role is replaced with two friars who stop at an inn, drink heavily, and stay the night, discovering that the lady of the house is being visited by her lover, another friar. Her husband comes home, and they befriend the cuckold and eat the lover’s dinner. In the end, they convince the husband that there is a demon in the chest where the friar is hiding, and they instruct the husband to beat it and banish it from the house. This is the closest English version of “The Rich and the Poor Peasant” that has been found to date.

There are versions of this tale type in Ireland, but the most prominent of these lack the infidelity episode and focus mainly on an episode wherein the protagonist’s mother is killed, which, in the end, allows him to gain even greater sums of money than

he got for the cow hide. Only one Hicks family teller, Orville Hicks, tells a version with the dead mother episode in tact, and through his version we are able to connect the Appalachian tradition to Ireland, where this tale type thrives.

Orville Hicks: Radical Jack Tale Teller and the Source of the Irish Connection

In contemporary western North Carolina, Orville Hicks maintains the Jack tales in the public arena and includes “The Heifer Hide” as part of his repertoire. Like his cousin, Ray Hicks, Orville presents his work to broad audiences, often made up of children and adults and of community members as well as outsiders. To understand why Hicks includes an extra episode in his version of “Jack and the Heifer Hide,” and thus resists self-censorship, we must understand the context in which he tells the tale.

As a result of Chase and Sharp’s idealization of Appalachian culture, the region has attracted a number of visitors seeking the kind of harmonious landscape and community that they imagined and promoted. And while tourism is a healthy trade in western North Carolina, the second home market is even bigger business. The following description from a second home real estate company, located not too far from Beech Mountain, imagines second-home buyers living, like the locals, in harmony with nature and the idealized mountain community:

The views so prevalent in ... the North Carolina High Country are legendary. But there’s something more. Something unspoken about this place. *The crisp mountain air. The tranquility. The kinship shared with others.* A mountain home in the High Country is a soul-nourishing place defined by the Blue Ridge Mountains, boundless opportunities for outdoor

recreation, *charming communities* and activities and attractions almost too numerous to mention. *Your mountain home ... is in the middle of it all.*

(Echota, emphasis mine)

The reality is not so ideal, as the influx of second-home buyers has raised home prices and the cost of living in the region. Furthermore, developers buy family-owned land from cash-strapped locals at a price well below what they will get from resale to second-home buyers. In a region that has little industry beyond tourism, the economic and cultural impact of the second home market has created a great deal of tension between the local community and those who live there only part time.

Hicks, who in public consistently wears a full beard, overalls, and a ball cap, presents himself to his audiences, both local and outsider, as an authentic mountain storyteller, friendly and welcoming to all who come to hear his tales; nonetheless, he is a covertly radical figure who disarms his audience with his authenticity and unassuming persona while simultaneously critiquing their assumptions about mountain culture as part of his performance. “The Heifer Hide” is key to his critique, and his version of the tale is critical to making a connection to the Irish tradition. But to appreciate Hicks’s methods, we must first understand the why he tells the uncensored version of “The Heifer Hide” in context with the economic and cultural realities of his community.

When he tells in front of mixed crowds, Hicks often takes the opportunity to critique the assumptions of outsider groups by including material that puts community tensions on display and dispels idealized notions of mountain culture. His feelings about the effects of the second home market are apparent in the following three-part anecdote about his time working at a recycling center in Watauga County:

Then I put up a bench out there. They called it the liar's bench. I'd sit on it. People'd bring their grandkids out there, you know, sit on the bench. I'd tell them a tale. And I think it got to blockin traffic up, and the County told me I couldn't do it no more.

And one day I'd been a-workin hard and I set there on the bench to rest. This big ole car pulled in there. And a woman got out of the car. I'd never seen her before. And she looked at me, said—I don't why she asked me this—but she said, “Are you shamed of bein a mountain man?” I looked around. I seen her tag. She had a Florida tag. And I said, “Lady, I'm originally from Florida.” [Laughs.] And she got mad, got in the car, and drove back off. [Laughs].

And I met another woman out there from Florida. I don't know what happened. Undoubtedly her and her neighbor probably been in a fight. And she got out of the car, and I didn't even know her. And she walked up to me, and she said, “I come to a conclusion: Ninety-eight percent of the mountain people ain't got no sense.” And she was mad at somebody. And I said, “Lady,” I said, “You about right. The ninety-eight percent sold land to people like you ain't got no sense.” That's what I told her. [Laughs.]

(McGowan)²²

Thomas McGowan, who recorded the anecdote explains, that Hicks “establishes the liar's bench as a place where locals can enjoy stories and where he can take a break.”²³ Hicks

also uses the liar's bench as a symbol of the radical nature of his storytelling when the County forces him to stop telling stories because of the disruption it causes to traffic flow. Hicks positions the persona of the storyteller, the great liar who, like Pat Dirane, upends both belief and disbelief and thereby draws audiences under his power, against the faceless County official, who works to put order on the chaos that Hicks's seductive narratives create. This dichotomy between the power of the trickster and the power of official authority is, of course, the basis for all Jack tale narratives and is at the heart of the tradition's radical nature.

Having allied himself, his local audience, and the content of his stories against official power structures, Hicks introduces his critique of the outsider who likewise does not value local traditions and prefers order to chaos. McGowan explains further:

The first Florida woman sees him taking a break after working hard and starts stereotyping [his] appearance and laziness, and Orville can use her own marker of identity against her. He then moves to another Florida story in which he can take the accusation of the woman and turn her own words into an expression of her intruding in two places: his work site and his homeland. Notice the context of hostility he interprets for the second story. Getting along with people is an important value for Orville.²⁴

Hicks uses his position as a storyteller to voice local hostility to groups of outsiders who might otherwise be ignorant of their impact on the community and whose attraction to the community is based on false stereotypes, both negative and positive. The last anecdote, which unambiguously expresses local frustration with the economic realities of a poor community exploited by tourism and development, is not part of Hicks's public

repertoire. However, he does incorporate the first Florida woman anecdote, the less openly hostile of the two, into his performances for mixed audiences and uses the story to confront outsiders with their own assumptions of mountain culture. Through both the Jack tales and the other stories he performs, Hicks embeds subversive messages within his otherwise disarming materials and public persona. He invites the outsider with the lure of the pastoral Jack tales that they expect and simultaneously critiques their idealized assumptions about the native innocence of Appalachian culture.

As part of his covert radicalism, Hicks places “Jack and the Heifer Hide” prominently in his repertoire, and he relishes his particularly bawdy telling of the tale. He tells two distinct versions of the story. One version is standard and resembles the narrative described above; the other includes an extra episode incorporating Jack’s mother-in-law and the mothers-in-law of his two brothers.

In the extra section, Jack learns of his mother-in-law’s death while the brothers are trying to sell their hides in town. Jack’s wife tells him to take the body, which has been dead for three days and is stiff with rigor mortis, into town for burial. He sets the body upright beside him in his wagon and heads for town. On the way, Jack passes a millpond owned by a “mean, stingy, and greedy” miller, who stops Jack to sell him a glass of water. Jack accepts and the miller offers to sell a glass to his mother-in-law. Jack invites the miller to wake the old woman up and recommends shoving her because she is hard of hearing. The miller does and the body falls into the millpond. Jack accuses the miller of drowning his mother-in-law, and the man offers Jack money for his secrecy. Jack takes the money goes about his business of having the body buried. On his return home the brothers ask him how he got this new sum of money and Jack responds, “At the

funeral parlor, they're buying mother-in-laws, a thousand dollars a piece" (*Mule Egg Seller*). The brothers respond by killing their mothers-in-law and attempt to sell them to the funeral parlor, unsuccessfully of course. This offence, and not the heifer hide, is what brings the brothers to their decision to kill Jack, and the tale proceeds to the sheep-gathering episode.

Hicks uses the tale as a radical critique of manipulative folklore collectors like Chase who have altered the family's tradition in order to create a palatable and widely marketable literary product. But, as a public performer, Hicks relies on that same product to draw his audiences and, therefore, must be covert in his challenge to Chase and other collectors who have followed him. On his self-produced CD, *Orville Hicks: Mule Egg Seller & Appalachian Storyteller*, he explains that "The Heifer Hide" is "one of my favorite tales of all the Jack tales... It got told a little different through the mountains there. I'm going to tell it like some of the old folks used to tell it and put the mother-in-laws in it." Hicks fails to locate blame for the alteration of the tale, likely because both the family and Chase have participated in censoring the "mother-in-laws" episode. However, he does make a claim for the greater authenticity of his version by citing "the old folks" whose version has been elided by both collectors and tellers since the family's traditions have been recorded. Hicks claims to have learned the tale from his uncle, Adie Harmon, who ran a general store where Hicks spent time as a child.²⁵

Hicks's telling challenges Chase, but his statements about the collector's legacy are deliberately ambiguous; when speaking about Chase, he in fact defends the authenticity of his tales against charges that Chase censored some bawdy material. Hicks acknowledges that "some of the old people, they said ... told them a little rough, had

some rougher words in them, and Chase cut the words out.” But he claims that his primary sources for his repertoire told only clean tales, saying, “Momma, you know, [and] Ray never did tell them like that.”²⁶ Therefore, Ray Hicks and Sarah Harmon Hicks, from whom Orville Hicks claims to derive much of his own material did not tell the tales rough.

This claim does not sit comfortably with the record of Ray Hicks, who indeed told a rough version of a tale called “Hardy Hard-Head” to Joseph Daniel Sobol in 1985. Ray Hicks claimed, confronting Chase’s version, “That’s not the way they told it ... He took out the rough parts, to put it in the book. ‘Hardy Hard-Ass’ is how they told it when I was a kid” (Sobol, “Jack in the Raw” 6). During his telling of the tale, Ray Hicks revels in the profanity of the change:

Hardy Hard-Ass.

This h’yer Hardy Hard-Ass—

(This’s the name of it, Hardy Hard-Ass.) [!!!!]

...

Not Hardy Hard-*head*, the way *they* told it.

It’s Hardy Hard-Ass, is the name of it.

An’ I’ve heard ’em an’ laughed, when I ’as a kid—

Gawd, you talk about I’ a kid. [!!]

An’ then they’d cuss in it.

Gawd. [!!]

Cuss along in it, with the cuss words. (Sobol, “Jack in the Raw,” 10-11)

In the tale, Jack's brothers, who battle with a witch in order to marry an enchanted girl, must jump on a hackle, a metal implement used to comb wool. In the clean version, they are merely injured; in "Hardy Hard-Ass," they are mortally, and comically, wounded. Ray Hicks describes, "An' so this boy got up an' he sunk his ass down on it, he just tore it all to pieces. / Gawd. / An' he drug off in the woods an' died. / His whole ass was tore out. [!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!]" (Sobol, "Jack in the Raw" 12). Jack survives the feat by finding a magical helper named Hardy Hard-Ass who simply bounces off the hackle, and Jack, of course, gets the girl for his trouble.²⁷

Orville Hicks's denial of rough material does not vindicate Chase against accusations of censorship. Hicks's status as a performer who stakes his livelihood²⁸ on the strength of Chase's reputation leaves him vulnerable to public opinion that holds Chase's work in high esteem; Hicks consistently draws large crowds in part because of Chase's popularity and the wholesome image of Appalachia that he promoted, so to malign his methods of collecting would be an impolitic professional choice. Nonetheless, Hicks is covertly critical of Chase when he tells a family story describing Chase's methods while collecting material for *The Jack Tales*. Hicks explains,

He come to [the house] in the wintertime. They said it was about ten below zero. And he was trying to record Mama, and the young'uns are running through the house and making a lot of racket. And he told the young'uns to go outside till he get done, and daddy jumped up and said, "Buddy, nobody tells my young'uns to go out in zero weather but me." He opened the door and throwed Chase outside, and he never did come back. (personal interview)²⁹

The story reveals the undercurrent of resentment that coexists alongside the family's public praise of Chase's legacy. In fact, according to Joe Wilson, a local folklorist, Chase was eventually evicted from Beech Mountain altogether: "The community is hospitable and open-hearted, but Chase's repeated abusive treatment of his neighbors, particularly the children, angered the people of Beech Mountain. A community warning was delivered, and when it was ignored his house was burned and he was driven from the community" (quoted in Lindahl, "Introduction: Representing" 19). The house fire burnt all of Chase's original fieldwork, the absence of which has led to the ongoing disagreement and speculation over both his sources and his manipulative editing practices (Perdue, "Old Jack" 115). The incident of the house fire is not common knowledge, as both Chase and the family publicly maintained praise of each other so as not to alienate their audiences or mar reputations on either side.

Contemporary collectors looking to capitalize further on Chase's idealized mountain aesthetic have not embraced Hicks's radical, yet traditional, revision of "Jack and the Heifer Hide." Julia Taylor Ebel, a contemporary collector, has published Hicks's tales in a collection called *Jack Tales and Mountain Yarns as Told by Orville Hicks* (2009). She maintains Chase's marketing strategy by including similar illustrations of Jack as an adolescent in overalls in idealized mountain settings. She also fails to include "Jack and the Heifer Hide" among the seven other Jack tales she selected. The tale, it seems, continues to unnerve collectors looking to sell Jack to broad, American audiences.

Matricide, Fratricide, and Infidelity: The Irish Jack Tale vs. the Revivalist Aesthetic

“The Rich and the Poor Peasant” has thrived in the Irish oral tradition for centuries, and the National Folklore Collection in Dublin lists 495 different versions of the tale type either in print or in their own holdings. Many of the oral versions are in Irish, and the tale has a long record of publications, most of which are in English. The oldest version of the tale appeared first *The Royal Hibernian Tales*. The exact date of the chapbook’s first production is unknown, but its title is mentioned as early as 1825 in the *Reports of the Commissioners of the Board of Education of Ireland* (Ó Duilearga 148). The anonymous collector of *The Royal Hibernian Tales* describes his desire to furnish Ireland with its own version *Arabian Nights*:

Finding nothing of this kind in Ireland, and knowing a great many curious Tales, handed down to posterity, and held on record throughout the country, which I had an opportunity of hearing in many places; I thought I could not benefit my readers more than by committing them to print for their amusement. That they are instructive will be clearly seen from the excellent morals that each contains, and all my readers will not hesitate to pronounce them most entertaining. (n.p.)

The collection contains, among other *märchen* (including a few short Jack tales), a tale called “Donald and his Neighbors,” which is the earliest recorded English-language version of “The Heifer Hide.” Furthermore, the inclusion of this tale makes clear the irony of the collector’s stated desire to provide “instructive” and “moral” material.

In this tale, Donald O’Nery, a prosperous farmer, lives next to Hudden and Dudden, his envious neighbors. They conspire to kill his bullock so that he will be unable

to cultivate his property and be forced to sell out to them. Donald finds the dead bullock, skins it, and takes the skin to town. On the way, a magpie that has been taught to speak lights down on the bullock's skin. Donald catches the magpie and hides it in his coat. He sells the skin and goes to an inn for a drink. He follows the landlady into the cellar and along the way squeezes the bird, making it speak in a human voice. She asks him what the noise was, and the text reads, "Indeed, said Donald, it is a bird I have that tells me everything and I always carry it with me to know when there is danger. Faith, he says, it says you have far better liquor than you are giving me" (62). The woman, after selecting a better bottle of spirits for Donald, asks to buy the bird. She fills Donald's hat with silver, and he returns home. He tells Hudden and Dudden that he got the money by selling his bullock skin, and they set off to kill their bullocks in an attempt to get the same price, which of course they fail to do. Donald overhears them vowing revenge and he begins to fear for his life, so he switches places with his mother for the night. Hudden and Dudden kill the old woman, thinking she is Donald. The next morning Donald takes her body to town, stopping at a well along the way; there "he fixed his mother with her staff, as if she was stooping for a drink, and then went into a public-house convenient and called for a dram" (63). He tells a woman in the pub to fetch his mother, saying, "she is hard of hearing, if she does not observe you, give her a little shake and tell her that I want her" (63). The woman does as she is instructed and the old woman's body falls into the well. Donald feigns great sorrow, weeping and lamenting his mother's death. To make up for his loss, the inhabitants of the town pool their money, and he returns home with "a greater sum ... than he got for the magpie" (64). Once he arrives home, he thanks Hudden and Dudden for killing his mother and brags of the sum he got by selling her

body in town. Hudden and Dudden kill their mothers and attempt to sell their corpses in town, where everyone laughs at them. They return humiliated, seize Donald, put him in a sack, and head down the highway toward the river where they intend to drown him.

Along the way they are distracted by a hare, which they decide to hunt, leaving Donald by the side of the road. Donald begins to sing, attracting a drover, who asks him why he is singing in a sack. Donald explains that he is going to heaven to be free of his troubles. The drover begs to take his place in exchange for his twenty head of cattle, and Donald helps him into the sack and drives his new herd home. Hudden and Dudden return, throw the drover into the river, and march home to take possession of Donald's farm. Instead they find him with his new cattle, which he explains he gathered at the bottom of the river and that, if they worked together, they could gather more. They go to the river, and Hudden and Dudden each jump in and drown.

With the exception of the episode of the unfaithful wife and the lover in the chest, "Donald and his Neighbors" matches the episodic progression of Orville Hick's "Jack and the Heifer Hide." The function provided by the missing episode is fulfilled by the talking magpie that helps Donald achieve a victory similar to Jack's. Both protagonists use a false magical object that "talks" to acquire better quality food or drink before exchanging the object for a sum of money. Jack gets the passenger's feast and Donald gets better quality liquor.

The Royal Hibernian Tales was circulated throughout the nineteenth century, and "Donald and his Neighbors" made its way into W. M. Thackeray's *Irish Sketch Book* (1842) and later into Yeats's *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888). Some scholars have suggested that the circulation of the written tale has strengthened its place

in the oral tradition. Séamus Ó Duilearga writes, “That this version has found its way from [*The Royal Hibernian Tales*] into oral tradition is clear from a glance at the MSS.... This tale was one of the most widely-known and most popular of all Irish folk-tales; and, in my opinion, the influence of the RHT tale on the oral version is very clearly marked” (202). Indeed, many Irish and English-language versions of the tale in the National Folklore Collection reveal little variation from the one recorded in the *Royal Hibernian Tales*. Yeats’s publication of the tale has only strengthened the influence of the written word on the oral in the twentieth century. Glassie, who collected folklore in Ballymenone, County Fermanagh, in the 1970s, calls the tale “the prime fireside tale” of the twentieth century (*Stars* 233). He traces the version of the tale he collected from Hugh Nolan to both written and oral sources: “Mr. Nolan learned the story from a Christmas number of the *Fermanagh Herald*, ... [and] the story was surely reprinted from W. B. Yeats’s ‘Donald and his Neighbors’.... Yeats got the story from ... *The Royal Hibernian Tales*.... Before that it had been in oral circulation in County Antrim” (*Irish Folktales* 250).

There are recorded variants that fail to conform to the standard written version and reveal a strain of the tale largely uninfluenced by *The Royal Hibernian Tales*. One of these is a tale called “Little Fairly,” recorded by Samuel Lover and published in *The Dublin University Magazine* in 1833, a Traveller tale told by John Power in 1930 that is housed in the National Folklore Collection, and Dirane’s “Tale of the Unfaithful Wife,” collected by Synge.

Lover is not a wholly reliable folklorist, as he often altered the oral pieces he collected to fit stereotypes of native Irishness for his English and, in this case, Anglo-

Irish, audiences. Richard Dorson observes that his work often featured a kind of stage-Irish figure: “Paddy, the lovable Irish scalawag who talked in a rich and circumlocutious brogue, relished his pipe and poteen, and engaged in amusing lower-class capers” (Foreword vii). “Little Fairly” features just such a character, and we cannot assume that the published version of the tale, written in heavy dialect for comic effect, aligns wholly with the oral version Lover encountered. Nonetheless, Lover’s lack of concern with presenting idealized Irish personae in the tale preserves some of the more unsavory elements of the oral version that have been diluted in both Irish and Appalachian variants in print. “Little Fairly” is downright scandalous, incorporating for the sake of humor various narrative turns that reveal the teller’s resistance to self-censorship.

In the tale, Old Fairly marries a small, industrious woman who gives him a small, red-headed son with whom he is unsatisfied. So he decides that since “he got on so well and prospered in the world with one wife, that, by gor, he determined to improve his luck and get another.... Now maybe it’s axin’ you’d be how he could marry two wives at wanst, but I towld you before, it was long ago, in the good owld ancient times, whin a man could have plinty of every thing” (388). The tale thus begins with Old Fairly’s casual bigamy and the birth of two sons, one favored and one despised. On his deathbed Old Fairly leaves Little Fairly one cow and his mother’s meager dowry and leaves his farm to the beloved son, Big Fairly, and from there the tale progresses as usual, with Big Fairly killing Little Fairly’s cow. In this version, Little Fairley cuts holes in the hide, puts some shilling coins in it, and in town announces that it is “the Pope’s 239olden bull’s hide, that ken from furrin parts, and it’s a fortune to whoever ’ill have patience to bate his money out iv it” (391). Little Fairly sells it for one hundred guineas, inspiring his brother

to kill all of his cattle in an attempt to get the same price, and Big Fairly is beaten nearly to death by the man to whom he attempts to sell the hides.

Rid of his herd, humiliated, and physically broken, the brother attempts to kill Little Fairly, and, during the struggle with “a chance tap o’ the cudgel that big Fairly was weltin’ away with,” he accidentally kills Little Fairly’s mother. After her wake, Little Fairly takes her “stiff as she was, and dressed in her best” to the garden of a Squire, whom the woman had worked for as a nurse to his children (394). He stands her up by a well, finds the children, addressing them as “Masther” and “Miss,” and tells them, “there’s old Mammy nurse come to see yiz, childhre ... and she’s down by the well in the garden, and she has gingerbread for yiz ... and whoever o’ yiz runs to her first ’ill get the most gingerbread” (394). Thus the second “killing” of the mother figure punishes the landlord by traumatizing his well-fed children and accusing them of murder, a comic outcome for a colonized Irish audience. The squire offers Little Fairly twenty guineas, but he bargains up for fifty, which leaves the value of dead mothers in Ireland half of what one can get for a cow hide. The disparaging of elderly Irish mothers continues when Little Fairly tells his brother that he sold the corpse to a doctor, explaining, “there’s no sitch thing to be had, for love or money as a dead ould woman—there’s no killin’ them at all at all, so that a dead ould woman is quite a curiosity” (395). If Little Fairly’s joke makes light of the old Irish mother who refuses to die and leave her adult children in peace, then Big Fairly’s reaction reveals the greater, more profane humor enjoyed at the expense of burdensome old women: “the big savage wint into the house where his ould mother was and tuck up a rapin’ hook, and kilt her an the spot ... faix he raped the life out iv her” (395). The object in question is a reaping hook, but with some Irish accents

the word would be pronounced as a homophone of rape. In this version, matricide is committed within the context of comic overtones. The pun is reintroduced when the doctor to whom Big Fairly tries to sell his mother's corpse tells him, "you've Burked the woman ... and now you come to *rape* the fruits o' your *murdher*" (396). "Reap the fruits of your murder" becomes, within the accented speech, "rape the fruits of your mother."

From here, the sheep gathering episode progresses, with Big Fairly leaving Little Fairly in a sack while he goes to the pub for a drink. The specifically Catholic overtones of the episode and the blasphemy committed by the exchange of Little Fairly for the farmer only enhance the comic effect. The farmer who wishes to trade places with Little Fairly admits to having been "a wicked sinner in my time, and I havn't much longer to live; and to tell you the truth, I'd be glad to get to heaven in that sack, if it's thru what you tell me" (397). Little Fairly tells him, "there will be great *norations* made agin you, all the way you're going along; and you'll hear o' your sins over and over agin, and you'll hear o' things you never done at all ... but never say a word, or you wont go where I was goin'" (397). Not only does Little Fairly, in effect, murder the farmer with false promises of heaven, but the farmer attempts to circumnavigate the sacraments in order to receive undeserved salvation. The story ends typically with Big Fairly jumping into a bog hole in order to gather cattle that Little Fairly promises are waiting for him at the bottom.

The question of how many of these comic turns were in the original telling and how many were invented by Lover himself cannot be known. The reap/rape pun, especially, might be a joke at the expense of the teller whose pronunciation would have been comic to his Anglo-Irish listener but not evidently so to him. However, this conclusion presumes the teller's innocence, and the tale reveals his distance from naïveté

and ignorance. Even without the mother-raping joke, the tale is the bawdiest version that I have encountered. It reveals a similar delight in its profanity that the Hicks family tellers, and Orville Hicks especially, take in recounting a tale that implies infidelity and the satisfaction of killing one's burdensome relatives in exchange for wealth. The tale, in all its versions, is a fantasy that exploits human exhaustion with poverty, powerlessness, and abuse. It is the ultimate Jack tale in which Jack finally takes revenge, not on the distant threats of the public sphere or magical fantasy, but the private threats of the domestic realm that dog him throughout the canon.

But "Little Fairly" and "Donald and his Neighbors" are not Jack tales; they are merely versions of the Appalachian tale type that lack our specific hero. In order to find an Irish Jack tale version of "The Rich and the Poor Peasant," one has to look at Traveller traditions, where Jack thrives best in Ireland. In the National Folklore Collection in Dublin, there are a handful of Jack tale versions of the tale; one of these was told by John Power and recorded by Pádraig Mac Gréine on Christmas day, 1930, along with four other Jack tales. Of the tales, Mac Gréine wrote, "They were told by a young tinker or 'traveller', John Power. His mother Oney Power, then 70 years, was a fine storyteller, and her art and style have descended to her son John to a fair extent" (NFC 81). John Power tells a tale, inexplicably titled "Buddy," that carries many motifs of the Irish and Appalachian tale but also diverts from both in key ways, proving its orality and lack of influence from the written sources. Power's is the only version of the tale I have encountered in which the animal in question is neither skinned nor dies. Instead, "Buddy" takes a scatological turn when Jack feeds his horse coins, both the animal and the money having been inherited from his father. In town, each time he beats the horse, it passes a

coin. Eventually “an old gentleman” offers Jack five hundred and fifty pounds for the “magic” horse. When the beast passes only one final coin, the man comes back to complain to Jack, who sells him two more fake magic objects to assuage the man’s anger, first a “magic” rabbit that Jack claims will find its owner anywhere (it promptly disappears when the gentleman’s wife sends it after him), and a “magic” horn that can wake the dead. Jack proves the power of the third object by asking his mother to fill her mouth with chicken blood, pretending to kill her in front of the gentleman, after which she releases the blood from her mouth, and rousing her with the horn. The man chooses to demonstrate the power of the horn at a party where he kills his wife and, of course, fails to raise her from the dead in front of his guests. At this point the man resolves to kill Jack, and the sheep-gathering episode follows.

The episode that is missing from all of these Irish versions of “The Rich and the Poor Peasant” is the scene with the unfaithful wife, the lover, and the cuckolded husband. This episode does not seem to be a part of Irish versions of the tale, which almost always segues from the selling of the hide to the death of the mother figure. However, the episode does exist independently of the tale and, at least in the Irish language, appears as a Jack tale of sorts. P. S. O’Hegarty notes the existence in Irish of a tale called “*Eachtra Mhic Na Baintreabhaighe*,” which “was awarded second prize in the 1901 Oireachtas” (the Irish parliament) and was published in the “Oireachtas Proceedings” in 1910. O’Hegarty translates the title as “Adventures of the Widow’s Son,” the most common epithet assigned to the Irish Jack. In this tale the hero, Seaghan, sets off from home and spends the night in the house of a woman, who is simultaneously waking her dead husband and conducting an affair with a young man. After the woman and her lover

disappear into another room, the “dead” man rises and explains to Seaghan that he is feigning death in order to catch his wife in the act of infidelity. He offers Seaghan the lover’s coat, which he left behind, and tries to stand to confront the pair but stumbles because his socks are sewn together. The lovers, scared by the noise, flee the house, and, after Seaghan frees the husband’s feet, they sit down to a meal. The next morning Seaghan leaves the house searching for further adventures.

O’Hegarty makes note of the tale because of its closeness to Synge’s *In the Shadow of the Glen* and the version of “Tale of the Unfaithful Wife” that Synge collected from Pat Dirane on Inishmaan (126-27).³⁰ O’Hegarty published the tale in order to defend Synge from “the violent controversy about [the play’s] sources ... [that] has left its mark on his reputation in Ireland” (126). Synge was, of course, accused by prominent nationalists of using Continental sources for his play and of maligning Irish womanhood with its depiction of Irish peasant adultery.

O’Hegarty’s version, with a hero whose name is easily translated to Jack, is clearly part of the Irish-language international tale tradition that transformed into the English-language Jack tales in Ireland. O’Hegarty’s tale also resembles the infidelity episode of “The Heifer Hide,” as told in Appalachia, wherein Jack who is witness to the wife’s infidelity and the husband shares a meal with him. In Dirane’s version, the Jack figure (here a fictionalized version of the storyteller) helps the husband expel the lover from the house. Synge’s text of the tale reads:

Then the dead man got up, and he took one stick, and he gave the other to myself. We went and saw them lying together with her head on his arm.

The dead man hit him with a blow with the stock so that the blood
out of him leapt up and hit the gallery. (*The Aran Islands* 33)

Just as in “The Heifer Hide,” the visitor and the husband ally themselves, the lover is subsequently punished for his transgression, and the wife’s infidelity is to some degree exposed. The Appalachian version and the Irish one are not by any means identical. For example, the Appalachian husband is neither aware of the affair nor does he feign his death, and the cuckold’s punishment is not nearly as violent. However, the situation in both national locations is the same: an outsider comes into a domestic space where a cuckolded husband, his wife, and her lover convene. The outsider’s presence spurs the action and helps the husband rid his home of the interloper, leaving the married couple intact, though likely not harmonious.

Conclusion

Thus through Synge, the Jack tale enters into the Irish literary tradition, where, through *In the Shadow of the Glen* but more so through *The Playboy of the Western World*, Jack-like figures continue to have influence. Christy Mahon, the embodiment of the Irish folk hero, is himself a version of Jack; he too sets off from home on the road to adventure, has his pick of beautiful women, and slays the patriarchal giant. Like Jack, who may end one story having killed an enemy in order to marry a princess just to begin the next story unmarried and facing similar obstacles, Christy’s adventure is cyclical; he woos multiple women, he kills his father twice, and he ends the play promising to “go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the judgment

day” (*Playboy* 80). A romping lifetime of romance and adventure is certainly what Jack has endured throughout the centuries in both Ireland and Appalachia.

Jack is undoubtedly an Irish hero beloved by rural audiences, but one who, like Christy, does not sit well within an Irish nationalist narrative. Ironically the Irish nationalist narrative mirrors the arc of a Jack tale, as it pits powerlessness against a large and seemingly inexhaustible foe and wins. But Jack is always a radical figure—he always thwarts authority, causes chaos, and is ambiguous in his origins. Moreover, as the tales attest, he embraces the bawdy and obscene fantasies of the rural poor as part of his resistance to authority. Therefore, Jack cannot be a symbol of the nationalist cause because he reveals the Irish peasant to be, not an idealized and static pastoral figure, but rather a radical one that cannot be contained within any national aesthetic.

Abbey audiences rejected Synge’s heroes because they failed to fit the overarching aesthetic of Irish folklore promoted otherwise by the Revival. By marginalizing the international tale and its Jack-like heroes and heroines, the Revival and those who have followed its prescriptions have essentially erased the genre from the national consciousness. By considering the folk traditions of the southern Appalachians in context with Irish oral traditions, we are able to unearth this genre within the Irish folk memory. Whether or not the Jack tale comes to Appalachia from Ireland, it is clear that both locations have been perfect incubators of the tradition, not because of their isolation, but because both are sites of migration and exchange. My purpose has been to imagine various moments of exchange that have, rather than corrupt the Irish folk text by making it less authentic, instead enriched and furthered its lifespan within regions and populations well beyond Ireland. The tales examined here reveal the memory of Irish folk

texts among cultural groups throughout the British Isles and America. Their occurrence in twentieth-century Ireland and Appalachia does not attest to those locations' ownership of the tales but instead reveals the widespread movement of diverse groups and individuals who, whether Irish or English, Traveller or colonial settler, crossed national and cultural borders to tell their stories.

¹ See Yeats's "Dreams that have no Moral" in *Mythologies*, pages 83-90.

² See Gregory's *The Kiltartan Books*, pages 166-73.

³ See Synge's *The Aran Islands*, pages 46-51.

⁴ For an excellent study and recovery of the Virginia traditions, see Perdue's "Old Jack and the New Deal."

⁵ See "Old Jack and the New Deal."

⁶ See *The Devil is an Irishman*.

⁷ Other scholars make different claims about the first Hicks ancestor. Nicoliasen claims that the first Hicks in the New World was David Hicks Sr. ("The Teller and the Tale," 126). Scholars like Lindahl have used Nicoliasen's claim to discuss possible connections with eighteenth-century literary Jack tales circulating in England ("Sounding" 72).

⁸ Gwynn cites the manuscript as "Lansdowne MSS. Vol. 156. Caesar Papers, Ireland. *Endorsed* : An advise for Ireland, 19 Deceb. 1607."

⁹ Gwynn cites the manuscript as "*State Papers (Ireland)* 235 (36) 1620. December 8, 1620."

¹⁰ Gwynn cites John Smith's *Generall Historie of New England, Virginia, and the Summer Isles*, edited by Arber and Bradley, volume II, page 565.

¹¹ See Nicolaisen, "The Teller and the Tale," page 126; James W. Thompson page 27; Carl Lindahl, "Sounding a Shy Tradition," page 72.

¹² See Smith pages 58 and 78.

¹³ See Alan Lomax's film *Appalachian Journey*. Carl Lindahl, who provides the most open interpretation of the Jack tales' origins in his "Introduction: Jacks: The Name, the

Tales, the American Traditions,” makes passing references to the possible Irish origins of the tales (xvi). However, later in the essay his language shifts to be less inclusive, identifying British Isles origins as “English, Scottish, or Scots-Irish” (xxxii). In another essay, “Sounding a Shy Tradition,” he also makes reference to “the British- and Irish-American folk Märchen” (68) but maintains that the Hicks family is English in its origin (72).

¹⁴ “Jack and his Comrades,” pages 5-16; “Jack the Master and Jack the Servant,” pages 32-38; and “I’ll be Wiser the next Time,” pages 39-42.

¹⁵ This introductory material comes from a tale Ray Hicks called “Jack and the Robbers,” but it is not the same tale as the “Jack and the Robbers” of Chase’s book or the tales in the 1888 edition of the *Journal of American Folklore*. Instead, Ray’s tale is a version of a tale Chase called “Jack and the Doctor’s Girl,” which also features a band of robbers. This tale was recorded in 1951 by Frank and Anne Warner in Maryville, Tennessee. At the time, Ray was 28 years old and visiting his Tennessee relatives, including Samuel Harmon, another important storyteller. This version of “Jack and the Robbers” was the first tale Ray recorded.

¹⁶ This introductory material comes from Orville’s version of “Jack and the Varmints,” included on his *Mule Egg Seller and Appalachian Storyteller* CD.

¹⁷ “The Three Gifts,” pages 25-30; “The Unlucky Messenger,” pages 30-33; “Jack the Cunning Thief,” pages 38-46; “Shan an Omadhan and his Master,” pages 74-80 (in this tale the hero’s name is Shan, but throughout the tale “Jack” often replaces “Shan” as the name of the hero); and “The Grateful Beasts,” pages 95-98.

¹⁸ Glassie collected the tale in Roanoke, Virginia, in August, 1962 from Miss Mary Wright, originally from Patrick County, Virginia, and published it in the *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* in 1964. Glassie notes that the tale is known in Ireland and Germany. Glassie later collected the tale in County Fermanagh on November 28, 1972, from Hugh Nolan. He published Nolan’s text in *Irish Folktales* and in *The Stars of Ballymenone*.

¹⁹ Carter calls him “Mr. Passenger,” and other tellers call him simply “the passenger.”

²⁰ For example, in Jane Hicks Gentry’s version of “Jack and the Beanstalk,” Jack visits the giant’s wife, stealing his boots, his gun, and “the prettiest china bells” that are fastened to the “bed cords” (Carter 365). Each time the giant comes home, the wife urges Jack to hide under the bed. The implications of walking another man’s boots and using another man’s gun imply a sexual metaphor, and the placement of Jack and the coveted China bells (themselves a feminine object of desire) in close proximity to the bed confirm that this tale, too, is one of infidelity and sexual adventure. Another less ambiguous sexual metaphor for male virility is a tale Jane Hicks Gentry calls “Old Stiff Dick,” wherein Jack, having killed seven flies, has the words, “Old Stiff Dick killed seven at a lick,” cut onto his belt (Carter 355). The passage is easily censored, and Chase’s “*STRONG-MAN-JACK-KILLED-SEVEN-AT-A-WHACK*” (59) has become standard even in Orville Hicks’s public performances.

²¹ Samuel Harmon’s version of “The Heifer Hide” is titled “Jack, Tom, and Will.”

²² Thomas McGowan recorded this anecdote on 20 July 2010, at Orville Hicks’s home, Wildcat Community, Watauga County, NC. McGowan shared the text with me through personal correspondence on 19 July 2010.

²³ McGowan, personal correspondence, 20 July, 2010.

²⁴ McGowan, personal correspondence, 20 July, 2010.

²⁵ Personal interview, July 8, 2008.

²⁶ Personal interview, July 8, 2008.

²⁷ Douglas Hyde collected and published a similar, though not obscene, tale in Irish that he translated as “The King of Ireland’s Son” in *Beside the Fire* (18-47).

²⁸ Hicks received the North Carolina Heritage Award in 2007 and has since retired from the recycling facility where he previously worked in order to tell stories full time.

²⁹ Personal interview, July 8, 2008.

³⁰ O’Heagerty identifies this tale as a Irish-language version of Synge’s “In the Shadow of Glen.” Synge himself collected a version of this tale in English from Pat Dirane on Inishmaan.

Conclusion:

Reinventing Ireland Globally through a Local Lens

It is dangerous business challenging the canon of Irish folklore, especially for someone who is not Irish. National folklores provide the cultural artifacts with which nations build elite national cultures; they are the basis for national literature, art, theater, and even politics, not just in Ireland, but in nations from Greece and Germany to England and the United States. Without a national folklore, a nation is without a basic cultural identity; indeed, it is even without sovereignty. Therefore, when I began investigating the connections between two national folklores that were supposed to have nothing to do with each other, I was walking into contentious territory. While this project challenges perceptions of what constitutes the Irish oral tradition, it does not attempt to replace Cuchulian and the Irish fairies with something else. Instead, it merely places Jack alongside Cuchulian, places the international tale alongside the fairy legend, in an attempt to understand the complexity of Ireland's cultural underpinnings. Throughout this research, my comparison has illuminated elements within Irish oral traditions that would never have come into my view otherwise and that, I believe, are valuable and should be discussed within the mythology of Irish nationhood.

Despite the political implications of my work, it began simply as a personal curiosity. Having grown up in Appalachia and having long studied Irish literature, I wanted to see if I could make connections between these two places.

When I was a child, Orville Hicks worked at the recycling center down the road from my family's house, but I knew he was also a storyteller. On the way to drop off our

bottles and cans, my father—always in a hurry—would say, “Now Emily, don’t talk to Orville, or we’ll never get out of there.” Jack tales were of our community, and I grew up knowing that Ray Hicks, Orville’s more famous and now deceased cousin, was an important figure in national storytelling circles.

The seeds of this work began to sprout years ago when I met Eddie Lenihan, an Irish folklore collector and professional storyteller, at the Wake Forest Irish Festival. In a chance conversation, I mentioned to him that I was from the Appalachian Mountains and that we had storytellers there too. He told me that he was aware of our tellers and that, indeed, later that week he was driving up to see his old friend Ray Hicks. The trip, I later heard, was an awkward one. Ray was in the hospital at the time, dying of kidney failure and surrounded by the very large, very rural, and very eccentric Hicks family.

Because I am from Appalachia, I come to the subject of Irishness with a particular set of concerns and predispositions. Much of the work herein has been a critique of the selections made by collectors when compiling folk texts for publication. Yeats, Synge, Gregory, Sharp, and Chase looked for what they found, and they found, almost exclusively, that for which they looked. It would be naïve not to acknowledge myself among them—I too have looked for a certain elements in both Irish and Appalachian folklores, and I have begun to build an Irish-Appalachian canon. I hope, however, that I have made my bias known. I have searched for Irish texts within Appalachian oral traditions while acknowledging the multiple influences in the region; I have noticed tropes, tales, and songs I know from Appalachia in the Irish record. However, I do not argue that each wholly defines the other; instead, I argue that each illuminates otherwise invisible parts of the other tradition.

Furthermore, I bring my local perspective and bias to my analysis of Irish culture and text. The Appalachian Mountains are a marginal space with the minority perspective of the larger South, and therefore I am attracted to marginal and minority narratives in Ireland. I am also interested in rural perspectives, though I have little patience for the pastoral, which is essentially an urban view that romanticizes rural life. Finally, because of my own hybridity (I am not a local Appalachian with roots in the region but a transplant with roots in the Georgia piedmont and the South Carolina coast), I appreciate narratives that re-imagine the identities of place more inclusively. I understand Yeats's desire as a London-based Anglo-Irishman to claim a Celtic identity by going back to the magical landscape of his childhood—indeed, this research has led me down a similar path. And if in my twenty-two years living in Appalachia I absorbed an Appalachian identity that I felt distinctly only after I left, then surely some Ulster Scots who left Ireland for America absorbed a similar hybrid identity and sense of a shared tradition with their Irish neighbors, who were probably as foreign to them as some local Appalachian families are to me.

Despite the many connections that I uncovered between Ireland and Appalachia, my initial thesis was beset with doubt from the beginning. While perhaps parallel with Ireland in some ways, Appalachia is in other ways wholly culturally different. First of all, it is Protestant—Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist mostly. The university town I grew up in had one Catholic church, and I did not see a priest in person until I was a teenager—indeed, I did not see a nun until I visited Ireland for the first time in college. So in some ways it was absurd to bring together two places, one defined by its Catholicism and the other defined by its Protestantism. Furthermore, people in

Appalachia rarely claim Irish heritage, though they are happy to claim Scottish roots (Satterwhite 306-07). The yearly Highland Games at Grandfather Mountain showcase a particular brand of Appalachian Celtic pride that attempts to draw connections between the “High Country” of North Carolina and the Scottish Highlands, even though there is only a slim history of Highland Scots immigrating to the Appalachians (Satterwhite 318). Throughout my research, specifically at Appalachian studies conference panels, I have had to defend my focus on Ireland against those who felt I was shortchanging the more evident Scottish connections. I do not deny that Scottishness is a factor in traditional Appalachian culture, nor do I deny that Scotland and Ireland share closely-related folk traditions. But the resistance to suggestions of Irishness that I encountered reveals the Appalachian discomfort with Catholic religion and identity. It is easier for Appalachia to embrace Scottishness because it is recognizable and seemingly native. Irishness, on the other hand, is foreign, peculiar, and—worst of all—northern and urban. In the Appalachian imagination, Irish-America resides in New York and Boston, and those places have little to do with the elements that define Appalachia. Therefore, I have tried to redefine Appalachian and Irish identities as more inclusive, less atavistic, and more inclined to accept that the culture of the rural past is not isolated or pure.

On the Irish side of my work, I had to begin conceiving of Irish culture globally in order to understand the relevance of the connections between these two unlike places that I uncovered. After the Good Friday Agreement and during the Celtic Tiger, scholars began grappling with the notion of a newly global Ireland leaning toward a post-national politics. In the heady days of the economic boom, Andrew Higgins Wyndham described an Ireland “awash in change, globally connected ... asking who they are, what Ireland is”

(xiii). Wyndham's answer was to "re-imagine Ireland" and to "plumb the meaning of being Irish in a global context" (xiv). With immigrants steaming in from Poland and Africa, and with the new Northern peace agreement bringing Catholics and Protestants together in non-violent exchange, Edna Longley and Declan Kiberd attempted to imagine a "multi-cultural Ireland" that embraced the diversity suddenly engulfing the nation.

Carmen Kuhling and Kieran Keohane located the New Ireland in terms of cosmopolitanism, pointing out that "economic, political, social and cultural transformations ... feed into the widespread perception that Ireland is increasingly multicultural, global and therefore 'cosmopolitan.'" But, they also point out that Ireland's newfound cosmopolitanism "does not match the reality of Ireland as a deeply stratified society" (4). Indeed, the xenophobia and racism evident in a multicultural Irish society, especially since the Recession and the death of Tiger prosperity, reveal that global communication, travel, and business practices do not immediately and with ease create a cosmopolitan Ireland ready to embrace the cultures of the world within the Irish border. Jason King, reflecting on the number of deported immigrant actors working for Dublin theater companies, warns, "Ultimately, the question of whether Irish culture is inherently hospitable or insular in relation to cultural difference, intrinsically racialised or receptive to external cultural influence, hangs in the balance" (57). Luke Gibbons prescribes the following recommendation for the newly hostile, multi-cultural Ireland: "The ability to look outward, and particularly to identify with the plight of refugees and asylum-seekers, may be best served by reclaiming those lost narratives of the past which generate new solidarities in the present" (105).

By investigating the shared folk traditions of Ireland and Appalachia, this project locates some of those lost narratives in an attempt to reveal that the Irish oral tradition has always been cosmopolitan and part of a global network. Before the internet connected Ireland to the rest of the world, tales, songs, jokes, and riddles were passed between unlike people—Irish and British, Catholic and Protestant, Traveller and settled. And while people across Ireland told stories also told as far away as Germany and India, they also used those stories to imagine lands far away from Ireland. The Irish imagination revealed by the tales and songs investigated here is already cosmopolitan and linked into a global network of ideas.

I would never have noticed Irish international tale, the Jack tale, and narrative folk song traditions without looking at Irish folklore through an Appalachian lens. To imagine Ireland globally, I had to come to it from my local perspective, and this fact makes me wonder what other local, non-Irish perspectives might change our conceptions of Irishness. Therefore, this project is, I hope, a model for re-imagining Ireland's folklore and the underlying culture it reveals as something beyond an exclusively nationalist, inward looking tradition. My Appalachian perspective helps to unveil an internationally-positioned Ireland that has had an incredible impact on a wholly foreign and seemingly unconnected culture. While southern Appalachia was my point of departure, scholars could examine the oral traditions of any national or regional location where people or ideas from Ireland have migrated, and they would produce similar results. Brazil, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, the Continent—all of these and surely various other locations have connections to Ireland through immigration, and a comparison of these oral

traditions (or any cultural practices) with those in Ireland would surely produce fascinating results.

Studies like these will help us re-imagine the global context of Irish culture, not as a product of new technology or the Celtic Tiger, but rather as part of Ireland's historical and ingrained pluralistic identity. In the new economic landscape, it seems that Ireland's only relevant global impact is its ability to sink European markets further into recession. Re-imagining Irish culture as perennially global and hybrid might help the nation maintain its new and now threatened identity as a cosmopolitan and internationally important cultural force. Furthermore, my work reveals that to understand other places in the world fully, then we must understand Ireland and reveal the more complete impact of the Irish diaspora. Recovering Ireland's diverse history of migration will help the nation understand that its borders have always been porous and penetrable by non-Irish cultural forces. If Irish culture is already hybrid, then integrating immigrant communities will seem like less of a threat to national heritage and more like a continuation of Ireland's inherent plurality.

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