The Art of Juncture – Transformations of Irish Traditional Music.

Niall Keegan

Submitted to the University of Limerick in Fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2012.

Supervisor: Professor Micheál Ó Súilleabháin
Abstract

The Art of Juncture – Transformations of Irish Traditional Music

Niall Keegan

This thesis examines 'transformations' of Irish traditional music represented in speech, notation and writing in historical and contemporary contexts. Instances of these three modes of transformation are examined, and their structure, role and motivations in the context of Irish traditional dance music are interrogated, drawing on cognitive linguistics, structuralist and post-structuralist discourse. The thesis illustrates the way that the community supporting this set of performance practices engages in the creative use of language and signs to frame their own music making. Fundamental to these processes is the use of metaphor, as understood in the tradition of scholars such as George Lakoff, Mark Turner and Mark Johnston.

The development and use of these transformations by traditional musicians occur in a context dominated by the power of language and symbols. This development is motivated by a number of societal and aesthetic factors as well as the contemporary need to frame this music culture in the contemporary world. The way in which the nature of these transformations
frames and shapes the discourses of the music community, as well as the music itself, is highlighted and examined.
Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to thank all the traditional musicians who have contributed to this thesis. In particular Donal O’Connor, Majella Bartley, PJ Vaughan, Maire O’Keeffe, Verena Cummins, Alan Dooley, Jackie Small, Sheila Cagney, Patricia Daley, Kathleen Nesbitt, Eamonn Curran, Brendan Mulkere, Grainne Hambley, Sarah Jane Woods, Caoimhin O Raghallaigh, Eileen Gannon, Karen Ryan, Deidre Horan, Frank McCardle, Mick Conneely, Mary Bergin, Aoife Granville, Carmel Burke, John Burke, Richard Moon, Kirsten Allstaff, Maeve Donnelly, Patrick Olsen, John Devine, Kevin Rowsome and the late Dennis Doody. Without your knowledge, expertise and generosity this thesis would not have been possible.

I must also thank my supervisor, Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, who has supported and inspired me through a very long journey. This would also have been impossible without the support of staff of the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick. A special word of thanks has also to go to Marie De Mott Grady who helped enormously with a mountain of transcription.

My thanks is also pitifully inadequate for the members of my family who have put up with me and this research project for so long. My mother, Bernadette, who has always encouraged me to follow my heart and was there to pick up the bill. The good humour of my family in England – Niopha, Nuala and Carl, Rosie and Ruby. Also my children, Cairenn and Coilin, who provided the ultimate inspiration for the completion of this project, and Bridgie who brings order and humour to our lives.

Most importantly I must recognise the huge contribution of Sandra Joyce. Her work and dedication to this project has been immense. She contributed, critiqued and cajouled me and this thesis through the past few years and I cannot thank her enough. She brings the concept of ‘proofing’ to holistic and teleological heights!

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, Pat Keegan, who always delighted in the poetry of every day.
Declaration

I hereby declare that this is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted for the award of any degree at any other University.

Signed _________________________________
Table of Contents

i. Abstract

ii. Acknowledgements

iii. Declaration

v. List of Figures

1. Introduction – Signifier and Signified – the Marriage of Music and Language

29. Chapter One – Transformations of Music as Culture

80. Chapter Two – The Physical Transformations of Traditional Irish Music

161. Chapter Three – The Physical Transformations of Irish Music – Writing About It

240. Chapter Four – “The Weft” – Players Words

329. Chapter Five – Terrain

378. Works Cited
List of Figures

Fig.1. ‘An Ceoltóir Fánach’ from Breathnach 1963, p.15.

Fig.2. ‘The Irish Washerwoman’ from Fox 1993, p.22.

Fig.3. ‘The Gold Ring’ from O’Neill 1903, 132.

Fig.4. ‘The Broken Pledge’ from Flaherty 1990, p.30.

Fig.5. Frequency of publications as mentioned by informants (where it is unclear whether the informant means one or more publications by a single editor all are listed together).

Fig.6. Notation of two Highlands from Tommy Peoples (source: author).

Fig.7. Sonny Brogan’s notation of ‘The Tobacco Leaf’ (often also called the Steampacket) and the first part of the ‘Fermoy Lasses’, Source: Traditional Music Archive).

Fig.8. Brogan’s ‘Tobacco Leaf’ in standard staff notation.

Fig.9. Brogan’s first part of the ‘Fermoy Lasses’ in standard notation.

Fig.10. Tommy Keane’s alphabetic notation of ‘The Butcher’s March’.

Fig.11. Alphabetic notation from Mícheál Ó hAlmháin.

Fig.12. Alphabetic and staff notation used by Sheila Cagney (source: author).

Fig.13. Padraig O’Keeffe’s fiddle tablature (source: Máire O’Keeffe).

Fig.14. Staff notation for Padraig O’Keeffe’s ‘Air’ (commonly known as ‘The Dawning of the Day’).

Fig.15. Contents page from The Master’s Touch (Ennis, vii, 1998).

Fig.16. Ennis’ terminology, definitions and OED definitions.

Fig.17. The cran.

Fig.18. Graphic representation of Breathnach’s conceptual structuring of Irish tradition in Folk Music and Dances of Ireland (1996).
Fig. 19. A generic roll.

Fig. 20. Ó Riada’s structuring of traditional music practice.

Fig. 21. Transcription of Joe Derrane’s ‘The Bird in the Tree’ from the CD

Fig. 22. Transcription of melodies played on fiddle and button accordion in
session recording.

Fig. 23. Transcription of A part of ‘My Love is in America’ From Tommy
Potts’ recording CD, The Liffey Banks (1972)

Fig. 24. Transcription of Brian Finnegan’s recording of flute part of ‘Purvey’
from his CD When the Party’s Over (1993)

Fig. 25. Metaphorical category structures for Irish traditional music
performance
Introduction

Signified and Signifier - The Marriage of Music and Language

...the way people relate to one another as they music is linked not only with the sound relationships that are created by performers, not only with the participants’ relationships to one another, but also with the participants’ relationships to the world outside the performance space, in a complex spiral of relationships and it is those relationships, and the relationships between relationships, that are the meaning of the performance.

(Small 1998, pp. 47-48)

This quote from Christopher Small’s classic contemporary text, Musicking (1998), is an obvious reaction to the type of western musicology that concentrates on the immutable work, its history and structures, with little reference to context. He argues eloquently for a wider conception of ‘music’, concentrating on the real meaning of music as an inclusive social act brought about through the interplay of a wide community of individuals who may not even consider themselves so inter-connected (his concentration on the importance of the concert-hall cleaner and obvious dislike of the place of the virtuoso is, for me, endearing and quite justifiable). What I will examine here are the principal social mechanisms through which the acts of relationship and meaning are mediated. These are speech and language
and related semiotic systems in the context of what is also a linguistic construct – traditional
Irish music. Thus, this is a study of language and signs that mediate musical meaning.

It is said that every word, and more generally every linguistic sign is an entity with two
sides. Every linguistic sign is a unity of sound and meaning, or in other words, of
signifier (...) and signified (...). Remember the diagram that we used to represent this

![Diagram: Signifier and Signified]

It is rightly said that the two components are intimately related, that they call for each
other, as is indicated by the arrows in the diagram. Take for example, the French word
that is written pain 'bread'. This graphic form, which is the way in which the word is
reproduced in writing, as a form stemming from tradition or history, and it no longer
corresponds to the way in which the word is actually pronounced... The dictionary goes
onto tell us what the word means: 'Food made of dough, with added yeast and baked in
an oven'. This is the signified of the word pain 'bread'.

If someone says pɛ; [pain], this signifier evokes in us the corresponding signified, i.e.
the idea of food made of dough, with added yeast, and baked in the oven. On the other
hand of we think of this kind of food, and if our thought happens to be captured in the
French language, then the motor and acoustic representation which springs to mind is
the phonetic representation pɛ.

(Jackobson 1978, pp.23-24)

Roman Jakobson essentially presents us with a summary of this study in a different context –
the thesis here is about the relationships between signifiers and signifieds used and conceived
by traditional Irish musicians and the community that engages the music they make.
However, the study here is considerably more sophisticated than Jackobson’s statement
above may indicate and this is rooted in the nature of the signified as a category. If the
parameters offered by Jackobsen are to be taken as classical, Aristotelian parameters for the
construction of the category bread, then the puddings and dumplings of my long-gone school dinners are also ‘bread’. This may be facetious but it highlights the problems of category construction and definition that have resulted in the revolutionary research of Eleanor Rosch and her colleagues.

Also, the very nature of music as an emotive and social communicative ‘system’, often perceived as existing outside of the realms of language which itself is presented as an essentially referential system, provides further issues for the building of structures relating signifieds and signifiers in this performative and thus multi-modal communicative context. The evident ‘disconnect’ between music and word as belonging to two sometimes disparate communicative systems means that the development of signifiers in a musical context is often motivated by other, essentially non-musical factors, that may or may not have a real functional role in the performance of that music.

All music practice is contextualised by culturally appropriate semantic referential systems of expression (at least, in my limited experience – I have not been made aware of a human music culture that is not in some way verbally reflective). If we wish to engage emotive language we could say that music is imprisoned or entombed by such systems; but perhaps a better metaphor taken from the realm of personal interaction. Music is married to language but, of course, in a completely non-monogamous way, as language engages all other forms of expression to an extent that no other does. We talk about art, dance, sculpture, music but ‘music-ing’ (i.e. creating musical sounds rather than Small’s ‘musiking’) about dance, art and
other creative expressions is rarer in conception. Indeed, even when we do engage in activities like ‘dancing about architecture’, language is in the bed between the creative forms, negotiating their engagement. This marriage of two forms of expression (music and language) shapes, limits and enhances both (despite the dalliance of language) but the two are eternally individual and, like us all at the end, are alone.

My fascination for this marriage in the context of traditional music performance is born of the fact that to some large extent I was brought up with the music practice without the prevalent parole or langue context\(^1\) of the community of musicians at ‘home’, a common experience for musicians in diasporic communities worldwide. This fascination has been fed by my own professional involvement in the integration of a traditional music performance practice and the study of that music in the language based world of the modern university.

The Imposition of the Signifier on the Signified - Linguistics and the Structure of Music and Meaning

This thesis is not a study of musical syntax where linguistic theory is applied to the sounds we call music. Depending on whether one’s perspective is from traditional linguistics or cognitive linguistics, we can gain insights into the structure of music by imagining that it has

\(^1\) Saussure tells us about two forms of engagement with language. Linguists of the structuralist tradition see parole as the day-to-day instances of language use. However this is informed by a more coherent and useful langue which is a system of language, complete in itself, removed from banal meaning (Saussure, 1995).
a semantic content (parole) and structure (langue). That can lead to conclusions about musical meaning as defined in the structuralist or post-structuralist tradition of the author. The critique of this sort of approach, with its desire for absolutes that encourage aesthetic hierarchies based on an encultured monoglossia, will be discussed later. Here I rather hope to engage an approach to the structure and use of language around a specific, primarily oral, music tradition and the relationship of that language practice with the music practice of the musicians and audience that engage both. Rather than using modern linguistic theories to give us new insights into the structure and meaning of traditional Irish music (which I believe will be hopelessly teleological, and potentially damaging to the aesthetic discursive practices of the sound community) this work is about the use of such theories in understanding the way traditional musicians frame and perhaps form their music practice with and through notation, speech and language. In this way, the following study is different from the studies of music cognition by researchers such as John Sloboda (1985) and also those who use the same theoretical tools that are utilised here, primarily Lawrence Zbikowski (2002).

The Challenge of Text and Speech

One particular challenge presented by this thesis is the study of textual objects (both notational and written language if they can be distinguished so flippantly) and speech event
in the same framework. Certainly they are different, as is represented in the structure of this thesis, and these differences will again be highlighted in the conclusion to the thesis.

There are obvious differences between text and speech, painfully obvious to any ethnographer who has engaged with speech events and made even more apparent in the translation of such events into text through transcription. Speech is only one part of the communicative process in face-to-face interaction. Facial expression, body language, gesture, tonal inflection of speech all play an important role in the gestalt of face-to-face communication that also includes speech. The grammatical rules of speech are also far more fluid and less structured.

Of course a major issue in an academic engagement with speech events is transcription. We engage speech events in documents such as this through the medium of transcriptions – text based objects. This transforms the very essence of the speech event into something permanent and solid and will naturally involve some degree of interpretation by the transcriber. Norman Fairclough writes that “… one has to produce a ‘text’ by transcribing speech, but there are all sorts of ways in which one might transcribe any stretch of speech, and the way one interprets the text is bound to influence how one transcribes it” (Fairclough 2001, p.22). Interpretation is unavoidable and the only mitigation for it in this context is that the interview is focused on the garnering of terminology, a focus that will remain manageable with an ethical approach to data gathering.
Some post-structuralist commentators have insisted on the basic difference between notation and speech. For commentators like Barthes and Kristeva the essential difference is that the author of speech is alive in its utterance, an ephemeral thing that happens in the instant, that can also change with every new utterance. However when text is created and published it is removed from the author who, from then on “is lost in the writing” (Allen 2000, p.40). Barthes and Kristeva then go on to demonstrate difficulties of meaning and authorial intent in the engagement with text.

There are other obvious essential difference between text and the spoken word relating to the permanence of one and the other’s fluid and unruly life in the instant. However, in the use and production of knowledge, they do share many essential processes and aspects. The concept of the ‘word’, though developed through its realisation in text, is central to both as a fundamental unit of meaning. Both the written and the spoken word look to a history of communal practice for definition and precedence. Certainly the objectivisation of such histories of practice into printed text often gives them increased credence and import but they certainly don’t need text to survive, even though academics such as Walter Ong and Jack Goody illustrate how these histories of practice function in significantly different ways in oral and literate societies. Most crucially, both the spoken and written word are generated through the same sort of imaginative, metaphorical processes that we will examine here.

Despite the differences between these two manifestations of language, I argue that we can examine both through the imaginative processes that create and sustain the word produced
in both contexts. However, it will become obvious that there are differences between the two, which provides the justification of treating both separately.

Processes of the Signifier

Rather than looking to linguistics for models of new ways to understand our musical world I look to cognitive linguistics to provide insights into how the 'sound community' of traditional Irish music use language and notation to create structures within which to frame their 'own' musical world against others and internally. I suggest that this process is motivated, politically structured and turns back on itself to help (re)form the very performance practice it is created to contextualise. In this way this study is intended to be reflexive, to give a theoretical framework for understanding the Irish traditional sound community’s conceptual structuring of their tradition on its own terms rather than the terms of the neighbouring art music tradition. This ‘other’ tradition has coloured every interaction of educational and institutional structures with music in Ireland since that process began at the beginning of the twentieth century, a process I regard as being in many ways (although not exclusively) destructive.

An issue for such a study is the sheer insidiousness of the questions posed and appropriate levels of reflexivity. Even in the last paragraph, by juxtaposing traditional Irish music practice against others, I am building effective barriers that may have not been so apparent to
my performing predecessors whose distinctions between different musics may not have been as rigid as my own. Both approaches have concrete implications for performance practice, as we shall see. This level of insidiousness can lead to a peculiarly tight, Geertzian approach that could result in a thesis about the author. This I will attempt to avoid but ask all to forgive any reflexive navel-gazing that I may think appropriate!

Methodology

The methodologies used to garner material for this thesis are ethnographic in the widest sense and are in no way from the science based practices of some of the cognitive scientists whose research has informed parts of this study. When asked to explain this, my first and obvious response is that it is the academic tradition I come from, the 'naturalist' tradition. We are often presented with the positivist / naturalist dichotomy - empirical, scientific, controlled experimentation versus the naturalist view that "...as far as possible, the social world should be studied in its 'natural' state undisturbed by the researcher" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p.6). Surely, ethnography, though a naturalist art, must draw something from the positivist or scientific tradition? Research design is never achieved though entirely arbitrary grounds (despite the idealised tradition of this, see Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p.23) and invariably aspects of scientific, empirical research creep in, very
often in the shape of controls to avoid unwanted and complicating variables. Indeed, by merely placing parameters, usually focused on a hypothesis or perceived area of interest, we are building structures to control and frame our research and thus results. Some would argue that scientific research like that conducted by Berlin and Kay (1969) into basic colour terms in a non-western context is not ethnography – but isn’t such a position ludicrous when this research contributes so individually to challenge the ‘scientific’ paradigm concerned with our organisation of experience? Schutz’s (1964) position of ethnography being about difference, as illustrated by a cultural outsider, implies the building up of a conceptual, scientific, categorical structure based on the positing of alternative cultural values and practices. I would argue that good ethnography is not born of the clash of either positivist of naturalist traditions and the choice of one over the other, but the combination of the best of both to suit the individual contexts of the area of research, whilst recognising their, and thus the research design’s, inevitable short-comings.

My ethnographic research is concerned with the critical examination of texts, both notational or word based (and sometimes combinations of both) that are produced for and by ‘traditional’ Irish musicians who predominantly engage the instrumental dance music tradition. It also involves e-mail correspondences with groups of musicians and in particular music teachers about their interaction with notation. Perhaps the single most important ethnographic source is a number of extensive interviews conducted with 8 musicians who are asked to respond verbally to snippets of music of between 40 and 90 seconds in length. This is the most apparent controlling aspect of my research. Its methods have their basis in,
reliant on, the perception of these certain extracts by researcher and informants. The obvious alternative would be to investigate in the manner of linguistic scientists such as Eleanor Rosch and deal directly with the words and concepts themselves – but this would impoverish the opportunity presented here to examine the structures of language, and also to illustrate their relationship to recordings of aspects of the act of 'musiking' and the creative processes of what we will in chapter one call the 'musicological juncture'. This also overcomes the naturalist objection to directive interviewing techniques that can be seen to have the result of misleading research through reactivity (ie. the questions determine the answers). This is achieved through the reflexivity of looking for response to stimuli that are not constituted by language.

Another controlling factor in ethnographic research can be the selection of candidates for interview. I do not in any way suggest that the informants I have chosen are in any way representative of the tradition as a whole. I did attempt to have a wide range of informants, from those experienced in the languages of performance, to those just learning them; but otherwise they are hardly representational of the community of traditional musicians at all. However, a representational selection of informants is hardly important, as Hammersley and Atkinson write:

... a representative sample of informants is not always required in ethnographic research. This is especially so when the primary concern is with eliciting information rather than with documenting perspectives or discursive practices

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p.137)
I am not 'primarily' concerned with documenting perspective or discursive practices, but through eliciting perspectives and discursive practices I am acquiring information, words, that give us clues to their production and organisation.

I am sure that many would be very quick to point out that I am basing my research on only one very small part of what is musiking in the context of traditional Irish music and that perhaps I should look for a wider group of contexts in which to elicit speech around the tradition. However, I would be the last to say that I am searching for a complete lexicography for the language or notation of the tradition and would argue that, for my needs, in uncovering a small amount of these words and texts, I have enough to come to some conclusions about the use of language and notation by traditional musicians in everyday contexts. Indeed the choice of some of the music in the interviews has been made to reflect responses to music that 'belongs' in a variety of contexts, whether that be the music of a céilí band which would usually exist in the context of a céilí dance or céilí band competition; the music of a session which would normally be heard in the context of a pub, or more infrequently, house session; or even the music of commercial recordings made in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century which today lives only in those recordings and the imaginations of the audience for those recordings. However, I will be the first to point out that the method I have adopted does exclude the possibility of examination of other contexts for language connected to performance and thus of specific types of language. For instance, I have not had the opportunity to examine verbal responses and contributions from the so-called 'audience' (a problematic category outside of western,
solo-listening context) that occur in the context of live performance itself. Also, the terminology uncovered through this research has a life beyond its use in this context, and, despite my position as a cultural actor and perhaps the single most important informant for this work, naturally I will not be able to uncover and highlight every possible nuance of meaning, association and attributes for them. However, I hope to be able to show some instances of how this does happen and provide principals that could be applied through this cultural and musical context.

The fact that informants are reacting to recordings is also an issue. There are multiple issues involved in the playing recordings, the majority of those used in this study being commercial. Some ethnomusicologists see commercial recordings as disconnecting performance from its social life, but more realistically it creates a new social context, removed to some extent from its original, and very often focused on different processes of listening. Also, recordings commodify a musical performance, creating it as an object that can be bought and sold, with a permanence not suffered by an unrecorded performance. As such, a different set of values are created around recording, leading to different production and engagement practices by all cultural actors involved. These issues are felt most acutely in the context of the recording of a traditional music, even one as widely commodified as Irish traditional music. They highlight the peculiar and conflicted contemporary existence of traditional Irish music and musicians. Traditional musicians and their audience negotiate a plural world of relationship styles, engaging commercial recordings, displaced performances, one-on-one practices, orality and literacy, mass mediated and true micro-musics. The use of
a variety of different types of recordings here, and the familiarity of the respondents with that varied use, highlights the status of this music practice as one that embraces both traditional and popular practices and modes of relationship. However, we must always bear in mind that the informant is reacting according to this recorded mode of relationship and as such relates to the performance differently to a live performance. The music becomes a thing (the tape or the CD) and looses its temporality as is evidenced by the fact that occasionally, in the course of the interview, I am asked or offer to rewind the tape. This, and the adoption of western relationships to media which leads to the expectation of certain styles and standards, influences and more specifically limits the language generated by informants (although they do often frame their experience of the recorded example with other listening experiences outside of recordings) rather than affect what we could perceive as its accuracy or authenticity.

It can be argued that the music presented to the informants has been mostly excellent performances or, at the very least, performances by excellent and sometimes iconic players, to the exclusion of what could be regarded as poor, bad or merely mediocre performances. This, again, could be said to skew the type of response elicited from my informants. I must emphasise that the responses are not meant to be representative of traditional practice, as I feel this is not essential for this research. Rather, the research is focused on uncovering and articulating processes of speech production, rather than giving an empirical account of their occurrence. Also, examples of poor recordings, which by their very nature are anonymous - as it would be highly improbable that recordings of music that a community recognises as
sub-standard would be distributed - will potentially undermine the relationship between researcher and informant when the process is founded on a pre-existing relationship that recognises aesthetic difference. I would also argue that the categorical structures engaged by the communities of Irish traditional music are focused on exemplary performance. A bad fiddler from Sligo is a bad fiddler; whereas an excellent fiddler from Sligo will be seen to engage categorical continua such as style and authenticity, and will be much easier to generate and elicit responses about. Certainly, there is a need for research on the nature of what is regarded as ‘bad’ in any performance context, but that is not the nature of this research.

Why just musicians? There is no reason why the interviewees are exclusively musicians, apart from the fact that, as socially active performers, their acquaintance with the community of language around traditional music is going to be considerable at a number of different levels. Hargreaves and Coleman have written about two listening styles, ‘objective analytic’ and affective’ (Hargreaves and Coleman 1981, pp.15-19). They write:

Our results seem to point toward a distinction between what might in the broadest terms be called “objective”, or technical reactions, which tend to come from musically experienced subjects, and “subjective”, personal reactions, more likely to be produced by the more musically naïve.

(Hargreaves and Coleman 1981, p.19)

Much as we cannot condone such a valuative hierarchy of the “experienced” and “naïve” as implied above, we will see that musicians will produce more technical language. However,
to say that they do not produce ‘affective’ responses to music would be ludicrous. In the context of traditional music where performance, aside from a musicology or compositional practice, is obviously dominant, the musician is best positioned to express both points of view. True, in a context where musicians will try to display their technical knowledge, as in the interviews and questionnaires involved in this research, their affective viewpoint may need some coaxing; but I would argue that their responses will not be technical or affective (as described by Hargreaves and Colman) but a creative blending of both. The musician’s acquaintance with the social and political structures of, and active participation in the tradition, makes necessary their knowledge of the greater number of language structures around that tradition. This, I would argue, is not be true for many non-performers whose relationship to the music may well be less participatory, due to the dominance of general western listening practices that encourage passive reception and naturally will be less technical when the primary function of technical language is the means of production of the sounds heard. There are certainly non-performers who play an active role in the sound / language community of traditional Irish music but they run a greater risk of lacking some of the intimacy of the relationship of sound and technique which will play a part in the structure of the languages around the music. Gerstin also highlights the intensely personal nature of a musician’s relationship to his or her music and the other musicians in a particular context, as well as the intensity of the reflective practice that this will evoke. He writes:

“performers judge each other constantly, and their judgements combine several elements: aesthetics; social identity, or membership in various large-scale social groups); and alliances with one another within performance networks.”

(Gerstin 1998, p.387)
The fact that musicians have to generate such language, generating ‘judgements’ that place themselves hierarchically and politically in a musical world, makes them perhaps a greater source for language than many people who can be best categorised as listeners. These may not have such a personal and intimate acquaintance with the need to position themselves in a perceived hierarchy which generates and is itself generated by language. This obviously relates to the different styles of listening mentioned above and perhaps subverts it. If a motivation for language among performers is to situate themselves politically and hierarchically – the expert, performing listener is perhaps the most motivated to make so-called aesthetic and musical judgments to serve their own needs rather than generating ‘pure’ aesthetic judgement. Some of these needs are described by Gerstin as being “… underlying “logics” of inclusion and exclusion [that] control the drawing of boundaries and thereby constitute scenes” (ibid, p.388).

Also we must ask ourselves, because of this motivation, do musicians produce either (a) a more extended and detailed language around a music practice or (b) a musical language peculiar to musicians? It is certainly a combination of both. Perhaps an examination of the linguistic constructions of ‘listeners’, not intimately involved in the production, but exclusively involved in the reception of these sounds, is a separate and ultimately more separable study related to the one practice which can be undertaken without reference to performance practice.
Insider Musicology

Of course, Gerstin’s statements above explains the personal motivation for my research and thus constitutes one of what many would consider the main problems presented by my research. Much has been written in recent years about the metaphorical juxtaposition of opposites – researcher as either inside or outside the tradition. This study is definitely a work of (ethno)musicology at home and as such I like to categorise it as ‘insider musicology’. This is appositional to Micheál Ó Súilleabháin’s construction (personal communication, 2011) of insider and outsider musicology where the ‘in’ is the place for an ‘–ology’, the university. This of course makes absolute sense in that the community of ‘–ologies’ very often focuses on and is situated in the university. However, the nature of this study would be seen as a journey into the ways most members of a community of practice think about their music (musicologies). Indeed ‘in’ and ‘out’ in this metaphorical sense is a matter of perspective.

For the efficacy of my own studies it does help that contributors are those I relate to in other contexts in the world of traditional music. This obviously helps in the level of response that I have from the subjects and also means that they are aware of my own political position in the tradition and perhaps more importantly, that I am fully aware of their’s. I am very sure quite a number of my informants would not enjoy my style of performance or at least would not endorse my performance style (i.e. one I present in a formal, stage, context) as 'traditional' but I may play with them regularly in a session context (such as Donal and
Dennis, who would both gently prod at their perception of me as a jazz musician with great humour) or I may help in the projects of a local teacher (such as Majella) or have an institutional, University-based relationship (as in the case of Máire O’Keeffe). These relationships, though obviously colouring results, more notably lead to a deepening of them through the willingness and frankness of informants. The familiarity of researcher and informants also allowed for the establishment of a time for fairly formal ‘interviews’ at times that usually would be set aside for often informal music making (for instance, for the first part of Máire’s interview we left a session in the back bar of the Malbay Hotel during the Willie Clancy summer-school to go up to one of the bedrooms to conduct the interview).

One distinct advantage of being a cultural ‘insider’ is not having a need for ‘gatekeepers’ (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995, pp.63-68) for access to appropriate subjects (although perhaps being ones own gatekeeper has its own implicit problems, but none as much as the reliance on others has). Obviously I have not an objective observational position. Everyone who has spoken to me have known me at least by reputation as an academic in a politically positioned (in the political structuring of the tradition by member’s of its community) institution and as a performer whose performance practice can be seen as being anywhere between innovative and non-traditional (this is a severe over-simplification, as most informants know me a lot better than that in a number of different environments). Thus their responses may well be geared towards what would be seen as appropriate to me rather than the enquiries themselves. However their utterances, as far as I am concerned, will elicit the same vocabulary that would be generated in an engagement with a different researcher.
Also it would be naïve in any ethnographic context to look for truly objective, controlled contexts in such research featuring an objective researcher (thus catching social meanings 'on their own terms') – indeed this is the basis for the rejection of what is called a positivist approach to it (see Kuhn 1970). At least, as a true participant-observer of a lifetime's experience, I am aware of the nature of my own role as a cultural actor and hopefully the effects that will have on the content and structure of the responses I hope to elicit.

Linked into the suspicion of ethnomusicology or anthropology 'at home' is the underlying ethnographic principle of 'difference' which emphasises the role of the outsider / stranger. Shutz is certainly correct in the belief that cultural insiders are often blind to many of the factors that underlie their behaviour and interaction but makes the implicit assumption that through research such an understanding is unattainable. This is ludicrous – but if it is the case then we should leave the formation of social research and policy (let alone ethnomusicology) in the western world to researchers and sociologists from other cultural contexts as we cannot possibly have anything worthwhile to say about our own society that can't be better done by so-called outsiders! Also, the so-called objectivism of the outsider is not in reality based on a lack of presuppositions and values but a different set of both that will naturally interact in producing new sets of judgements based in that unique cultural interaction. This is the inevitable basis of studying outside of one's own principal cultural context, which draws us to how things are different between original and host cultures. To seek 'difference' we must build new categorical structures founded upon attributes that are themselves based on difference relying on the Aristotelian structuring of categories, that a
basic thesis of this work and modern cognitive philosophy rejects. I am not rejecting the research of purported 'outsiders'. That position is as valuable as any other in research, but has just as many problems and pitfalls as any other. All social researchers build their own conceptual world around their subject area. The recognition of how the background of the researcher informs this and how the positioning of the researcher must be appropriate to his or her own background, as well as the subject in question, is essential.

I also reject the basic and crude dichotomy often presented between 'insider accounts' and 'participatory models' (Hammersly and Atkinson 1995, p.126) which reflect more on the hierarchical nature of the possession of knowledge in western society, i.e. that the considered view of the researcher is more precise, true and accurate than the researched. In the case of the research undertaken here I am very much an insider uncovering other insider accounts, working to a participatory model true to my position as insider.

Being an insider has proved to be problematic in the course of the interviews in one particular way. Informants very often will not explicitly state something when they know that it is information I would also immediately assume concerning the piece of music commented on (e.g. ‘this tune is a jig’, ‘the instruments played are accordion and fiddle’ etc.). I have attempted to overcome this by asking the informant to consider me an 'ethnomusicologist from Mars', who knows absolutely nothing about the style of music in question and remind them of this as the interview progresses but still a considerable amount of prompting has been required. The fact that the informant regularly lapses and reconsiders
me as an ‘insider’ is advantageous in that it has the potential to reveal a different ‘insider’
layer of language practice. Community is made in language practice and part of the
definition of community is often exclusion.

Hargreaves and North (1997) provide us with a useful structure to view this research, writing
of

...Doise’s (1986) proposal that there are four distinct types of explanation or ‘levels of
analysis’ in social psychology research. The first is the intraindividual level, at which we
investigate the mechanisms (e.g. cognitive and perceptual) by which people appraise
and organise the social environment. The second is the interindividual and situational
level, which deals with the processes which occur between different individuals within
a given situation, such as a small group, but which does not take into account the
positions or roles that the participants occupy outside that situation. At the third socio-
positional level, the emphasis moves beyond the immediate situation to differences in
social position, such as different group memberships. The fourth ideological level deals
with the broader cultural system of beliefs, representations and norms that people take
with them into experimental situations

(Hargreaves & North 1997, pp.6-7)

My study is essentially an examination of the intraindividual level, looking at the symbolic
mechanisms that traditional Irish musicians use to organise and appraise their musical
environment. However such an environment is essentially social and contextually relevent so
the mechanisms are intrinsically interindividual, where our methodological issues occur.
However, it is the basic underlying paradigm of any ethnomusicology that such mechanisms
are formed by and contribute to the sociopolitical and the ideological level. Thus the model
for analysis presented here is of limited use in that the analysis proposed in this thesis is
across all levels. But it does perhaps show interactive levels of analysis and the levels
themselves will provide useful markers in the examination of sources. They also allow us to conceptualise imperfect interindivudual data (please ignore the crass naivety of the implication of ‘perfect data) informing a coherent intraindividual thesis.

The terms ‘ethnography’ and ‘ethnographic’ litter the section above even when referring to methodology that seems far from ethnographic, such as the examination of texts. Recent writings by Barz and Cooley (1997) and Rice (1997, 2001) call for, and to some extent also account for, current and future trends in ethnographic fieldwork made necessary for the ‘Shadow in the Field’ which is musical performance. Barz and Cooley write that ‘Doing fieldwork we weave ourselves (or are woven by others) into the communities we study, becoming cultural actors in the very dramas of society we endeavour to understand, and vice-versa” (1997, 18). I think the metaphor of the ‘weave’ can also be understood alternatively and productively to represent the acts and objects that are ‘fieldwork’. Fieldwork is woven by researchers proactively engaging a community as insiders; and to generate such fieldwork, interaction must be with actors, imagined constructs and their manifestations in that community. Perhaps this is fundamentally an ethnography of self, but perhaps all good ethnography must at least to some extent be this way.

**Thesis**

This thesis examines theoretical problems and issues with regard to what I call the 'transformations' of Irish traditional music represented in speech, notation and writing. It
goes on to examine some instances of these three transformations and demonstrates their structure, role and motivations in the context of Irish traditional dance music. In doing so it draws on the modern academic discipline of cognitive linguistics. Through this I hope to illustrate the way that the community that supports this set of performance practices engages in the creative use of language to frame their own music. Such processes occur in a world dominated by the power of language and symbols. In this process of examination and illustration I use my position as an ‘insider’, ‘subjective’ ethnographer and informant to the best advantage to the research at hand and simultaneously remain aware of the metaphorical pot-holes that this perspective generates.

Chapter one is a broad theoretical introduction to the thesis. It introduces the notion of language as the central area of examination and develops the idea of ‘signified’ and ‘signifier’ in this context, exploring ways of accounting for the relationship between the two, settling on the concept of ‘transformation’. Theoretical approaches to the concept of transformation are engaged and the traditional semiotic analysis of music is rejected. Transformation is imagined to occur in Seeger’s ‘musicological juncture’ (Seeger 1977, p.44) where the creative agent is language, engaging music through processes of metaphor. These processes are briefly framed historically for Irish traditional music, out of which emerges a discussion of two different yet co-existing mind-frames for Irish traditional music, an oral and a literate. The objects created by literacy (printed collections, personal manuscripts, etc.) are considered to be related to speech through a shared transformational process. However these objects are examined as individual phenomena, true ‘object transformations’ of this music practice –
permanently representing the ephemeral, transient music performance. The nature of language used in a tradition with a primarily oral functionality is examined in the context of an ethnomusicological literature with a fundamental ethnocentric approach. There is also other important literature that engages speech as process, moving away from categories and taxonomies of words – in particular the work of Zemp (1978, 1979) and Feld (1981, 1984, 1988). The chapter goes on to introduce contemporary theories of category, as initially developed by Eleanor Rosch and her colleagues, and modern ideas concerning the role of metaphor in our cognitive processes. These are introduced as central premises for the creative transformational process bringing together music and language. The chapter concludes with an examination of the implications for the search for meaning that this exploration of transformational engagements of music with speech and a brief introduction to the post-structuralist tradition that informs this thesis.

Chapter two examines the types and use of notation employed by Irish traditional musicians currently and historically. Use of notation is examined primarily in informal and formal transmission contexts and two categories of notation are proposed: (i) published and (ii) unpublished. Their use is examined in both contexts. Published collections are understood in a historical context as products of class and nationalist politics in the intellectual environment of European antiquarianism. They are then engaged more systematically in their socio-political context, accounting for the style of presentation. Several published tunes are examined and assessed according to the use of collections in the multiple contexts of contemporary formal transmission. Unpublished notation is primarily used in formal
transmission processes and I demonstrate how these contexts help to shape the form of the notational systems used. The role and use of these notations in a formal context are then examined, demonstrating that literacy is only used to supplement and support the primarily oral transmission practices of the vast majority of traditional musicians. It becomes evident that the structure and form of these notations are dictated by this secondary, representational and mostly mnemonic role. This is perhaps most notable in the way that western staff notation is adapted to this context.

Chapter three examines some of the texts that are generated about traditional music. These publications are seen as anecdotal, educational, musicological, journalistic or existing in the academic realm of cultural studies. I examine three such texts: Seamus Ennis’ *The Masters Touch* (1998), Breandán Breathnach’s *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (1971) and Seán Ó Riada’s *Our Musical Heritage* (1982). In the case of each publication, structure is examined, as well as the use of metaphor. Political and aesthetic motivations are frequently uncovered. We then examine words used, and not used, for the performance practice itself, in particular ‘traditional’ and ‘folk’ and demonstrate how both are politicized. The chapter concludes with an examination of metaphorical language structures in the more conversational publication, *Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference* (Vallely et al 1999) taking models of metaphorical schema from works by George Lackoff (1987), Lackoff and Mark Johnston (1988) and Lackoff and Mark Turner (1989).
Chapter four examines musicians’ reactions to a number of short musical excerpts played to them in an interview context. These are presented as examples of parole but from a particularly post-structuralist viewpoint, which rejects the Saussurial emphasis on langue. Eight informants are asked to respond to 13 short excerpts of recorded traditional music. The responses to each are accounted for and in particular metaphors and the structuring of aesthetic are examined. In this process I attempt to remain reflexively aware of my own generation of category and metaphor as an investigator and member of the community of sound. A more integrated analysis inspired from music psychology and cognitive linguistics is engaged, engendering categorical structures to account for the diverse terminologies thrown up by the interviews. This analysis engages issues around the use of synonyms and the relevance to prototype theory to our understanding of the relationships between and internal structuring of the categories evinced from the interviews.

Chapter five attempts to bring together the divergent strands of this thesis into an understanding of speaking and writing about music as a creative process, mediated and motivated in peculiar and personal terrains for Irish traditional musicians. The work of twentieth-century post-structuralist thinkers such as Bakhtin, Barthes and Kristeva, and cognitive philosophers such as Fauconnier and Turner informs this understanding. This is contextualized in an examination of structures used to generate ideas about regionalism and ensemble playing in the tradition. The thesis will conclude with an emphasis on the role of the creative practices of language and signs in the cognitive structuring of the other creative
practice of performance and an examination of how such language use can in turn shape the very music it is allegedly representing.

The ‘juncture’ of the title is Charles Seeger’s “musicological juncture” (Seeger 1977, p.44) is presented as a creative space where transformations of music into speech, text and sign are conducted as creative, communal acts. The ‘art’ of these transformations is creative language acts. These acts occur in a terrain of cultural, musical and aesthetic contexts and motivations. Such acts are themselves not just limited as acts of creative language or signage but can, in turn, help shape not just the understanding we have of our musical experience but the music itself.
CHAPTER ONE

Transformations of Music as Culture

…art lies half way between scientific knowledge and mythical and magical thought. It is common knowledge that the artist is both something of a scientist and ‘bricoleur’. By his craftsmanship he constructs a material object which is also an object of knowledge. We have already distinguished the scientist and the ‘bricoleur’ by the inverse function which they assign to events and structures as ends and means, the scientist creating events (changing the world) by means of structures and the ‘bricoleur’ creating structures by means and events

(Levi-Strauss, 1966, p.22)

This thesis is concerned with the nature of two types of transformations of traditional Irish music used by participants (both players and listeners) of the tradition. These are the notations used by musicians and the speech used by musicians and their ‘traditional’ audience. Of course these transformations are not the only forms of transformation of the music as it is today. There are kinaesthetic transformations (the most obvious being dance\(^2\) in the context of the account I give below for the term transformation), other musical transformations and the often objectified modern media transformations. Indeed, concerning notation, Yamaguti Osamu in his article ‘Music and its Transformations in Direct and Indirect Contexts’ writes that “Notation should be considered rather, to be only one kind of music transformation placed in the matrix of various forms of transformations

\(^2\) Before I inspire the wrath of every dancer on the planet dance can be considered a kinaesthetic transformation only as much as music could be as an audible transformation of dance and this can of course only occur in traditions with a functional and aesthetic dependency between the two forms
intricately interwoven and interrelated with one another” (Tokumara Yoshiko & Yamaguti Osamu, 1986, p.31).

To discuss these transformations we must, for musicologists make a peculiar about face. Richard Baumann and Joel Sherver (editors) in their introduction to *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking*, write that;

> The point of departure … is the speech community, defined in terms of the shared or mutually complimentary knowledge and ability (competence) of its members for the production and interpretation of socially appropriate speech.  
> (Baumann & Sherver 1989, p.6)

It is going to be peculiar for ethnomusicologists to take as a point of departure the products of a speech, textual and notational community, products which, though not necessarily identical in content or form, are tied into knowledge of the music and English language and sometimes notational skills. These products, both aural and graphic are our starting point rather than the music of a specific ‘sound community’.

However, we must be careful not to be completely caught in the seductive traps of what Horst Ruthrof terms the ‘linguistic turn’. Of this she states in her examination of the corporeal turn of language;

> This is the widespread tendency to overestimate the role of 'linguistic definition' in language. We can crudely label this tradition 'the linguistic turn'. Briefly put this refers to the realization that language itself needs to be carefully understood before we can deal with the phenomena it describes.
> (Ruthrof 2000, p.6)
We must not get so lost as to risk a break in the connection with the musical expressions that inspire the sign systems and conceptual mappings that stem from our musics and the immanence of the role of music in their organisation use and expression. This thesis will show how signs and symbols about music are cultural, physical, political, historical but also intrinsically creative and musical.

Although his terminology is slightly different, perhaps an account of this study is best supplied by David Huron in his article “Design Principles in Computer Based Music Representation” (1992). He writes that “To represent something is to create a mapping between a source object to be signified and an independent target object or signifier” (p.7). This has resonances with the proposals of Saussure and indeed shares some terminology. The important concept here is the one of mapping, the mapping must be made over a multi-dimensional human and even physical terrain. Not only does the originator connect with and influence the independent target object but also so does the contextual, cultural terrain, the two creatively interacting, producing what I would rather term as transformation rather than signifier. From an examination of the originator, the music, but primarily the transformation objects, the speech and notation, in context we can understand the nature of the creative transformational process and thus understand the structure and nature of the transformational objects.
The various motivations for the use of such devices by the traditional music community have transformed this account of them into a terminological minefield. These devices I have termed as being ‘transformations’, a term which is used as it doesn’t falsely account for the motivation for use of the parallel graphic and audible communicative systems I am attempting to account for (as terms such as ‘representations’ or ‘descriptions’ would). However the term does need some explanation and justification of its use, especially in the light of others that may be equally as appropriate and with some hefty precedent.

The term that perhaps is closest to the use of ‘transformation’ here is Gottlob Frege’s Vorstellungen. Ruthrof explains the relevance and it’s roots as follows;

Playing into the hands of the linguistic turn for a moment, one could say that perhaps the problem with representationalism and its critique is a particular usage of the term ‘representation’ as a kind of copying. If this is so the problem appears differently in English from its non-English versions. Indeed, in ‘Sending: on representation’ (1982) Jacques Derrida has drawn attention precisely to this point that the talk of representation as well as its critical opposition are in need of semantic-philosophical scrutiny,. When Frege eliminated as merely subjective the ‘idea’ or ‘image’ that may accompany a concept he used the German Vorstellung, a putting in front of oneself of a mental projection. Unlike re-presentation, Vorstellung is not tied to copying or any other form of repetition. Vorstellungen can vary from fairly close presentations to the most experimental distortions and indeed to entirely free inventions. Not that this would have satisfied Frege’s need for a Begriffsschrift, a purely logical form of notation. But the semantic latitude of Vorstellung provides the kind of concept that would allow perceptual and quasi-perceptual realizations of the world to be a part of language.

(Ruthrof 2000, pp.9-10)

Implicit in the definition of Vorstellung is some aspect of creativity but it’s use actively in an artistic context with its western philosophical and creative implications of individuality and
supreme consciousness and the extremity of the phenomena to these ‘entirely free inventions’ does not sit easily with the context we are presented with here.

‘Transformation’ is possibly the most suitable term because it implies some aspect of creativity (perhaps this is more a personal observation rooted in the term’s modern liturgical usages) while also implying the substantial independence of the transformation without going so far as to break the connection with the signified. A representation or description can imply something limited to an existence in the constant context of its origin (whether that origin be a performance or not), there being a constant and permanent reflective connection. A transformation has a new existence, rooted in the original but existing anew outside of the context and perhaps even some conceptions of the original. Transformation also implies process where other terminologies might not. A transformation thus is an object produced through a creative process motivated through various criteria but eventually leading an existence that could possibly be outside of the context of the original. This transformation is also a process with two very different but related objects at either end of the processual axis that can, but do not necessarily, exist simultaneously in parallel to each other. Important here is the Saussurial proposal of a disjuncture between products at either end of the transformational process. In this context, unlike Vorstellung, transformation is an encultured object and process, engendered by the individual creative act but sustained and given authority and substance by community. But what is essential and is my main motivation of the use of the term ‘transformation’ for both object and process is the creativity of process and the potential creative use of object.
Before we examine the object transformations let us first attempt to outline the theoretical background to the transformational process. The root of the need for a transformational process is in the fact that music is not directly referential as language actually and necessarily is. It is generally held that music is a means of communication. Steven Feld accounts for communication as “the process of meaningful interpretation explicitly conceived and socially active” (Feld and Keil 1994, p.77). He goes on to qualify this by saying that “Communication is neither the idea or the action but the process of intersection whereby objects and events are, through the work of social actors, rendered meaningful or not” (ibid, p.78). This bears certain resonances with what has been previously described as ‘transformation’ where the transformation to and as meaning is dependent on the ‘process’ enabled by actors in a social context or terrain. However, the communication in question is held, by authors such as Lannger (1957), or Hanslick as far back as 1891 (1986), to be based in emotion or cold aesthetic or the unifying message of or Meyer (1961) which places meaning in music in the realm of emotion to be discovered in verbally based aesthetics. This relates directly to our study here but it is important to point out that, as illustrated by Charles Keil in his critique of Meyer (Feld and Keil, 1994, 57), meaning is not only found through verbally based aesthetics but also can be embodied (this was very much a reaction to Meyer’s implication of a lack of value in dance based aesthetics which he saw in traditional musics). Christopher Small takes Keil’s approach to its natural, and very attractive, conclusion when he writes of his overarching concept of ‘musicking’:
The language of musicking is the language of gesture that unites the entire world, and unlike verbal languages it has no set vocabulary or units of language  

(Small 1998, p.184)

Though I disagree fundamental with Small’s assumption that language is entirely propositional and literal and thus cannot convey the metaphorical, multiple meanings of gesture and ‘musicking’, his understanding of the meaning of musicking to be found in the relationships expressed through gestural and ritual communications is nevertheless attractive and deserves considerable examination (elsewhere)

Linguistics again throws up a few interesting theoretical constructs that can give interesting insights to the process of transformation, constructs that can only be accentuated in significance because of the parallel nature of music and language as communicative systems. ‘Declination’ has its roots in the writings of the structuralist Charles Sanders Pierce (1958, 1974) and developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1996) and according to Ruthrof “appears to imply… that we never quite achieve a full signified” and that “the signifeds are never fulfilled, are always deferred, carried away and are in a sense no more than metaphoric presentations…” (2000, p.28).

In this study I will avoid (although with this approach avoidance is almost essential) any semiotic style analysis of the music. While such analysis may be effectual for music in
certain, almost scientific, western, contexts, it tends to decontextualise music, placing it outside of its human and social context. Feld writes on semiotic analysis of music –

Musical meaning cannot be reduced to the textual level of structural association, comparisons of musemes in one piece with phrases, motifs, or patterns from others. While such associations may be part of the microstructure of listening experience they do not necessarily fix any or much of a piece’s meaning

(Feld 1994, p.82).

Some aspire for what is called ‘total music’ and in such a context semiotic analysis has its worth (in a specific western cultural context) but the existence or prospect of such a music is realistically dubious. To attempt to create and understand a grammar or semiotic analysis of music one is essentially denying the encultured aspects of music as it is evident that the same sounds can mean different things to different people. Certainly a valuable understanding of a music or a performance can be garnered from such a structuralist approach – creating a perception of music as ‘langue’. However this does not allow for us to develop an understanding of meaning per-se. Also, as Steven Feld (1984) argues, the tradition of semiotic searches for meaning in music is bound to fail as it focuses on the ontological metaphor of ‘music as object’ rather than looking at ‘meaning as process’ in the communicative act. The issue of ‘meaning’ is one of great importance and will be revisited in this chapter and indeed through the thesis.

Ruthrof points to another objection to the ‘semiotic’ analysis of music which is based on the fact that what is meant by ‘semiotic’ is very often, and perfectly naturally, language based.
Once we have declared our master theory of investigation to be language we will find it extremely difficult to discover anything in nonverbal semiotic domains that is not already prefigured in language. In other words, we will only rediscover quasi-linguistic characteristics. Yet to understand how tactile or olfactory semiosis works it seems a dubious starting-point to suggest that they must operate like linguistic signs: ‘To apply a reductio ad absurdum to this problematic, we could ask what the haptic and olfactory equivalents are to noun phrases, present participles, the passive voice, and so on. We should avoid this kind of linguistic imperialism that blinds rather than enlightens, ...We must remain open to the possibilities that nonverbal signs operate differently from their natural-language relation’ (Ruthrof, 2000, pp.22-23)

She quite succinctly points out here what is almost an arrogance that places language based structures as the model for all others communicative systems in the semiotic pile. It could be argued that the basic referential nature of language makes its structures incompatible for an understanding of other communicative systems without the same referential impetus, such as music.

Transformation is thus an attempt to interpret a communicative event in widely different communicative contexts. Alan Merriam approaches this issue, describing the transformational process between “intersense modalities” which are “the linguistic transfer of descriptive concepts from one sense area into another” (Merriam 1984, p. 94). However these are not just different sense areas. Indeed speech and music belong to the same sense area, this communicative transformation essentially being much more than a mere transfer. Roger A. Kendall and Edward C. Carterette (1990, pp.29-164) account for difficulties in music communication and communication about music resting in the transformations between various sequences of ‘states’. Their organisation of the problem of cognition does
not fully account for the encultured and embodied aspects of music and music cognition but is never the less useful. They write;

We conceive of music as based on a system of sequences of states that fill gaps of inexorable time. Depending on the frame of reference, these states can be, for example, sound states (perception), acoustic states (vibrational signal), symbol states (cognitive metasymbols).

(Kendall & Carterette 1990, p.129)

They go on to state that these sequences of states are not patterned until mental processes do so, applying a manner of perceptual organisation. They write that “The recording of musical messages depends on shared and unshared implicit and explicit knowledge. Much musical activity implies implicit over explicit knowledge” (ibid, p.133). Thus transformation occurs through a temporal cognitive framework that can be constituted mainly of implicit knowledge, a cognitive structure not acquired formally and implicitly of what is inevitably a literate mindframe.

Charles Seeger provides us with an appealing concept and account of this transformation (although he is primarily concerned with speech and perhaps most specifically with musicological speech). He writes;

The situation in which we place ourselves when we talk or write about music must be regarded in barest outline as a sixfold complex that may be referred to as “the musicological juncture”: (1) As students, each with our own singular competences and conceptual and perceptual banks of factual and valual behaviour, (2) we meet, within certain limited extents of space and time, (3) in a particular biocultural continuum and social context, two of its principle traditions of communication, (4) of a music, (5) of a language, (6) and a subtradition, a musicology, the extents of whose spacial and temporal currencies are, in the constantly renewable collectivity of biocultural continuum, to the best of our knowledge unlimited
Seeger’s presentation is a discussion of what he sees as the pillars of the western musicological tradition and in that is limited and may seem elitist (see ibid, p. 45). However, if we take a wider view that the ‘student’ remarked of above is anyone who attempts to approach this juncture in physical, cultural, temporal, speech and music spaces, and also take the concept of musicological juncture outside of the realms of an inward-looking traditional western musicology, we have a useful concept. Seeger describes this succinctly and inclusively when he writes “Both descriptive and valuative treatment of music in terms of speech take place in a biosociocultural context that can be termed the ‘musicological juncture’” (ibid, p.49). Of course Seeger is speaking about the discipline of Western musicology but here in the use of terms ‘descriptive’ and ‘valuative’ he alludes to a motivational aspect to the juncture. Seeger goes on several times to mention speech and music compositional processes, essentially varied creative processes. Both music and speech about music are essentially creative processes motivated by individuals or groups of individuals in a temporal biosociocultural context. The seemingly contradictory roots of this creative process for speech about music (and perhaps one of the roots of a creative process in music itself) lie in the disjunctional aspects of the juncture, basically the essential communicative differences between music and speech. There can be no true iconic relationship between language and music - though some language, especially in Western art music can appear so - only a symbolic relationship can exist and this symbolic relationship is the root of disjunction. Seeger writes that “A prime - perhaps the prime - operational consideration in musicology is the principle of bidirectionality in the comparative semiotics of the two compositional processes” (ibid, p.50).
Whether we metaphorically construct this as creativity produced in the tension produced through this bidirectionality or in a vacuum created in space between two, ultimately parallel communicative systems, the nature and expression of this creativity in the context of the Irish dance music tradition are the central issues of this thesis.

The tradition that produces the transformations I will speak of here is traditional Irish dance music. This is a tradition of music performed historically by a non-literate, western, peasant class in an almost exclusively rural environment. For a multitude of reasons, this performance practice has flourished on the periphery of Western Europe in recent years to become one of the most commonly recognised musics both inside and outside of Ireland. The tradition has managed to attain this apparent level of achievement (dependent on your political stance within the tradition) by successful negotiation of modern musical, technological, social and political environments. Traditional music has transformed itself and three areas within which transformation has been perhaps most apparent have been in speech, text and notation generated around the music. The dance music of Ireland has been annotated for the last three centuries but for the first two of those it has been done so primarily by classical musicians for a primarily classical audience. Only in the past hundred years have a number of factors encouraged, and encouraged slowly, traditional musicians to write down their music for themselves and other traditional Irish musicians. Of course, traditional musicians have always used speech around their music performances, speech from a purely functionalist point of view is necessary when the tradition of dance music is by necessity a social activity, which must be prepared and accounted for. However we do know
that many of the language based transformations of the tradition have changed and indeed some new ones have been created in the past century at least. Complex conceptual organisations such as those of regional style and those that occur around modern performance practice do not occur in the early literature of traditional Irish music such as Capt. Francis O’Neill’s *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (1913). Indeed much language has developed around purely contemporary developments in performance practice and thus must be recent. Even the often vicious ‘debate’ popularly seen as innovation versus tradition (see Vallely et al 1996) is probably a new phenomenon (most certainly the extent of it is), there being no records from the first half of this century of such an extensive and extended discussion. It is thus apparent that developments in language and notation have at least been necessary in the negotiation between music practice and an increasingly extensive and varied cultural context (culture meant in the widest, Geertzian point of view).

Indeed this thesis must be see as part of the continuum of the journey that traditional Irish musicians are attempting to make so as to make sense of their musical world in an ever widening context. Many traditional musicians are attempting to become scientists or musicologists – looking for equation like formula and hard and fast structures to account for their experience. Many of these have become apparent but are obviously lacking to the vast amount of traditional musicians who, like myself, at some point of their musical lives have been both musically and intellectually disempowered through a combination of exclusion and the inefficacy of the structures they inherit and are constantly having to patch and repair to remain a semblance of organisation and ‘science’ to which they aspire. However, the
inadequacy of present symbol systems that exist around traditional music are more and being seen as inadequate as is see very recently in Dermot McLaughlin’s call for the development of a ‘critical language’ for traditional music at the Cruinniú conference (2006) in Ennis.

A central issue in any discussion of these transformations of traditional Irish music is an oral - written dichotomy. Traditional Irish dance music is not just an oral tradition within a written culture (partially of course because the spacial metaphor is really invalid) but a tradition attempting to come to terms with growing literateness within what is, and was solely, an overtly oral tradition. Such a process has occurred before, most notably in the context of the development of Western art music. The tradition may develop as western art music has or not but such predictions are of little value and possibly self-indulgent. It is the present accommodation of the literate as servant to the oral, which bears examination. What is most apparent however is that when Goody writes that oral tradition in written culture becomes marginalised (Bauman 1992, p.13) this is blatantly and obviously not the case and in fact reversed in Irish traditional music practice. Goody writes that “From the standpoint of the total society, their [oral traditions in a literate society] role is now subordinate to those of written origin, ..., the content of the oral tradition tends to be marginalised” (ibid 1992, p.13). Although we are not speaking of a total society or culture but what Goody implies as the empirically lesser tradition and one which may indeed be considered by some as marginal: orality, central to transmission of repertoire and style, is by no means a marginal vehicle for the content of Irish traditional music. The creative tension between the oral and literate is going to be a theme of this thesis as it is undeniable that traditional musicians and
listeners are ever (and perhaps always have been) striving to account for their music. But now the tools of language and classification are coming from their experience and conditioning by a literate rather than an oral world.

An important paradigm for this thesis is the existence of two separate mind frames or forms of consciousness: an oral and a literate. The paradigm of the existence of a ‘literate and oral mind set’ is one which is central to this thesis and one which, though perhaps sometimes over emphasised, has been more than adequately illustrated by Walter Ong. It is also obviously central, though often not explicitly so, to the theories of the experiential realists such as Mark Johnston, Mark Turner and George Lakoff. However, some, most notably Marc Perlman, have serious misconceptions about the existence of literate and oral consciousnesses. Marc writes, in relation to the adoption / adaption of notation by Javanese court musicians, that “Technologies, like ideas, do not dictate their own applications”. However, some would argue that literacy is much more than an acquired technology and does alter many aspects of consciousness. Walter Ong’s perhaps extreme relationist view ties developments in culture and consciousness to the technological evolution of the word, through oral written, print and now electronic eras. Ong sees these developments producing transformations of the word, which he accounts for as follows,

The real word, the spoken word, is always an event, whatever its codified associations with concepts, thought of as inmobile objectifications. In this sense the spoken word is in action, an ongoing part of ongoing existence

(Ong 1977, p.21)
This draws obvious parallels with our conception of music transformations. He goes on to write;

> Technology is important in the history of the word not merely exteriorly, as a kind of circulator of pre-existing materials, but interiorly, for it transforms what can be said and what is said”

(Ong 1977, p.42)

Over two works (1977 and 1982) Ong masterfully develops these two orientations in the technological development of the word. He highlights two ways in which consciousness develops; ontogenetically – growth from the unconscious and phylogenetically “through the development of culture, a store of experience and knowledge that human beings can accumulate and hand onto succeeding generations, mankind as a whole gains more and more control over the cosmos and itself” (Ong, 1977, p.43). Literacy and more recent transformations of the word are very much a technological innovation serving this phylogenetical process.

He illustrates how modern, literate man has given birth to several areas or fields of what the French educationalist and philosopher, Pierre de la Ramee (Peter Ramus, 1515 – 1572) termed as ‘closed system thinking’ (Ong 1977, p.310). This is the segmentation of reality into separate disciplines, which must be open to the extent that to remain meaningful they must maintain a communicative interface with one another. Thus “literacy … is absolutely necessary for the development not only of science, but also of history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any art” (Ong 1982, p.15). He contrasts this literate
mind frame with an oral one, which is marked by the ordering and remembering of experience through mnemonic formula and homeostasis. He writes that “Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situation, operation frames of reference that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human lifeworld” (ibid, 1982, 49). In an oral context intelligence is not discovered in abstract situations, such as tests or exams, but are more found in operational contexts, intelligence in action. Ong goes on to illustrate how our modern day obsession with quantified lists stems from not just literacy but from print.

This hypothesis of separate oral and literate consciousnesses is implicit in the works of Brown (Brown 1958) and Berlin (Berlin, Breedlove, Raven 1974) in their illustration of one of the ways in which an objectivist or God’s-eye view of the world does not quite account for the various perceptions of our environment. They show how a doctrine of natural kind terms (i.e. where the world consists of ‘natural’ kinds of things which are also categorised naturally – the categories of the mind must fit the categories of the world) diverges between literate and oral cultures. In research they discover that the doctrine works at genus level but outside of that level they show that folk and scientific terminologies and meanings have considerable differences. Experiential realists such as George Lakoff and Eleanor Rosch use this as a pillar of support for their central tool, basic level categorisation. Walter Ong shows why and what processes lead to this divergence between oral and literate modes of categorisation.
Notation

Notation and speech are not necessarily related beyond their roles as creative transformations of music and indeed potentially each other. Notation need not be a language based system, although it often is, and can indeed a purely graphic transformation of music, sometimes, as in Padraig O’Keeffe’s notation, being a kinaesthetically based system instead. I would like to argue here that language and notation are theoretically tied together not through a supposed language-based origin but in their role as creative transformations - processes of creative transformation being the common bond between word, word/picture and picture.

Marc Perlman writes; “When music writing enters an oral tradition it can alter the musical life of musical representations” (Perlman 1996, p.1). In saying this he states that the nature of the form of notation adopted by an oral tradition will be fundamentally changed through a process of adaptation. This is a theme which will become apparent in our examination of the use of various notations which we will find are used throughout the Irish tradition. However I disagree fundamentally with Marc when he again asserts that notation as a technology does not influence its own application (ibid, p.15) Ruth Davis illustrates this well through her article accounting for the effect the introduction of notation had on the development of performance practice of Tunisian Classical music in the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed she shows how notation was used deliberately by the Rashidiyya Institute to mould performance and performance practice to serve its own aspirations of respectability, nationality and authenticity (Davis 1992). Notation will affect its own application in the way it serves the purposes of the various individuals that creatively invent,
adapt and/or use it. Notation will help dictate its own application in context, both the notation’s original context and the new creative context of its application.

Notation is perhaps the first ‘objectification’ of music from a ‘subjectified’ (A.L. Lloyd, in Leach & Palmer, 1978) form as time-bound sound into a non-temporal, permanent and physical form. Mary Louis Serefin writes that “Notation is only a record of what has been reflected upon and thought and thought important” (Serefin 1988, p.37). In this she implies though understates the importance of the creative act of notation making. Notation is not just an ‘act of reflection’ (ibid, p.37) but a purposeful public act, made within certain restraints, with certain, explicit and hidden, aims and objectives, some possibly affirmative and some even subversive. What makes notation distinctive is that it is the creature of a literate world and, today, a print-originated mindset (Ong 1982).

As we shall see, language and notation do have a lot in common, something rooted in their roles as creative transformations. Notation belongs firmly within firstly a literate world and more recently within a print dominated world and it portrays many of the qualities Ong mentions for print and written objects. Music notation further enables the phylogenetic growth of musical traditions, creating artificial memories for aspects of musical traditions that are accounted for through the notation. This leads to what Ong terms a “knowledge explosion” (Ong 1977, p.47) and an intensification of what Pierre Tulhard de Chardin terms the ‘noosphere’ (quoted in Ong, 1977, p.48) – the shared consciousness of man. What is
alluded to is what literacy can most often be, a dedicated tool for sharing, transmission of repertoire and skill. It is a media that invariably leads to acculturation and syncretism, what Alan Lomax emotively calls ‘cultural greyout’, what some might just as emotively term ‘enrichment’ or ‘improvement’. Ong alludes to this process further while referring also to a more intrinsic process when he writes:

“Technology is important in the history of the word not merely exteriorly, as a kind of circulator of pre-existing materials, but interiorly, for it transforms what can be said and what is said”

(Ong 1977, p.42)

Because notation cannot ever be true to its transformation, music, the reinterpretation or translation of the code that is notation back into a musical format, can never be true to the original. This process of translation is made doubly impossible by the fact that the metaphorical vacuum is filled often partially with the musical, social, political and cultural baggage of the notator and interpreter. In effect, notation will augment (I do not mean improve but rather add new dimensions while strengthening aspects of the old) a musical tradition by affecting intrinsic processes through its use while paving the way for extrinsic, new processes of creating and recreating performance through the development of a wider noosphere.

Notation is by necessity a closed system with carefully constructed interfaces with music and printed notation is even more so. There must be rules and the fact of the existence of these rules mitigate against the central role I give to imagination. But it is in the limited way in which these rules are interpreted and most importantly the way in which they have come to
be which is fascinating. This negotiation between music and notation is played out in reality between notator (person who writes the music, not necessarily composes it), text (the score) and translator (the musician who uses the score, again, not necessarily in performance). If notation is to be considered as a written text, then the modern field of literary theory, reader response criticism, must play a part in any examination of a process, which can be summarised as follows.

Author → text → reader

However, in the case of traditional Irish music, and because notation is not solely contained in print but in many forms of personal manuscripts, perhaps a more accurate account would be;

Author ↔ text ↔ reader

In literature, the creative aspect of the writer is ostensibly paramount and thus reader response criticism fits very well within my work with its emphasis on creativity. Perhaps it is because of the more conspicuous nooetic role of the shared, historical consciousness of notation that the idea of creative aspects of notation in many historic traditions has been hidden. However, in examining notation it is necessary to understand the invented personas, for themselves and others, that all parties of the above diagrams create so as to meaningfully interact with text. Of course a further complication of applying such a
structure in a music context is the role of author and reader as musicians and the ultimate interchangability this facilitates especially in a traditional music context where author can be, and invariably is, not composer but just engaging in transfer of aspects of tradition.

Notation is in effect a code, which plays a part sometimes in the creation, and especially in the case of Irish traditional music, the recreation of musical sound, whether real or imagined. However, these circular processes of codification and code translation again occur in a cultural landscape negotiated through the creative imagination of individuals.

Language

The use of language by the sound community of traditional Irish music has always been of intense personal interest to me. Being part of a community of sound isolated from the ‘musical mainland’ of traditional Irish music, Ireland itself, I was not exposed to the many of the cognitive structures used by musicians and audience to order their musical experience. The only system I was acquainted with was the highly literate operational³ (Baily 1988) system of western art music. So my surprise was tangible when, on coming to Ireland to examine traditional music performance practice and in particular flute style⁴, I found a language which seemed to be inconsistent with music practice. Some, such as Fionnuala

³ A conceptual framework expressed through terminology which directly informs performance. This term, and two others which provide theoretical axes, will be discussed later in this thesis.
Scullion (1980) leave it at that and just imply that the lack of accuracy and the often apparent complete inconsistency in the use of language is due to a lack of sophistication on the part of both practitioners and the tradition itself. Such an intrinsically ethnocentric and valuative view along an axis of complexity does not do justice to a system of speech that supports and informs a living tradition let alone account for its motivation.

Such ethnocentricity is found in ethnomusicology but perhaps in a more sophisticated form. Foremost of this tendency is George List who has twice produced a scale of coherence of expression for native American traditional musicians (1997 and in Degh, Linda, Henry Glassie, Felix J. Oinas). He writes;

> It is not surprising that traditional performers are unable to express clearly the musical concepts which they may hold. They learn their art primarily by imitating the performance and composition of others. They are infrequently obliged by either social or personal necessity to describe in precise linguistic terms the concepts underlying composition and performance.

(List1997, p.430)

And he goes onto say:

> As reflections of cultural values they [the conceptions of traditional musicians] shed light not only on the aesthetics of the group but also on their general social attitudes.

( ibid, p.431)

This latter statement reflects ideas perhaps most developed in the writings of Steven Feld but it does not do justice to the value and use of the terminologies to regard them as mere reflections (rather than as the transformations I propose here). List denies the expressions of
traditional musicians any importance outside of their social reflection; he denies them any active role, either musical or social. We all learn (and not just in music) through imitation, not just traditional musicians, and List makes an assumption that speech about music is solely concerned with transmission and learning of repertoire and skills (such as composition and technique) when it quite often is obviously not. Because List cannot uncover a group of scientifically organised closed (in the Saussurian sense) systems of speech (which, one would be tempted to say, resembles that of western art music) to account for a Hopi Indian musical world he implies that, because of its non-operational nature, Hopi music-speech, has no active function. Indeed it only holds interest insofar as it passively reflects general ‘cultural values’.

List describes the scale of conception derived from his study with Hopi Indians as:

The type of responses received in endeavouring to illicit musical concepts from the Hopis can be divided into five categories  (1) The informant is able to express the concepts verbally and has a technical term to represent the concept (2) The informant is able to express the concept verbally but has no technical term to represent the concept (3) The informant possesses a technical term which represents the object but is otherwise unable to express the concept verbally  (4) The response of the informant indicates that he possesses some concept of the musical phenomenon under discussion, but he is unable to express the concept verbally, so he resorts to performance, hoping to convey the concept through demonstration  (5) The response of the informant indicates that he possesses some concept of the musical phenomenon under discussion, but he is unable to articulate the concept clearly or to convey his meaning by demonstration. Under these circumstances the investigator is able in some cases to provide the informer with an analogy (such as the ladder as the representation of a vocal range) in order to clarify the concept.

(List 1994, p.340)

The fact that the investigator might need to produce analogies to explain how he thinks the traditional musician conceptually organises his or her world is particularly wrong-headed and
in fact imposing the investigators' view of the tradition on the informant. It is impossible for
the investigator, perhaps unless the investigator is a particularly sensitive cultural actor, to
produce socially meaningful ‘analogy’, socially relevant to the context of the informant.

The past twenty-five years of ethnomusicological research has included many other studies of
the speech performances relevant to music performances. According to Zemp this has its
origin in Alan Merriam’s statement that:

> It is also to be expected that cultures differ in the extent of such verbalisation, but at
the same time it is very doubtful that any people have nothing whatsoever to say about
their musical style.

(Merriam 1967, p.117)

Merriam however did qualify this sentiment by implying that speech about music is most
often found in more ‘complex’ or perhaps more literate societies when he writes that:

> There is also verbal communication about music which seems to be most characteristic
of complex societies in which a self-conscious music has developed.

(Merriam 1964, pp.10-11)

Zemp points out Merriam’s flat contradiction of his earlier sentiment three years later when
he states that “the Flathead simply do not verbalise about their music” (Merriam 1967,
p.45). He goes on to refer to Power’s review of Merriam’s above quoted essay on the music
of the Flathead Indians, who disagrees with Merriam:
But I cannot agree that the Flathead, or any other groups of Indian who are capable of formulating extensive taxonomies of natural phenomena, are not capable of verbalising about their music satisfactorily to their societal needs [my italics]….

…..when it comes to analyzing such phenomena as music verbalisation and concepts of formal structure and aesthetics, there is a greater need for ethnomusicologists to “deculturate” themselves from Western orientation and take the cue from the proponents of ethnoscience, that is, to “think Indian”      

(Powers & Kolinski 1970, p.70)

Leaving aside the discussion as to the efficacy, possibility and desirability of ethnomusicologists “deculturating” themselves what is interesting here is that it is recognised that speech about music serves different purposes in different cultural contexts. This, however, does beg the question, pointing back to Merriam, as to why there would be speech about music if there are no ‘societal needs’ for speech about music in certain cultural contexts. This is an occurrence I hope to later suggest which at the most is unlikely and more probably impossible. However the further insistence by both Power and Zemp of the necessity to build up taxonomies seems to miss the point. Taxonomies are creatures of modern literate culture and really, as an organisational tool, have no relevance to the music culture they are derived from (unless it is literate and perhaps even then not definitely so). This is not necessarily a bad thing as part of the underlying purpose of ethnomusicology is to present ‘the other’ in an emic form. This means essentially as comprehensible to a western audience who generally are a great fan of lists which order their world and allow for the relative quantification of aspects of that world. However, the emphasis on taxonomy does not illustrate the relationship between the music, the speech about music and the societal needs they all inform and serve and I believe actually mitigates against an understanding of the creative processes which tie these phenomena together. However taxonomies certainly
have an important place in the study of speech systems which occur around and within music performance contexts.

However, Zemp’s work (1978, 1979) is outstanding and begins to point the way to the metaphorical roots of speech about music. He is at pains to illustrate the complexity of ‘Are ‘Are musical conceptual organisation. He portrays in his two articles several aspects of who the ‘Are ‘Are people of Malaita in the Solomon islands organise their musical world. Most interestingly he shows how the term ‘AU (a term outside a musical context which normally denotes bamboo, an important raw material of their instrumental culture) signifies all music with melodic elements even if there are no bamboo instruments involved in the performance. Zemp calls this a process of analogy but rather it is more likely to do with metaphor, where the definition of the term AU’ in a musical context no longer is immediately referent to bamboo but to melody. This sort of process of analogous transferral is apparent in other traditions - for instance the expression on a blustery day that “the wind is very sharp” will have a completely different meaning in the context of an orchestral rehearsal! These are metaphorical transformations which in the case of the ‘Are ‘Are and their conceptions of ‘AU led to one further associative step in meaning away from the original.

Bamboo → bamboo instruments → melodic music of bamboo instruments → all melodic music
He mentions several terms having different definitions in the non-musical world but does not explore this diversity of meaning.

Outstanding in this recent field of music orientated ‘ethnosemantics’ is Steven Feld, whose ground-breaking work with the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea will be a benchmark for any future studies in this field. Feld’s innovation is in his concentration on the role of metaphor. He writes:

> The basic problem is: in what way does metaphor systematize abstract ideas and provide verbal means for expressing the structure of musical experience?
> (Feld 1981, p.22)

It is not necessary to overview Feld’s groundbreaking work here. Feld calls the speech used by musicians ‘metalanguages’ – this is terminology taken from ordinary, day-to-day discourse but given different meanings in a musical context, as is illustrated above. This change in meaning is often brought about through a process dependent on the use of metaphor, though this transferral of meaning is not exclusive to music but goes on through many areas of conceptualisation. Feld shows how the term paper clip in English is an obviously descriptive, referential term – something for clipping paper together. However in French it is called a trombone – a basic visual metaphor. This transfer does not cause confusion amongst the French about paper clips and trombones because of their metalinguistic use - their use in various defining contexts.
Effectively Feld examined the metaphorical basis (which was beautifully poetic) of what he considered the aspects of the system of systemised language used by the Kaluli to frame their musical world. Through this examination of this metaphorical basis he came up with a deeper understanding of a wide musical and extra musical aesthetic and indeed a wider cultural economy (physical, moral and aesthetic). Where this work will diverge from Feld’s is in a basic orientation. Feld, in no way which I have considered, regards language about music (and for my purposes here, notation) as a creative aspect of culture, sometime reinforcing, but also capable of revolutionising music traditions and the environments of those traditions. Feld only really examines what he terms “systematic knowledge organised in such a way that it is applicable to a wide variety of circumstances” (Feld 1981, p.23). Feld (in Yoshihiko, Tokumaru & Yamaguti Osumu, 1986) speaks of orality or literacy not as being either a determining or limiting condition of a music but just another aspect of music informed by society. This produces an image of a one-dimensional, one-way relationship portraying language and notation as merely a tie or conduit for an informing process. He also writes;

The formation of the Kaluli ‘lift up over sounding’ sound proceeds from a dual dialectic, sound / environment on the one hand, sound / social relations on the other. The first side involves a process of adaptation. The fluidity of environmental awareness as musical inspiration, environmental perception as musical appreciation is the motion between nature and naturalness, the sensate and the sensual. The music of nature becomes the nature of music. The inverse side involves a process of rationalisation. The fluidity of musical consciousness as social identity, idea performed to ideation formed in the motion between the “natural” and human nature, the sensual and the sensible.

(Feld 1988, p.102)
This is a wonderful account at a macro level, which does not just pertain to the 'Kaluli groove'. In what seems to be the relatively static cultural environment that Feld encountered amongst the Kaluli it does present an exceptional summation of their musical and aesthetic world. However in my personal, Irish musical experience the dialectics are much more divergent and it is the creativity seen in the use of notation and speech about music which are the bones of such a discourse. In Ireland, as well as through much of the world, the poles which frame Feld’s theoretical structure, “…sound / environment on the one hand, sound / social relations on the other” (ibid, p.102) are on the move. These moves are constantly, creatively accounted for and expressed through and even as part of transformation.

This is what is missing from Feld’s account of the discursive transformation of Kaluli music – an account of the role of creativity, what Mark Johnson (1987) describes as “imagination”. Johnson illustrates how imagination is the essential process, the lifeblood, allowing for the interaction of two experiential structures, image schemata5 and metaphor, which enable us to give meaning to our experience. He writes that “‘imagination’ is a basic image-schematic capacity for ordering our experience’ (Johnson 1987, p.156). Imagination, an essential creative process, provides the means by which the 'bodily' works its way into the conceptual and rational.

5 Which he accounts for as “a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience” (Johnson 1987, xiv)
To understand such transformative processes from music to language / language base object, we must also understand the nature and structure of the type of object that is aspired to. Essentially perhaps the most important cognitive role of language is categorical and that it divides human experience and sensory experience into structures that place order on that world of experience. It can be argue that the essence of much language usage is a categorical aspiration, driven by the need to order human experience. Of course I exclude much of the artistic use of language in this but George Lakoff and Mark Turner in More than Cool Reason, a Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor (1989) demonstrate how an essential aspect of artistic use of language is the unorthodox juxtaposition of conceptual domains, or categories, through correspondence, thus developing conceptual structures that throw our experience in a new light.

The basis of the classical formulation of theories of categorisation comes from Aristotle who distinguished between a thing’s ‘essences’ and ‘accidents’. The essence of a thing is what defines it and is ‘all parts immanent in things which define and indicate their individuality, and whose destruction causes the destruction of the whole’ (Metaphysics 5.8.3). Whereas a things ‘accidents’ are purely incidental, play no part in the definition of a thing and ‘means that which applies to something and is truly stated, but neither necessarily nor usually’ (5. 30.1). Therefore, for Aristotle, a concept is defined through a formula (or logos’) which accounts for it’s essence – the most famously quoted formula being that for the essence of man which has two aspects, ‘two footed’ and ‘animal’. (see Taylor 1989, p.22)
This classical approach to categorisation has been developed primarily by linguistic and more specifically phonologists so that categories are seen to have the following characteristics according to John Taylor (1989, pp.23-24).

(1). Categories are defined in terms of a conjunction of necessary and sufficient features.
(2) Features are binary.
(3) Categories have clear boundaries.
(4) All members of a category have equal status.
(5) Features are primitive.
(6) Features are universal.
(7) Features are abstract.
(8) Features are innate.

Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations (1973, written in 1945) critiques this structure through a examination of the word ‘Speil’ or game. He shows that the word cannot be defined in terms of the criteria above but rather through a crisscrossed extended chain of familiarities. How can a board game like chess and say a field game such as the 100 metre sprint share basic characteristics which are binary, clear, abstract and innate? He writes:

Consider for example the proceedings that we call ‘games’. I mean board-games, card-games, Olympic games and so on. What is common to them all? – Don’t say: ‘There must be something common, or they would not be called “games”’- but look and see whether there is anything in common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole
series of them at that. To repeat: don’t think, but look! For example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained, but much is lost. Are they all 'amusing'? Compare chess with noughts and crosses. Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. In ball games there is winning and losing but where a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature disappeared. Look at the parts played by skill and luck, and at the difference between skill in chess and skill in tennis. Think now of games like ring-a-ring-a-roses; here is the element of amusement, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared! And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way; we see how similarities crop up and disappear. And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail… [H]ow is the concept of a game bounded? What still counts as a game and what no longer does? Can you give the boundary? No. You can draw one; for none has so far been drawn. (But that never troubled you before when you used he word 'game'.)

(Wittgenstein 1978, p.31-3)

Linguistics still wrestles with this classical structure but it is evident from an approach from something as intangible as music and the so-called musicological juncture in a context such as Irish traditional music that it is seriously flawed. To gather a group of musicians and attempt to even come up with an Aristotilian definition of what Irish traditional music itself is would be a fruitless if perhaps comical exercise.

The most serious challenge to the classical argument and the first real proposition for an alternative approach to the understanding of categories comes from the cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch and her propositions ‘prototype theory’ and ‘basic level categories’. Her research brought together that of others in two sets of results concerning ‘prototype effects’ and ‘basic level effects’. Rosch, in her studies of colour in different cultural contexts (see Heider 1971 and 1972, Heider and Olivier 1972, Rosche 1973),
develops the work of Berlin and Kay (1969) in illustrating that some category members are more central and important to that category than others. These categorical members she terms as cognitive reference points or prototypes which mitigate the classical equality of categorical members through their display of apparent asymmetry with other category members as being best examples of.

Rosch also develops the concept of basic level effects that give special importance to categories in the middle of the taxonomic structure or hierarchy. Lakoff accounts for these basic level categories being basic in the following respects.

Perception: overall perceived shape; single mental image; fast identification.
Function: General motor programme.
Communication: Shortest, most commonly used and neutral words, first learned by children and first to enter the lexicon.
Knowledge Organisation: most attributes of category members are stored at this level.
(Lakoff 1987, p.47)

Rosch herself rejected her own propositions as an alternative to classical categorical theory, particularly those concerned with prototype effects, as being too general and in themselves over emphasising hierarchical structures. She writes:

The pervasiveness of prototypes in real world categories and prototypicality as a variable indicates that prototypes have some place in psychological theories of representation, processing and learning. However, prototypes themselves do not constitute any particular model of processes, representations or learning
(Rosch 1978, p.40)
Prototypes, though important are ultimately superficial, can change between various cultural contexts and ultimately cannot, as she indicates, provide a comprehensive and universal alternative structure for the understanding of meaning. However, their presence as a factor in processing, representation and learning is undeniable and gives us an potentially exceptional tool in understanding the musicological juncture.

Metaphor

As indicated earlier, to understand these transformational processes (and perhaps not just for language) an understanding of metaphor is essential. Metaphor is central to the studies of Zemp and Feld among other ethnomusicologists but has perhaps become central to the propositions of many cognitive scientists, many of who see metaphor and the processes that lead to its creation as central to the way we understand and organise our world.

However, metaphor has historically been a very poor relative in philosophical thinking. Traditionally there has been a simplistic view of a relationship between metaphorical and literal language, one being the language of science and development while the other is seen as the language of poetry, the arts generally but also being intrinsically of none or very little value (apart from aesthetic). From British empiricism to Vienna positivism metaphor has been denied any real importance in western philosophy while the basis of most thought (quite naturally) has been classical, scientific objectivism.
Two often-quoted critics of metaphor are Hobbes and Locke (the following quotes can be found in Ted Cohen’s introduction to *Critical Inquiry – Special Issue on Metaphor*, Autumn, 1978, Vol. 5, No.1) – both of whom use metaphor remarkably effectively and creatively in their vilification of it.

The general use of speech, is to transfer our mental discourse into verbal; or the train of our thoughts, into a train of words. . . . Special uses of speech are these; first, to register, what by cogitation, we find to be the cause of any thing, present or past; and what we find things present or past may produce, or effect; which in sum, is acquiring of arts. Secondly, to show to others that knowledge which we have attained, which is, to counsel and teach one another. Thirdly, to make known to others our wills and purposes, "at we may have the mutual help of one another. Fourthly, to please and delight ourselves and others, by playing with our words, for pleasure or ornament, innocently.

To these uses, there are also four correspondent abuses. First, when men register their thoughts wrong, by the inconstancy of the signification of their words; by which they register for their conception, that which they never conceived, and so deceive themselves. Secondly, when they used words metaphorically; that is, in other . . . And therefore such [inconstant] names can never be true of speech: but these are less dangerous, because they profess their inconstancy; which the other do not.

(Hobbes’ *Leviathan* pt. 1, chap. 4 in Cohen 1978 p.3-4):

And

34. ... since wit and fancy find easier entertainment in the world than dry truth and real knowledge, figurative speeches and allusion in language will hardly be admitted as an imperfection or abuse of it. I confess, in discourses where we seek rather pleasure and delight than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from them can scarce pass for faults. But yet if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheats, and, therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are
certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them. What, and how various they are, will be superfluous here to take notice; the book of rhetoric which abound in the world will instruct those who want to be informed: only I cannot but observe how little the preservation and improvement of truth and knowledge is the care and concern of mankind; since the arts of fallacy are endowed and preferred. It is evident how much men love to deceive and be deceived, since rhetoric, that powerful instrument of error and deceit, has its established professors, is publicly taught, and has always been had in great reputation: and, I doubt not, but it will be thought great boldness, if not brutality in me, to have said thus much against it. Eloquence, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And it is in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving wherein men find pleasure to be deceived.

(Locke’s Essay, bk. 3, chap. 10, in Cohen 1978, 4-5)

This last quote from Locke is amusing in that it is so rhetoric in nature and uses metaphor so eloquently that the message is effectively an attack on the means by which it is being communicated. But it does highlight the traditional association of metaphor with ‘art’, ‘rhetoric’, ‘deceit’, ‘ornament’ and separates it from ‘dry truth and real knowledge’. I would argue that much of knowledge is as ‘real’, as Locke conceived it, as truth is truly ‘dry’.

The basis of the emphasis on literal language is a objectivist or “god’s-eye” view. This is described (perhaps not so objectively) by George Lakoff in juxtaposition to a related orientation, basic realism.

…objectivist metaphysics goes beyond the metaphysics of basic realism. Basic realism merely assumes that there is a reality of some sort. Objectivist metaphysics is much more specific. It additionally assumes that reality is correctly and completely structured in a way that can be modelled set-theoretical models – that is in terms of entities, properties and relations. On the objectivist view, reality comes with a unique, correct, complete structure in terms of entities, properties and relations. This structure exists, independent of any human understanding.

(Lakoff 1989, p.159)
Thus the objectivist viewpoint is that our universe is made up of objects with specific properties that exist in relationship with those of others and independent of our understanding and perception. Therefore in the objective world, as Mark Johnson points out, “...words are arbitrary symbols which, though meaningless in themselves, get their meaning by virtue of their capacity to correspond directly to things in the world” (Johnson, 1987, p.x). This is harking back to the previously quoted writings of Hobbes and Locke and implicates that it is only the words that do represent clearly definable worldly things that have any true meaning and real value. The emphasis in an objectivist world view is on meaning – words are valuable only as far as they are clearly meaningful – again the implication is that where words fail in the clarity and referentiality it is the fault of incomplete or corrupt language and can only be fixed through research and the development of more and more scientific language. Thus, when words do fail us, it is our fault and the fault of the words and the only solution is to invent much more accurate language (jargon).

Linguists and philosophers have attempted in more recent years to reassess the role of metaphor in an examination of language and meaning. Ted Cohen, in the following quote, illustrates how this began in a fairly superficial manner, not reassessing the role of metaphor but rather re-evaluating the traditional value put on empirical and metaphorical language.

The why might you, or anyone, use this metaphor instead of a literal remark? To be eloquent? To decorate? To say something beautiful? Of course these could be your reasons, these “aesthetical impulses,” and they are the kind of reasons suggested by those that condemn metaphor or consign it to the class of the inconsequential. Because I subscribe to the opinion that metaphors are peculiarly crystallised works of art, I am not surprised by this convergence of arguments about legitimacy. Just as self appointed followers of Aristotle have swallowed Plato’s pill and then found that
they can only treat art with respect only if they can find knowledge in it, so latter-day friends of metaphor have thought that only of metaphors have all the semantic possibilities of literate language and more – could metaphors be intellectually respectable. Otherwise they could be nothing more than small scale art. But why? Is knowledge the only, or even the most important concern? Is it’s formal semantics all that matters in the use of language, or the only correct and proper subject? Is a joke less important than a theorem even if it’s a good joke and an inconsequential theorem?”

(Cohen 1978, pp.7-8)

In the same publication Wayne C. Booth further moves metaphor up a valuative ladder without addressing the creative role of metaphor. He addresses an aesthetic of metaphor and places metaphor as not a means but an end while proposing that a culture can be judged by the quality of its metaphors, an aesthetic judgement that would inevitably be essentially metaphorical itself. He writes “metaphor… is not a means to other ends but one of the main ends in life; sharing metaphors becomes one of the experiences we live for.” (in Cohen 1978, p.69)

Donald Davidson was one of the first to start to address the creative nature of the metaphorical process starting with the premise that metaphors mean nothing more than what they literally mean and disagreeing with the concept of metaphor as primarily a vehicle for conveying ideas (basically metaphor cannot be literally paraphrased because there is nothing to paraphrase). Thus Davidson moves away from ideas of meaning and starts to engage process.

No theory of metaphorical meaning or metaphorical truth can help explain how metaphors work. Metaphor runs on the same familiar linguistic tracks that the plainest sentences do; this we saw from considering simile. What distinguishes metaphor is not meaning but use – in this it is like assertion, hinting, lying, promising or criticising. And the special use to which we put language in metaphor
is not – cannot be – to say “something special”, no matter how indirectly. For a metaphor says only what shows on its face – usually a patent falsehood or absurd truth [Niall is a pig / no man is an island]. And this plain truth or falsehood needs no paraphrase – it is given in the literal meaning of the words.

(in Cohen 1978, p.43)

Thus the importance of metaphor is not in its literal meaning (which, according to Davidson, is the only meaning it could convey) which is quite often an absurdity, but rather in the creative processes of its creation an understanding.

However a community of philosophers have developed in the past thirty years a radically alternative view of the relationship between world and words. Argument today seems to be concerned with the centrality of meaning and knowledge to the issue of the value of metaphorical and literal language. Central to their approach was the idea that perhaps meaning and knowledge aren’t the central issues that they are portrayed to be – perhaps more central issues can be uncovered in the examination of metaphorical structure, process and motivation.

Much of the language about music is obviously metaphorical (even though many are obviously not active but dead metaphors, where the metaphorical root of a term is either not considered or forgotten and the term becomes iconic in nature). Thus an examination of the nature of metaphor in a music / speech context is vital. However an examination of the creative process of metaphor and its motivations may well provide a frame for the understanding of the creative processes spanning Seeger’s musicological juncture outside of a
strictly metaphorical context and thus help us with our many problems connecting music to meaning.

Discussions on the transformations of music, language, speech or otherwise, tend to be of an essentially functionalist nature, portraying these ‘secondary modelling systems’ as mere conceptual conduits between music and culture rather than another creative performance practice. Marc Perlman writes;

All sorts of mapping, of translating from knowing-how to knowing-that, can be found in the history of human societies; the invention of scripts and notation systems, the writing of how-to manuals and textbooks, the composing of grammars and theory treatises. The act of turning inchoate, mute knowledge into an explicit, formal system is not a purely intellectual exercise; it is also a social act, responsive to social pressures and opportunities.

(Marc Perlman 1996, p.2)

Marc gives a clue as to what is essential to this thesis when he speaks of ‘composing’. Imagination is the vehicle for the transformational process over the intellectual and social terrain he mentions. Language performance and notational objectifications must be creative – it can affirm but also can subvert culture. They are not only routes expressed on the mapping between culture and music but a force not only recontextualising the relationship between the two but also recreating both. Essential is the creative role of the cultural actor as “scientist and ‘bricoleur’”(Levi Strauss, 1966, p.20) but where, unlike the Levi-Strauss’ model in which the scientist changes the world, the ‘bricoleur’ also has a social and culturally creative role. Martin Stokes (1994, pp.1-24) speaks of musicians ‘subverting’ culture in
performance. I believe that musicians often do so (as well as to affirm culture) more subtly and more effectively through the creative transformations of that music.

The Reassessment of Meaning and the Search for Process

The motivation for this study is the examination of transformational processes. It is an examination of these processes that will help us understand the products of them (words, signs and music) in the cultural context of traditional music and musicians in Ireland today. Many musicologists are involved in the study of these processes become obsessed with and I believe sidetracked by the idea of meaning. Perhaps the most developed of these obsessive searches for meaning can be found in the work of Adorno. Richard Middleton describes Adorno’s search for meaning:

The immanent method [of Adorno] assumes that the ‘truth’ of a work is to be found within the work itself; or rather that it can be discovered by critical confrontation of the work’s ideal or concept – what it wants to be – with its reality.

(Middleton 1990, p.61)

Adorno combines what one would expect to be the contradictory elements of his mid-twentieth century Marxism with a peculiar contemporary classical elitism. His search for meaning was dependent on musical autonomy and social relevance which was forever tainted
by the over-arching presence of capitalism. Like most others, he was concerned with product (truth and meaning). The creative transformational processes that lead to these products (words like meaning, truth) are not examined by Adorno and the vast majority of musicologists, which ultimately means that their understanding of music is ultimately blindly relativist (culture bound).

Ethnomusicologists have, I believe, avoided the issue of meaning and understandably so when confronted by a pre-existing musicological / philosophical / linguistic literature which looks right and feels wrong (or, amongst the more classically orientated of us, perhaps the reverse). But as evidenced in the recent British Journal of Ethnomusicology entitled *Music and Meaning* (2001) many are approaching the subject creatively, positing metaphor and it’s structures at the centre of an understanding of meaning. They do first by very carefully approaching the metaphorical structures we all build to mediate the very term music (in particular the music as object metaphor) and illustrating how these may limit our understanding of music as an imaginary construction. Martin Clayton writes;

Music’s apparent existence as text is made possible only by the attempt to rationalize and fix experience. Music as text (music as form, etc.) is an artifact discourse, brought into being through the operation of metaphor yet most accounts of meaning in aesthetic, semiotic or structural terms presuppose the existence of this imaginary artifact, while greatly underestimating the constructive role of real and socially-situated listeners … If (objectified) music is not a natural fact but a construction, an aspect of cultural knowledge, then where can its meaning be found? If meaning is to be found solely in the ascriptions of listeners, as some would hold, in what ways (if at all) is it generated or communicated by music?

(Clayton 2001, p.5)
The implication is that music is not music until it is heard by a someone who recognises it as such and as such is something imagined by a listener, although done so in a wider social context where that imagining is taught and widely understood to be reality. This experience is bounded through the application of forms and structures. However to merely account for these imaginings as just that and not even conjecture the importance they may have is hardly adequate. These imagined boundaries that help us sort and define musical experience also inform the act of what Christopher Small would describe as ‘musicking’ (Small, 1998). Out of such structures we don’t only decide what is music and what for, structure, or aesthetic or political value it may have but also we recreate the creative act of musicking. We make music according to structures, no matter from what cultural background we emerge or what level of genius we are. Thus it is not just a matter of interpretation that is dictated by the metaphorical acquisition of structure and other such issues but the act of musicking itself—basically what makes our music is our creative interaction of the metaphors born of past practice.

What also is facilitating the engagement of ethnomusicologists with the search for meaning is a reassessment of the term meaning itself. Timothy Rice assesses the definition of meaning in the context of his studies on metaphorical structures used by Bulgarian musicians. Commenting on Martin Clayton’s above quoted work, he writes:

Meaning, as a quick look at my modest home dictionary and thesaurus reveals and as we know intuitively, has minimally three distinct meanings. (I shudder at the prospect of how consulting the OED might complicate this.) The first meaning given is "what is ... signified, indicated, referred to, or understood". Close synonyms for this sense are words like signification, sense, import, purport and message and
phrases like "semantic meaning" and "referential meaning". This seems to be Clayton's narrow sense of the word meaning. The second dictionary meaning of meaning suggests an array of linked synonyms like significance, importance, value and merit. (Complicating this simple dichotomy, one of the meanings of significance is signification.) Such a sense of meaning seems to provide a basis for the broader concept of meaning, which Clayton, appropriately, wants to keep before us.

Third, meaning means intention or purpose. We hear this sense of the word in quizzical responses to avant-garde art and music: what does it mean? What, in other words, was the artist trying to achieve? What did he or she intend? Though we may hear this question most often in response to difficult works of art, and music, such turns toward intention are probably a very frequently used interpretive strategy, used even when the interpreter is faced with common behaviours and works that are fully integrated into culturally shared practices and styles.

Another, perhaps more sophisticated version of the question, one that avoids the so-called intentional fallacy, might be: how am I to interpret this work? How am I to understand its formal logic, its references to worlds, and its artistic, cultural and social significance and value? This question yields a fourth sense for the word meaning, one somewhat undeveloped in my dictionary: meaning refers to (means) interpretation and understanding (this question and the concepts of interpretation and understanding used here are developed in Ricoeur's 1981 essays on phenomenological hermeneutics.) Both these last two senses - meaning as intention and meaning as interpretation and understanding - seem to me to combine the narrow and broad senses of meaning in a fruitful (even broader?) way and locate the concept of meaning not in the thing or the form or the action but in the people who make and reflect upon them.

(Rice 2001, p.21)

Rice goes onto argue that perhaps the term meaning, because of its own diversity of meaning has to be used very carefully and indeed should be qualified in one or other of the ways mentioned above. The basis of Rices’ thesis is that all these meanings are generated through a process of metaphor and he demonstrates the implications of this in the following professionally generous illustration!

It seems to me that all human beings, including ethnomusicologists, understand the nature and significance of music (its meaning in the broad sense) by making metaphors that link music to other aspects of human experience. Each such metaphor makes a truth claim about the ontological status of music: music is art,
music is meaningful action, music is humanly organized sound, and so forth. I would like to suggest that, as researchers, we not critique some of these metaphors as false while proclaiming others as the keys to the musicological Kingdom: “music is not a thing at all but an activity” (Small, 1998:2). Rather, ethnomusicologists should take all musical metaphors they encounter, whether of their own making or that of their research subjects, seriously and for what they are: fundamental claims to truth, guides to practical action and sources for understanding music’s profound importance in human life. Rather than true or false, each claim, it seems to me, is merely limited, one of many possibilities. A given metaphor probably achieves some goals and makes some sense in certain situations but fails to account for the full range of music’s possibilities and significance. I further suggest that multiple musical metaphors probably guide action and thought in individual lives, in society and through time. Sometimes I suppose, they happily co-mingle; at others they may become alternative, competing strategies.

(Rice 2001, p.22)

Therefore a metaphorical process is used to account for and produce meaning but, as implied above, such meaning is appropriate to some approaches and contexts and not some others. Again I hope to expand on this. Rather than seeing such metaphors as ‘limiting’ musical experience, a viewpoint which seems to suggest that there is some greater meaning beyond what mere language can explore and resounds to the belief that ‘all art aspires to the state of music’, I would argue that these meanings are not just inadequately translated through the metaphorical process but are created in that process. Meaning is not acquired from the higher emotional gestalt of the exalted art form but from established metaphorical structures that we use to interpret and create our musical structures.

Of course, meaning does not have to be found solely in text or language it also has emotive, embodied and social expressions. However we would never say that the emotive or embodied meanings generated through music are corrupted in that experience and process while, paradoxically many authors would suggest this happens in the ‘texting’ of music. No-one would dream of saying crying about music is like dancing about architecture!
Rice himself puts metaphorical processes nearer the heart of the issue and gives us some valuable tools that will be used and developed in a later context when he does go on to say:

Metaphors are not simply literary devices. They are constructions that help us to understand our world. When we take them as true they powerfully inform our view of the world and our actions in it (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:156-84). When we are faced with five common and possibly cross-culturally useful metaphors about the fundamental nature of music (as symbol or text, as art, as social behaviour, as commodity, as emotional expression), a number of important questions arise. First, how do our subjects deploy these metaphors? Are some or all of them kept in some kind of balance or always kept in mind? Or do people bring one into the foreground while pushing the others into the background? Or does one actually eclipse the others, making them disappear at least for a while? In other words, we may want to consider how and whether our subjects use metaphors of music’s nature and significance strategically to their benefit.

(Rice 2001, p.24)

My positing of metaphor at the centre of musical experience and the true essence of what is meaning in a musical context is perhaps a little extreme and beyond the pale for this thesis. However, on a personal note, I do recoil from the notion that there is some greater musical truth that, though it may be unaccountable, informs all the pale metaphorical reflections that we can generate. I would argue that without the process of metaphor there would be no music, only noise. The meaning that we acquire when we listen to music comes from us, not the music. This of course is qualified by a greater diachronic and synchronic metaphorical context from which listener, composer, performer (where such distinctions exist) all learn to behave and interpret appropriately. However this is where I would disagree with Rice and where I believe he would fall into conflict with Lakoff and particularly Johnson. Without metaphor music does not exist and music and it’s meaning are created in a sometimes creative metaphorical space, where phenomena, in this case particular noises, are being
understood (an understanding enabled through embodied aspects and cultural learning) in a different, unconnected realm. Rice, borrowing from Bourdieu, points out that the metaphorical acquisition of meaning is not solely a literary or textual process, citing the metaphorical schemas of music as social behaviour, music as art, music as emotional expression, music as commodity. There are definitely many more schemas but one thing that is for sure is that rarely does just one schema apply. For instance, from my own experience, a couple dancing to a favourite pop ballad at an 80’s disco can be seen to engaging a number of levels of meaning. It is their ‘favourite’, a aesthetic judgement, part of the music is art schema – Charles Keil would argue that a wider understanding of aesthetic to include embodied aspects will also play a part, the couple enjoy dancing to this music; they have paid to get admission to this disco so for them the music as commodity schema is very much alive; the fact that they are dancing together, to a ballad indicates to the others at the, dance, particularly the single people there, that the two are a couple, and in that way are unavailable, which is music as social behaviour.

Intertextuality

Our understanding of speech and writing about music and notation as transformations of music is further complicated by the post-structuralist notions of intertextuality. Rooted in Saussure’s structuralist representation of language as a system of arbitrary and differential signs – a langue which can be deduced from instantiations of language practice, parole – post-
structural theorists, such as Kristeva and Barthes, influenced by the Marxist theoreticians Bakhtin, Medvedev, Volosinov, emphasis the nature of texts (and arguable by extension, speech) as existing in an all-pervasive textual continuum within which they exist. Their arguments are built around ideas of texts not being produced by “a unified authorial consciousness but a plurality of voices, of other words, other utterances and other texts” (Allen 2007, p.72). Essentially, meaning is found for text and utterances in it’s intertextual relationships rather than through it’s relationship with a signified, a relationship that Barthes in particular portrayed in S / Z (1976) which is always changing so as to make any meaningful such relationship unstable despite the attempts of the dominant powers of orthodoxy to make it so.

Such theories are rooted in the contemporary literary art and expression of a class of intellectual revolutionaries in a revolutionary period for France and the world embroiled in civil unrest, war in Indochina and the anarchist inspired revolt of Paris in 1968. If we apply the theories of Kristeva and Barthes religiously in the context of this thesis it makes a nonsense of what is essentially an attempt to map some of the relationships between signifier and signified, the heart of this study. We would be caught in the dead-end of abstract objectivism with little option to focus on the relational structures of language and a avoiding the day-to-day ‘meaning’ of language which would be regarded as intangible and mutable. However, their emphasis on the systematic, intertextual nature of language cannot be ignored and we shall see that we can consider this intertextual terrain of word-to-word as sometimes having precedence over the terrain between signifier and signified. We will
occasionally draw on the Marxian structuralism of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Volosinov and the Marxian post-structuralism of Julia Kristeva in particular to demonstrate the political and power based tensions of language structured in Bakhtin and Volosinov’s world of monologic and dialogic discourses (1986) and Barthes struggle of *doxa* and *para-doxa* (1975).

**Levi-Strauss Reprised!**

An examination of the languages used by musicians in any cultural context will show how they are organised into structures which have no relation to a functional, empirical or objectivist understanding of music (what are essentially ludicrous notions) but are themselves creative and traditional acts, achieving much more than subversion and driven primarily by an urge to bring the musical act into a more reasonable frame of understanding but also by the joys, fears, excitements and sorrows that fuel our daily existence. Levi-Strauss in the opening quote of this chapter speaks of the Artist as ‘scientist’ and ‘*bricoleur*’. Ignoring the metaphorical schema of art (in this case music) as object we must complicate his structure for the purposes of this thesis as the artist engaging in two separate processes, creation of music and language for that music, as both scientist and *bricoleur*. Perhaps we could disagree with Levi-Strauss to a small extent in that, artists (in the widest sense - musicians and audiences) subvert his conceptual structure by being ‘scientific’ *bricoleurs* in the realms of language and meaning. To understand meaning or other such referential concepts as applied to music we
must examine the processes through which they are created and the cultural terrain these processes engage.
CHAPTER TWO

The Physical Transformations of Traditional Irish Music – Writing It

Here we begin the examination of some of the manifestations of aural (speech) and visual (notation and writing) transformations in the context of traditional Irish dance music. An essential difference between these two transformations in any diachronic analysis is that notation and writing are physical, spacial objects which, though often delicate, can have unlimited longevity; whereas speech is a transient, auditory form which only exists in the moment of its utterance\(^6\). To have a diachronic manifestation of speech about music it must usually go through a further transformation into writing and print and, more recently, into other media objects such as tapes and CDs as well as other more visual technological formats. Understandably this will complicate any diachronic study of the use of speech by traditional Irish musicians. Such a diachronic examination is essential as the recent development of these transformations gives essential clues to their nature. However we must also examine their manifestation today. In this chapter we will look at some of the physical manifestations of the transformational processes of Irish traditional music, specifically notation as represented in manuscript and published forms. These manuscripts and print manifestations of transformation are perhaps the most obvious examples of a scientific bricolage that

\(^6\) Other more embedded differences between speech, written and published materials and notation will be examined in chapter 3.
informs a traditional musicology by and for the communities of traditional Irish dance music.

**Notation**

Notation can be classified in a number of ways. There are two obvious divisions, published and manuscript, but perhaps more informative is the related distinction between the two roles of notation in the transmission process. Transmission occurs in two separate spheres, and notation is used in both. The first of these spheres is formal transmission where the processes of teaching and learning take place in the formal environment of the student / teacher relationship. This can be found in situations and contexts which hardly seem formal in comparison to traditional western modes of classroom learning. Such processes take place in appropriate contexts in the everyday life of the traditional musician. What defines this as formal is the physical presence of student(s) and teacher with the express purpose of teaching and learning repertoire and / or technique. The second is informal transmission which takes place outside of the boundaries of formal transmission (although the extent and definition of those boundaries are problematic in themselves). This is where notation facilitates solo learning or group learning without the presence of a teacher. We must take care with our definition of ‘teacher’ in the context of small groups of peers or near peers who gather to learn repertoire together. For instance, when, in the 1930s, musicians from the proximity of Ballinakill in East Galway gathered to learn repertoire from Lucy Farr (see Vallely 1999, p.258), one of the few literate local musicians able to acquire tunes from ‘the book’, *O’Neills
Dance Music of Ireland 1907) was Lucy regarded as, or actually, a teacher? As someone who developed his performance practice in a context like this I would argue not, but this should not take away from the importance of peer learning. However the fuzzy boundaries between student and teacher in these admittedly important contexts have little relevance to issues presented here. Crucial to the demarcation of formal and informal transmission is the presence and definition of the teacher.

We will see later that published notation exists primarily for the facilitation of informal transmission, essentially the solo learning of repertoire. Such notation tends to be in reasonably standard and acceptable staff notation in a wider cultural and western context. Less often it appears in the form of instrumental tablature. We shall also see that unpublished, manuscript based notation is used primarily in the context of formal transmission (generated either by student or teacher) and is much more likely to be idiosyncratic in form according to the preferences of participants and the pedagogical intent of the teacher. Again, this structure is not hard and fast – teachers sometimes use printed materials and unpublished manuscripts also have a mnemonic or archival role in the life of the musician. I should perhaps reiterate here that notation never plays a role in the actual performance of traditional music (unless we include performance directions and notes used in professional and primarily rehearsal contexts as notation). These roles for notation in the world of Irish traditional music and their history will be examined here.
(a) Historical background

As was stated previously, the appearance of published collections of traditional Irish music is the first media 'objectification' (A.L. Lloyd, in Leach & Palmer 1978, p.1) of traditional Irish music. The appearance of notated Irish music was important to the tradition as a whole. It transformed aspects of the music which are believed to have been localised and mainly contained. This is believed to be the case in particular for repertoire and ornamentation and other aspects of style to a much lesser extent. Much repertoire is now internationalised and available to all those who shared the same form of musical literacy within and to a large extent outside the tradition. Literacy in traditional Irish music is often viewed by practitioners with some suspicion, but this contrasts with the reverence some collections are held in, especially O'Neill's Music of Ireland (1903). As will be seen later it would be common for a teacher to actively reject notation as a means of formal transmission. However the same teacher in performance would mention the inclusion of repertoire in 'the book' (O'Neill's Music of Ireland 1903) or The Roche Collection of Traditional Irish Music (1927) or even Breathnach's more recent collections, Ceol Rince na Eireann 1 - 5 (1963-99) in order to give the tunes played extra validity and the appearance of authenticity. A very good example of this validation through a literate source can be seen in the sleeve notes of the commercial CD recording by the McNamara family, Leitrim's Hidden Treasure (1988),

[7] An anecdote comes to mind of a wonderful performer and colleague who was reluctant to learn to read music as he feared that if he did, when he closed his eyes when performing he would see the notes instead of the hills of Donegal which were his inspiration!
in which the majority of tunes are sourced either in manuscripts (those by Grier, Goodman, Levey, Sutherland, Forde) or published collections: (O’Neill’s Waifs and Strays (1922); Ryans Mammoth Collection (1883); Brendan Breathnach’s three volumes (and fourth and fifth posthumous volumes, edited by Jackie Small) Ceol Rince na hÉireann (1963-1999); O’Farrell’s Pocket Companion to the Irish or Union Pipes (1804-1816); O’Neill’s Four Hundred Selections Arranged for Piano and Violin (1987 – first published in 1915); Neil Gow and Son’s Complete Repository (c.1817); Burke Thummoth’s Twelve English and Twelve Irish Airs (1745) and Twelve Scots and Twelve Irish Airs (1748); Kerr’s Collection (c. 1870); R.P. Christeson’s Old-Time Fiddlers Repertory (2010, first published 1973); O’Neill’s The Dance Music of Ireland, 1001 Gems (1907). However, communication with a selection of teachers indicated that they preferred not to use printed sources in formal transmission. One of the most influential teachers alive today is London-based Brendan Mulkere who wrote:

I never use published material for tuition purposes but list such publications. I supply all notation, charts, graphics, arrangements of tunes; each tune has many formats to suit the level of the student. Many adult students come with copies of books and tutors, much of which I recommend they bin. I have browsed around various shops offering tutors and books of music and I am not impressed. Then I have to admit that I have not seen a comprehensive list of tutor publications. All published material offers a version of a tune. Our task is to explain to the students that there are as many versions as there are individual musicians. I have rarely heard a mature musician play selections of tunes that did not have some attractive novel elements.

(Mulkere March 2005)
Here Brendan represents the most common reaction of teachers when I asked them whether they used published material in their teaching. The majority rejected its use for the same reason – the tune represented is only a version of the tune and often the versions in the publication would not be appropriate to the individual student. Some teachers (such as Kathleen Nesbitt, 2002) have gone as far as publishing their own tutors so as to fill a gap that they perceive in publication but these do not seem to have been adopted extensively by other teachers to date. Three teachers who responded said that they would use notation extensively. Kevin Rowsome writes that he uses:

> everything from old Treoirs [the magazine of CCE] to Brendan Breathnach’s books etc etc… I would always emphasise that this is a version of the tune. I would often change bits of the tune and point out ways that I play it differently, ultimately trying to get students to develop their own version (take whatever they like themselves out of it)

(Rowsome March 2005)

So in using published material he encourages his students to do so critically for the same reasons Brendan has for not using publications. Eamonn Curran and John Devine use collections that are aimed at providing students beyond beginner stages with access to a common session repertoire. Frank McCardle also says he occasionally uses collections for the purpose of providing students with access to a common session repertoire. The two harpers, Grainne Hambley and Eileen Curran both state that they would occasionally use historical harp sources (such as Bunting) or collections and tutors authored by popular performers. Most teachers solicited wrote that they use such published sources themselves, especially the

---

8 I explicitly told these informants that I was not interested in whether they photocopied material, in the hope that they would not let worries about issues of copyright and their infringement of it influence their responses.
more prestigious and historical ones, and make students aware of them, but again they would encourage critical interaction with them.

It thus could be said that literate sources of traditional dance music (especially the older, more prestigious collections and manuscripts, validated by time and usage) are tolerated in the context of informal transmission rather more than in the context of formal transmission. This may be because that in the formal context what is generally transmitted is a more holistic approach to the entire performance, engaging aspects of technique and style rather than just the repertoire. However, in informal transmission, many of the teachers who responded to the questionnaire stated that it is usually just repertoire transmitted through published collections, and often only a basic, impersonal version of that. Very rarely are aspects of ornamentation, phrasing, articulation, dynamics, or change of rhythmical emphasis (see Keegan, 2009) included in published collections and even when they are, their inclusion is usually indicative of possible or correct approaches to the use of these important stylistic aspects rather than providing precise performance directions. For instance, Breandán Breathnach’s *Ceol Rince na hÉireann, cuid 2* (1976) features some tunes written out with grace notes included but the collector / editor wrote in the introduction in order to justify their inclusion:
Teachers and others who hanker after uniformity and standard versions are asked to note that the transcriptions in this volume are not prescribed as the correct settings, as definitive versions which must be rigidly adhered to. They are, it is hoped, correct settings, settings perhaps better than most other correct settings because of the musical taste of the performers from whose playing they were transcribed. They should be regarded, however, as an aid to memory, as facilitating the learning of the tune, some part of which, perhaps, had hitherto defied the ear.

(Breathnach 1976, p.xiv)

Breathnach is not only here justifying his inclusion of ornaments in the texts of the tunes (that are far from what would be described as transcriptions in an academic context) but he also implies, in the last sentence, the intended use of the collection in an informal, solo, learning context (where a musician could sit with the book to learn the tune without a teacher). He could be paraphrased as saying that publications of traditional Irish material (even tutors) are meant for use outside of the student teacher relationship.

However it is perhaps possible that traditional musicians see prestigious literate sources as a means of validating performance apart from their use in a transmission process. I would propose that notated repertoire is an important part of formal transmission processes but it is generally preferred to teach by ear for a number of reasons that will be considered later in this chapter. Published collections are not usually considered as a central part of formal transmission apart from instances when repertoire is considered as a central aspect of a regional style; for instance the importance of the compositions of Paddy O’Brien, as represented in the published collection *The Compositions of Paddy O’Brien* (1993) which is central to the tradition of the region around Nenagh in North Tipperary.
The general distrust of written sources can be found as early as Capt. Francis O’Neill’s *Irish Folk Music – A Fascinating Hobby* (1973) where in the introduction Barry O’Neill writes:

> When a new tune was discovered in a printed source it was likewise learned. and altered by James O Neill for presentation. The Tribune reporter quotes Captain O’Neill "Frequently, this old music, as printed has been arranged in London . . . and it is by no means certain that for the publisher's purpose it was not quite as well for him to mutilate the old Irish air anyhow. For this reason, or for the genuine Irish that was in the custodian of the air, the music as sung or whistled by Patrolman O’Neill has been pronounced by the committee as better Irish and better music than were embodied in the print."

(O’Neill 1973, p.ix)

This implication of notated music being intrinsically non-Irish (or even worse, English!) because of an undoubted and inevitable editorial process conducted by editors outside the tradition has obviously played a part in the creation of the suspicion that many traditional musicians hold for published collections. Colette Moloney in her thesis concerning the manuscripts of perhaps the most important late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth century collector, Edward Bunting, highlights how an editorial process was used to help the recreation of the music of the Irish harpers in another related tradition, western art music. She writes:

> He often neglects to include ornaments in the print which are indicated in the draft notations. For example, the trill sign in bar 8 of *Dermot O’ Dowd* or those in *Nanny McDermot Roe* do not appear in the print. On the other hand, he freely adds trills, appoggiaturas and other pianistic ornaments to the prints as well as indicating dynamic markings.

(Moloney 1995, Vol I, pp.146 - 7)

She goes on to say;
It is highly unlikely that any harper could have played, or would have ever wanted to play, most of the Bunting arrangements in the volume which, of all of his publications, has the most subjective and negative editorial intervention. Bunting freely introduces accidentals to make tunes conform with his idea of what the harmony should be. This is especially evident in modal pieces where he sharpens and flattens sixths and sevenths at will to make tunes fit into a minor key... Given the structure and tuning of the Irish harp at that time it would have been impossible for the harpers to have played these accidentals. Even though Bunting has sometimes imposed the minor key in earlier prints he had never used such a proliferation of accidentals and had previously even shied away from sharpening the seventh. The arrangements in this volume are very pianistic in style with the introduction of piano ornaments and the use of dynamics and extreme rhythms.


Published collections of traditional Irish dance music are generally made through staff notation (although some, especially when in conjunction with tutors, may include alphabetic, numeric notations and / or tablature). However the staff notation used is by no means standard (by this I mean standard in general western art music usage). What I will first attempt here is to examine the way traditional dance tunes are notated in these collections. It is important to discover: (1) what was and is the audience the collections are specifically aimed at; (2) how much of a musical performance is actually annotated; (3) how consistent such notation is with both a single collector/publisher and between collectors/publishers; and (3) how many features of performance were not notated, and which, when notated, were excluded by performers when they used the books. This then leads to the issue of how published notation affects performance.

There are two distinct phases in the notation of traditional Irish dance music, both of which are distinguished by the purpose and content of the collections. These two phases can be distinguished by the audience they were aimed at and used by. The first is for an audience from another tradition, specifically the western art musics of the established and
middle classes; the second for an audience of what would now be considered as Irish traditional musicians. We must remain aware that the concept of ‘tradition’ in this context is one that has developed and been defined in a modern context. We cannot know how words like ‘traditional’ that ascribe identity to music practices and those who perform and engage that music were used two hundred years ago. However it would be reasonably safe to assume that the peasant performers of dance music would have hardly regarded themselves as ‘traditional’ or even ‘Irish’ musicians. The published collections of the eighteenth century that would have been closest in form to contemporary dance music tradition, were collections of country dances which were rarely ascribed with a national character. It is no accident that the creation of the concepts proposing and defining Irish traditional music were developed at the same time as the music was being published. Indeed the appearance of publications such as Neill’s and Roche’s at the beginning of the twentieth century was part of the process which defined this music as ‘traditional’ and ‘Irish’.

There are two simultaneous and entwined strands in the first phase of publication in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The first of these consists of collections of mainly harp music, which are arranged and aimed at an audience of amateur western art musicians who could largely be considered as members of British and Anglo-Irish upper and middle classes. The other strand of this period is of harp music, dance tunes and song airs collected for antiquarian purposes and aimed at a group of the same social classes and musical communities that may have had a politically or culturally nationalist orientation. These two types of publication often overlapped and it is possible to distinguish publications that bear
the hallmarks of both, indeed these may be in the majority. The most obvious example of these are Bunting’s three collections (1796, 1809, 1840), two for piano and another vocal and piano. However, the antiquarian motivation for the publication is highlighted when he writes;

The works of some of its latest composers, as Connollan and Carolan, have before been selected; but even of these it remained to this day to give accurate copies; while the superior productions of their masters, on who they had formed their stile [sic], and of who’s [sic] excellence they have fallen short, are now only partially known in the very Country in which they once flourished. To rescue them from oblivion, and to open a new source of musical delight, the Public are now presented with the first volume of such a Collection, as has for a long time been eagerly desired.

(Bunting, 1796, p.i)

Thus Bunting has the dual motivation of rescuing the music from ‘oblivion’, an antiquarian motivation, and of opening ‘a new source of musical delight’ for his predominantly Anglo-Irish audience, justifying the presentation of the music in ways acceptable to common western practice at the time. Of wider historical interest is how the music was transformed in subsequent performances by these two motivations facilitated through the processes of notation in this period.

The first collection of exclusively 'Irish' music was John and William Neals’ *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes Proper for the Violin, German Flute or Hautboy* published in Dublin in 1724. This, like many other collections afterwards, consists mainly of what seems to be Irish harp music (the native art music) which was in terminal decline at the time. The music is arranged, as can be seen from the title, for western art instruments performing in that style. Most collections of this Anglo-Irish phase of music publishing were of this form.
well into the twentieth century. Some, such as George Petrie’s *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland* (1855) did contain some traditional dance tunes but again they are arranged for amateur classical musicians and we have no record of how they were being presented by traditional musicians. This strand of music 'arranged' for the instruments and style of another tradition is closely related to the second strand that is motivated through the antiquarian movement. A prime example of this is P.W. Joyce’s *Irish Music and Song* (1888) that contains, in the most part, apparently unadulterated dance tunes. An antiquarian philosophy affected many publications to some extent. Partially, at the very least, preservation motivated even many of the most 'arranged' collections. However the underlying philosophy implies preservation as a museum piece rather than as a living tradition. This is very colourfully illustrated by the late eighteenth-century collector and editor Sydney Owenson, who wrote;

It was reserved for the minute and enquiring glance of the humble gleaner, to discover the neglected charms, and to behold them like the rose, fragrant even in decay. With a timid hand I have endeavoured to snatch them from the chilling atmosphere of oblivion, and bound them in a wild and simple wreath, in the faint hope that public approbation would nourish and perpetuate their existence.

(Owenson 1805, preface)

This antiquarian strand of music publishing did not disappear with the nineteenth century and in my opinion extends to contemporary publications, most notably in the publications of Donal O’Sullivan (1958) and Nicholas Carolan (2010). However, the work of Carolan in particular reinvents our notion of antiquarianism but making historical documents relevant to the contemporary community of traditional musicians.
The collectors and editors of some of these older antiquarian publications often had little regard for the living (and, in the case of the harp, the dying) traditions they drew their material from, regarding the peasant or professional itinerant practitioners as unfit vessels for the repertory they preserved (this remark obviously does not apply to the more contemporary works of O’Sullivan and Carolan). This is apparent in the following quote from Moore.

In general, however, the artless flow of our music has preserved itself free from all tinge of foreign innovation; and the chief corruptions of which we have to complain arise from the unskilled performance of our own itinerant musicians, from whom, too frequently, the airs are noted down, encumbered by their tasteless decorations, and responsible for all their ignorant anomalies. Though it be sometimes impossible to trace the original strain, yet in most of them... the pure gold of the melody shines through the ungraceful foliage which surrounds it; and the most delicate and difficult duty of a compiler is to endeavour, as music as possible, by retrenching these inelegant superfluities, and collating the various methods of playing or singing each air, to restore the regularity of its form, and their chaste simplicity of it’s character.

(Moore, 1807, p.3)

Many antiquarian publisher believed that the music originated in a long-gone Celtic golden era and had been corrupted somewhat by it’s current peasant and itinerant practitioners (see Joyce 2011, p.279).

The history of publishing by and for traditional Irish musicians did not really begin in earnest until the early twentieth century. Previous to that it is important to identify some of the interconnected music sub-cultures throughout Ireland. The first is the western art music culture, promoted and supported by the elite classes of Irish society and functioning as a reflection of the London art music culture (which itself is said to be a reflection of that of
Europe). The second is an Anglo-Irish music culture to which the works of the Neals, Bunting and Thomas Moore belong. This music involved an anglicisation and ‘classicalisation’ of strands of Irish music culture derived especially from the then almost extinct native art tradition of the harp or were published out of a purely antiquarian interest. Nicholas Carolan (2010, p.3, 34) points out that in the eighteenth century publishing occurred at times of increased political nationalism, notably in the 1720’s at the time of the Wood’s halfpence affair and the 1770’s at the time of the volunteers. This music subculture did not have the same prestige as the former but did have a political (in the broadest sense of the word) and specifically nationalist connotation. A third, which had very little prestige attached to it at all, was the brass and reed band phenomenon associated with the temperance movement. This was very much an importation of an aspect of British (and to a certain extent European) working class culture with some elements of the Anglo-Irish subculture thrown in for good measure (arrangements of Anglo-Irish repertoire) (see Kearney 1981, pp.23-29). Others included the musical traditions of the Irish churches, popular and political song. The last musical culture was traditional Irish music (in it’s broadest, modern sense including Irish language song, urban balladry, and dance music) which was perhaps the least respectable of all the musical traditions in it’s day-to-day life. One instrument of the dance music, the uileann pipes, however did attain some respectability. Because the pipes appeared to be peculiarly Irish and authentically native, it had some standing amongst those with a culturally or politically nationalist outlook within the middle classes.
Examples of traditional music publishing from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Ireland which perhaps were aimed at traditional musicians are the two O’Farrell publications, *O’Farrell’s Collection of National Irish Music for the Irish or Union Pipes* (1804) and *O’Farrell’s Pocket Companion for the Irish or Union Pipes* (1804-16, 4 volumes), both of which were published in London. Also the Dublin-published *A Collection of Favourite Irish Tunes Composed by William Jackson Esq.; Properly adapted to the Harpsichord, Violin, G.[erman] Flute and Guitar* (c.1790). However O’Farrell’s publications have to be seen in the context of the interest in London at the time in the Scottish pipes that were also on the decline in Scotland because of their association with eighteenth-century Jacobean nationalism (indeed many of the tunes he annotates are Scottish and are attributed as so). Also, as can be seen from Capt. Francis O’Neill’s text *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (1913), the pipes were an instrument that had attained some small degree of respectability amongst the middle and upper classes despite originating in the peasant music tradition. Again this is most probably due to their acquisition as a symbol of cultural and political nationalism. Indeed it is the only easily recognisable instrument seen as being natively Irish with the exception of the harp. Therefore it is no accident that Jackson is referred to by O’Neill (1913) as a ‘gentleman piper’ and it is obvious by the use of basses in all the tunes of Jackson’s and O’Farrell’s publications and by the title of the publication that it was aimed at classical musicians. Thus O’Farrell’s and Jackson’s books can be seen as almost politically inspired aberrations as far as the annotation of traditional dance music is concerned. Because of the peculiar individual nature of the uilleann pipes, it can almost certainly be said that these tutors did not gain any currency amongst those who we would consider to have been
traditional musicians at the time, the peasantry. However, it did affect a small number of socially higher-class musicians. We must conject that by today’s standards this was a community whose ‘traditionality’ is unknown and must be suspect.

Why did traditional Irish music publishing not engage the community of Irish traditional musicians until the early twentieth century and indeed why then? Universal primary education was imposed on the Irish by the British authorities in 1831, thus empowering the peasant classes with general literacy, which, according to Hugo Cole (1974), is a necessary prerequisite for musical literacy. Previous to this the only education open to an Irish peasant community would have been in the hedge schools, and though we know that song and dance played a large part in their activities we do not know much about music and music literacy although there is no evidence that staff notation was taught. However we do know that music was considered as an important curricular subject by the British authorities in the national (primary) schools in the 1830’s. In 1840 the Wilhem Hullah method of music training was adopted by the British Committee of Council of Education and two specially trained teachers were dispatched to Ireland in the 1840’s to promote it (McCarthy 1999, p.55). Because the schools throughout Ireland were very diverse in nature it is impossible to generalise but, in the majority, staff notation and tonic sol-fa were taught. We know that by 1860 there were 5,632 schools organised through the national schools board and 804,000 students enrolled (this is an underestimate of the amount of schools and students as it does not include denominational schools for whom music education was very important for obvious liturgical reasons) (McCarthy 1999, p.45-71). However there were major barriers to
the use of classical music theory learned in school in the world of traditional Irish music. These problems were generated from an ethic which was anti-native culture and held by all classes of society. Firstly, as was said previously, the native music culture was not regarded by the majority of middle and upper classes as having any worth at all and so the tradition was totally ignored in music education (much of the curriculum was taken from what was current in England at the time and very little was even taken from the Anglo-Irish tradition). Also the main motivation for the wholehearted engagement of the Irish peasantry with the new primary education system was to facilitate the abandonment of the Irish language in favour of English. Parents naturally did not approve of their children learning much else apart from English let alone anything as non-productive as music especially when it was taking important units of labour away from essential agricultural activities. However it was the exclusion of what was the musical experience of any peasant child by the schools, i.e. traditional music, which must have been at the root of the disjuncture between school and community musics. A barrier was raised between school musical activity and traditional Irish music discouraging the use of literacy amongst traditional musicians and naturally the schools programme must have been ineffective as it did not relate to the day-to-day musical experience of the community it was attempting to educate. Thus in the late nineteenth century observers within the primary school system noted how the children in Irish rural communities seemed to be unmusical! (McCarthy 1990, p.60)

Another major factor in the rise of musical literacy in Ireland was the general marching band movement, which arose out of the temperance band phenomenon. The Catholic
temperance movement in Ireland began in the 1830’s under the leadership of Father Matthew (Kearney 1981, p.6). Its aim was to promote abstinence from alcohol and to improve the character of the Irish Catholic lower classes. The two most tangible activities of this movement were the creation of reading rooms that functioned as centres of adult education and the formation of temperance bands. These flute, and brass and reed, bands could be found throughout Europe at the time and a fair degree of music literacy was necessary for such ensemble performances. In Ireland in 1842 there were 300 temperance bands in existence and by the second half of the century many bands were formed outside of the flagging temperance movement. Their repertoire was mainly derived from the western art tradition but a significant amount was taken from the Anglo-Irish tradition (such as arrangements of Thomas Moore’s songs) (Kearney 1981, pp.23-29). It is probable that the temperance band movement encouraged the introduction of the flute to traditional Irish music and we know that traditional musicians were also sometimes members of these bands (as were the fathers of Willie Clancy and Denis Murphy, both prominent traditional musicians of more recent years) and so it is probable that it helped promote literacy amongst traditional musicians. S.C. Hamilton in The Irish Flute Player’s Handbook proposes that the military bands, based in garrison towns throughout Ireland, contained musicians that performed and taught the flute outside of their military duties (he quotes an anecdotal piece of iconographical evidence of this – a flute player, in military attire playing at a house dance with a boy playing bodhrán in a oil painting held at Muckross House, Co. Kerry, (Hamilton 1990, p.38)). It is very unlikely that these literate musicians would have taught their musically orally and in all likelihood they would have used some sort of notation. However,
as it was an urban-based phenomenon, dominated and controlled by a growing middle class, the effect on a great proportion of the peasant community must have been minimal.

A lot more than literacy was necessary for the existence of traditional Irish music publishing for an audience of traditional Irish musicians. At a more basic level a combination of financial and physical factors made the possibility of traditional Irish music publishing more likely. Firstly, after the famine and until the end of the First World War (especially from the 1880's onwards) there was a general economic upturn in the fortunes of agricultural Ireland – at least for the majority who were able to stay in the country. There was a dramatic growth in the agricultural export industry and a move away from subsistence based agriculture. This meant the agricultural economy was more fiscally oriented. The disposable income resulting from this generated a boom in retailing throughout the country, providing points of supply for luxury goods, the sales of which increased. Also the dramatic improvement in the railway network in Ireland made towns, the major retailing centres, a lot more accessible to the majority of the population. Thus the money to buy, and the means of distribution for, Irish music books existed at the end of the nineteenth century. L. M. Cullen in his seminal text on Irish economic history writes:
Shops had become much more numerous in the second half of the [nineteenth] century. Little shops had multiplied in the countryside, sometimes in or beside the post office whose role was itself a pointer to changing times. At the end of the century, the increased purchasing power of the rural community, and – scarcely less important – its enhanced mobility was reflected in marked prosperity in the larger shops in the towns whose rural hinterland widened rapidly in these years. Hilliard of Killarney, for instance, sent some 10,000 copies of their price list to the names on the electoral lists within a radius of 30 miles of Killarney up to 1915. Small luxuries and gadgets began to appear in rural homes…

(Cullen 1987, p.156)

The skills required of a market for traditional music publishing were there, as were the necessary economic conditions, but the seed of demand was not. Neither was there a realisation by music publishers that the music was worth publishing, either for aesthetic or financial reasons. Thus it was in America at the turn of the century that the phenomenon of traditional Irish music publishing, for traditional Irish musicians, was born. In the late nineteenth century much Irish material was published in collections that were comprised mostly of American fiddle tunes. The most notable examples of these are *Ryan’s Mammoth Collection. 1050 Reels and Jigs, hornpipes, clogs, walk-arounds, essences, strathspeys, highland flings and contra-dances with figures* (Elias Howe 1883) and *Howes 500 Irish Melodies* (c.1880), both published in Boston. These two collections included a large number of Irish tunes and were probably aimed in part at least at the Irish immigrant traditional musician (there is a section at the start of *Ryan’s Mammoth Collection* which consists of studies for violinists who had no formal instruction or teachers). It is impossible to say whether they found their way into the hands of traditional Irish musicians in North America or whether they were treated as a source for aspects of the tradition. However it was almost certainly an
important source of material for the later publications of Capt. Francis O’Neill. Nicholas Carolan writes about William Bradbury Ryan’s collection:

This, like O’Neill’s, is a classified collection and it contains many of the Irish dance tunes published by O’Neill, often note for note. While he refers only fleetingly and dismissively of Howes collection… and strangely nowhere mentions Ryan’s work by title, O’Neill had acquired a copy of it sometime before 1903, and the possibility must remain that he laid it under unacknowledged contribution.

(Carolan 1997, p.44)

However these pre-O’Neill American collections do not seem to have had any currency amongst traditional musicians in Ireland as the publications have, until recently, not been commonly found here.

The first major publications of purely Irish music that were accepted by the communities of traditional musicians were the O’Neill collections *O’Neill’s Music of Ireland* (1903) and *The Dance Music of Ireland – 1001 Gems* (1907). Both have been refereed to as ‘The Book’ but the reverential title is more often applied to the later collection that contains just dance tunes. The vast majority of the material in this smaller, and consequently cheaper (see Carolan 1987, p.46), publication also appears in the earlier, more voluminous collection. This until recently was the largest single published collection of Irish music in existence, with 1,850 tunes (it was eclipsed by Aloys Fleischmann’s *Sources of Irish Traditional Music*, 1998). This book has to be seen in the context of other collections published in the United States at the time such as Frank Harding’s three published collections (1891, 1905, 1932) which were primarily piano arrangements of Irish dance tunes. The publication of these collections must be seen in the general context of American music publishing and specifically the publishing
of ethnic music. Like the recording of ethnic music later in the twentieth century, the concept of ethnic music publishing was born out of a realisation by publishers, whether specialist or not, that there was a substantial ‘race’ market and money to be made. For instance, Nicholas Carolan notes that O’Neill’s publishers, Lyon and Healy, were a mainstream music publishing company that claimed to be the largest in the world. Though one of the co-founders of the company was Irish (Patrick Healy emigrated from Co. Cork in 1864) it was not an ethnically based organisation but a mainstream, money-making enterprise (Carolan, 1997, p.72). The market for Irish music publications consisted of the large number of emigrants to north America from Ireland since the famine and their progeny. Also the majority of these emigrants were derived from the class of landless labourers, predominantly from the west of Ireland, who suffered the most in the agrarian reconstruction of the second half of the nineteenth century. It was precisely the members of these peasant communities who would have been practitioners of traditional Irish music. A new role for the music encouraged this phenomenon; Méabh Ní Fhuartháin writes of these immigrants:

> The cultural inheritance which they carried to their foreign destination obviously no longer served the same function as it has in Ireland.... music and dance and other cultural traits adopted different roles and meanings. Adaptation in music and dance took place to preserve ethnic character whilst simultaneously aiding the immigrants adjustment to a new and largely urban environment. 

(Ní Fhuartháin 1993, p.35)

It became important for immigrants to find a coherent cultural image and for at least some music became an important aspect of that. Also, as is evident from the writings of Francis O’Neill, it was important that the traditions of the immigrant Irish be presented in a
respectably bourgeois manner. O’Neill concentrates his writings in his two texts (*Irish Folk Music – a Fascinating Hobby*, 1910, and *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 1913) on subject matter such as ‘gentlemen pipers’ (the title of chapter thirteen in the 1913 publication) and ‘bardic harpers’ (1913, pp.17-28), rarely discussing the music as a peasant, lower class activity. When peasant music making is mentioned it is presented as a virtuous homely activity amongst a somewhat imagined pre-DeVelerian community. This, though coloured by an extreme romantic nationalism, is also motivated through a desire for a bourgeois respectability that was important to an Irish community attempting to climb the social ladder in the United States. The same sort of thinking may well have led to the publication of traditional Irish music in staff notation, the visual presentation of a more respectable musical tradition.

At the same time in Ireland there was an increase in Irish music publishing. This was born out of the political and cultural nationalism which came to its zenith with 1916 and the war of independence. The huge interest created in Irish language, theatre, poetry and sport completely dwarfs the stirrings which were felt in the world of traditional music but there was a definite revival in the fortunes of traditional music in the establishment of the Pipers clubs in Dublin (1900) and Cork (1898) and the establishment of the *Feiseanna Ceoil* (1897). The publishing of traditional music was mostly associated with the Irish language movement (some, such as those by Honoria Galwey (1910) would still be motivated by an Anglo-Irish interest in Irish antiquities). Prime examples of this are Carl Hardebeck’s *Cnuasacht Port agus Cor don bPiano* (1921) and Eoghan Laoide’s *An Cruitire* (1903) and like
these, most would be arranged for the piano (and thus perhaps for classically trained Irish speaking musicians!). *The Roche Collection*, which was published in three volumes between 1912 and 1927, was born out of the same element of the Irish language movement. Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin quotes Roche as writing that his collection is for "friends and pupils of mine, as well as many teachers and members of various branches of the Gaelic League" (Roche 1983, preface, no page number) and the tune titles are given first in Irish (if they are available). Although not as prominent as O'Neill’s two major collections these publications are very important and did gain some currency amongst traditional musicians. Roche’s collections are not arranged for piano and although there are some indications that it is aimed at classical violinists (for instance it calls for third position and complex double stopping in 'The Fox Chase' (Roche vol. 2, pp.63-66)). These collections as a whole are presented in a standard fashion for traditional music collections since, unlike the many piano arrangements that came previously. Music played a minor role in the nationalist movement of the early part of the twentieth century, probably because of the obvious rural, and thus perceived backward roots of the music. When the music was published, its publication and the arrangement into more acceptable classical forms served to validate traditional music culture within the nationalist communities that were based primarily on the Catholic middle classes.

With the establishment of the Irish Free State and the ensuing civil war there was a decline in the nationalist fervour of previous years. Whatever respectability traditional music may have had during those years was soon lost and years of decline for the whole tradition set in –
a fact attested to by the decline of the pipers’ clubs and publishing. A large proportion of the population saw traditional music as backward, the activity of the poor and uneducated. Very little traditional music publishing took place in Ireland (a contributory factor to this must be the effects of severe depression and the Second World War) and what little did take place was specifically for the war pipes and uilleann pipes, particularly tutors (see Crowley 1936 and Rowsome 1936). In the United States there does not seem to have been any extensive publishing activity after O’Neill’s books.

Traditional music publishing started again in the 1960’s in the context of the folk revival with the notable exception of Donal O’Sullivan’s *Compositions of Carolan* (1958) which was of an antiquarian nature and gained little currency amongst traditional musicians. Since then the quantity of publishing has increased well beyond any previous levels. The first major publications of this period were Breandán Breathnach’s three volumes of *Ceol Rince na hÉireann*, the first of which was published in 1963 by Oifig an tSoláthair for the Department of Education of the Irish Republic. This was arguably the first collection of traditional Irish music aimed solely at traditional musicians or aspirant traditional musicians (with the possible exception of O’Neill’s works although it could be said that those are biased towards classically trained Irish musicians). This and the arguably non-commercial style of the publication may be related to the fact that it was a state sponsored publication. Since the first publication of O’Neill’s there have been at least 50 further paper (ie. Excluding CDRoms, DVDs, interactive and non-interactive websites) publications of collections (or tutors containing tunes), aimed at traditional musicians. More recently there are trends of
publications of tunes by particular composers such as *The Definitive Collection of the Music of Paddy O'Brien 1922-1991* (O'Brien 2009), *Charlie Lennon: Musical Memories* (Lennon 1993) and *The Collected Compositions of Ed Reavy* (Reavy 1996). Also there are a growing number of collections of tunes associated with particular musicians, such as Terry Moylan's *Johnny O'Leary of Sliabh Luachra: dance music from the Cork-Kerry border* (1994) or particular regional styles such as Feldman and O’Doherty’s *the Northern Fiddler* (1979) or Bernard Flaherty’s *The Trip to Sligo* (1990). A recent phenomenon is books of tunes reflecting the repertoire and arrangements of particular ensembles such as the two collections of tunes performed by Lúnasa (Hennessey 2002 and Vallely 2006).

(b) Form and structure of published collections of traditional Irish music and the nature of the notational systems contained within them.

It is generally held that transmission in the worlds of traditional Irish music was oral in nature until this century and that the use of literacy did not begin until O’Neill’s collections were published and engaged by communities of traditional musicians. Nuala O’Connor writes that “The publication of O’Neill’s *Music of Ireland* marked the first collection made by a practitioner for the use and interest of other practitioners” (2001, 65). Previous to that we must assume that transmission was totally oral and that learning was achieved through observation and repetition. Published notation allowed for the mass communication of certain aspects of traditional Irish music and it is the first instance of the move from a
primary to a secondary orality. According to Blaukopf (1992), primary orality involves two-way interaction between sender and receiver, while secondary orality involves a one-way transaction from sender to receiver. Thus solo-learning involving a published source will bear some of the hall-marks of a secondary orality. We must remember that the transmissional process engaged by learners in this context is only partially informed by the publication, maintaining the primacy of an orality within which literacy is utilized as a tool. The use of publications in the alternative context of the lesson by a teacher also adds a new dimension to the process of formal transmission. As has been noted in other cultures (see Terry 1992, Davis 1992, and O’Connell 2000), these additions and developments in the learning economies of traditional Irish music may have affected performance practice. However the form and use of notation must be accounted for before we can speculate on its effect on the sounds and social life of tradition.

Returning to David Huron’s model in chapter one, we can consider three separate topics when considering notation. These are (1) the type of signifier involved (2) the type of signified and (3) the nature of the mappings between signifier and signified. The signifiers are the notation forms used, the signified is Irish traditional dance music (or more accurately the concept of elements thereof). The mappings have to be considered in terms of the function of the relationship between the signified and the signifier and the relevance of the signified to the music itself. These mappings must be seen to exist in a multi-dimensional cultural domain and also in the context of the relationship between author and reader, both of whom approach the text in their different capacities with different creative purposes.
There are four distinct types of publication in which traditional dance tunes are notated. The first, which we are not concerned with here, is collections containing tunes that are adapted and arranged for a classical audience and done in such a way as to exclude a traditional audience. Examples of this would be Hardebeck’s orchestral arrangements of tunes (n.d.) and Thomas Moore’s collections of songs (1808). The second is publications that contain arrangements of Irish tunes that, despite their adaptation for a classical audience, are still accessible to traditional musicians. This category would include the publications of Bunting (1796, 1809, 1840) and Petrie (1855) and O’Neill’s piano arrangements (1987). The third are collections of tunes that account for more than just a tune model; for instance articulation, ornamentation or any of the other distinctive features of style in traditional Irish music (see Keegan 1992, 36 and Keegan 2009). The fourth category is of those that convey just the basic model of a tune, imparting nothing but repertoire. We must bear in mind that not all of these collections are equally accessible to the historical communities traditional musicians. Some collections are inaccessible for historical reasons. For example, the antiquarian collections and piping publications of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (ie. Joyce, Petrie, Jackson and O’Farrell) were not accessible to traditional musicians at the time, and are little more so now because most are out of print. There is a growing trend for this material to be re-issued (for example David Cooper’s edition of *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland*, 2002) or published on the internet by organisations such as the Irish Traditional Music Archive (www.itma.ie) and Na Píobairí Uilleann (www.pipers.ie). Today other collections are inaccessible to large
amounts of traditional musicians for geographical and distributional reasons. Publication of tunes tends to be conducted by smaller publishers with limited levels and territories for distribution. Therefore we can find that some publications tend to have limited geographical influence. For example, many of traditional Irish music publications that have been created in the United States (eg. the books of Joseph Reavy’s tunes, 1971,1979, 1984) and Great Britain (eg. the Bulmer and Sharpley collections, 1974-6) have been, until very recently, unavailable in Ireland.

The majority of these collections are published in staff notation although it would be incorrect to assume that they all are. Some are given in either graphic or numerical tablature but these are nearly always used in the case of tutors for a particular instrument. Interestingly Terry (1992, p.197) tells us that in Thailand the relationship of Gamelan to differing forms of notation is similar, as western notation is widespread and tablature is aimed at a specific instrument and instrumental tutors. We will discuss these various types of notation amongst the various categories of publication later in this chapter. However what is instantly striking about the general use of notation in Irish traditional music is the level of non-conformity and what can be perceived as the general inaccuracy of the use of western staff notation.

Of the four forms of collections we have classified we are concerned with those that are transmission orientated collections, the third and principally the fourth type of publication listed above. By transmission orientated collections I mean collections that serve the purpose
of the transmission of elements of the tradition between traditional musicians. These collections have become very important in the processes of informal transmission, and to a lesser extent formal transmission, as was illustrated earlier. The other forms of collections, that are motivated by preservation and transferral of repertoire between traditions, such as those by Bunting, Petrie, Joyce and Stanford do not particularly concern us here although they have a growing significance as their availability increases among a critical traditional music audience. Transmission orientated collections are generally created by traditional musicians for traditional musicians, or potential traditional musicians.

The majority of the content of these collections is made up of dance tunes, with the exception of some of the older publications (such as *O'Neill's Music of Ireland* (1907) and the Roche collections (1983)) that contain sizeable amounts of airs. Also the type of dance tune presented in the published collections of traditional Irish music seems to have changed since the first collections. Earlier collections represent dance forms such as long dances, flings, quadrilles etc. However, more recent collections would confine themselves mostly to jigs, hornpipes and reels, tune types that would generally be the most popular in modern performance practice. Also modern collections sometimes include polkas or slides that tend not to be represented at all in the older collections. This mirrors a general reduction in the amount of forms of dance types in Ireland of which many had their corresponding dance tune type. Dancing master and collector Francis Roche writes;

*Up to the beginning of the present century, or for sometime thereafter..... was in vogue amongst a considerable number of our people, and was taught by a few of the old masters of the art, but as these retired or passed away a notable and*
regrettable change set in; the old style began to wane until, as time wore on, it became submerged in what has been called "revival dancing", with injurious effects on our dance music.

(Roche, 1982, vol.3, p.v)

Thus the decline in forms of dance tunes may have been due to a decline in the fortunes of the dances themselves. Indeed many tunes have been swapped between dance tune types (for example, *The Flax in Bloom* is listed as a fling in Roches' first collection but is commonly now played as a reel). Some of the dance tune types (such as polkas, slides, germans and schottisches) may have only been included in later collections because of them being specific to certain regional traditions (namely Sliabh Luachra and Donegal) which have maintained some musical isolation, precluding publication, until relatively recently. The perceived traditionality of these dance tune types that are regarded as being associated with regional repertoires has changed over the past century. For instance polkas would have been seen as not authentically Irish at the start of the twentieth century and thus not important in the construction of publications of native music. However today they would be seen as central to the music of Sliabh Luachra, one of a number of regional styles that would be regarded as the principle sites of authenticity in the Irish tradition. Therefore we find that polkas are the predominant dance tune to found in publications such as Terry Moylan’s *Johnny O'Leary of Sliabh Luachra: dance music from the Cork-Kerry border* (1994).

Generally, the use of notation in published collections is not of such a diverse nature as that used in the unprinted manuscripts of formal transmission (or the tunes written out by the teacher). Published collections are usually in accurate staff notation, although omissions and
misuse do occur. Notation in Irish music parallels the use of notation in Thai music as described by Terry (1992). Generic collections for no particular instrument invariably are in staff notation, collections specifically for an individual instrument (which often function as tutors as well) are more likely to include numerical or graphic notations.

Published collections of Irish traditional music do tend to be made up of tunes primarily accounted for in staff notation. Occasionally they may also include alphabetic or graphic notations but these nearly always occur in conjunction with staff notation. In the use of staff several inaccuracies occur consistently. Time signatures for reels are nearly always presented in common time instead of split-common time (see Breathnach’s collections, 1963-1985 - strangely Breathnach’s first volume notates reels in split common time but the others in 4 4) and sometimes hornpipes are represented in split common time when, strictly speaking, they should be in common time. The treble clef is also sometimes not represented and, when it is it is often dropped after the first staff. Key signatures are also sometimes incorrect. However the notation presented is generally fairly accurate so that a musician from the western art tradition could follow, although they would certainly be unable to produce an acceptable performance in the traditional idiom from the notation alone.

Apart from the basic tune, what is contained in many transcriptions are annotations of ornamentation. There does not seem to be much consistency in the symbols used in the representation of ornaments (which within the tradition would be referred to as crans, cuts, rolls, grace notes etc.). The exception to this is the symbol ∩ used to indicate a roll (see
Breathnach, Vol. 1, 1963). Sometimes symbols are taken from the classical tradition, particularly trills (e.g. O’Neill’s *Music of Ireland*, 1903), turns, mordents and inverted mordents that all presumably indicate rolls, although in the strict sense they are not the same as rolls at all. This use and adaptation of classical symbols occurs mostly in the older collections. Appogiaturas and acciacaturas are used in many collections to represent grace notes and cuts but are all used more in the spirit of an acciaccatura (e.g. O’Neill, 1903, Breathach, vol.1-5). In more recent years it has become popular amongst editors to create symbols for ornaments (presumably because they realised the inadequacy of the classical symbols and were fearful of a ‘literal’ reading). Arrows between tones are often used to represent sliding between the two notes, especially when the collection is aimed at fiddle players and in that context the standard symbols for up-bow and down-bow are often used.

However most collections do not annotate anything more than a model of the tune, everything else left to stylistic interpretation. Collections that indicate ornamentation, phrasing, variation, and articulation tend to be older but even then it is unlikely that these give a complete account of those factors that would have been expected by the collector to be employed in performance. Indeed the inclusion of these stylistic factors of performance in publication can sometimes be seen as being almost politically motivated, being an indication of ‘correct’ performance. As many of these publications are meant as an introduction to people beyond the community of traditional musicians and indeed beyond Ireland and Irish communities, they are sometimes designed to give a fuller account of traditional Irish music performance than would be required for traditional musicians.
Fig. 1 (Breathnacht 1963, p.15)

Let's look at a couple of examples to illustrate some of these features of the publications of traditional Irish dance music. The tune above is the jig *An Ceoltóir Fánach* (The Wandering Minstrel), taken from Breandan Breathnacht's *Ceol Rince na hÉireann, Cuid 1* (1963). We can see that after the first line the clef is lost. Some performance indications are given, namely the bow marks in the up beat bars 17, 18 and 9, the slurs between bars 10-11, 7-8, 15-16 and in bar 7 and 15, and the roll marks (∩) in bars 9 and 24. Obviously these performance indications are indicative and suggestive of others that will be created in performance as to play with just these performance indications would be impossible (for example, to play virtually all of the tune on a down-bow would be impossible) and undesirable. Here Breathnacht is providing illustrations aimed at a fiddler picking up the tune from the book (perhaps to keep faith with the source of the tune, the fiddler Tommy
Potts) but he does not specifically say that or preclude other instrumentalists from playing
the tune. In his introduction to this volume Breathnach writes;

It was thought at first to transcribe in full the forms of ornamentation used but as the
collection was primarily intended for traditional players who would automatically
embellish the music after their own fashion and as the form of ornamentation differs
from instrument to instrument it was more simple for all to use symbols to indicate
when a note was ornamented by two or more grace notes.
(Breathnach 1963, p.iix-ix)

He goes on to illustrate the ‘appropriate’ ornamentation for different instruments on pages
xii-xiii. Interestingly Breathnach abandons this convention of using symbols in his next
volume, choosing to write out the ornaments in full, for seemingly more ‘academic’ reasons.

He writes “While I have still some misgivings about the change, I yielded to the argument
that people studying the music like to deal with transcriptions which are complete in
themselves” (Breathnach, 1976, xiii, my italics). It is interesting to speculate how
Breathnach would distinguish between those learning and those ‘studying’ the music.
The above example is also interesting in that it conveys three different forms of notation - staff, numerical, and graphic (not unusual for a tutor). This particular tutor, though not strictly Irish in that it includes popular material from other western cultures, is published in Dublin and authored by an Irish traditional musician. The top level of notation is obviously tin whistle graphic tablature (although it work for flute also) where the illustration represents the finger holes of the tin whistle from the perspective of someone standing directly in front of the whistle as it is being played. Where the circle is filled in it is intended a finger covers...
that respective hole; when it is a hollow circle, it is intended the respective tone hole is open. The next level of notation is ordinary staff notation, accurately used in its normal western music context (a fact perhaps important when the tutor is meant for export beyond traditional music practice as this particular touristic tutor obviously is). The last form is related to the graphic tablature where each note is given a number value which relates to a finger (so the index-finger of the left hand is 1, the middle-finger 2, the ring-finger 3, the index-finger of the right hand 4, the middle-finger 5 and the ring-finger 6. The number ) indicates all holes are uncovered, playing a C sharp. As the tin whistle has generally an open holed progressive fingering system, nearly always the numbered finger is used with all lower fingers (e.g. if the score indicates 3, fingers 0, 1, 2 and 3 are covering their respective holes). The exceptions for this are for the notes C natural (an octave above middle C) which is indicated by a 0 underscored by a 2 (meaning only the second and third fingers of the left hand cover their respective tone holes) and the D above that which is indicated by a 0 underscored by a 5 (meaning that the all the tone holes are covered apart from the very top one usually covered by the index finger of the top hand). Presumably as this tutor is aimed at very beginner level students no stylistic directions are given.
The example above is taken from O’Neill’s *Music of Ireland* (1903). Again this is interesting as the notation is fairly standard with the exception that there are no tempo markings and the clef and key signature disappear after the first line. Perhaps what is most interesting is the use of the two signs for trill (tr) and (˘). Though a very small amount of traditional musicians today use anything which could be regarded as a trill it may have been more common at the time of this publication and the late nineteenth century that would have informed it. However it is more likely that O’Neill (or more precisely his musical transcribers as he wasn’t musically literate) just used these symbols as a generic indicator for an ornament. Perhaps, as the tr is used exclusively on notes of longer duration (crotchets)
they indicate longer ornaments such as rolls and crans while the \( \text{🔍} \), which occurs on quavers, is indicative of shorter single or double note ornaments that can happen in shorted durations. A common nineteenth century indication of a mordent was \( \text{🔍} \) so possibly this symbol may indicate a two-note ornament which would be a rapid main tone, and tone above the main tone before returning to the main tone. However I have to take care here not to project modern ornamental practice too far back in time so this can not be regarded as anything but speculation.

Fig. 4 (Flaherty 1990, p.30)

This last tune, taken from Bernard Flaherty’s *Trip to Sligo* is again interesting in the way it represents ornamentation in this tune collected by Sligo fiddler, Phillip Duffy (Flaherty, 1990, p.23). Again, the use of staff notation by contemporary western standards is accurate but he uses the symbol ‘\( \infty \)’ which would, in a classical context be used commonly to indicate a turn - a four note, usually melodic, ornament, usually with a standard, even rhythmical pattern. It is unclear in this context what is indicated but it is reasonably safe to say that it is
telling the traditional musician that here is a suitable space for any ornament rather than any specific ornament, especially considering that they occur on to widely different tone and rhythm values. For instance, sometimes the turn symbol is used in other published contexts to indicate a roll but it is highly unlikely to be the case that Flaherty intends us to play, or recorded from his source, a five note roll on the first of a group of triplet quavers as occurs in bar one – especially on what we would expect to be an open D string.

(c) The Use of Published Collections Amongst the Traditional Community - Extent of Use

To facilitate this section, I e-mailed out a basic questionnaire (deliberately encouraging yes / no or quantitative answers) to an extensive number of traditional musicians and received 39 responses. The point of the questionnaire is not to betray proportions of traditional musicians who use notation but rather to give indications of patterns of use. Admittedly the majority of people questioned were literate musicians, actively engaged in music at both professional / semi-professional performance and educational contexts. However their responses will give a reasonably accurate idea of patterns of usage and valutative associations in relation to particular collections.

Despite most of the informants being musically literate, 6 stated they used published collections of tunes and two said only occasionally. I did not specify the context for their use of collections but many of the others assumed that I was talking about the context of their
teaching rather than their own acquisition of repertoire or style. When asked how they learned their repertoire 37 informants said predominantly or exclusively by ear and the remaining two said either through notation or ear or 50/50 between the two. This is fairly startling evidence of the supremacy of aural transmission in the context of traditional music practice amongst literate traditional musicians.

Collections that are mentioned as specifically important are generally historical in nature. 26 informants mention O’Neill as being important. By this they usually mean *The Dance Music of Ireland, 1001 Gems* (1907) and many would refer to this as either ‘O’Neill’s 1001’ (Maeve Donnelly March 2005) or ‘O’Neill’s Dance Music of Ireland’ (Harry Bradley March 2005). Only one informant, Brendan Mulkere (Mulkere March 2005) directly speaks of the larger collection (which is earlier and duplicates the dance tunes and adds airs and tunes by Carolan) *O’Neill’s Music of Ireland - Eighteen Hundred and Fifty Melodies* (1903) and only one, Harry Bradley (Bradley March 2005) mentions another O’Neill collection, *Waifs and Strays of Gaelic Melody* (1922). Most informants simply mention O’Neill’s which can be assumed to be the *The Dance Music of Ireland, 1001 Gems* (1907) and shares the dance music repertoire with the larger, 1903, collection but is the one most often referred to historically.

The other recent groups of texts referred to by the informants are the five collections entitled, *Ceol Rince na Eireann, Vols. 1-5*, Oifig an tSoláthair & An Gúm, 1963-1999, edited by Breandán Breathnach, and the last two by Jackie Small. All these collections are derived
from the collecting and archival work of Breathnach. These were mentioned by sixteen of
the informants, none of whom distinguished between volumes (although they may have
meant to) and some mention that they mean all the volumes. These collections, published
by or through various Irish public bodies and thus commissioned by the Irish state are
obviously held in high regard. This is perhaps because the sources of many of the tunes
included in these publications are listed in the appendices of the collections and these sources
usually prove to be respectable icons of traditional music performance (in particular
important older musicians resident in Dublin in the middle of the twentieth century), some
of whom made few if any recorded performances which are widely available. Most of these
publications have been republished on a couple of occasions which, as well as being a
testament to their popularity, also may have contributed to their visibility and pervasiveness
along with their effective nationwide distribution.

Most of the other collections mentioned are historical, nineteenth or early twentieth century
collections. Some mention Joyce by which they mean either P.W. Joyce, *Irish Music and
Song* (1888) or Joyce, P.W. *Ancient Irish Music.* (1906). Others mention R.M. Levey’s *The
First Collection of the Dance Music of Ireland* (1985); Frank Harding’s, *Harding’s All Round
Collection of Jigs, Reels and Country Dances: for piano, violin, flute or mandolin,* (1905); *Ryan’s
Mammoth Collection. 1050 Reels and Jigs, hornpipes, clogs, walk-arounds, essences, strathspeys,
highland flings and Contra-dances with figures,* (1883); George Petrie’s *The Petrie Collection of
the Ancient Music of Ireland,* 1855; *O’Farrell’s Collection of National Irish Music for the Irish or
Union Pipes* (1804); Francis Roche’s, *The Roche Collection of Traditional Irish Music, Vols. 1-
3, Ossian, 1983; John and William Neal’s, *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes Proper for the Violin, German Flute, or Hautboy* (1724); Edward Bunting’s *Ancient Music of Ireland* (this could be any one of three of Bunting’s publications from 1796, 1809 and 1840/42); and Canon James Goodman’s manuscript collection part published by Hugh Shields as *Tunes of the Munster Pipers* (1998).

Other collections mentioned tend to be either collections of the compositions of particular musicians or the repertoire of some particular important musicians or musicians of a particular region. Of the compositions of particular musicians mentioned were Paddy O’Brien’s *The Compositions of Paddy O’Brien* (1993), Sean Ryan’s *The Hidden Ireland: the first selection of Irish traditional compositions of Sean Ryan*, (1998), Charlie Lennon’s *Musical Memories* (1993), Ed. Reavy’s *The Collected Composition’s of Ed Reavy* (1984), Josephine Keegan’s *The Keegan Tunes: a selection of traditional Irish music / composed by Josephine Keegan* (2002) and Cuz Teahan’s *The Glen Road to Glountane*. Collections of particular individual musician’s repertoires or repertoire of musicians of a particular region include Pat Mitchell and Jackie Small’s *The Piping of Patsey Touhey* (1998), Pat Mitchell’s *The Dance Music of Willie Clancy* (1976) Terry Moylan’s *Johnny O’Leary of Sliabh Luachra: dance music from the Cork-Kerry border* (1994), Seamus Connolly and Laurel Martin’s, *Forget Me Not. 50 Memorable Irish Tunes* (2003), *The Mountain Road: a compilation of tunes popular in South Sligo* (1998), and Bernard Flaherty’s *The Trip to Sligo* (1990). A very few modern, non-thematic, collections were mentioned such as *Allan’s Irish Fiddler* (c.1920), Brid Cranitch’s

---

9 Seamus Connolly was the only informant who mentioned a collection or tutor of his own when many of the informants have been involved with such publications.
Irish Session Tunes – the Blue Book (2003), Bulmer and Sharpley’s Music from Ireland Vols 1-4 (1974-6), and Mallinson’s collections of session tunes – 100 Essential Irish Session Tunes (1995), and 100 Enduring Irish Session Tunes (1995). Three tutors are also mentioned, namely Leo Rowsomes Tutor for the Uillean Pipes (1936), Kathleen Lougnane’s Harping On (2002), the Brian and Eithne Vallelys’ Learn to Play the Tin Whistle, Parts 1-3 (1972, 1997), Micheal Ó Halmhain’s and Seamus MacMathuna’s Tutor for the Feadog Stain (1971), Matt Cranitch’s The Irish Fiddle Book: the art of traditional fiddle-playing, (1996). The modern scholarly works of Fleischchmann, Sources of Irish Traditional Music, c.1600-1855 Vols.1&2 (1997), and Donal O’Sullivan’s Carolan, the Life Times and Music of an Irish Harper (1958) also get a single mention each. Below is a table indicating the relative occurrence of these collections and tutors in the responses of informants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication(s)</th>
<th>Incidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Edward Bunting Ancient Music of Ireland, Vol. 1-3 ()</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pat Mitchell The Dance Music of Willie Clancy (1976)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Trip to Sligo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Learn to Play the Tin Whistle, Parts 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tune's of the Munster Pipers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Johnny O'Leary of Sliabh Luachra: dance music from the Cork-Kerry border</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Irish Fiddle Book: the art of traditional fiddle-playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Mountain Road: a compilation of tunes popular in South Sligo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ryan's Mammoth Collection. 1050 Reels and Jigs, hornpipes, clogs, walk-arounds, essences, strathspeys, highland flings and Contra-dances with figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Hidden Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Irish Music and Song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; Ancient Irish Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Allan's Irish Fiddler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Irish Session Tunes – the Blue Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Music from Ireland Vol.s 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tutor for the Feadog Stain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sources of Irish Traditional Music, c1600-1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Forget Me Not. 50 Memorable Irish Tunes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Frank Harding, <em>Harding's All Round Collection of Jigs, Reels and Country Dances: for piano, violin, flute or mandolin</em>, (1905).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Leo Rowsome, <em>Leo Rowsome Tutor for the Uillean Pipes</em> (1936).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>John and William Neal, <em>A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes Proper for the Violin, German Flute, or Hautboy</em> (1724).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>O’Farrell's <em>Collection of National Irish Music for the Irish or Union Pipes</em> (1804).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5. Frequency of publications as mentioned by informants (where it is unclear whether the informant means one or more publications by a single editor all are listed together)

It is notable that the only publications not regarded as important as historical documents or associated with a particular individual musician or region, are those of Dave Mallinson (1995a, 1995b) and Bulmer and Sharpley (1974-6). And even these are mentioned only by
musicians from England whose exposure to printed sources of Irish traditional music would have historically been limited to these publications. Richard Moon, a flute player from Bedford, England writes:

There are problems for people who are not part of the Irish community to learn Irish music, ....I think the Mallinson books are ubiquitous in England which gives them a degree of importance.

(Moon March 2005)

So it is obvious from the table above that publications that are highly valued are either of historical significance and date mostly before 1950 or are rooted in the playing and / or composition of players who are perceived by the community to be important. This is attested to by the response of most of the informants who stated that some collections were more important than others. The important collections were regarded as such for historical contextualising information, different versions of repertoire, and unusual repertoire. A couple of the informants were interesting in that they stated that collections only become important because of the way they are interpreted by individual musicians or because they give us interesting versions of tunes. However, many responded by implying that an interest in published collections is mostly academic rather than performative. Brendan Mulkere writes:

Breandan Breathnach’s, *Ceol Rince na hÉireann* series gives interesting versions of tunes, which few would wish to play as printed, but he does offer original versions of tunes, which are of interest to research students. O’Neill’s compilations are of interest for the same reason. It would be interesting to have a research student trace the development of a tune currently played by a leading musician, which was noted down in the late 1800’s. The Reverend Goodman’s collection is of great interest. I have found several tunes there, quaint originals of tunes we play today.

(Mulkere March 2005)
When asked if collections were important for anything apart from the transmission of repertoire the answer, surprisingly was yes. However, those who went on to say why presented reasons that are essentially non-musical and historical. Kirsten Allstaff writes;

Those of antiquity - provide us with a mirror into the musical society of the time- we can speculate what instruments could have influenced the notation of the tunes by modes and range of notes used. Names of tunes, and reference to people and places within tune titles - Can perhaps help us in defining regional styles.

(Allstaff March 2005)

Maeve Donnelly, among others, notes the importance of published collections as a form of artificial memory for the tradition when asked of the importance of collections;

Yes. They ensure that certain tunes will never be forgotten or lost as could be the case in the oral tradition.

(Donnelly March 2005)

Some also point out that published collections bring repertoire to a larger number of people and indeed bring Irish music to people outside the communities that normally perform it. Marcas Ó Murchú writes on why publications are important;

Yes they broaden repertoire and introduce our music to a wider audience

(Ó Murchú March 2005)

However some informants go on to describe published collections as being limited. Máire Breathnach writes;

Can be helpful to see what has been 'frozen in time' on paper, so to speak, although I often feel that the written settings are quite a bit removed from my experience of the tunes. Sometimes one 'consistently wrong note' can be an irritant, especially where it seems that the editor has tried to refine a modal tune into some form of what he considers to be 'diatonic normality'.

(Breathnach March 2005)
and Brendan Mulkere voices his own frustrations with the versions of tunes offered;

I believe collections are important as a reference library and as resource material. The problem with the old collections of music is that it is now impossible to tell what the musician actually played or how the singer sang the song and interpreted the melodic line. There is usually no notation detail of ornamentation, variation or styling. We do not know if the version written down accurately represented the version played by the musician. Looking at the tunes in O’Neill’s Collections, it seems to me that the tunes are skeletal in form and only hint in places at variations from the source. There are ideas there in the notation of the tunes that are traceable in current musicians’ performances. In O’Neill’s 1850, there are charming bars of music - Paddy Ryan’s Dream; A rainy Day, The Rambling Sailor, etc. - that seem to fizzle out. Some bar sequences hint at what might have been. It is still refreshing to find this material and it is important to the serious student of music and musicologist.

(Mulkere March 2005)

A common theme of these interviews is the idea that collections are important for the musicologist – a category of individual perhaps not as specialised or well defined in this context. In the context of Irish traditional music, the individuals who function as musicologists have historically been independent of educational institutions such as Universities, the home of the western musicologists.

The last question asked of the informants concerned the value of instrumental tutors (i.e. publications focused on the development of a learner’s skills on a particular instrument). In considering the responses to this question we must bear in mind that many of the informants have themselves published tutors. The most popular response was that they could be valuable if there was also exposure to practitioner(s) of the instrument being taught or at least recordings (or some other multi-media format) of performances on the same. It was
generally held that exposure to a published tutor alone was not adequate. Deidre Horan writes;

I think they are useful if a learner doesn't have access to classes or a teacher. I don’t think they should be depended on solely though as there are things that are difficult to transfer through these tutors. Tutors with accompanying cds or videos are better than just written instruction books on their own.

(Horan March 2005)

Christy Leahy also says what is important for transmission today is “cd roms, nowadays, yes. Videos to a lesser extent. but books alone, [I] wouldn't think so” (Leahy March 2005).

Others responded by saying that published tutors were or could be useful but their standard was generally low. Brendan Mulkere writes:

Many adult students come with copies of books and tutors, much of which I recommend they bin. I have browsed around various shops offering tutors and books of music and I am not impressed. Then I have to admit that I have not seen a comprehensive list of tutor publications.

(Mulkere March 2005)

Many expressed the belief that they were only useful in the context of learners who were unable to have other exposure to the tradition or teachers, or that they were useful for slower students or adults, who, by implication, would be more literate in their approach! Some informants said quite blankly that in their experience published tutors were of no use. Patrick Olsen outlines his distrust and dislike of tutors when he writes;

I have never met a good player that has told me that they learned to play from watching an instructional video or reviewing something like the Bill Ochs tin-whistle book and tape. They also seem to be unsatisfactory as a teacher aide. The reality is that to watch someone do something new to you is the best way to learn something. There
is an excitement that comes from learning this way. Extracting it from the pages of a book is frustratingly ineffective and sterile. Plus rhythm is an ever-changing and personal element in Irish music. It is notoriously difficult to notate it exactly. This makes learning from a tutor even more difficult. Written tutors place the emphasis on visual memory and not the aural.

(Olsen March 2005)

From this small survey of literate traditional musicians we can safely assume that literacy, especially in its commercial, published manifestation, is considered as very secondary to aural, face-to-face transmission. It is generally not regarded as desirable, unless in extreme circumstances of isolation, for literacy to supplant oral transmission. It is also evident that published collections can be considered as being good for the transmission of repertoire (especially different manifestations of known repertoire); storage of repertoire that may otherwise disappear in a purely oral context; and contextualising, usually historical information about that repertoire. However published collections play little part in the transmission and acquisition of most aspects of performance and is generally rather limited in the transmissonal process that is still largely oral in nature, even in the transmission of repertoire.

Notation used specifically in formal transmission (unpublished notation).

Unpublished notation found in manuscripts has two possible uses, (1) the development of a manuscript ‘library’ by a musician for her own personal use and (2) in the formal transmission of music (ie. class teaching). I would argue that the manner and use of such
forms of notation are rooted in the formal transmission process because notational systems are themselves learned, most often in some manner of formal educational context. Therefore even the manuscript meant for consumption by no one else but the author is representative of that author’s own acquisition of performance practice. Of course in this cultural context, where notational systems have only been acquired and developed in the past century or so, there are instances of traditional musicians learning staff notation later in life in a solo or western music context. However, this notation is still representative of just another learning process.

Notation, when usually created in the context of classes for students, is interesting in that it tends to be more varied in form than that used in published notations. This perhaps reflects the flexibility of many traditional music teachers in the transmission of this music in ways attuned to the needs and abilities of the student(s) and therefore the varied educational and musical backgrounds of the students themselves. Also teachers have the opportunity to create notations that are expressive of their own aesthetic, and political belief structures associated with the performance of traditional music, promoting these values to the student(s).

The types of notation used in a formal context by traditional musicians tend to be either alphabetic, staff, graphic, numerical or solmization and often combinations of these.
The use of staff notation in this context is similar to its use in the context of publications. Usage is generally standard with some loss of features usually associated with use in the context of western classical music. Below is an example taken from a festival fiddle class (a finite series of classes given to students over the period of a week) given by Tommy Peoples, the well-known Donegal player.
Again, this is interesting as there are no time signatures but for a traditional musician there is no need. The tune type, 'Highland', is written at the top of each tune, arguably giving more information about the rhythmical structure of the tune than a mere time signature would. For example it tells us about tempo and the use of scotch snaps as a stylistic technique. Bow marks are given for individual notes and slurred groups of notes as well as some grace notes. This is a style of notation that would be largely understood outside of an Irish traditional music context.

However, the late Dublin based accordion player Sonny Brogan gives us an extreme adaptation of western staff notation below.
Fig. 7. Sonny Brogan’s notation of ‘The Tobacco Leaf’ (often also called the Steampacket) and the first part of the ‘Fermoy Lasses’ Source: Traditional Music Archive)

This is a code based on western notation but very far removed from it. The first tune, ‘The Tobacco Leaf’ can be ‘properly’ annotated as follows, based on Sonny’s version above.
The Tobacco Leaf

And the first part of ‘The Fermoy Lasses’ as;

The Fermoy Lasses (first part)

Fig. 8. Brogan’s ‘Tobacco Leaf’ in standard staff notation

Fig 9. Brogan’s first part of the ‘Fermoy Lasses’ in standard notation.
Many features of Brogan’s idiosyncratic notation become apparent when we compare figures 7, 8 and 9. There is no clef apart from the one at the beginning of ‘The Fermoy Lasses’. Also there is no time signature, not even an indication that these are reels, although ‘re’ seems to be written at the start of the title for ‘The Fermoy Lasses’. We have to presume that Brogan would have verbally informed the student of the tune type. And of course there is no key signature. There are only three indications of the rhythmical structure of the tune that I can identify (an accordion player more familiar with Brogan or one of his students would of course make better sense of this notation). The first is the way that a note of a crotchet duration is indicated by the following two quavers being given stems and being beamed together. One might speculate what Brogan would have written if there were two crotchets together but that sort of motion would be rare in the context of Irish traditional dance music. The second indication of rhythmic structure is the way that the notes of the triplets in the second part are grouped more closely together and are formed graphically a little less heavily than the other tones. This is more apparent in his representations of rolls in the ‘Fermoy Lasses’, where they are represented textually and as three much closer and fainter strokes on the staff. The final indication of time value is where, at the end of the first part of ‘The Tobacco Leaf’ he simply writes ‘long’ over the last note of the bar to indicate it is of a crotchet, rather than a quaver, duration. The underlying assumption is, of course, that each note head is of a quaver duration.
Other performance directions are specific to the accordion and are represented textually. For example we can see written ‘F and E draw on the outside’ on the first line of ‘The Tobacco Leaf’ which indicates the position of the notes on the outside row of the accordion and the direction of the bellows, the ‘draw’. He also indicates a specific roll by writing ‘E roll’ in the second line of ‘The Fermoy Lasses’. As noted earlier he also does this graphically on the staff.

In this example from Sonny Brogan we can see an extreme example of the way traditional Irish musicians have adopted and adapted western notation for their own, aural ends. We could say that this is the result of a sort of semi-illiteracy, rooted in inadequate knowledge of the system itself. We will return to this assumption again but I would rather put forward the idea that the notation above represents one musician’s creative reworking of a system of representation for his own aurally defined needs and purposes. It is also interesting to ask why in the use and adaption of staff notation many aspects unnecessary for the transmission of Irish music are retained? Why retain time signatures when we know the dance tune type? Why retain key signatures if the tune is obviously modally centered on a particular note? Perhaps the reason partly lies in Bruno Nettl’s explanation of the use of western notation in classical Persian music. He maintains that one aspect of the use of notation in Persian music is symbolic, an attempt to show that Persian music was as vital, as important as, and competitive with western music. Thus the use, and sometimes incorrect use, of unnecessary aspects of western notation in the transmission of Irish music may be evidence of some sort of traditional, perhaps post-nationalist inferiority complex, an attempt to validate traditional
music as a worthwhile endeavour by using the tools of the nearest ‘respectable’ art tradition to validate it.

Alphabetic notation is closely associated with staff notation and the two are often used together. However, when it occurs alone, alphabetic notation drops many of the aspects of western art notation that are used in the adaption of staff notation by traditional musicians. Sometimes bar lines are retained, often not. The durations of notes are often not accounted for at all and, if they are, they are sometimes only indicated through the use of a dot or line after or below a note of longer duration, usually not even indicating how much longer the note is (although in some transcriptions a dash would be used for every extra quaver beat of a note’s duration).

The different octaves are usually indicated in one of three different ways: by placing an inverted comma after a note; having higher notes and lower notes in different cases (it seems to be most common to have higher notes in a larger case); or by having a line above or below the note (this seems to suit instruments which have some capacity in the octave below the D above middle C, you would use a line above for a higher octave note and a line below for a note below D). Usually no key is indicated and F when given will mean F#. When C is given there is regularly some indication of whether C or C sharp are meant but often it is left to the sense that the reader has for the modality of the tune (and of course the context of informal transmission) to dictate which is chosen.
The example below is a fairly standard and effective form of alphabetic notation used by piper Tommy Keane to teach the whistle to children in Galway. It is arguably the most popular system of notation used by teachers of traditional music in Ireland today and is certainly effective and avoids the acquisition of unnecessary western music theory.

Fig. 10. Tommy Keane’s alphabetic notation of ‘The Butcher’s March’.
There is no time signature or key signature but the tune type is indicated in the title and the sharpened note is indicated underneath it. Thus the student may not know that the tune is in 6/8 and in the key of G but they do have accurate information enabling the performance of the tune. Notes are indicated by their letter names and an apostrophe after the note indicates that the note is in the higher octave (the tin whistle usually has a range of two octaves from the D above middle C). If a note is of longer duration (and again the assumption otherwise is that each note has approximately a quaver’s duration) the extent of that duration is indicated by hyphens after the note letter. The tune is arranged according to two bar phrases and notes are grouped to represent the rhythm of the tune (so in threes for the above jig). Leading notes are placed before and separated from the main columns of grouped notes.

Here is another use of alphabetic notation from the teaching of Mícheál Ó hAlmháin.
This is also a very common type of manuscript, without many of the usual features of staff notation – for example there are again no time or key signatures. It is similar to the Tommy Keane example above but the notes are not grouped to indicate rhythm. Instead Mícheál uses slurs over the letters to indicated the groupings of notes. Notes of lengthened duration are indicated by the letter being underlined. Unlike Tommy’s notation, Mícheál indicates articulation by also placing staccato marks underneath the notes.

Very often staff and alphabetic notation are presented together, as we can see below.
Fig. 12. Alphabetic and staff notation used by Sheila Cagney (source: author).
This presentation of two systems in conjunction with each other is common especially as a music class may contain some children who can read staff notation and some who can’t. It is common that some pupils may play classical music or popular music and have an extensive theoretical background to support those practices while other students may have virtually no musical experience apart from that given to them at school that can be particularly patchy in Ireland. Dual systems like this may also be used when a class may be at a stage of transferring from one system to the other. Perhaps this is implied by the text at the top of the page that says “beginners that have trouble reading”. What is of interest here is that information conveyed in the staff notation is not equally conveyed in the alphabetic notation. In particular the occasional dotted quaver / semi-quaver patterns can be seen in the staff notation but not in the letters underneath. Perhaps it is anticipated that the child would engage both notational systems but it is more likely that these again are aspects represented in the staff notation for a sense of correctness but that are really acquired by ear.

Numerical notation generally occurs in tablature (i.e. notation which is specific to one instrument). I have seen examples particular to the fiddle such as Padraig O’Keefe’s tablature which has a strong neumatic (graphic) element. Also there are many examples of less neumatic accordion, concertina and whistle numerical tablatures (as in fig. 2 above). Generally each number refers to the use of a particular finger or group of fingers with an extra symbol for push or draw for accordions and concertinas. This form of notation normally follows the conventions of alphabetic notation in the indication of rhythm, octave (if necessary) and key.
The last two forms of notation, tonic sol-fa and graphic, seem to be used rarely in the tradition. True graphic notation I have only seen in some whistle tutors (again as in fig. 2 above) where the whistle is graphically represented, but always in association either with one or both of staff and alphabetic notation. It also occurs as a strong element of numerical tablature (as in the case of Padraig O'Keefe's) and in some cases of staff notation (indicating melodic contour rather than individual pitches). Tonic sol-fa is not commonly used in the transmission of Irish traditional dance music (although it is sometimes used in national schools) and is more commonly associated with the transmission of song, again in schools. It is not favoured because it gives no indication of key and when tonic sol-fa is used Doh invariably represents D.

As stated previously, the notation system used by Padraig O'Keeffe has both strong graphic and numerical aspects. O'Keeffe (1887-1963) is perhaps the central figure for Sliabh Luachra music and and he is particularly highly regarded historically as a teacher. This is an example of the type of sheet he would have given to a young fiddle player at her first class is below.
This is an important document for traditional Irish music, especially for the tradition of the Sliabh Luachra region of West-Cork / East Kerry. The performance directions at the top left of the sheet are fascinating but what is of interest to us here is the tablature at the bottom that is fairly self explanatory. The spaces represent the strings of the fiddle – the top space representing the E string and the bottom space representing the G. The numbers in the spaces indicate the finger to be placed on the string – ‘0’ indicates an open string, ‘1’
indicates placing the index finger on the string, 2 the middle finger, etc.. Thus the tune represented is as follows.

Air

![Staff notation for Padraig O'Keefe's Air (commonly known as 'The Dawning of the Day'). This notation is perhaps rhythmically more rigid than O'Keeffe would have intended, especially as he refers to it as an 'air' rather than a march.]

The notation bears all the hallmarks of instrument specific notation in the Irish tradition. Bow marks are supplied and, where numbers are grouped together under a slur, they are to move a little quicker. In this case the assumption is that all the notes are of crotchet duration unless they are grouped as described above which indicates that they are quavers. Doubling or trebling the duration of a note is indicated if the number is followed by a stop (.). As other notations by Padraig O’Keeffe illustrate, he was certainly musically literate (he was also a trained primary school teacher so was probably also acquainted with tonic sol-fa). However he certainly preferred to use such tablatures rather than staff notation. It would be impossible to say whether O’Keeffe invented his own tablatures or inherited them from others but this is a prime example of how traditional musicians have used aspects of western
classical music to (in this case the staff itself) to creatively invent an approach to notation to fit their own needs and tradition.

The Use of Notation in Formal Transmission

This section will examine the way that teachers use written notation in class contexts. In a questionnaire submitted electronically to 14 teachers I asked them questions concerning the type of classes they teach and the way they use notation in the context of those classes. The teachers chosen are all well established in a wide variety of teaching contexts which includes weekly classes, group classes, multi-instrument classes, single instrument classes, regular one-on-one classes, one-off festival type multi-instrumental classes and many combinations of the above. These classes can be aimed towards ensemble competitions, solo competitions, and solo or group performances. Their views with regards to the use of published collections in a formal educational context have been examined previously (6 – 8).

Unsurprisingly all informants uphold the traditional primacy of aural learning but nearly all would use some form of notation in the context of their classes. Notation is generally supplied after the main tasks of the lesson are over (ie. after the repertoire and technique are learned). This notation is used a mnemonic device, giving the student the means to recall the tune without the presence of the teacher. Only one informant, Carmel Burke, an
accordion player and teacher from Leicester, England, insinuated that this is not always the case when she writes;

We also teach some tunes by ear and once they have learned the tune we give them notation so they have reference to it  
(Burke March 2005)

The implication here is that transmission is not always by ear and that sometimes notation is introduced in tandem with aural learning or perhaps that sometimes children learn solely through notation. Most informants however use words such as ‘reference’, ‘memory aid’ and ‘back-up’ to describe the role of notation in their classes and some are very reluctant to use notation at all. Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh writes;

If students REALLY want to have it written out, I ask them to write it out themselves and then check it. (Ó Raghallaigh March 2005)

Here, Galway based fiddle player and teacher Mick Conneely gives a nuts-and-bolts account of the way he and many others teach traditional Irish dance music.

I teach one tune per hour-lesson by ear. I break each line into 4 equal phrases. Once a phrase has been absorbed (it doesn’t take that long) I move on to the next phrase. I teach the 1st phrase and we play it over a few times till they have it. I teach the 2nd phrase and we play it over a few times till they have it. Then we play those first two phrases together until they have it. I teach the 3rd phrase and we play it over a few times till they have it. Then we play those first three phrases together until they have it. I teach the 4th phrase and we play it over a few times till they have it. Then we play all four phrases together until they have it all. And so on. I teach the tunes as I play them - not from a book or record etc. Once they have the tune I then teach them how/where to put ornamentation in (cuts, rolls, bow-trebles etc). I prefer to teach a tune with the meat on the bones, so-to-speak, to give it all to them as they learn. In time they acquire the necessary technical vocabulary to populate any tune. It should be natural to them after a while…. I promote learning by ear, but if a student needs notes, I will write the tune down for them in letter format (A B C# D’ etc).
Most teachers use a combination of forms of notation depending on the age and background of the student, the teacher’s own experience, and the instrument being taught. The most popular type of notation is alphabetic notation and some would use a numerical tablature or staff notation. Most see the value of knowing how to read staff notation but don’t see it as having any intrinsic, performance related value. For instance the Dublin-based flute player and teacher Sarah-Jane Woods writes that staff notation is good for;

….Recording, sourcing and analysis of traditional music. I think its merits in the teaching of traditional music lie in the explanation of key-signatures and modes.  
(Woods March 2005)

Some informants note that teaching staff notation can sometimes prove to be an obstacle for the child learning. Aoife Granville, a flute and fiddle player and teacher from Dingle in West Kerry, writes;

I generally use notation (dega bgg-), not too much staff notation. I find they spend more time worrying about reading the notes than the tune with the staff notation. Too time consuming when only meeting once a week. I will usually notate some ornamentation - rolls, cuts etc but they also would have to add their own in (write it in) as homework! I never simply give them the notes or get them to play the tune through without playing the tune for them umpteen times.  
(Granville March 2005)

Many informants emphasise the role of the student actually playing a part in constructing the score, by either writing the tune out or adding stylistic elements such as ornamentation and bowing to a score supplied by the teacher. This would generally occur at the end of the class.
Often an influencing factor in the use of staff notation is the background of the student. Grainne Hambly, a harper, concertina player and teacher from Mayo tells us that when teaching in Ireland that she will rarely use notation. However she will use notation outside of Ireland. Thus staff notation has an important role in the spread of Irish music across cultural and geographical divides especially in the context of overseas teaching workshops. Some informants state that adults very often prefer to learn through notation rather than ear while children usually rather the reverse. Some informants make the distinction that those dependent on the use of notation are inhibited and held back from the truly creative performative aspects of the tradition. When asked whether different students respond to notation differently, Dublin based uilleann piper and teacher Kevin Rowsome, writes;

Yes, it’s evident very quickly, which children learn by which method… ie. kids that learn by ear are more flexible and vise-versa.

(Rowsome March 2005)

Some informants actively undermine students’ dependence on notation. Mary Bergin, whistle player and teacher from Galway, writes;

Yes in the beginning students rely on notes but with a lot of nagging…. They use the tape more and more!

(Bergin March 2005)

Some informants state that students who have good ears actively dislike and try to discourage the use of notation by teachers but the teachers do not present this as a problem. Interestingly enough, not one teacher mentioned sight-reading as something to be desired of, or worked on, with a student.
The overall feeling of the informants is that notation is inadequate to convey essential aspects of repertoire and style. For instance, Caoimhín writes;

For subtle bowing stuff that happens inside a single note, any notation would be too cumbersome to be practical. It’s the sound that matters.

(Ó Raghallaigh March 2005)

There is also a general belief that any musician dependent on notation is essentially disadvantaged. John Devine, a flute player and teacher in St. Albans, England writes;

In my experience, players that rely more on text miss most of the fundamental and more subtle aspects of playing and are less favourably responsive in terms of improvisation…

(Devine March 2005)

In assessing these responses from traditional music teachers we must remember the political context they come from, where ‘traditional’ is what is right and where the traditional learning method is ‘by ear’. It is tempting to speculate on colonial and post-colonial roots of the rejection of many aspects of western literacy especially when so many other more contemporary technologies have been embraced in the tradition but this is perhaps beyond the scope of this thesis. We also must remember that, in the often hurried responses to an e-mailed questionnaire, we cannot hope to uncover the complex interplay of orality and literacy in the context of many varied educational settings that exist in the various social, political and cultural contexts traditional music is formally transmitted in. However it is a reflection (however one-dimensional) of the use and status of notational systems as little more than mnemonic devices in the context of traditional Irish music. It is very interesting
that Kevin Rowsome postulates that technology for slowing down performances while maintaining pitch would one day replace notation as a learning tool (Rowsome March 2005).

There should be no stigma attached to the use and adaptation of notation systems from the local art music culture as very rarely does a musical, or any other, culture truly invent its own sign system. Instead it modifies another phonic (of letters, syllables, numbers) or graphic system, or a combination of both. Notation has been successfully established as an element of transmission in both formal and informal spheres with either a superficially primary role (especially in the case of informal transmission) or secondary mnemonic role (as tends to be the case for formal transmission). It has infiltrated the tradition with ease because of the relative literacy of the Irish peasant classes over the last 150 years. However, has this infiltration affected the tradition? Has the use of notation subtly changed the course of Irish traditional music? Bruno Nettl (1985) states that the use of notation in Persian music has standardised the musical tradition and led to a decrease in the level of improvisation. Bohlman (1988, p.28) speaks of notation as being an agent of stability in tradition, and Durant (1984) speaks of notation inhibiting development and change. The answer to this question is fairly straightforward in the light of what has been discussed. Notation can only affect the tradition through what it signifies and the nature of that signification. It obviously does affect the tradition in that, by storing the bare-bones of repertoire, it goes some way to maintaining that repertoire, preventing the disappearance of tunes that have been notated from the tradition. Also, it can preserve versions and settings of tunes which otherwise may
have disappeared with time and the passing of individuals and generations. A good example of this is the seven part jig 'The Gold Ring', a version of which was collected by Captain Francis O'Neill (1913, p.132) at the turn of the century from the piper Tom Ennis. This version is very different to the one current today (and, I suspect, then) but musicians are still able to resurrect the Ennis version from O'Neill's *Music of Ireland*. Notably Noel Hill did this on his recording *The Irish Concertina* (1988). This setting of a tune otherwise may well have gone to the grave with Tom Ennis. Notation has thus provided an artificial memory for the tradition as a whole. Presumably the use of notation has also been somewhat responsible for the spread of what were previously regional repertoires and the creation of a national repertoire of traditional tunes, even though many of these tunes are still known for their regional origin.

Has performance been affected by notation through its use in transmission? I believe the answer to this is no. If notation is used to transmit more than just a basic repertoire it would change the personal and improvisatory nature of those more ingrained elements of performance and thus the basic personal and improvisatory nature of the tradition. However this has not occurred. Also it is important that literacy does not seem to be used extensively as a compositional tool, which might lead to greater complexity in basic repertoire structure and encourage composers to move away from basic structures and norms maintained through oral tradition. Along with other media transformations and representations of Irish traditional music, notation may work as an agent for stability (for example in the role it plays in the preservation of repertoire) and of change (it is argued that regional repertoires
have spread into a national, and even international, phenomenon through the influence of publishing. However, as it does not significantly account for other elements of performance (or if it does it is generally ignored) it does not affect significant aspects of performance practice. Indeed the acquisition of western notation has occurred in such a way that it is possible to conclude that its use has not affected the basic nature of performance of Irish traditional dance music.

Breathnach speaks of the incorrect use of staff notation in traditional Irish music and, if approached from the point of view of the western art music tradition, much staff notation as used in traditional transmission is hopelessly incorrect and often indecipherable. Omissions are common and essential factors for western art performance are excluded, such as the treble clef (especially after the first stave), time signatures, key signatures, bar lines, repeat signs. Strictly speaking there is also much misuse of elements of staff notation. Time signatures, if given, are often wrong, especially in the case of reels. These are often notated in 4 4 or common time (which is hornpipe time) instead of split common time. Key signatures are often incorrect as is the direction of the stems; accidental signs are often given after the note and sometimes twice for the same note in the same bar, or are omitted completely. Western notation and terminology is also misused in the sense that signs and symbols are often adapted or invented to indicate factors of traditional performance such as ornamentation. Terminology is borrowed from western practice (such as legato and staccato) and their meanings are transformed in the process of transferral from one musical context to another.
As we have seen these are just some of the more common problems associated with the application of western art music notation and theory in traditional Irish music.

Two possible views may be taken of this. Firstly we can simply assume that this adaptation is simply misappropriation, brought about through ignorance of the donor tradition. This is essentially a development of Naumann’s “gesunkenes kulturegut” (1922) or fallen cultural artefacts (see Bohlman, 1988, p.48). This describes the process in which aspects of the art tradition descend to a folk tradition. In this scenario the artefacts (in this case a system of notation) are perceived to be corrupted and adulterated because of the ignorance of the peasant musicians. This view is obviously oversimplified and rooted in the assumption that an ‘art music’ is somehow better or more sophisticated than a ‘folk music’. There are specific reasons for these developments in notation, that should be categorised more as adaptation than corruption in their transferral between western art and Irish folk traditions. John Baily describes 'operational models', a taught music theory that informs an entire musical performance and indeed plays an active role in the performance. These are fundamentally different to representational models that describe what a musician already knows and have no direct role in performance (Baily 1988, p.114). Although I disagree with the idea that there can be concepts of music and systems of musical thought that are entirely either operational or representational, what we are discussing here are two operational systems that inform a performance to differing degrees and in different ways. In the western art tradition the performance is almost entirely informed through notation (although not completely, especially concerning aspects of style often relevant to period of origin). In the Irish
tradition, performance is informed only partially through notation, if at all; the rest of the information coming from an acquired 'folk-knowledge', separate from notation and rooted in the traditional means of aural transmission. The attempts to notate ornamentation, phrasing and other stylistic elements in some collections may seem to disprove this, but the vast majority of traditional musicians would generally ignore such additions. The motivation for the inclusion of such elements of performance is often political, particularly as an attempt to illustrate correct 'traditional' performance (such as in Breathnach's collections). Of course the definition of what is, and what is not 'traditional is disputed within the communities of Irish traditional music practice. Also, in the context of formal transmission, notation often has a secondary role to aural transmission and thus functions as a mnemonic device that serves only as a backup to memory.

This adaptation of the operational status has had an impact upon the use of notation in Irish traditional music. Much of the knowledge represented in a 'correct' or 'accurate' transcription of Irish traditional music is not necessary for its transmission as it is already part of the interpretative equipment used by traditional musicians in the acquisition of repertoire. Little more than repertoire is ever notated for transmission, everything else is conveyed by ear or through demonstration. Time signatures, bar lines, correct time values and perhaps even the grouping of notes are not important when it is known that a reel is being taught or transmitted. The tonality of a piece is usually betrayed by the melodic outline of a tune and common practice will also force assumptions on tonality (i.e. F sharp is often not accounted for but most musicians will assume it anyway). Thus notation, staff or otherwise, only acts
as part of the machinery that is used to recreate and interpret a tune in the transmission of Irish traditional music. Common practice and an acquired folk-knowledge play a large part in this machinery and an understanding of these processes allows us to account for apparent misappropriation and misuse. We must remember that this is not unique to Irish traditional music. Even classical musicians bring encultured, aurally learned knowledge and knowledge rooted in literacy acquired outside of the performance context to the generation of music along with the text. It could be argued that the practice whereby notation plays no immediate role in performance, acting only as a mnemonic device in formal transmission and only acquiring some centrality in certain contexts of informal transmission, is standard in many dance music traditions of the north Atlantic seaboard.

Notation as used in Irish traditional music does not have the same nearly isomorphic relationship (i.e. it does not have the same identity in form and structure) with Irish traditional music than is the case between notation and classical music (Neumann 1990, p.22). The score in the world of classical music is both an accurate model for performance and a model of performance and plays a major role in the economy of that music. In classical music notation is used primarily in an operational mode (in its use by both performer and composer) but also has a representational aspect in that it can represent the music for purposes of analysis, or even in the common practice of following a score in performance. In traditional Irish music the relationship between the signified (a model of the music) and the signifier (the notation systems used) is not as direct as their relationship in the art tradition. Many of the elements of Irish traditional music performance (for example variation,
ornamentation, phrasing, articulation) are not accounted for at all and usually the melody is represented in a very basic manner. Therefore the signified in both traditions are very different. In classical music the signified are the majority of elements that construe a performance, whilst in traditional Irish music the signified is a truncated version of only one componential element of the performance. Most of the information required for traditional performance, even elements of repertoire, is not transferred in notation but is transmitted orally in both formal and informal modes. This is probably because of the originally oral nature of all transmission in Irish traditional dance music. However because the use of stylistic elements and the interpretation of repertoire is entirely personal and is, to a certain extent, improvisatory, standard detailed notations are not likely to gain currency. Thus it would be incorrect to describe notation as used by traditional musicians as representational as it represents very few essential elements of a performance. It would also be incorrect to describe it as operational as it plays no role in the actual performance of the music. It is perhaps better to describe it as 'directional' in that it is used as a signpost in the processes of transmission, providing essential information for the traditional rendering of a tune (that is the basic outline of the tune) but only being a small part of a transmission process in the creation of performance. Therefore the signified and the signifier are kept separate through the primacy of aurality in the tradition. The signifier is not allowed to shape the signified to any significant extent, instead it is used to maintain the tradition of the signified by becoming co-opted, transformed and subsumed into transmission processes. Traditional musicians have instinctually and consistently, in a number of different ways as represented in the variety of their notational practices, utilised music literacy for the purposes of their oral
tradition. In this way literacy becomes a tool for an oral practice through the creative adaptation of these tools borrowed from a related tradition.
We have seen that writing and publication about traditional Irish music for and by musicians of that community is a relatively recent affair. I must state that this section of the thesis is necessarily a critique of a selection of such publications and could be read as being just so. However, as Phillip Bohlman and Martin Stokes write in relation to other such texts and collections, it is important to note that,

To approach such artefacts and commodities as O’Neill’s *Music of Ireland* in the vein of commodity critique is, of course, to engage in an act of criticism, but not in an act of aesthetic or political dismissal.

(Stokes and Bohlman 2003, p.18)

Certainly my own prejudices concerning the value of much current and historical publications about traditional Irish music will hopefully become apparent to the reader – if they are ambiguous I will certainly, but metaphorically, underline them as reflexively as possible. At the end of the day I am writing about writing about traditional music, critiquing critique of the essentially uncritiqueable, returning to Seeger’s original thesis of the ‘musicological juncture’. I would argue that these writers create the juncture, the
transformation, of music and language through a creative but ultimately futile act. If this is a creative act then such creativity can be accounted for in an examination of the processes it involves in a cultural context. Thus such creative transformations are necessarily critiqued.

Of course, what will be accounted for here are works presenting categorical structures representing this tradition in literature. Such categorical structures build set parameters and expect category members to share certain attributes. However, in the real world of embodied, social, political, cultural and musical ‘traditions’, any such categorical structures have particularly ‘fuzzy’ boundaries. I have excluded many other published materials that may include important information about the nature of this music but are not principally concerned with accounting for the tradition or its function, use and structures. This includes works of literature, biography, and folklore such as John B. Keane’s *The Bodhrán Makers* (1986) and the various publications of the stories of Cú Chulainn where the metaphorical nature of the presentation of music involves dimensions beyond the scope of this thesis.

It could be argued that publication about traditional Irish music has occurred in a number of forms that can be listed as follows:

1. Anecdotal publications that concentrate on the historical aspects of the tradition and on some of the prominent personalities considered significant in the historical progression and documentation of traditional music. This is perhaps the oldest
tradition of publication (outside of collections of repertoire), and notable works in this mould include Francis O’Neill’s *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (1913) and Caoimhín MacAoidh’s *Between the Jigs and the Reels* (1994).

2. Educational publications, ie. tutors, session guides etc, that tend to be aimed at adult beginners new to the tradition and perhaps coming from a performance background in another musical tradition. Example of this include Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin’s *The Bodhrán: an easy to learn method for the complete beginner showing the different regional styles and techniques* (1984) which has been translated into several languages and the publication of Seamus Ennis’s piping tutor *The Master’s Touch – A Tutor for the Uilleann Pipes* (1998) which will be examined in more detail later.

3. Musicological work is obviously of particular interest to this thesis as the suffix ‘-ological’ implies a scientific, categorically based approach to the presentation of material. This is perhaps numerically the lesser of all the categories of publication presented but the one where the presentation of language structures about performance practice is the most apparent. There are quite a number of articles, theses and publications that could be considered thus but perhaps the three most important publications are Seán Ó Riada’s *Our Musical Heritage* (1982), Tomás Ó Cannain’s *Traditional Music of Ireland* (1978), and Breandán Breathnach’s *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (1971). These publications are important because of their comprehensive nature (they are about the tradition as a whole), and their age. We will examine some of them more fully later. They also have an influence outside the realms of the tradition and are used in institutional educational contexts.
(secondary schools and universities in particular) in Ireland and beyond. They are often used in situations such as these to teach musicians from other traditions who must fulfil curricular requirements that include study of aspects of the Irish tradition.

4. Journalistic work, as especially apparent in reviews of recordings and performances, as well as in articles on ensembles and individual musicians. This is obviously not just meant for an audience of traditional musicians but would be regarded as important to that community, especially professional performers for whom promotion is an important issue. Definitely today the largest amount of such published material can be found in the *Traditional Music Magazine*. This strand of music writing is often criticised for its lack of a critical nature, as well as its commercial motivations. As a source of terminology peculiar to the tradition, this type of publication is particularly barren because the audience perceived for it extends beyond the core communities for traditional Irish music.

5. Cultural Studies literature concerned with traditional music has become more evident in recent years through the academic and journalistic work of authors such as Fintan Vallely and Harry White (1998). This literature essentially questions the place of traditional music in a modern context, critiques the interaction of the tradition with modern institutions and has been inspired in recent years by the ‘tradition vs innovation’ debate. Very often such writing is contextualised in the modern academic tradition of ethnomusicology and also crosses into the realm of more journalistic style publication. Very rarely does musicological analysis, in the
sense described by Cook and Everist (xi, 1999), figure in this strand of publication, reacting counter to the long tradition of musicological formalism.

Perhaps the landmark modern publication regarding traditional music (that is not a collection) is the *Companion to Traditional Irish Music* (1999), edited by Fintan Vallely *et al.*, and republished in a revised second edition in 2010. This is an A-to-Z, encyclopaedia-style publication, and as such is a prime example of the modern western, print tradition. It is essentially a list dictated by an arbitrary alphabetic structure but beyond that structure there is arguably very little arbitrary about the content! It is unique in its portrayal of aspects of all the above categories, unlike other alphabetic lists concerning the tradition such as *The Rough Guide to Irish Music* (2001) and others that tend to be journalistic and promotional in nature.

Before we talk about a selection of publications we must discuss the political economy of traditional music publication or, perhaps more accurately, the place of the publication in the cultural economy of traditional Irish music. William St Clair presents us with three models for the examination of the ‘political economy of reading’ (St Claire 2004, pp.447-449) all of which would be useful for an examination of publications of traditional music. These are (1) an “Author led model” (ibid, p.447) where the author is framed as prime mover in the production and societal influence of texts (a notion perhaps anathema to much post-modern discourse); (2) a “reader led model” where the “needs, aspirations and desires” (ibid, p.448) of the readers are the motivating factor for text publication; and (3) a “Commercial and
political model” (ibid, p.449) where the prime motivational force for publication is the ‘producer’ of the physical commodity with his / her / but most likely their own commercial and political interests.

We must take care not to misread St Clare by declaring that one or another model of interpretation of the political economy of reading in the context of publications of traditional Irish music is more appropriate. All are models of analysis that can be appropriate. What this illustrates is that the political economy around the consumption of published texts is a culturally situated context for the interplay of reader, author and publisher. Perhaps it would be more accurate in accounting for the reader-led model as an account of the political economy of reading, the author-led model as a political economy of writing, and the commercial a political model for an economy of publishing. It would be perhaps naïve to ascribe political motivations just to the entrepreneur – the reader or author can be equally ‘sullied’ by political (and for that matter commercial) motivations.

It is beyond the scope of this research to give an accurate, empirical account of the cultural economies around reading, writing and publishing (both text and music) among the communities of traditional music. This is despite such economies obviously playing a decisive role in the relationship between sound and sign. All such economies are individual in the context of the single publication but what I have focused on here are influential, substantial, and highly regarded publications from the musicological and educational traditions of publication. What will become apparent is that much text, especially in the
context of writings about traditional music is structured to enforce paradigms related to intrinsically conservative, institutionally supported views of tradition. In this way, as we shall see, publishing about traditional music tends to enforce what Bakhtin terms “monoglossia” (1981), the centrifugal force drawing meaning to dominant and conservative ideology.

It would also be impossible in a context such as this (or perhaps any context) to give a complete account of all the publications about Irish traditional music beyond the level of a bibliography such as James Porter’s *Traditional Music of Great Britain and Ireland* (1989). Indeed such an account would be very quickly made irrelevant in the vibrant context of traditional music publishing today. As stated previously, the categorical structure presented above excludes many other printed sources that can provide insight into the life of traditional music in Ireland and elsewhere. In the rest of this chapter I hope to present some examples of how, through the critical examination of these publications, the structuring of this music can be revealed. Also I hope to show some of the metaphorical roots to the assignations that create these categories and some of the motivations for their creation. To this end I will examine two works of the native musicological tradition, Breandan Breathnach’s *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (1971) and Sean Ó Riada’s *Our Musical Heritage* (1983). These two works are perhaps the first truly syncretic and methodological works concerning traditional Irish music practice and are two of the most comprehensive conceptual structurings of the tradition. I will also examine Seamus Ennis’ pedagogical publication, *The Masters Touch*
(1998), and go on to account for metaphorical presentation and structuring of the tradition itself in the publication of papers, *Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference* (1999).

The Pedagogical Tradition – Séamus Ennis’ *The Master’s Touch*

An important role for language in the context of a musical tradition is the part it plays in transmission. Certainly we do hear of transmission contexts where language plays no role (e.g. where student and teacher engage in progressive cycles of repetition) but these are the exception rather than the rule. For music to be socially and meaningfully transmitted, language is very frequently used to create pathways for that transmission. For instance, in my role as an educator in the field of traditional music performance practice I frequently come across the frustration of teachers who try to get over the idea to students that they should not see repertoire and stylistic techniques such as ornamentation, phrasing, variation etc. as being separate entities but see them existing together as a *gestalt* in the context of ‘the tune’. This frustration is very often born of the teachers own language-based structuring of their experience of performance practice, a structuring engaged and developed often and primarily for the purpose of transmission. Such structuring is not engaged in a vacuum and forms one or more culturally specific traditions in its own right. In a modern Irish context this tradition is obviously today a product of a negotiation between traditional transmission and modern institutional, mediated and objectified practices.

---

10 In another context, the Folk Music department of the Kunglia Musikhögskolan (Royal College of Music) in Stockholm will try to avoid what they call ‘the pedagogical tune’, a piece of music that is taught scientifically and structurally but does not really become ‘music’ in a real sense.
Séamus Ennis (1919 – 82) was arguably the most influential Irish traditional musician of the twentieth century. An excellent performer, primarily a piper, he was also a collector and broadcaster with the Folklore Commission, Raidió Éireann and the BBC and he had a huge influence on the early formation of Na Piobairí Uilleann, an international association of uilleann pipers. In the 1960s and early 1970s Ennis produced two versions of an instructional tutor for the uilleann pipes but neither was published in his own lifetime. Robbie Hannan and Wilbert Garvin collated the two and Na Piobairí Uilleann published this in 1998.

My examination of the tutor will focus, naturally enough, on the contents page as it most explicitly illustrates a categorical structure. The tutor gradually presents the learner with a structured introduction to piping technique. It is important to note that it does not do this in a systematised, chronological manner that could be representative of a series of classes but rather through a more abstract approach. The tutor is a careful blending of language from the western art tradition and language more peculiar to the Irish tradition. It is my intention to identify both and contextualise them through an examination of the metaphorical and onomatopoeic roots of the text.
**Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOREWORD</strong> by Liam O'Flynn</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 The Chanter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The first octave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hard bottom $D$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- $C$ natural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The Second Octave</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pinching and leading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pipping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nipping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Basic Ornaments</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grace-notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Slurs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ghost $D$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Semitones; lifting the chanter</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Semitones</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lifting the chanter off the knee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Advanced Ornaments</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rolls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Trills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Triplets; the slap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Crans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Shivers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tunes</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The Drones and Regulators</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDIX 1</strong> Transcriptions of Séamus Ennis' piping</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDIX 2</strong> A Séamus Ennis Discography by Nicholas Carolan</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDEX</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 15. Contents page from *The Master's Touch* (Ennis, vii, 1998).

Figure 14 is the contents page of the Ennis publication. Obviously we can see terminology taken from western art music theory – namely, *octave*, the letter note names ($D$, $C$ natural)
although used in a wider and more peculiar context (such as hard D or ghost D), semitones, trills and triplets. However, sometimes the meanings of these words are slightly adapted to account for the terminology’s new musical environment. For example a triplet as defined by Grove Online is:

A group of three notes to be performed in the time of two of the same kind, or in the time of any number of another kind. They are indicated by a figure 3 usually under a slur (ex.1). The slur and figure may also signify a two-beat note plus a one-beat note; and rests may take the place of any of the notes. The slur and figure used in this way do occur in the 16th century, but were not common until the 19th.


However Ennis goes on to extend this in the context of uilleann piping by saying:

Triplets are a sequence of three notes played in the duration of two notes. They are very popular in some hornpipes and particularly useful in reels. Since they are played so quickly, particularly in the reels, they have to be played staccato.

(Ennis 1998, p.26)

Ennis, therefore, adds extra defining characteristics to the definition of triplets that are peculiar to the tradition by stating they can be found, and are popular, in hornpipes and reels. He provides further defining characteristics to the definition of triplets which are related to the instrumental context by stating that they are to be played staccato, a technique central to the categorisation of style and performance practice in Irish piping. This illustrates how Ennis elaborates and adds to the standard definition of triplet according to his musical environment.
The terminology less general to western music practice is perhaps of more interest here. Some words, such as ‘chanter’ are cross-cultural. The chanter is used in Ireland, Scotland and much more widely to describe the pipe that is used to generate the melody. There is an obvious metaphorical relationship between this and the sense of someone chanting a tune or the medieval notion of a chanter being someone leading a congregation in song or providing a musical aspect of liturgy. The term chanter is found, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, from the late fourteenth century and is etymologically related to ‘cantor’ and ‘chazzan’, people who lead a Christian or Jewish liturgy in song. According to the same source the term ‘chanter’ is used to describe the melody playing pipe of bagpipes from the seventeenth century (OED Online). So as the chanter leads a congregation with a liturgy in song, the chanter leads the other pipes by playing the tune (the other pipes would only provide drones, and other accompaniment, but not the main melody).

Other terminology used by Ennis obviously relates onomatopoeically to the centrality of techniques of articulation to the performance of traditional Irish music on the *uilleann* pipes, in particular *pinching*, *pipping* and *nipping*. Techniques of articulation are central to the conception of stylistic categories in traditional *uilleann* piping. Pipers tend to be considered as either (1) *tight* or *closed* pipers, utilising a lot of techniques of articulation, or (2) *open* pipers, with a legato style of performance. If we look at the terms used through Ennis’s work to refer to aspects of technique, we can see that many are metaphorically related to articulation beyond the techniques being accounted for. Below is a table of such English language terms as they occur, including their definition in a piping context by Ennis and the
definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (online edition). I have excluded here those terms general to western music practice and used in conventional manners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Ennis’ (or editors) Definition</th>
<th>OED Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clip (xvi, 4)</td>
<td>Grace note (eds)</td>
<td>That which clips or clasps; an instrument or device which clasps or grips objects tightly and so holds them fast (&quot;clip&quot;, OED Online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut (xvi)</td>
<td>Grace note (eds)</td>
<td>A stroke or blow with a sharp-edged instrument, as a knife, sword, etc. (&quot;cut&quot;, OED Online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop (1)</td>
<td>The holes on the chanter</td>
<td>The action or an act of impeding, obstructing, or arresting; the fact of being impeded or arrested; a check, arrest, or obstruction (of motion or activity). (&quot;stop&quot; OED Online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinching (11)</td>
<td>An articulation Technique for getting up to second octave</td>
<td>The action or process of compression between two surfaces, <em>esp.</em> between a finger and thumb; nipping, squeezing, pressure. Freq. with <em>in, up, off</em>. (&quot;pinching&quot; OED Online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipping (11)</td>
<td>No definition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipping (13)</td>
<td>An articulation technique for motion from the second to first octave</td>
<td>Cheeping, chirping (&quot;pipping&quot;, OED Online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nipping</td>
<td>Staccato technique between F and G in higher octave</td>
<td>Senses relating to pinching or squeezing. (&quot;nip&quot; OED Online)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 16. Ennis’ terminology, definitions and OED definitions.
It could be argued that three of the terms used by Ennis, *clip, pinch* and *nip*, are all related to a basic image schemata described as ‘pinching’ with its connotations of sharpness and precise location (although this is not the only associated base schemata of the terms). Two of the terms, *stop* and *cut* (and maybe three including ‘tip’), perhaps rely primarily on the image schemata of a sharp end or break. Most of these terms are associated with techniques of articulation as an end in themselves or as means of movement between the two octaves of the pipes. Others not directly associated with articulation, the meaning of which I take from normal western usage which, according to *Grove Music Online*, “is the degree to which a performer detaches individual notes from one another in practice” (Chew, 07), are *cut* and *stop*. However, a *cut* is an ornamental technique which, though not creating silence between the notes, does distinguish them by placing another tone of extremely short duration between them. Also, a *stop* refers directly to what the player physically does (ie. stopping all the holes on the chanter) to produce the articulation. Indeed the fact that Ennis calls these holes on the chanter ‘stops’ highlights the centrality of techniques of articulation to performance on the uillean pipes, or at the very least Ennis’ performance practice on the instrument.

The term *pipping* importantly illustrates the secondary nature of metaphorical transformations of basic image schematas (such as ‘pinch’ and ‘end’ as described above). Of all the terms above, *pipping* is one that has a sonic meaning in its everyday and general usage, usually referring to a brief high pitched tone either from a bird (as in the OED definition above) or mechanically produced (as in the BBC’s Greenwich time ‘pips’). It is unlikely that
Ennis is referring to either of these definitions when he is defining a technique for a transition from higher to lower octaves on the instrument. It is much more likely that the root of the term used by Ennis, like the root in its use for the more general meanings, is onomatopoeic. By this I mean that the word sounds like the effect of the technique as well as certain sounds of birds and some mechanical sounds in more general context. This process of onomatopoeia is created through sound symbolism creating a network of associations that includes all of the terms above. In that process of networking is the symbolic role of short words containing multiple consonants are arguably essential (‘clipping’, ‘pipping’, ‘cut’, etc.) providing what sounds like the very things they attempt to describe. In this then the process of acquisition of this terminology is not unlike a process of metaphor, but instead of the appropriation of a term from one domain of meaning being applied in another, terms are being invented or acquired according to the perception of their sonic qualities (they 'sound like' rather than the other 'likes' implied, sometimes obtusely, in a metaphorical context). However, if metaphor is a word or phrase used in a context different to that in which it is literal, then, whatever the motivation (ie. through onomatopoeia or not), the above words are still metaphors. Indeed the general terms ‘pipe’ and ‘clip’ are probably echoic and imitative from their earliest recorded etymological roots in *Pipare* (latin) and *Klippa* (Old Norse).

However, these are not the only technical terms used in the tutor. Others presented by Ennis are used generally throughout the tradition for particular categories of ornament such as *roll* (discussed later) and *cran*. *Cran* is a word that is use to describe a complex ornament
that it is thought was originally used by pipers but more recently has become more of a cross instrumental technique. It occurs on a tone of a long duration (measured usually as a crotchet or dotted crotchet) and involves the tone being broken by multiple different grace notes above that tone. A simple D cran could look like this when annotated:

![Fig.17. The cran.](image)

Etymologically the word ‘cran’ is obviously related to *crann*, meaning tree, and perhaps also *craobh*, meaning branch, in Irish. In a personal communication, Mícheál Ó Geallabháin writes that around 1300 the wordcran(n) had three musical uses, as a viol / fiddle, a bow and a musical phrase. Thus we can assume that the term was originally partly a manner of synecdoche, where the term for a technique is acquired from the object or part of it that is used to construct part of the instrument. The process of how the term has been acquired to denote an ornamental technique associated with performance on the uilleann pipes is not obvious and may involve some past relationship, lost in time, between techniques on that instrument and an early Irish fiddle but that process is obviously rooted in some form of complex synecdochic metaphor.

There are other terms used by Ennis more specific to the pipes and piping than words like *roll* and *cran*. Five are concerned with different types and pitches of D tone; ‘back D’ (Ennis 1998, p.1), ‘ghost D’ (ibid. xvi), ‘bottom D’ (ibid, p.4), ‘soft D’ (ibid, p.4) and ‘hard D’
(ibid, p.4). All these have obvious metaphorical and embodied roots. The ‘back D’ is the only tone that involves the thumb hole at the back of the chanter being open, thus the name comes from an imagining of the chanter (rooted in the player’s physical interaction with it) as having a front and back. The bottom D is the D pitch which is the lowest on the instrument, thus the name is rooted in the general perception of pitches rising and falling. A ‘hard D’ and a ‘soft D’ refers to ways of producing this pitch in different timbres on the instrument, one metaphorically softer and one metaphorically harder. The ‘ghost D’ again refers to the timbre but also the articulation and attack of a technique of playing the second D of the instrument where it seems less articulate and substantial, thus producing the metaphor ‘ghost’.

There are of course other metaphorical constructs used to explain piping technique in this publication. I have largely chosen to ignore those that would not be peculiar to the world of uilleann piping and believe that the piping-specific metaphors highlight the metaphorical processes that have been used to develop what are terminologies of general usage in the piping world. The rest of this chapter will contrast the nature of these terms with some of the words and word structures we will examine later taken from other publications that exist largely outside of this instrumental and pedagogical context. We have seen that the motivation for the metaphorical processes that have been used to develop the terminologies stemmed from the embodied nature of the musicians’ interaction with the instrument or their perception of the sound created. What we will find when we move away from this context to more ‘musicological’ and journalistic publications is that motivations start to be
much more noticeably political and aesthetic in nature. They may lose their straightforward metaphorical and onomatopoeic focus, but are still essentially embodied.

The Musicological Tradition – Brendan Breathnach’s *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (1996)

Invaluable for this research are those texts of the musicological tradition that present categorical structures representing the entirety of the dance music tradition (and the native musical traditions beyond that, i.e. song, instrumental airs and dance) in a style that approximates the role of a traditional music educational text book. The three outstanding historical examples of this are the above-mentioned works by Ó Riada, Breathnach and Ó Cannain. They are all interesting in the way that they present categorical structures enabling a more ‘academic’ understanding of this music.

Breandan Breathnach’s *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* (first published in 1971) is perhaps the most important of these texts as it has been reprinted a number of times since its first publication in 1971 and is used as a basic text by second and third level teachers of music. Breathnach (1912-1985) was a Dublin-based piper and was arguably one of the most important figures in the world of traditional music in the twentieth century. He was a collector of repertoire and the fruits of this work were presented in the five volumes of *Ceol Rince na hÉireann* (1963, 1976, 1985, 1996, 1999). He also published many articles, most
frequently in his own occasionally published journal, *Ceol*. In 1971 Breathnach produced perhaps what is his most significant work outside of his collections, *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, with an accompanying cassette. An important convention in the presentation of its structure of eleven chapters is that each chapter represents a category of tradition and that he orders them chronologically, from old to new. Also each category is sub-divided chronologically according to the age of its contents. When he categorises song he first mentions Irish language song and its earliest historical instances in manuscript. For dance tune types he first mentions jigs, believed to be the earliest of those in current usage. For instruments he begins with the harp, the most prominent of early Irish instruments. It would be fair to say that this is informed by a deep-seated emphasis on authenticity and tradition that idealises and underlines the importance of historical rather than contemporary aspects of tradition. If it were the reverse (i.e. presenting a categorical listing of tradition emphasising what is most prominent in practice at the time of writing), Breathnach would have talked first about English language song, reels and the accordion or tin whistle!

The first chapter is a general introduction concentrating on the terminology and definition of ‘folk music’ (a phrase, as we will see, that is otherwise not popular within the tradition). It also introduces different types of historical musics and instruments. Chapter two is an introduction to the melodic structure of the tradition that he approaches by borrowing the medieval western-art church modes. Gelbert shows us that the use of modal analysis to illustrate the different characteristics of folk musics has its roots in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Gelbert 2007, p.146) and it certainly reached a height in the
writings of Cecil Sharp (1907) in the early twentieth century. However, this is a structure and terminology not generally used by traditional musicians who usually borrow and adapt more modern tonal structures from classical music to account for the tonality of their music. This is most often done in the recent operational role of providing information for accompanying harmonic instruments. Breathnach also describes motific structural aspects of the tradition by using the normal classical structure of A, B, C, and so on. This is certainly a terminology used by traditional musicians but there are others such as ‘tune’ or ‘low part’ (for the A part) and ‘turn’ or ‘high part’ (for the B part). Chapter three concerns songs and non-dance instrumental tunes, initially providing earliest examples of these. He goes on to provide examples of different categories of song, including religious song, love song, ‘patriotic or national’ song, *Aisling* (a type of patriotic song), the Fenian lay, labour or occupational songs, lullabies, carols, macaronic songs, English and Scots songs, Anglo-Irish songs and folk songs. These categorical structures are not equal and some are sub-categories of others (e.g. English and Scots songs and Anglo-Irish songs are both presented as categories of folksongs). The presentation of all English language song as ‘folk-songs’, and the implied presentation of Irish language song not as ‘folk-song’, could be an indication of how this categorical structure, or more precisely the labelling of it, is politically motivated. It could be argued that the implication is that English language song is ‘folk’ (i.e. oral, coming from

---

11 Phrases such as ‘E minor’ would not mean exactly the same thing as the tonal structures that would be meant in a general western music context. A tune that would be accounted for by ‘E minor’ usually involves the following tones.

[Music notation]

As such, Breathnach’s account of this being in ‘lah’ mode is an accurate account of the position in a western music context but its value is perhaps undermined when we realise that this is not the terminology used by traditional musicians.

12 Most Irish dance tunes are binary in that they are structured into two parts, although there are exceptions to this.
an illiterate peasant class) and that Irish language song isn’t. Since the first collectors of the eighteenth century, there has been the idealisation of aspects of true ‘Irish’ culture which are thought to be vestiges of a ‘celtic dawn’ of Irish high art (as discussed more thoroughly in chapter two). Irish language aspects of Irish culture, thus, are not represented as ‘folk music’ because of the implied definition of ‘folk’ (peasant and illiterate) which conflicts with the idea that the music is generated by the denizens of an idealised Gaelic-Irish culture.

After a historical discussion of dancing and dancing masters, Breathnach goes on to discuss dance tune types. In this he mentions jigs (subdivided into single, double, hop (or slip) jigs) and defines them primarily through time signature. A secondary system of definition is through the differentiation of quaver and crotchet / quaver progressions in double and single jigs which are sometimes considered as being in the same time signatures. He does not mention slides, a type of jig found often in the Cork / Kerry area and associated with the set dances (the social variety) of that area. Interestingly enough he does not ascribe time signatures to his definition of the reel of which he says “Its parts consist of eight bars, each containing two groups of four quavers” (Breathnach, 1971, p.60). This would imply split common time (he uses a mixture of split common time and 4 / 4 in his collections but always groups quavers in fours). Again, he does not provide a time signature as the primary defining aspect of hornpipes but instead writes that “The hornpipe has a structure similar to that of the reel, but is played in a more deliberate manner, with a well defined accent on the first and third beats of each bar” (ibid., p.61). This is, strictly speaking, contradictory as he defines the reel previously as having two groups of four quavers and thus containing only two
beats in each bar. There is obviously a tension between the relationship of 4 / 4 and 2 / 2 in
the writing of Breathnach where he sees the tunes as being in 4 / 4 but is reluctant to say so
explicitly (after all, he is explicit about the time signatures of jigs). At the same time he
recognises the overall structure of a reel as being in 2 / 2 (two groups of four rather than four
groups of two or 4 / 4). However, later in the chapter concerned with style and technique,
he does explicitly say that a reel is in 4 / 4 but does confuse the issue a little by saying
“Looking at the transcription of a jig (6/8) or a reel (4/4) one sees in each bar two groups of
quavers: in the jig, groups of three quavers, in the reel groups of four quavers” (ibid., p.88).
A useful term here is the word ‘groove’ which is used in the ethnomusicological tradition,
initiated by Steven Feld and borrowed from contemporary African-American popular music.
I believe Breathnach is reflecting a tension between the two ‘grooves’, 4 / 4 and 2 / 2, that is
evident to any performer and encultured listener of traditional Irish music when hearing
musicians playing hornpipes and reels.

The ‘groove’ very often depends on the melodic structure of the tune and always on the
interpretation of the performer who will often exploit the tension between the two to create a
dynamic that maintains the individuality of the performance. It is a matter of style. For
example, fiddle player Seamus Creagh produces a strong 4 / 4 feel by accenting the first,
third, fifth and seventh quavers of the bar consistently in his recording of reel, ‘Colonel
McBain’ (2001, Track 4). However, flute player, Paddy Carty, in his 1986 recording with
Conor Tully and Frank Hogan, *Traditional Music from Ireland*, performs ‘The Galway Bay
Hornpipe’ in a lightly accented 2 / 2. More normal would be the performance of ‘Scotch
Mary’ by flute player Desi Wilkinson in his 1987 album with Gerry O’Connor and Eithne Ni Uallacháin, Cosa Gan Bhroga, when he alternates the groove, especially in the second part of the reel.

Essentially Breathnach begins building an Aristotelian structure for differentiating categories of dance tunes with jigs according to time-signatures but starts to ‘fudge’ the use of these western musicological constructs when they fail as a tool, particularly in the context of reels. I would argue that Breathnach is incorrect in accounting for the difference between dance tunes primarily in terms of time-signatures although this is entirely understandable considering the aesthetic and general cultural environment he was operating in. This music was played by people for generations who were musically non-literate and who wouldn’t have understood, or had a need for, such western classical constructs as time signatures. Perhaps he would have been more accurate to tie his definition of dance tune types into his sections on dance. Of course this would not have been especially helpful in the context of this style of musicological work and would have resulted in a much more complex ethnographic publication. However, it is interesting to see how he produces a structure defined by factors he later undermines to allow for traditional musical ideas relating to the fluidity of the structure and frequency of beats in the every-day performance of reels and hornpipes.

The fact that he does suggest a structure based on time signatures is unsurprising for two reasons. The first and the most obvious is that this is a dance music, and its rhythmical
structure must be paramount for the traditional social life of the music. The music has to provide consistent rhythm for it to be of use to dancers and, we assume, the music had little function and use (in the sense that Merriam used the terms) outside of its primary context of the dance. However we have also inherited the basic western metaphor within which the words of time signatures are used. When we say a tune is in $4/4$ or any other time signature for that matter, we are using basic container metaphor where the time signature becomes a container that our tunes are either in or out of, and of course a container obviously lends itself to be the base of a categorical structure. This is in no way peculiar to time-signatures or music for that matter (we can be ‘in’ the club or ‘out’ of our minds). We also say that a tune is ‘in’ G (a key signature) but the potency of the time-signature containment metaphor is realised because of the centrality of the dance to the tradition.

Breathnach goes on to talk about set or long dances. Interestingly enough he does define them as dances when he writes “Set or long dances are solo dances, usually with a jig or hornpipe rhythm” (Breathnach, 1971, p.62) but in doing so grants them a secondary status by defining them in terms of the other dance tune types.

After a small section commenting on the titles of dance tune types, Breathnach goes on to classify musical instruments. He distinguishes nine instruments; harp, pipes (accounting for two different types, mouth-blown and bellows-blown bagpipes, as they appear historically), fiddle, flute, whistle, and a category of free-reed instruments that includes accordion, concertina, melodeon and mouth organ. The piano accordion is only mentioned in relation
to its growing popularity (along with the whistle) in comparison to the button-accordion. Many instruments do not warrant mention at all, especially the accompanying instruments (guitar, bouzouki, bodhran, piano) despite the fact that Breathnach certainly would have been aware of them in his day-to-day life as performer and critic. It is extraordinary that he feels able to ignore these instruments in his otherwise comprehensive account of the music tradition. The amount of space allocated to various instruments also illustrates the author’s value system. The instrument to be presented first is the harp. It has the most in the way also of historical evidence perhaps because it was the instrument of the aristocracy and therefore can be more easily found in historical sources. However, the most extensive section is concerned with the author’s own instrument, the pipes. This instrument would be regarded as central to the tradition, partly because of its peculiarity to it. After that there is a sharp drop in the amount of attention paid to the remaining instruments. Fiddle, which is next, has just a page devoted to it with no illustrations (in comparison to the ten pages, with illustrations, that is devoted to the pipes). This is perhaps surprising when we consider the importance of the fiddle in the more recent history of the tradition. The flute receives two paragraphs while the whistle, more surprisingly, receives nearly three pages (again, the whistle has a long, if scantily recorded, history). The free reed instrument section is subdivided into first the melodeon (again, the earliest example historically) which receives nearly two pages, the concertina, which gets one paragraph and the accordion, one of the most popular and prominent instruments today, the same.
The next chapter, on traditional style and technique, begins with small sections on the use of emphasis and phrasing. Here Breathnach makes more peculiar but extremely powerful statements that have proved to be extremely influential and demonstrates the power of the word in the tradition in a modern context. He writes that:

Intensity, the varying of loudness and softness of sound, is not a feature of traditional music. It is not possible, in fact, to vary the sound in such manner on the pipes. Crescendo and diminuendo are terms for which one finds no use in the notation of the music, and this rule applies equally to singing and to playing. The use of dynamic’s betrays the non-native

(Breathnach 1996, p.90)

He is undoubtedly right that the use of terminologies such as the Italianate ones he mentions would have little use in the notation of traditional Irish music. Indeed their use in classical music has an operational role in that they are performance instructions and it is evident that the notation of Irish music for Irish musicians does not have this role at all. Certainly dynamics, like many other stylistic techniques, do not make it onto the page (see chapter two for a discussion of the role of notation in traditional Irish music). Also the implication of the broad sweeping and above all gradual dynamics implied by the long ‘hairpins’ used to indicate these terms in a classical score rarely occurs in the performance of traditional music. However, the varying of intensity is an important part of many musicians’ performance style and can manifest in a number of different ways. The fiddle players of East Clare use small dynamics on long tones which will include a slight movement of pitch and a dynamic movement instead of an ornament such as a roll. Many older generation musicians would play the repeats of entire parts at different intensities of volume and use crescendos over one or two bars to ‘lift’ the music into a phrase or part change. Indeed, Breathnach justifies his
belief in the lack of dynamic and expression in Irish traditional music by his perception of his own instrument’s lack of capacity for making different dynamics. However this is not strictly true as pipers create a dynamic by occasionally using their drones and regulators.

Certainly Breathnach was just reflecting what was a common contemporary belief in the tradition but he certainly is taking a very narrow view of what dynamics are, a view probably taken from his encounters with western art music and that tradition’s interpretation of traditional material. A feature of mid-twentieth-century classical music in Ireland was the arrangement of traditional material in a classical idiom, performed by classical musicians in their own, or a pseudo-traditional, style. A technique foremost in the betrayal of such performances as untraditional would be the classical use of dynamics. Perhaps in Breachnach’s writing we can see evidence of his reaction to what he may have considered as a corruption of the music he placed so much value on. However, Breathnach’s moratorium on all forms of dynamics have meant that an embargo on their use has been institutionalised in competitions and other forms of evaluation of traditional musicians. It is not the fact that that this was the view of an eminent traditional musicologist that is important, but that he wrote it down and published it, thus giving this account of the use of dynamics more emphatic authority.

Breathnach goes on to present performance style as being the product of the interaction of ‘two elements; the instruments in use and the local styles in which they are played’ (ibid., 90). He then goes on to discuss performance on instruments that he predominantly divides
according to regional titles, each representing certain techniques and sounds. He categorises piping according to titles relating to the use of articulation, ‘Loose or open fingering’ (legato) and ‘tight or close fingering’ (staccato) (Breathnach 1996, p.90). He continues by presenting alternative and older regional division of piping style, stating that the former is associated with Leinster and east Munster and the latter with Connacht and the western seaboard generally. He states that this regional division of styles has now no real validity.

When speaking about the fiddle he gives an account of the style of playing for the Irish tradition as a whole that he says has a tone; “sweet rather than brilliant and mellowed rather than brittle…” (ibid, 91), a sound that he accounts as deriving from the way a traditional fiddle player holds the instrument. He continues by making a strong differentiation between traditional fiddling and the violin playing of the local art tradition when he writes:

People who advocate applying classical tone and technique to fiddle-playing miss the point that traditional fiddle is an art form in its own right. The techniques they seem to advance belong to a different system, and their adoption shows a pitiful ambition in the fiddler who uses them.

(Breathnach 1996, p.92)

Here we can see the best example of how a categorical structure is used in a political debate born of different aesthetics of performance and listening that exist in the same tradition. A number of fiddle players in the past fifty years would be regarded as being more classical in style and approach, most notably the great Belfast fiddler, Sean Maguire. However, this style of playing has not been universally accepted and promoted (no style could be said to be) and the quotation above is not just a manifestation of that but also plays an active part in the aesthetic argument of what constitutes traditional fiddle playing long after its author has
passed away. Breathnach casts this performance style outside the category ‘traditional’ by associating that style with another musical tradition (classical music). Classical music is very often seen as the dominant established style that, in its domination, is a threat to the native tradition, and is therefore denigrated within the tradition in an attempt by members of the traditional music community to reaffirm and elevate their own identity. Interestingly, Ó Súilleabháin (2007) writes on the perception (and rejection) of Sean Maguire’s fiddle style by prominent proponents of the classical tradition in Ireland (what he describes as ‘classical ears’ listening to traditional music). He juxtaposes this with the confusion that another great innovator of the tradition, who could be said to have been heavily influenced by western art music in different ways, generates within the community of ‘traditional ears’. Thus by associating a style of traditional practice (in this case fiddling) with the perceived dominant, threatening art music tradition, it is devalued. Of course, this is steeped in the common metaphorical positing of the local art tradition as being from outside Ireland and alien.

Breathnach goes on to distinguish local styles which he presents as surviving the ‘levelling influence’ (Breathnach 1996, p.92) of media technology. These are the North (from Antrim to Donegal) where players favour a staccato style and little ornamentation (he states the fiddler players of Tyrone however, favour embellishment) and ‘Sligo southwards’ (ibid., 54) which is more decorated.

He considers whistle and flute styles together, again divides the two, a division based on the use of articulation. The ‘west’ is legato where “embellishment is preferred to rhythmical
ornamentation” (ibid, p.60), by which he possibly means predominantly techniques of articulation, and a more staccato approach is not restricted to a particular region “…but appears in areas as far apart as Cavan, Sligo and Clare” (ibid, p.92). He goes on to say that much ornamentation in flute and whistle playing comes from piping because of the number of musicians that play both pipes and whistle or pipes and flute or all three.

When Breathnach talks about accordion style he again uses a categorical structure to illustrate that what is older, and thus more native, is a better playing style than a newer style that is easier and much less worthwhile. The older style is related to melodeon playing and is more staccato as it involves more bellows movement. I’ll leave Breathnach to describe his view of the newer style!

Young players coming to the music for the first time reversed the old style all together. They were not inhibited by any respect for the tradition and quickly discovered that the easiest way to play the accordion was by using he inner row as the main one, resorting to the outer row to provide ornamentation… Unfortunately the results are too often at variance with traditional practice… The provision of the extra basses is a further source of trouble in that it permits the addition of a harmonic accompaniment which all too frequently is foreign to the nature of the music. The introduction of the second row on the accordion effected a revolution in the style of playing, the effects of which are not confined entirely to players of the instrument, but they may be detected also in the playing of some young fiddlers. Fortunately, because of the limitations of their instruments, pipers, flute players and whistle players are largely immune from this contagion [his main technical problems are the lack of articulation and the inclusion of chromatic passing and ornamental notes]

(Breathnach 1996, pp.93-94)

I must be honest here and express that in my own place within the tradition I would be positioned as the opposite of the political and aesthetic inclinations of Breathnach. However his structuring of what ‘bad’ traditional music is, as represented above, is interesting. ‘Good’ is ‘old’ and ‘native’ while ‘bad’, as we can see above, is ‘young’, ‘new’ and ‘easy’. Again, it is
important to note that this categorical structuring is hardly peculiar to the context of traditional music practice. If ‘authentic’ is good generally, the presentation of certain sounds as new, or played by younger players, is making Breathnach’s argument for him. He does not now have to defend his argument from a sustained challenge from those who would point to its technical and musicological deficiencies. For instance, why is the harmonic accompaniment provided by the bass of the accordion unacceptable and that provided by drones and regulators on the pipes not? Also why are the chromaticisms of Paddy O’Brien unacceptable but those of piper Johnny Doran OK? Of course there may be good answers (or not) to these questions but the point is they don’t have to be made because the culturally acquired metaphor that ‘old is good’ is applied here in an appropriate context – traditional music.\[13\]

Breathnach goes on to account for technical and sound parameters for style. He calls these ‘ornamentation’, which he breaks down into embellishment, variation and rhythm, the use of which is predicated by instrumentation and locality. Embellishment he then breaks down into further categories; grace notes and “the filling in of intervals” (ibid., 95). Grace notes are themselves broken down into a further categorical sub-structure made up of single grace notes, double grace notes, rolls (divided into long and short rolls), and cranning. Breathnach describes variation, as “changing or vary[ing] a group of notes in the course of a tune” (ibid, pp.98). He goes on to divide his variation category into two; changing a single note and changing a group or bar of notes. The last form of ornamentation listed by Breathnach he

---

\[13\] Of course this metaphorical construct doesn’t work in all contexts. For example, the ‘old is good’ structure is not generally applied to airplanes and most foods and drinks!
terms ‘rhythmical variation’ which he explains as changing the structure of a base quaver movement (e.g. replacing \( \text{\textbackslash g} \text{\textquotesingle} \text{\textbackslash g} \text{\textbackslash g} \text{\textquotesingle} \text{\textbackslash g} \text{\textbackslash g} \text{\textquotesingle} \text{\textbackslash g} \) with \( \text{\textbackslash g} \text{\textbackslash g} \text{\textbackslash g} \)) or altering the duration of the base quaver movement. These processes of ornamentation do not “exhaust the means open to him [the musician] to decorate the melody” (ibid, pp.99-10) and then he goes on to describe a series of instrument specific techniques such as double-stopping for fiddle.

The point of this analysis here is not to be critical of Breathnach’s most important work, which is perhaps the most influential text on Irish traditional music over the past thirty years (secondary school teachers refer to the text as the ‘bible’) but to illustrate the use of categorical structures by Breathnach and how the presentation of these structures are aesthetically and thus politically motivated. The structures and their basic metaphors are not however peculiar to Breathnach and perhaps his greatest strength is in how he has organised categorical structure that already existed as narratives (sometimes unconnected) within the tradition and in wider social contexts. It is important primarily as a work of synthesis, synthesis that does not just bring existing information together but builds it into structures that relate this information in ways not seen before. We could visually present the structures created by Breathnach for traditional dance music (and in doing this I have excluded his structures for song and dance) as below.
Fig. 18. Graphic representation of Breathnach’s conceptual structuring of Irish tradition in *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland.*
Diagrams like the above can be instructive but do oversimplify the texts they account for (if they did not we would have no need for texts at all) and this one could perhaps be presented very differently. However it does give a perspective on how Breathnach, and, through him, other members of the tradition, organise their traditional music world into categorical structures. Interestingly perhaps the only place where Breathnach’s structuring of the tradition would vary from general structuring current today (admittedly thirty-five years after the publication of this text) is his use of the title ‘ornamentation’ to include embellishment, variation and rhythm. In current usage these words would be considered aspects of style and embellishment would be a secondary word used for ornamentation.

We can see from the above that much of the terminology comes from western art music (e.g. terminology around modes) and general western usage (e.g. instrument names). We can see also the early development of the common ‘music as place’ metaphors that are used in the expression of regional style, although it is in a fairly simplified form of east and west in comparison to other more fractured structures. Where the most peculiarly native terminology is evident is in the words used around ornamentation, namely ‘rolls’ and ‘crans’.

A roll is very often presented by traditional musicians (and by Breathnach) as below.

Fig.19. A generic roll.
Essentially it is a five note ornament usually used on a tone of longer duration than a quaver (a succession of which generally make up the movement of the dance tunes) that starts on the note ornamented, followed by a note above the main tone again, a note below and coming back to the main tone. This structure can vary across the various instrumental practices of the tradition but the above description would be regarded by most as generic. Traditional Irish musicians of course share the metaphorical convention of pitches being higher and lower than others (although there is anecdotal evidence that the direction isn’t always the same) and also that of the piece of music being a journey in motion with a beginning and end. Therefore the acquisition of the title ‘roll’ for something that is structured as being in motion and going up and down and returning to the original orientation is hardly surprising.

Therefore we can see Breathnach creating a categorical and hierarchical structure with a nomenclature derived from western art music, local terminology and more obvious metaphorical structurings of the music practice. However, the nature of these categorical structures is far from being politically or aesthetically neutral. This is not just an account of a music practice but an aesthetic account of what is valuable and damaging to the practice as Breathnach, and a large section of the traditional music community, perceives it. In building these structures, their aesthetic and political nature are emphasised through the use of metaphorical structures (such as ‘music is place’ and ‘old is good’).
The Musicological Tradition – Seán Ó Riada’s *Our Musical Heritage*

Published in 1982, *Our Musical Heritage* was developed from texts by Thomas Kinsella and Tomás Ó Canainn from tapes of the 1962 RTE radio series of the same name. Unlike the work of Breathnach this publication is not a text accounting for the tradition, and Thomas Kinsella, in the preface, writes of the booklet “the result does not amount to a text-book of Irish traditional music, it is too slight and selective for that” but the material is “arranged thematically” (Ó Riada, 1982, p.10). Ó Riada (1931-1971) is a much lauded figure in the worlds of traditional music and the local art music establishment as an performer, composer and academic. The basis of his academic reputation was the fact that from 1964 until his death he taught at the music department at University College, Cork and there took a particular interest in traditional music.

*Our Musical Heritage* is divided into three sections devoted to vocal music, instrumental music and group playing (in the development of which, as a composer and performer, Ó Riada is seen as being historically central). Ó Riada immediately demonstrates how he constructs the category ‘traditional music’ and his motivations for its construction when he writes:

> By ‘traditional’ I mean the untouched, unWesternized, orally transmitted music which is still, to the best of my knowledge, the most popular type of music in this country.

(Ó Riada, 1982,19)
In the parameters of this structuring we can see the meeting of nationalism, authenticism and incipient ethnomusicology. The notion of ‘untouched’ is interesting for something as intangibly yet humanly and communally produced as a traditional music practice but it is used in this context to portray something authentic and natural. ‘UnWesternized’ highlights the music’s individuality and is an implicit statement of Ó Riada’s nationalism which underlines the peculiarity of Irish music by stating that it is “not European” (ibid, p.19) music - a tradition that, incidentally, “…is, by our standards, comparatively young” (ibid, p.20). The ‘unwestern’ nature of Irish traditional music is developed by Ó Riada when he writes:

Irish music is not merely not European, it is quite remote from it. It is, indeed, closer to some forms of Oriental music. The first thing we must do, if we are to understand it, is to forget about European music. Its standards are not Irish standards; its style is not Irish style; its forms are not Irish forms.

(ibid, p.20)

Indeed in the lecture notes he used for teaching at University College Cork later in the 1960s Ó Riada entitles a section “Similarity of Indian Music to Irish Music” (Ó Riada, lecture notes). We can see the influence of ethnomusicology in the criteria for traditional music as ‘orally transmitted’, an early criteria for the definition of what was regarded internationally as a ‘traditional’ music.

The initial chapter on Irish vocal music is nearly exclusively concerned with Irish language song (sean-nós). He begins by listing a number of characteristics for the song tradition generally: it is unaccompanied; improvisation is an important aspect; the absence of western-style dynamics; variation is important between verses. He then goes on to account for
different regional varieties of sean-nós - Connacht, Déise, West Munster and to each he ascribes differentiating characteristics.

Chapter two, concerning instrumental music, is broken down into sections according to instrument – are pipes, fiddle, flute and concertina / accordion. There are two sections devoted to the pipes, one concerning technique which gives a historical account and physical description of the instrument while introducing its musical capacity. It then describes two techniques common but not necessarily exclusive to performance on that instrument, which are “popping” and the “cran” (see previous section on Seamus Ennis’ use of the terms). At the end of this section, Ó Riada’s reluctance to frame Irish music as ‘folk music’ is represented in the following quote:

...we can still distinguish the fabulous piping technique which Johnny Doran possessed. Listen to a reel. It would be ridiculous to describe this as a 'country dance'. Nothing could be more sophisticated or artful, in the best sense of the word.

(ibid, p.44)

The next section is concerned with the performance of the slow air on the pipes, which he presents as a tradition in decline. He makes a number of suggestions for the correct playing of airs on the pipes and at one point implies that pipers historically had a better knowledge of a functional harmony when he writes that “It is unfortunate that few pipers today have sufficient understanding of harmony to do this properly” (ibid, p.45). Interestingly he makes a specific value judgement on a phrase used by the great travelling piper, Johnny Doran when he writes:
For consideration of actual piping practice, listen to Johnny Doran playing ‘Sliabh na mBan’. Compared to the version sung by Nicolás Tóibín, Johnny Doran’s piping version is slightly different, especially in the last phrase of verse. This particular variant seems somewhat sentimental and unIrish but otherwise Doran plays the air with remarkable faithfulness.

(ibid, p.48)

This criticism depends on the perceived unIrishness and sentimentality in Doran’s performance. It highlights the implication of the widespread nationalistic definition of what Irish music is – that perceptively less Irish aspects of the tradition than others are not as good desirable. The demotion of ‘sentimentality’ in Ó Riada’s aesthetic is perhaps harder to source, especially considering the high level of sentimentality in some of his compositions (particularly the ones with a nationalistic content such as the music for the film Mise Éire) but perhaps he is reflecting a traditional aesthetic against expression of emotion in traditional music performance (seen also in Breatnach’s condemnation of the use of dynamic above). Ó Riada goes onto describe ‘The Fast Style’ (ibid, p.49) of playing the pipes, again avoiding the ascription of ‘dance music’ which he would have regarded as pejorative. He then describes a number of different techniques which are important to piping style. Central to the sound of this music is what he calls ‘tipping, or pipping’ (ibid, p.49) which he accounts for as articulation (ie. the stopping of the sound of the chanter between notes). Other techniques mentioned are ‘variation’ (a particular type of which features modulation) and ‘speed’.

Ó Riada goes on to speak about the fiddle and makes his famous statement:

Like sean-nós singing, but unlike piping, fiddle styles vary from place to place; there is no definitive standard style. I doubt of there is a county in Ireland that has not got its
own quota of fiddle-players and its own tradition – thirty two counties and, you might say, thirty two styles

(ibid, pp. 51-52)

Whether there is any truth in this statement at all it is interesting that Ó Riada places so much emphasis on the idea of regional styles in the context of fiddle playing in Ireland. Certainly Ó Riada has taken the equation of sound with political, often imposed, divisions of the island too far. He disingenuously goes on to write:

It is not possible to give an account of all these styles in a short space and I have for that reason confined myself to a group of styles chosen at random from along the Western seaboard. These are the Donegal style, the Sligo Style, the Clare Style, and the west-Limerick-north Kerry Style.

(ibid, p. 52)

These are the styles which are now in common parlance among traditional musicians today and accounted for according to the sounds made by leading performers of those regions (the only region commonly spoken of which is excluded is East-Galway). It is debatable whether the programmes of Ó Riada and his undeniably influential teaching were responsible for this contemporary currency for these regions as at least the predominant ones for regional styles or whether Ó Riada was just representing a popular conceptual organisation of style of his day among traditional Irish musicians.

He goes on to repeat the common Lomaxian thesis of ‘cultural grey-out’ and writes:
These distinctions themselves are not entirely valid or stable. Radio and gramophone records are gradually tending to produce a uniformity of style in fiddle-playing, so that you could quite easily a fiddle player in the far south playing in the style of some fiddle players from the far north whose style he might find attractive, and for which he would forsake his own local style. This seems a pity; no style is perfect, and the more styles that exist the better.

(ibid, pp. 52-53)

He then describes the role of Michael Coleman’s recordings as being central in this process because of the virtuosity and attractiveness of his playing.

Here we can see the conflict between the process of transmission in a traditional context and the ‘music is place’ metaphor. In the transmission of repertoire and style imitation is a major component. Learners, and in particular children, learn by imitating the processes of more experienced practitioners in their immediate environment. In the traditional paradigm, such immediacy is supplied by musicians who live in the near environment - siblings, parents, neighbours etc. - and thus we have the environment in which a local or regional style can develop. However, in the growing modernity of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, witnessing the phenomenal growth of communications technology and its accessibility, immediacy is supplied by the same sources but by so much more through travel, broadcasting, publications and recordings. Of course processes of imitation have had to be modified. A piper today can learn from a family member but also can use software to slow down the recorded, technologically idealised performances of pipers they may never meet. However, the basic principal of imitation at some level or another is still there. So when Ó Riada uses words like “An imitation is only an imitation, no matter how good it is, a sign
that the player lacks imagination, a confession of failure” (ibid, p. 53) he is talking about the
Cork fiddler imitating Sligo’s Michael Coleman rather than a Sligo player doing the same.
He can conceptually get away with this because of the ‘music is place’ metaphor. The young
Sligo fiddler player is in some way playing like Coleman because he is of the place, rather
than just imitating Coleman. Coleman is part of a wider sound continuum, the sound of the
place, and it is OK for the young fiddler from the same region to join that same continuum
even though he or she does so by the same process of imitation of such an individual. Ó
Riada, like many traditional commentators, gets over the illogic of imitation being good in
certain contexts than in others by replacing the conception of imitation in a certain context
with the ‘music is place’ metaphor. A related metaphorical structure (related in that both are
connected to the basic metaphorical schema, where a ‘thing’ is a ‘container’) is ‘music is a
moving body of water’. A good example is the recent television series A River of Sound.
Often we hear commentators talking about two styles or sounds merging by flowing into
each other or about music being polluted (like a river or a stream). We will discuss the
‘tradition as river / stream / body of water’ later.

Ó Riada continues by accounting for these fiddle regional styles. Donegal is “a loose style”
(53) because of its detached, single bowing. Interestingly, the use of the word ‘loose’ to
describe this use of articulation is the complete opposite of how the word is used vernacularly
about piping. Ó Riada describes these fiddle sounds and means of production for these
sounds but also then evaluates them. For example, writing about Donegal fiddle style,
“Accentuation is comparatively rare and the phrasing suffers somewhat” (ibid, p. 53). Also,
unlike Breathnach, Ó Riada links his account of style into specific recorded examples (again, we must remember that the original format for this publication was a radio programme) and, in the more mainstream musicological tradition he uses transcriptions also as illustrations. He completes his section on the fiddle with an attack on the use of the piano as an accompanying instrument.

Ó Riada’s sections on the pipes and fiddle are of roughly the same length and are by far the most extensive, and this of course reflects the conception of the fiddle and pipes as the most central instrumental strands to the tradition. He goes on to discuss the flute historically and to compare it to the flute as used by western classical musicians. He writes, “As with fiddle-playing the styles of flute playing vary from one area to the next. Examples from three different areas, Sligo, Clare and west-Limerick will illustrate this” (ibid, pp.60-61). Again, Ó Riada is promoting a regional structure of styles of traditional music performances and goes on to cite examples of it rather than portray the complete structure that he is implying exists. He then accounts for the techniques and styles of these three regional styles and also provides some speculative reasons for these local differences. For example he writes about the playing of Tom Billy’s Colliers by west-Limerick’s John Joe Hartnett;

Although the tune itself is sparsely-ornamented, the rhythm tends to sweep all before it. The reason for the emphasis on rhythm is possibly that in West Limerick the bodhrán, or tambourine, is still very much in use for accompanying melody instruments. Something of its rhythmic power may have been carried over…

(ibid, p.63)
Ó Riada goes on to speak about the tin whistle, accounting for its structure and playing technique (interestingly he puts the whistle closer to the pipes than flute in approach and technique, an observation that shows he had little or no performance experience of the instruments).

The final section on the accordion and concertina is essentially a vitriolic assault on the suitability of the button accordion (and “the greatest abomination of all, the piano accordion” (ibid, p.70) for the performance of solo traditional music. Through this we can find hints about Ó Riada’s aesthetic consideration of what is correct and incorrect in the performance of traditional music. He also produces a very interesting justification for the suitability of some instruments by the way that, the most suitable, “…are at all times directly in contact with the actual notes they make.” (ibid, p.69). This is because in performance on these instruments “the player makes the notes himself” (ibid, p.69). Ó Riada states:

This the accordion player cannot do. He does not make the notes, they are already there, ready to sound at the pressing of a button, produced in an almost entirely mechanical fashion. He has only to press a button and pull or push the bellows. The tone and even the intonation of the ensuing note has already been decided for him by the maker. Because of this individual musical expression becomes extremely difficult if not impossible for him.

(ibid, p.69)

This of course misrepresents the situation - for all instruments and with all instrumentalists in any tradition, expression is attained in different ways. However it is extremely interesting that Ó Riada solidifies the ‘note’ as a concrete entity hand-crafted by the musician. Such a perception occurs across the tradition and an obvious example of the imagining of the note
being a thing of tradition, crafted and handed down is piper Liam O’Flynn’s 1995 album title *The Given Note*. However, according to Ó Riada, the ‘mechanical’ nature of the accordion takes that individual hand-crafted aspect from the note. For Ó Riada, the player of the accordion disseminates mass-produced notes rather than creating his or her own. This metaphorical creation of the crafted versus the mass produced physical note is of course helped by the perception of the accordion as being an instrument of the industrial revolution, designed and produced in factories, lending it to a proto-Marxian perception as something that alienates product (the note) from producer (musician). However, the reality is that most of the instruments mentioned by Ó Riada as being suitable for the expression of traditional Irish music, namely flute, fiddle and whistle, were also mass produced on mainland Europe in the nineteenth century. However the relative newness of the accordion in the tradition and its radical reinvention in the context of the introduction and popularity of the B/C system in the 1950s and 1960s helps to promote the lack of traditionality of the instrument (where an important defining factor of what is ‘traditional’ is age). Also its initial status as an instrument for women in what was and is a predominantly male dominated world of performance practice could, in a feminist discourse, add to the marginalisation of the instrumental practice. However, what is of real interest and a common metaphorical theme in the language around traditional music is the notion of an aspect of the music (the ‘note’) being a hand-crafted item. This has been previously discussed in Patrick Hutchinson’s article ‘The Work and Words of Piping’ (1994, pp.583-615) and obviously the use of metaphors from the craft worlds, primarily of agrarian Ireland, are common. Hutchinson speaks of tunes that are ‘made’ (ibid, p.587), polished (ibid, p.588) and have
‘settings’ (ibid, pp.588). Again, Ó Riada used a metaphor (music is an object that is man-made / crafted), combined with a reaction against what is mass-produced to make aesthetic judgements against aspects of the tradition.

The third section of Ó Riada’s work concerns group playing. In this section he argues against the performance practice of céilí bands and presents his idealisation of instrumentation and style for an Irish group which was virtually realised in his ensemble Ceoiltoiri Cualann.

It must be emphasised that this publication is derived from what is perhaps a much more personal and far less tangible media, a series of radio programmes, and as such is not as ‘objective’ and inclusive as Breathnach’s text-book. However, as it is it does effectively present much of the conceptual organisation of the tradition and how metaphors are used creatively to not just help to create that structure and mediate it but also to play a role in the politics of Ó Riada’s aesthetics (which, I would argue were most probably drawn from the community of traditional musicians he first engaged). He certainly tends to use a little more vocabulary from the tradition of western musicology and he extensively uses transcription as a tool. His organisation is clear where he presents aspects of the tradition and accounts for their characteristics. For example: Irish music is oral, non-western, and comparatively ancient (Ó Riada 1982, pp.19-22); Déise song style features nasalization, is higher pitched and features more complex ‘big’ songs (ibid, pp.34-37). Even in its omissions it is clear that they exist and that there are further structurings and categories that he doesn’t get onto
(although this is perhaps disingenuous as there is little evidence elsewhere that he was any more aware of them beyond his belief that they exist). However, the way metaphor is used in the conceptual structuring of Ó Riada’s theses is reflective of the speech practices of many members of the traditional music community especially in the constructs around ‘music is place’, ‘music is a hand-made thing’ and the heirarchical sequencing of instruments and practices in terms of importance and traditionality politically worked out through the use of such metaphors. Ó Riada’s presentation here is more significant in that he contextualises and concretises his organisation of the tradition through recorded examples. This enables him to produce statements like:

“… a perfect example of the Donegal style: Johnny Doherty playing that fine tune ‘The Nine Points of Roguery’.” (ibid, p.55)

(about Junior Crehan) “He is a typical example of a West-Clare style” (ibid, p.56)

“A perfect example of the style [Clare flute style] is Michael Tubridy’s playing of a pair of reels” (ibid, p.62)

“Michael Falsey’s style, while basically a Clare style, is perhaps a little more rhythmic”

(ibid, p.62)

Ó Riada is thus presenting the performances of these musicians as best examples of practice in these regional styles. So Johnny Doherty’s “Nine Points of Roguery” is a ”perfect” example, we also have typical examples and some examples aren’t as good in the context of their regional style because they portray audible foreign elements through the utilisation of techniques that are, in that particular usage, not native to that style. We will return to this theme of ’best examples of’ later but here we can see some fine example of it in action. This is a structure which is central to modern conceptions of the nature and structure of
conceptual organisation in reaction to the failure of classical, Aristotelian structuring in our attempts to account for our organisation of experience. However in this musical context and this formal structuring of a pattern of behaviour previously structured for the functional needs of a music with an insular self-awareness and oral functionality, we begin to see political implications of such organisational and formalising behaviour.
Fig. 20. Ó Riada’s structuring of traditional music practice.
For instance, Johnny Doherty, who would have been seen as an excellent fiddler in his locality had he been part of an earlier unmediated generation, is in this newly structured context a ‘best’ example of a Donegal fiddle style. My own paradigm here is that this is a new (twentieth century) structuring but it is defensible as there are no previous literary or recorded sources for the structuring of performance practice along regional lines. Doubtlessly Ó Riada based his structuring on information and organisations he inherited from some of the very performers he based his structuring on, and perhaps there has been always some manner of regional differentiation between musicians whose contact with and knowledge of each other diminished as distances grew. However, Ó Riada gleaned and structured information from a first generation of traditional musicians who grew up with an effective diffusion of traditional music performance in a number of media (primarily, print, radio, record and very latterly television). Also, the primary source of Ó Riada’s knowledge for traditional music was a group of traditional musicians he composed and arranged for and performed with, most part of a rural diaspora, living and working in Dublin who, like many diasporic communities, idealised the home-place, a place they developed as central to their identities and lives. It is natural so that they differences they found between their various performance practices were accounted for as being due to their various different ‘home-places’. Whatever its source, such regional structuring is not uncommon (even in Irish sporting traditions there are different regional styles of Gaelic football and hurling) but is far from universal. For instance, there isn’t a strong regional organisation of piping styles in Ireland. What is important here is the creation of ‘best’,
or 'typical' examples of regional styles which are performances and performance practices that the regionality (with all of its implications of traditionality and authenticity) of other performances and performers are measured against. Thus Michael Falsey isn’t a best example of a Clare flute player because of his accentuation of rhythm (which would be more typical of Ó Riada’s definition of Sligo playing (Ó Riada, 1982, p.55)).

Breathnach, Ennis and Ó Riada were among the first to provide systematic structures to account for the performance practice of what they considered as traditional Irish music. Graeme Smith in his reaction against Breathnach’s and Ó Riada’s condemnations of the accordion and, in particular, the modern chromatic style gives us clues to understanding the nature of the structuring introduced by these three authors.

Commentators such as Breathnach and Ó Riada… were members of the Dublin middle-class: Breathnach in his position in the civil service, and Ó Riada in his public role as bohemian avant-guard composer, from which he launched his championship of traditional music. The differences between their attitudes and those of players, however, may not rest so much on differing socio-economic roles as in the fundamental differences in the understandings of the role and meaning of Irish traditional music. Is it primarily a social or national emblem, to be seen historically as a folk music, or is it a recreational entertainment, a personal skill, and an expressive medium? Are the deepest meanings it carries those of the nation and the people, or are they those of the individual players making a sound which is of their own life, not that of some imagine community? (Smith 1997, pp.540-451)

Smith’s own juxtapositions of commentators and players, real individual experience and expression valued over imagined community, and need for a primary function for the tradition are perhaps overly simplistic. Ó Riada wore many hats in his professional
life – composer, performer (in a number of traditions including the one in question) and academic. Breathnach was primarily an uileann piper as well as a collector and commentator. Imagination is surely also an essential aspect of the creation of community. Interpersonal connection is rooted in our dynamic, imaginative engagement with our human environment through, in this particular context, a number of humanly and imaginatively created sounds. And meaning for a tradition such as this is surely a fluid category, not with primary and subordinate characteristics but many that interact affectively to adapt to different contexts. A flippant example would be my personal affective and very different responses to hearing the ballad, *The Field’s of Athenry* being sung at an international rugby game or hearing a ballad band singing it in a public house.

However Smith does show us that the structures produced by such cultural actors are born out of a new, capitalistic, class-based and literate environment, and as such represent the culmination of the acquisition of this tradition which has been going on since the early eighteenth century. This process began with individuals who could be presented as outside the tradition acquiring the music to the other, middle-class world. However, these late twentieth century commentators, especially Breathnach and Ennis, were of both worlds, being among the first middle-class literate traditional musicians who brought a humanistically conceptual organisation from the world of their literate class to the understanding of their music practice which was previously largely a rural, non-literate tradition. In doing so they applied some of the politically based value
systems from their bourgouis world to this same music practice. For example, the development of a diachronic, systematically historical account of performance practice serves the post-colonial nationalistic aspirations of an Ireland led by a burgeoning middle class, creating a counter-culture to the music practices of the British (and equally middle-class) oppressor! It does so by using the affirming metaphorical structure of music in place (of Ireland and a locality) and in time (being ancient). The organisation and privileging of certain past practices is a constant feature of the writings of Ó Riada, Breathnach and Ennis and is used in itself to validate traditional music culture as an alternative to ‘other’ music practices. Therefore, contemporary practices seen as ‘new’ in the context of the Irish tradition and that have an obviously syncretic source are rejected as being aesthetically invalid. Conceptions of authenticity come from a very real need to construct alternative and politically motivated identities. So, just as the eighteenth century collectors dismissed much contemporary practice as being the result of the degeneration caused through the process of creating such gesunkenes Kulturegut (fallen cultural artefacts), because these performances did not fit their classical western aesthetic, twentieth-century middle-class commentators judge contemporary practices that are perceived as being aesthetically good or bad according to politically organised structures of authenticity. Furthermore, the representation of a singularly Irish structure for this traditional music rather than assorted regional structures (which has primacy in perceptions of English folk music) is also arguably in line with the nationalistic project. This ideologically driven structural boundary affects our perceptions of aspects of music practice that may otherwise be regarded as
traditionally Irish (such as the Orange flute tradition, the Irish blown bagpipe tradition, even Donegal fiddle music which has often been characterised as foreign). In this way oral music tradition(s) is / are being shaped by conceptual structuring in a literate style according to the political and economic needs and aesthetic preferences of parts of the communities that engage them. It is important to realise that the middle-class, male and urban originators of many of the structures we are discussing here were hardly representative of the majority of the rural working-class community who performed and listened to that music.

However, so far we have only really examined these publications from a writer led model. What role do the publishers and readers play in the economy of these publications? Obviously publishers have a commercial motivation for their role, they produce and sell texts to make money even if it is just to publish other texts or engage in other related activities. The publishers of these three texts are from three distinct types of publisher of traditional music material. The oldest publication, Breathnach’s *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland* was first published by Mercier Press in 1971, a small Cork based publisher of Irish material, and was published again in 1977 by the same publisher. It claims to be the oldest independent publisher in Ireland (established in 1944) and focuses on material based on Irish history, folklore and politics, from academic works to popular humour. In 1996 it was republished by Ossian, a Cork based music publisher, record company and retail outlet (with both a shop and internet based business). Ossian concerned themselves primarily with traditional music and was
very much the work of owner, guitarist and traditional music enthusiast, John Loesberg. The publishers of Ó Riada’s Our Musical Heritage were Dolmen press. This publication would have been in the spirit of nationalism and the promotion of aspects of Irish culture that would have been intrinsic to the ethos of both publishers. It could also be argued that the emphasis on the regional structuring of the tradition would have resonated with the regional nature of the publisher, both outside and an interest and focus beyond Dublin.

The publishers of Ó Riada’s Our Musical Heritage were Dolmen press, a small independent publisher, based in Dublin and focusing on Irish poetry and literature. The fact that they published Ó Riada’s transcripts in book form belies the relationship of Ó Riada and his legacy with and Irish arts intelligencia more commonly associated with literature, poetry and theatre, a relationship obvious in the presence of a forward by the poet Thomas Kinsella. Again, this community would have been very much involved in the nationalist project with a focus on an Irish high art identity. Ó Riada’s emphasis on the more complex aspects of traditional music, less obviously rooted in other folk traditions and even the classical traditions of Europe, fits very easily with this search for a separate, serious Irish arts identity. The importance of nationality and a national identity for Irish Art can be seen in the following quote from a conversation between RTÉ’s Andy O’Mahony and the founder of Dolmen Press, Liam Miller.
... I believed that the publication of a writer from Ireland in Ireland was an important thing, to give him a sense of identity with his own country, but also for the national pride of the country in an international sense, that our writers should at least be ushered into the world from Ireland.

(Harmon 2001, p.31)

The first publication to be discussed above, Seamus Ennis’ *The Master’s Touch – A Tutor for the Uilleann Pipes* was published Na Piobairí Uilleann in 1998. This is a Dublin based international organisation devoted to the promotion of the Uilleann pipes, both by developing the extent of performance practice, and setting parameters for that development, and politically within the wider music and arts community. As an organisation they receive funding from the state and to some extent achieve that by successfully promoting the primacy of the pipes in the instrumental tradition and portraying its performance practice as being under threat from external and internal influences. The organisation’s website states about its aims.

By the 1960s very few people in Ireland were playing the pipes and far fewer, perhaps only five, were engaged in the making of the instrument. It was a matter of grave concern that the art would decline further and so The Society of Uilleann Pipers known as Na Piobairí Uilleann (The Uilleann Pipers) was founded in 1968 at grassroots level by pipers themselves.

The aims of the society are to perpetuate the spirit of the music, in particular the playing of the pipes and the production and maintenance of the instrument itself.

To achieve these aims the single most important facet of the Society’s activities is the teaching of the uilleann pipes, especially to young people, as it is through this that the playing of the instrument will increase, prosper and develop.

(www.npu.ie accessed 13.2.10)
In the analysis of the texts above I am also extremely conscious of the metaphorical nature of words used by myself as well as the authors and their works. Henry Kingsbury writes about the world of the western art music conservatoire:

Not only is architectural imagery apparent when we hear of musical “structure,” but some form of special modality can be discerned in such seemingly everyday notions as “scale” (which originally meant “step”), harmonic “progression,” “leading” tone or “roving” harmony.

(Kingsbury 1991, p.196)

Paradoxically above I have built structures from the critique of structures presented by these authors. The building of structures is however an essential tool for the organisational understanding of our world, essential for the day-to-day existence of civilisation but awareness of the metaphorical nature of such intrinsic structures can be used to bolster them!

Words for the Tradition

What of this category of music making that we call ‘Irish Traditional Music’? Perhaps the single most important factor in the history of Irish traditional music is the development of this conceptual category itself in the minds of performers, audience (as far as such categories work in any culture) and observers. Indeed the idea of Irish traditional music historically doesn’t seem to come from within the community that
historically is believed to have generated the music. Motivations for the development of the concept come initially from outside the tradition and are essentially political.

Evidence of an idea of an Irish repertoire can be found from the sixteenth century (although this is not saying that it didn’t exist previously). Aloys Fleischmann speaks about his criteria for accounting for the ‘Irish-ness’ of some of the material he included in the *Sources of Irish Traditional Music*.

Even in the case of Irish titles, one has to distinguish between titles which clearly indicate that the style is an Irish one, e.g. ‘The Irish Dumpe’, Irish Jigg’, or ‘Irish trot’ and anglicisations of a title in the Irish language.

(Fleischmann 1998, XVIII)

In the above Fleishmann is indicating that, in all probability, there were forms of styles of music that were being classified as Irish (although the reality of this has yet to be researched adequately).

The concept of a national music is born in the nineteenth century and is rooted in the struggle for power and identity of an Irish middle-class in post-Act of Union Ireland. Harry White characterises the musical motivation of this community in imagining Irish music.

Irish music began to be determined by an attempt to rationalise and subsequently to polarise it as an outgrowth of antiquarian research on one side and as a coherent, politically informed expression of romantic individualism on the other.

(White 1998, p.36)
This class developed concepts of a historical Irish music, vestiges of which survive as fallen cultural artefacts which need not only to be preserved but brought back to former glory (as mentioned in chapter two). Indeed the search for national music is one that has historically stretched beyond the world of traditional or folk music and has been extended by the middle-class that instigated the concept to their own, western-art music. This search can be seen to this day and is central to the crisis of modern Irish classical composition as evidenced in the pages of *The Journal of Music in Ireland*. Raymond Dean writes amongst a flurry of letters concerning David Flynn’s article ‘Looking for the Irish Bartok’ (Journal of Music in Ireland, July-August, 2005, 4-6).

A ghost haunts the *JMI* - the ghost of the Irish Bartók. When last seen some years back, this fearsome spectre was safely tucked in his tomb, a spig of garlic in his gob and a shamrock up each hairy nostril. Now David Flynn has disinterred him as a bogeyman to browbeat us into doing what Mr. Flynn believes we ‘should’, nay ‘must’ do in order to earn the ‘Guaranteed Irish’ seal for our music.

(Deane Journal of Music in Ireland, 9)

It is perhaps the cross-genre nature of the concept of ‘national’ music (we can see above the idea of a national ‘classical’ music and examples of this sort of genre label can be found elsewhere, particularly in Irish rock and country musics) which makes it inadequate as a categorical label for the music under discussion. However it is an important aspect of the tertiary compounded label most commonly used today of ‘Irish traditional music’.

Before we examine the use and metaphorical construction of this categorical label we should mention the one obvious alternative used frequently especially in a western
context – ‘folk’. This term would be the common term for accounting for indigenous, mostly rural music in Britain, America and much of Europe but would be rarely used in an Irish context to account for the same music. Originating in the romantic nineteenth century conception of Volk the concept of ‘folk-song’ first appears in English in 1847 (‘Folk-Song’, *Oxford English Dictionary* (online)). Matthew Gelbart (2007) sees the concept of folk developing from the eighteenth century interest in Scottish music, in particular the publications in the 1760s by James Macpherson of the Ossianic lays (Gelbert 2007, p.11). He also points out that the development of the category ‘folk music’ was came about in opposition to the development of the concept of ‘Art music’, both of which were the principle factors in the recategorisation of music from issues of function to that of form (ibid. 7). As a term in a musical context it comes to prominence during the first English Folk revival at the beginning of the twentieth century and is manifest in the name of the organisation that marked the culmination of this early right-wing, romantic, English movement, *The English Folk Song and Dance Society* (established 1932), created through the amalgamation of the *English Folk Song Society* (established 1898) and *the English Folk Dance Society* (established 1912, see Boyes 1993). The later folk revival in north-America between the 1940s and 1960s and the second English revival of the same period saw the popular use of the term ‘Folk’ being used to account for the selected traditional musics of rural and urban working-classes of Britain and north-America along with much popular acoustic music. Perhaps the most influential and reflectively complete definition of the
Music is the definition presented by the International Folk Music Council at its plenary session in 1954;

Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has been involved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are (i) continuity which links the present with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative impulse of the individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community; which determines the form or forms in which the music survive.

The term can be applied to music that has been evolved from rudimentary beginnings by a community uninfluenced by popular and art music and it can likewise be applied to music which has originated with an individual composer and has subsequently been absorbed into the unwritten living tradition of a community.

The term does not cover composed popular music that has been taken over ready-made by a community and remains unchanged, for it is the re-fashioning and re-creation of the music by the community that gives it its folk character.

(Journal of the International Folk Music Council 7 1955, p.23)

According to Gelbart “this characterisation attempted to consolidate working definitions used by many different collectors and scholars over several definitions” (Gelbart 2007, pp.2-3) was certainly problematic and contributed to the later abandonment of the term for ‘traditional’ in 1981 which will be mentioned later.

Perhaps the root of the problem with a working and accurate definition of ‘folk’ was it’s definition in opposition to what was perceived of ‘art’ and, more and more prevalently, ‘popular’ musics.

In the plethora of record-shop labels used today ‘Folk’ has remained associated with the above musics in an English and north-American context despite the common splintering of the concept with the adoption of terms such as ‘celtic’ and ‘world’.
Audiences still attend ‘Folk Clubs’, go to ‘Folk Festivals’ and a sign of the institutional security of the term is surely evident in the establishment in 1999 of a Degree in Folk Music at the University of Newcastle.

In a contemporary Irish context ‘folk’ music has a more specific, contemporary (in both material and style of presentation), cross-national and song focused definition. Authors of early twentieth century printed sources about traditional Irish Music do occasionally use the term ‘folk’ (although nineteenth century publications prefer to speak of the music as a national or ancient music or combinations of both). An important example of this is Capt. Francis ‘Neill’s Irish Folk Music – A Fascinating Hobby published in 1910 in Chicago; but he does not supply us a definition of the term ‘folk’. Most early publications do not use the ‘folk’ word, rather using earlier conventions of national and historical accounts for the music.

The rejection or at least lack of use of the term ‘folk’ to what is otherwise described as traditional Irish music probably stems from a number of factors. The term initially was used to describe a music engaged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by industrial and commercial middle-classes who rejected the emerging industrial culture of western Europe. Vallely writes that the term “…stems from the awareness that industrialisation was obliterating old customs” (Vallely 1999, pp.142) but perhaps Georgina Boyes is more insightful when she writes of the English folk revival:
Underlying and supporting the specific needs of the survivals in culture thesis, however, are the possibilities the Folk offer of the construction of cultural alternatives. Their existence as a source of ‘otherness’ of a better or more natural state, offers a powerfully attractive rationale for their acceptance as fact. The way of life inherent in the concepts of the Folk and folk culture presented by the revival did not exist in the English countryside of the late nineteenth or twentieth centuries. For a variety of ideological purposes, however, their fragile, threatened presence was a structural necessity.

(Boyes 1993, pp.17-18)

The instigators of the English Folk revivals were not just motivated through an emotional and aesthetic regard of past traditions but were intent on creating ‘alternative’ cultural performances, building on dubious historical precedent. They were motivated to this by a reaction against the all too apparent excesses and poverty of industrial life and the perceived influence of German cultural and economic hegemony (ibid, p.23). The British folk revival was essentially the creation of a cultural ‘alternative’ out of an imagined past of which some small vestiges remained. However the conceptual organisation of a traditional music practice in Ireland that was essentially still a popular music in its rural constituency does not need or facilitate the creation of an imagined past community of folk by it’s practitioners and promoters. The ‘folk’ for Irish music was not an imagined and thus politically impotent community but a living politically situated community living in rural Ireland or a diasporic environment seeking cultural affirmation to assist in economic advancement. The communities that played Irish music were not rejecting modern industrial culture but were creating their art and manipulating their environment for these mundane but never-the-less important social ends. In doing so this community, of course, imagined its own history but very differently than in the source contexts for ‘folk’. The concept
of ‘folk’ and ‘folk-revival’ did not fit the cultural or economic aspirations of what was rarely called Irish Folk music.

Perhaps another reason for the rejection of the term ‘folk’ is the geographical situation of its use in the American folk revival and what has been seen as the second British folk revival of the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The location of these revivals and the association of the term ‘folk’ with them has obvious political implication. Conservative rural Ireland was very much in a post-colonial phase, rejecting perceived British culture and cultural artefacts (despite the obvious transparency of such a rejection). Aspects of British popular music culture were very slowly acquired in an Irish context for this and other reasons associated with the marginal nature of Ireland in relation to Britain and western culture generally and the perception of it being a conservative and, especially during the ‘troubles’, a hostile environment. A similarly slow rejection of American popular culture was also evident in the mid twentieth century. Indeed, at the third annual convention of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in Athlone in 1953 a motion was passed making musicians who played jazz ‘ineligible’ for membership (Bartley 2002, p.28). It is understandable that in rejecting the ‘other’ and asserting the individuality of the native music culture (as can be seen in the words of Seán Ó Riada cited above), the international, and particularly British and American term ‘Folk’ was and still is frequently rejected.
The term ‘traditional’ is one that seems to have to come to prominence from the 1950s and, in an Irish context through the promotion Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCE). Internationally, its rise to prominence as a term is manifest in the *International Council for Traditional Music*, founded in London in 1947. As we have seen above it was initially entitled the *International Folk Music Council* but in 1981 the name was changed to the *International Council for Traditional Music*. Erich Stockmann writes of this change alluding to the problems with the term ‘folk’.

The change of name to “International Council for Traditional Music” in 1981, which Christensen had proposed and advocated was a first step. It is unusual for an international organisation which has been in existence for three decades to change it’s name. The step was taken amid heated argument.

Today we know that it was absolutely necessary, and this was realised as soon as the step had been taken. It worked like magic and opened up doors in regions where the word “folk music” had a somewhat pejorative ring.

(Stockmann 1988, p.8)

Since its foundation in 1951 ‘Traditional music’ has been the main terms used by CCE. Its first ‘goal’ is “To promote Irish Traditional Music in all its forms” ([http://comhaltas.ie/about/goals/](http://comhaltas.ie/about/goals/)) and has been from its inception. At no stage in its official documents does it use the term ‘folk’. ‘Traditional’ has become the term of choice amongst the community of this music and ‘folk’ is often used (in perhaps a derogatory manner) to describe acoustic, contemporary singer / song writers who seem to be connected to both so-called Irish traditional music and an international ‘folk’ tradition of singer-song writing as epitomized by artists such as Bob Dylan. In fact from personal experience as a young musician growing up in an Irish diasporic
community in the south-east of England I would have considered myself an Irish traditional musician and would have resented being called a folk musician. I knew that folk musicians were middle-class English, and as well as being from the sometimes perceived as the less-than-hospitable host community, they were not particularly good! It took my ‘backwards’ migration to Ireland to discover how wrong I was.

Since then the term ‘traditional’ has become by far the most dominant in accounting for this music. We have institutions such as the ‘Irish Traditional Music Archive’, the Arts Council setting up schemes for ‘traditional arts’ a monthly glossy *Traditional Music* magazine and government reports on ‘traditional music’. One can argue that this development of the sense of a tradition, an entity that we call ‘traditional music’ or ‘traditional Irish music’ has had a far reaching impact on that tradition and its interaction with a changing musical and cultural world. Fintan Vallely articulates the contemporary Irish (although not exclusively so) demotion of the term ‘folk’ as not as serious or consequential as ‘traditional’ when he writes:

> Whether ‘folk’ of ‘Traditional’ [his capitalisation] is used to describe indigenous music on the island of Ireland is not of any great consequence to appreciating the music. Terms such as these, however, may be of great relevance in popular media commentary, where the trivialisation implied in the use of ‘folk’ can sometimes have artistic or economic consequences for performers.

(Vallely 2008, p.10)

I would argue that the impact of the universal mid-twentieth-century conceptual categorisation of a certain type of music of this island being ‘Irish Traditional Music’ has been huge. For example, why did the period 1800 to 1930 see the acquisition of
instruments (such as flute, accordions, banjo, concertina etc.) and tunes along with
dance types (hornpipes, polkas etc.) while the period 1930 onwards has seen the
general loss of tunes and dance types (a lot of the long dances, and through most of the
country many nineteenth century couple dances such as the Scottische) and the loss of
some instruments in the mainstream melodic tradition\textsuperscript{14} (especially some of those
acquired in North America and an urban Irish environment such as the saxophone and
piccolo)? It seems to me extraordinary that this period that has seen the more startling
modernisation of Ireland economically and socially and increased exposure to a wider
world that is seen to threaten indigenous culture has also seen a slow down in processes
of acculturation and syncretism in this same indigenous music culture. Could it be
that in the nineteenth century most practitioners did not classify their music world into
categorical structures that would create political and aesthetical barriers to musical
syncretism? But that since, in creating complex conceptual structures to organise our
musical world, especially in relation to others that can be seen as competing, we have
produced barriers to such threats of modernity? In defining its music and giving it
perceived musical borders and conceptual barriers previous processes of acquisition and
perhaps also forgetting have been limited so as to maintain what Marcia Herndon calls
the ‘music equilibrium’

\textsuperscript{14} I am here purposely excluding the newly acquired instruments for accompaniment such
as the guitar and the bouzouki which have gained a peripheral status, almost totally
restricted to an accompaniment role and still occasionally rejected as having no meaningful
role in traditional Irish music expression.
Music systems tend to seek balance and to resist change. It is the seeking of balance that constitutes the dynamic process of music equilibrium…
(Herndon 1987, p.457)

It is evident that the development of categorical structures as an indigenous, oral peripheral music engages a world of many musics that are mass-mediated, sometimes literate, in a modern capitalist context, is part of the many processes that develop to resist change and maintain equilibrium for that tradition. However, that tradition, arguably as part of the same sets of processes of music equilibrium, is further characterised through the use of basic metaphors and their image schematas. We will go on to examine how these manifest themselves in a single publication.

The View from the Floor, the Walls and the Ceiling - Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference (1999)

A unique example of a publication that contains examples from each category of publication I suggest above is the proceedings of the 1996 Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference (Vallely et al 1999). This conference, very much a response to a mixed reaction of the traditional music community in Ireland to a television series broadcast by RTÉ and the BBC in 1994 entitled A River of Sound was presented along the line of the classic debate of any tradition of artistic endeavor, innovation versus
tradition. The papers presented at the conference were by a mixture of musicologists, academics from related fields of study, journalists and performers. It is evident from the publication of proceedings that many of the contributors had intellectually surpassed the rather one-dimensional representation of an argument of innovation versus tradition and were attempting to express ideas they had about the nature of the tradition and the way it is structured and how it interacts with other aspects of Irish and world cultures. An important part of this creation of contrasting conceptions of what is tradition is betrayed by the metaphorical structuring of the entity that is envisaged as tradition itself. As ethnomusicologists we can view a ‘traditional music’ as a community of shared artistic practice but practitioners in this tradition are anxious to present this as a number of different forms with various and appropriately implied characteristics (although some authors are challenging the idealization of music communities, and in particular Helen O’Shea (2006) in an Irish context). I will examine some of these that are represented in this publication of conference proceedings, and also their metaphorical nature.

Before proceeding it is important to note that the nature of such metaphorical constructs are common to our every day life and are not peculiar to the conceptual construction and extension of this or any other music. The mapping of one conceptual domain onto another is part of the way we understand and the basis upon which we interact with the world. There are basic metaphors without which we cannot imagine not having. These are, according to Lakoff and Turner, indispensable and include such
basic metaphorical structures as ‘time moves’ (Lakoff and Turner, 1989, p.56). The obvious musical extension to this is ‘music moves’ upon which we build conceptions of speed and purpose in music, among other things. Obvious Irish music extensions would be the perception of certain traditions being faster than others (eg. Donegal music is fast, Martin Hayes plays slowly, a reel is faster than a hornpipe) and the traditional presentation of the tunes in ‘rounds’ where they are metaphorically imagined as travelling in a circle and returning to the beginning. These are conceptual structures that are shared throughout our lives and are essential for the full understanding of our (arguably, largely imagined) world, musical or otherwise.

Lakoff and Turner write;

A metaphor with the name A is B is a mapping of part of the structure of our knowledge of source domain B onto target domain A.

(ibid, p.59)

In this way the knowledge structure of B is informing the same of A. In a music context the effect of this is magnified because of the non-referential nature of the music (A). By using metaphor we are attempting to produce, through metaphorical mappings referential data about that music. So when in a more referential context we say something like ‘that man is a pig’ we are juxtaposing two objects and perhaps sets of behaviour that are easily observable and definable. However in replacing the target domain with a sound with affective meaning we are relying more on the source domain to give us a referential conceptual structure. Thus, when Lakoff and Turner write,
When metaphors map spatial domains onto non-spatial, abstract domains, the image-schemas are preserved by the mappings.

(ibid. 99-100)

This is specially true of words about music as a domain, it is predominantly non-spatial beyond the level of the embodied actions that produce the sounds that are described as music. We can safely say that all word about the sound of music are metaphors in one way or the other. Now I can give some examples of these mappings as they appear in *Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference*.

Irish Traditional Music as a Physical Entity

Traditional music is very often basically presented as a physical object to be interacted with and manipulated. This, again is hardly an unusual thing and in a western context at the very least we do the same with all our music, talking about pieces, grooves, works without self conscious examination of their metaphorical roots. Lackoff and Turner write that:

Part of the power of such a metaphor [they are discussing the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor] is its ability to *create* structure in our understanding of life.

(Lakoff & Turner 1989, p. 62)

Metaphors help to structure meaning in their target domains and arguably this structuring becomes more powerful the less the source domain offers structures of its own (although there is always the possibility of multiple competing metaphorical
structures – perhaps this is called musicology!). However, these structurings become less apparent because they are usually not created or invented by the utterer but part of a parallel linguistic tradition.

Once we learn a schema, we do not have to learn it again or make it up fresh each time we use it. It becomes conventionalised and as such is automatically, effortlessly, and even unconsciously…. For the same reasons that schemas and metaphors give us power to conceptualise and reason, so they have power over us. Anything that we rely on constantly, unconsciously and automatically is so much part of us that it cannot be easily resisted, in large measure because it is barely even noticed.

(Lakoff & Turner 1989, pp.62-63)

In the introduction of *Crosbhealach an Cheoil: The Crossroads Conference* the editors present the tradition as something to be carried over or pushed over a threshold into a new era:

> Traditional Irish Music entered the twentieth century bolstered by the Gaelic Revival and the cultural momentum of the Irish independence movement”

(Vallely et al 1998, p.5)

Very often the music is presented as some kind of archaeological artifact with the underlying implications of solidity, something that won’t change apart from the the inevitability of physical decay. Nicholas Carolan, the Director of the Irish Traditional Music Archive writes;

> And yet the entity “Irish traditional music” has a very long history on this island. It’s been here, in round figures, for 9,000 years

(ibid, 52)
Catherine Curran (researcher) also uses this metaphorical structure when she writes of the music being “…a cultural artifact…” (ibid, p.56) and Hammy Hamilton (researcher, flute player and instrument maker) speaks about the characterisation of things being “…damaging to the ‘tradition” (ibid, p.82) from which he goes on to speak of “The notion of the tradition as something which needs to be protected from change and preserved…” (ibid, p.82). Tony MacMahon (accordion player and broadcaster) develops this metaphorical structuring of the music practice being an physical object to be protected by adding a moral dimension describing the music as “…a gift…[for which we have a]…principle of care” (ibid, p.112). Another common metaphorical structuring is of the music as a physical legacy for example when Seamus Tansey (flute player, author) writes of “…the music handed down” (ibid, p.213).

Lakoff and Mark Johnson call these type of entity metaphors, ‘ontological metaphors’ writing:

Understanding our experience in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances as a uniform kind

(Lakoff & Johnson 1980, p.25)

Importantly these are all metaphors that imply an object existing primarily in a time frame and heavily rooted in a past. This plays to the modern, literate conceptualisation
of traditional music being rooted in past practice and where certain, mediated examples of past practice are privileged and unrecorded examples or practices are imagined. To serve these conceptualisations objects, and ideas of objects have been carefully chosen to reflect this chronologically based modern view of what ‘Irish traditional music’ is. Thus what Lakoff and Johnson in this instance fail to tell us is that we choose the entities to characterise our experience but to suit our own social positioning of that same experience.

**Irish Traditional Music as Living Entity (Plant, Animal and Dog!)**

An obvious extension of the metaphorical construction of music as ‘thing’ is music as ‘living object’. This can have one or a combination or three elements, tradition as ‘general, unspecified living thing’, tradition as ‘animal’ and tradition as ‘plant’. A common construction that can be attributed to the three categories above is of the tradition dying or being killed. Martin Dowling (fiddle player and researcher) speaks of the “…death of a tradition” (ibid, p.64). He goes onto produce, or perhaps, more accurately, imply, the common construction of the tradition as plant when he speaks of “… musical roots” (ibid, p.65). The implication is that the tradition has roots that are structured metaphorically through time which is interesting when juxtaposed against the more frequent metaphorical construction of the past being behind us. Roots imply the past as underneath us, also supporting us, perhaps an important alternative
metaphorical structuring in a world of ‘tradition’ which privileges past practice. Roots are also importantly hidden and unexaminable. Very often the only way of interacting with roots is by pulling a plant out of the ground and effectively killing it! There are also important resonances here with common metaphorical extension of ‘People are Plants’ (Lakoff & Turner 1989, p.6) which has an emphasis on the mortality of the plant / person.

Seamus Tansey, in typically colourful language, gives us an example of how tradition can be characterised as ‘animal’ when he writes, “It gives us a licence if you like, to think that we can copulate and mongrelise with every culture under the sun” (ibid, p.212). I do not claim that the metaphorical construction of tradition as dog (especially in relation to it’s sexual activities) is in any way typical of tradition, but it is at the very least illustrative of the same process through which we characterise our music through metaphor and image schemata.

Irish Traditional Music Personified

A further natural extension of the objectified music projected as ‘living thing’ is for it to be presented as a person. The editors account for the birth of the music when they write that “… LPs, tape, then CDs became midwives to a successful revival of traditional music” (ibid, p.5) thus presenting inanimate objects that could paradoxically
be presented as offspring of the tradition, the capitalist objectifications of the music, as facilitating the birth of a the music tradition as a revival. Traditional music is presented by Curran as an actor when she speaks of “The changing role of music in Irish Society…”. (ibid, p.56) and MacMahon presents the same as a magician or supernatural being, writing “…this music of ours possesses the power of magic” (ibid, p.116). This characterisation gains extra power as the music is given characteristics of agency, consciousness, and directed action that would not be as prevalent in other metaphorical constructs.

The personification of the tradition is an extremely powerful metaphor. Lakoff and Turner write about personification saying that:

The power of poetic composition to create complex new ideas from simpler conventional ideas reveals itself in especially clear form in personification – metaphors through which we understand other things as peopled. As human beings, we can best understand other things in our own terms.

(Lakoff & Turner 1989, p.72)

Personificating metaphors are so powerful because they create mirrors of ourselves with the same limitations and possibilities offered through embodiment, the same motivations we have ourselves, the same imperatives, physical and moral, and the same duties and rights. And we can see above it is born, has further innate creativity (ie. it is an actor with changing roles, an extension of this can go as far as to undermine the individual musician’s creativity) and lastly has supernatural powers for the benefit of us all.
Irish Traditional Music as River / Stream / Vehicle

An important development of the category of ontological metaphor called by Lakoff and Johnson ‘entity and substance metaphors’ (1980, p.25) is another powerful construction of tradition as a body of water or sometimes vehicle. It is perhaps one of the most widely used constructions because it allows itself to be used creatively to support many politico-aesthetic view-points perhaps because of the ever present but ever in motion paradox of a river / stream which has the permanency of lifetimes but where water and objects can pass in a moment.

Dowling presents a common extension of this when he speaks of “…the more diluted mainstream of the tradition” (Vallely et al 1996, p.65), perhaps implying different streams of differing potency. MacMahon presents and extends the metaphor of the tradition as a river with a certain path, speaking of attempts to “…chart the course of traditional Irish music…” (ibid, p.117) and going on to develop the metaphor to ‘music as vehicle’, writing sardonically that “The contemporary folk-musack boat must not be rocked” (ibid, p.117) but then reverts to one of the oldest watery metaphors for music events regarded as very tradition when he speaks of “The pure drop” (ibid, p.118).
This chapter has introduced some of the metaphorical constructions used by traditional musicians and commentators in print to account for this aspect of their musical worlds. It has illustrated how these constructions have been formulated to support political and aesthetic points of view. However it is obvious from the works of particularly Lakoff, Johnson and Turner that these constructions are not particularly Irish or musical. Speaking of tradition as being rooted, of a particular place or like a river, stream or thing is part of the general intellectual armoury that gives us creative control over our world and allows us to formulate structures and debates throughout the understanding of our experience and the development of that understanding. However I like to understand these structurings as the result of creative processes engaged to shape our musical environment according to our own aesthetic judgement of value and meaning which in itself is reflexive and a dynamic actor in the social milieu in which we live. Look briefly at the following quote from the above mentioned publication from Seamus Tansey:

In the case of Irish traditional music if you dilute, impose, cross pollinate or orchestrate foreign cultures with that which is native and part of the soul of this country you will kill or else you will smother the very essence of our music...” (ibid, p.213)

This to my traditional eye is verbose, belligerent but essentially creative practice. It combines metaphors of tradition as ‘thing’, ‘body of water’, ‘plant’ and ‘western art music ensemble’ to make a very forceful point about what he thinks people are doing.
to a music he holds very dear, while betraying an underlying isolationist and nationalist agenda. Though not as structurally relevant as the writings of Ó Riada, Ennis or Breathnach (it does not intend to be so) it equally portrays a political and aesthetic sensibility. In the following section I will examine the responses of traditional musicians to specific excerpts of recordings of music which will produce a more integrated approach to the examination of the aesthetic structuring of their musical world(s).
CHAPTER 4

“The Weft” – Players Words

Musicological discourse might well be viewed as a fabric, having both a horizontal dimension – a warp – and a vertical dimension – a weft. By the warp I mean the rhetoric-verbal organisation of the narrative, and particularly the play of metaphoric / tropological domains that make up the musicological story. The weft is the ways in which narrative is inflected by real world actors: representations of composers, projectors of the author’s or the reader’s “voice” into the account. The notions of warp and weft may be helpful in dealing with the relationship between the metaphoric images that populate the narratives of musicological writing and the palpable, warm blooded persons who read and write such accounts.

(Kingsbury 1991, p.196)

This chapter is an examination of examples of what Kingsbury calls the ‘weft’. Kingsbury is not the first to metaphorically connect the construction of woven material and texts - indeed the etymological roots of ‘text’ is ‘that which is woven, web, texture’ (Oxford English Dictionary Online, accessed 20.1.08). Kingsbury does not explore the relationship between the two dimensions he describes, but perhaps his representation of them is inaccurate, especially in his presentation of meaning and structure in language about music as being socially derived and focused. His account above does suggest a classical structuralist formalisation similar to Saussure’s ‘lange’ and ‘parole’ and as such perhaps brings much of the critique of Saussure’s approach to the
Kingsbury’s structures. Kingsbury above is saying that there is a ‘narrative’ (the warp or langue) ‘inflected’ by ‘real-world authors’ (creating the weft, the parole) implying that the process is from the former to the latter. Kingsbury can be forgiven for this organisation since he is largely concerned (as an ethnomusicologist) with musicological discourse in some of the worlds of western classical music. In these particular contexts the word and its symbols have an emphatic power that is perhaps beyond their position in any other tradition. From working in an oral, traditional music context (admittedly one that is emerging in a literate world) it is evident that the primal structure is that of weft, discourse on a person-to-person level. The warp, ‘the rhetoric-verbal organisation’ (ibid.), is derived from and, to a large extent, a synthesis of the real day-to-day discourses of members of the traditional music community. Indeed these acts of derivation are themselves constantly contested and reinvented. Again, this has synergies with the rejection of structuralism by figures such as Barthes and Bakhtin who turn away from the attempts to discover the edifice of langue and turn to the parole of speech acts to understand their narrative and textual worlds.

Here I will particularly look to tools from discourse theory and critical sociolinguistics to help organise and make sense of the material collected and the context it is collected in. Certainly these methodologies could be used for the other materials under examination in this thesis but they are particularly useful here. This is primarily because of the fluidity of these ‘communicative ecologies’ (Gumperz 1999, p.453) in the context of the interview where informants draw on a number of discursive resources.
and practices to perform speech acts in a setting that they would naturally see as some manner of intellectual challenge. The move away from structuralism in linguistics which, in its most extreme form denied the worth of the examination of language in action (*parole*) and the growing primacy of the examination of what Kingsbury calls ‘warp’ in the search for interactional meaning suits the study here. We will discover two hybridised discursive practices separated through motivation and united in metaphorical processes of invention.

In the last chapter we discussed representations of the warp, the representations of narrative and their categorical and metaphorical nature. In this chapter we will examine instantiations of the weft, speech acts by individual musicians concerning specific recorded performances, what Feld has called ‘interpretive moves’ (Feld 1984, p.7) and what Saussure would call *parole*. In the introduction I discussed the problematic issues associated with the style of ethnographic research presented here especially regarding context, the nature of ‘recordings’ and my role as researcher / cultural actor; and if the last chapter concerning publications is hardly comprehensive, this examination is even less so. I must always remain aware that the interpretative moves resulting in language will be different for musics in various contexts, and the context in which I generate language from my informants could hardly be seen as ‘natural’\(^{15}\). However, despite these issues, what will be presented in the coming chapter

\(^{15}\) A massive and generally uncontested contemporary metaphorical structure in its own right
will give insight into the categorical and metaphorical nature of the perception of their
music by traditional Irish musicians.

Feld provides us with an interesting model for the process engaged by informants.

..'the central core of a music communication process involves two components.
One is a dialectic or tension when we recognize and engage a sound object /
event. The other is the interpretative moves we employ to situate, entangle and
untangle this engagement / recognition and turn it into a kind of practical
consumption.

(Feld 1984, p.12)

We will see that these processes are mirrored in the language used by my informants
but that the process is much more integral and less polarised than is suggested by Feld.

The Informants

The informants interviewed for this research have been selected through a small list of
criteria. Firstly they are all personal acquaintances of mine, as some small degree of
comfort with the interviewer would be more likely to elicit a deeper aesthetic and more
opinionated response. All informants would be acutely aware of my position in the
tradition, of my own personal aesthetic system and my own awareness of their
opinions. Discourse analysis offers many tools that allows us to understand the
dynamics of conversations such as this but this is not the main concern here. In a
community as aesthetically and politically diverse as that around traditional Irish music
and where the University and indeed myself are positioned so visibly within these structures it would be impossible to evoke entirely frank and open responses (whatever they are!). However, in a familiar context where such relationships would be openly admitted and where there is acute knowledge and recognition of the social, aesthetic and political structuring of the questions and responses, this examination transcends any attempt at a so-called frank and honest conversation.

Around each extract the informant is essentially asked 2 questions – ‘what is it?’ and ‘do you like it?’ For the first I encourage the informant to imagine that I know nothing about traditional Irish music in an attempt to dig up language practices that may be excluded. The knowledge such language represents would be so apparent to another member of the same ‘sound community’ that the informant would naturally not feel the need to use it speaking to me in the interview context. For example, if a reel is played the informant would naturally assume that I know this is the case and will mention more discursive, response driven reactions to the music. The second question then assumes that I am an active, politically and aesthetically positioned member of the community with inside knowledge to the various sounds and organisation of sound within the community. The attempt to ask the informant to engage two different interviewers (an insider and outsider) in the context of the interviews does produce a tension and the informants tend to move towards the latter position, more in keeping with day-to-day interaction with the interviewer. Consequently I regularly try to
enforce the idea that they are to assume I know nothing (I ask them to imagine that I am the ‘ethnomusicologist from Mars’) but perhaps to limited success.

Below is a brief introduction to each of the informants to inform our reading of them. Most are from, or have lived for a time, around the south-west of Ireland and specifically around the Limerick area. All have had musical and professional dealings with me at the University of Limerick as performers, visiting tutors and students. I have avoided speaking to musicians who have a knowledge of my research (even those who were students were interviewed before they attended classes concerned with language and music and the categorical practices of the traditional music community). However it must be recognised that the informants come from a specific context and, again, hardly betray a complete account of discursive practice in the community of traditional music. Instead these instances of parole give us examples of processes and structures that are utilised in the creation of language in this context.

Denis Doody was an accordion player from Sliabh Luachra who lived most of his adult life in Shannon, Co. Clare. In Clare he worked as an electrician in Shannon airport. He would have been recognised as an important exponent of Sliabh Luachra accordion music, playing the older D# / D tuning system.
**Máire O’Keeffe** is a fiddle player from Tralee, Co. Kerry now resident in Co. Galway. She is regarded as a contemporary fiddle player from a Sliabh Luachra background who has been influenced by traditions outside of Ireland, in particular the Cape Breton fiddle tradition. Máire is a primary school teacher and has recently completed a PhD examining the accordion in the Irish tradition.

**Donal O’Connor** is a fiddle player from Brosna, Co. Kerry now resident in Limerick city. A retired secondary school headmaster, he was a prominent member of the Brosna *Céilí* band and would be recognised as playing within the Sliabh Luachra tradition.

**Majella Bartley** is a flute and fiddle player from Monaghan. She is a prominent member of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* and has won several titles at *Fleadhanna* (music competitions) at every level. At the time of interview she was completing an MA in traditional Irish music performance.

**Alan Dooley** is a flute player from Laois. At the time of interview he has only been playing traditional music for two years and was completing a degree in computer studies. He had little previous background in the tradition.

**Verena Cummins** is an accordion and piano player from Coventry, England. Part of the Irish diaspora, she moved to Ireland in the late 1990s and completed an MA in
ethnomusicology in 2000 which was when we conducted her interview. She currently lives in county Galway.

**PJ Vaughan** is a fiddle player from O’Callaghan’s Mills in East Clare. At the time of interview he was completing a degree in science and had little formal music education but had played traditional music from an early age.

**Patricia Daly** is a harp player from Co. Armagh. She is a prominent teacher and main organiser of the Edward Bunting Harp Festival. At the time of the interview she was completing an MA in Irish traditional music performance.

**The Context**

These interviews were conducted primarily in the physical context of teaching spaces and my office at the Irish World Music Centre (as it was called then), University of Limerick. One interview, with fiddle player Máire O’Keeffe, was conducted partially in this context and completed in a hotel room at the Willie Clancy Festival in Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare. Two others, with fiddle player P.J. Vaughan, and flute player Alan Dooley, were conducted in my home.
The informants were picked for a number of reasons specific to the individual contributor. For many their eloquence, willingness to express their opinions and ability to perform in such a context was important. Some were chosen because of their position within the tradition (e.g. belonging to an instrumental community such as the harp which has a particular identity within, or perhaps considered outside, the tradition). Their comfort with me and the context of the interview was also important. I knew all well personally and would have performed with many of them. All would have been regular visitors to the University, and some were students.

The Music

The music played for the informants to comment on was not selected to allow for a complete account of the diversity of traditional practice. Instead the 13 tracks were selected by me along the lines of what I would imagine would elicit stronger and more substantial comment. All of the tracks are from commercial recordings with the exception of one from a bar session. None of the tracks are presented in their entirety - the informant is usually only played one or two rounds of a tune in the recording. We must therefore bear in mind that the music is presented in a way not intended by the musicians and producers who created the recordings and the comments will not represent the whole recording or style of the musician. This will naturally be
presented in the *gestalt* of the whole performance, rather than an excerpt, although the ‘accuracy’ of commercial recordings in representing performance practice is often contested within the tradition. However, as stated previously, the point of the interview is not to present entire musicologies or accounts of performance practice but to discover some of the ways such categorical and narrative structures are created and used.

I will now go on to discuss each recording individually as well as the responses of my informants. My objective is to introduce etc. and engage an analysis later.

**Michael Coleman – The Shaskeen (reel).** This recording is taken from Harry Bradshaw’s remastered recordings of Coleman, *Micheal Coleman 1891-1945* (1992). Michael Coleman is regarded by many to be the principal historical performer for traditional Irish dance music. Of the early Irish-American recording era of the 1920s and 30s he is the most prominent solo recording artist and his recordings, originally on 78, have been reissued in the past thirty years on album, cassette and CD. He is promoted as the prototype Sligo-style fiddler and, as we have seen previously, commentators such as Seán Ó Riada have noted the pervasive influence of his style on the tradition in general, but would be divided as to whether this is a positive or detrimental factor in the modern history of the music. This recording of what is now a common session tune, very closely associated with the tradition of South Sligo and Coleman in particular, was made in 1921 along with the tune ‘The Bag of Spuds’,
recorded by American record company Vocalion (14201 7366). The piano accompaniment was by John Muller. Vocalion were established by Aeolian company (a piano manufacturer) and were known for their red Shellac disks and their ‘race-records’, particularly for African-Americans. They became a subsidiary of Canadian company Brunswick Records in 1925 (originally a company that made billiard tables!) (Barr 2009).

Nearly all interviewees recognised this as a 1920s, American recording, some recognised it as Sligo playing but few recognised the artist or the tune name. Majella Bartley’s reaction to the recording was indicative of the responses to this recording.

M. Ok. Well it was a reel. It was played on the fiddle and backed by piano. Do you just want me to say whatever I feel about the music or anything at all?
N. Yeah.
M. I do like it. I really do like it. There was great rhythm to it so there was. Good steady timing and everything. It was a real old style of fiddle playing so it was. Nice ornamentation, pretty basic towards nowadays. Some variations during the second time round in the tune, there was some double stopping with the bow doing the two strings at the one time with the bow.
N. Any idea who it is?
M. Is it Coleman?
N. Yeah.
M. Yeah, yeah, Sligo fiddle player, Coleman. I can’t remember the name of the tune. I should know the name of the tune. [diddles tune]
N. Do you play the tune?
M. Oh yeah, yeah, I play the tune. It’s a good fiddle tune.

(Bartley, April 2002)

Most informants said they liked the recording (with the exception of Verena) but qualified this in three ways. Firstly, most would have commented on the poor piano playing. However, notably, they would not comment on the choice of chords which
would be regarded as ‘wrong’ in a modern context (in the first two A parts the accompanist is clearly playing in D when the tune is in G major – he rectifies this in the second round). Some of the interviewees commented on the rhythmical monotony of it. For example, Denis Doody commented:

I consider the piano to have a certain amount of monotony in it. It’s like listening to a bodhrán playing all night. It’s grand for a while but there does come a, I think it actually interferes with the music

(Doody April 2000)

However, two interviewees commented that they enjoyed the piano playing or thought it was good. Some commented that the recording was good but technically the performance was not up to contemporary standards (as Majella does above). Of less importance was the poor quality of the recording. Only one of the younger interviewees with a preference for more contemporary styles stated a dislike for the playing, saying:

Now it’s a terribly old style of playing the fiddle. Very very loose type of style, very little technique I think. It’s very very…
N. Do you like it? Would you listen to it?
A. I wouldn’t listen to it whatsoever. Maybe the only reason I’d listen to any music like that is to learn a tune, but it wouldn’t interest me whatsoever to constantly listen to it over and over again for enjoyment purposes. Although I couldn’t really say that. It would depend on the recording of course. Another guy from the same era could have been excellent…

(Dooley April 1998)

Generally the response was that the performance was good (despite the quality of the recording and accompaniment) and Denis Doody commented on the quality of the
music in a contemporary context by talking about the influence a recording like this should have.

It’s the type of music that if every young player in Ireland today took up that type of style and that type of thing fiddle playing wouldn’t go too far wrong because it’s well founded, it obviously has a lot of tradition behind it, that type of music. It’s not a man that took it up, he’s a man that took up the music for music’s sake and who loved playing, he has the soul and style, ah and that’s really what I would say about it but that is the type of thing I would recommend to young fiddle players today…

(Doody April 2000)

This view would be a common conservative view that the music represented in these older recordings is more authentic and, despite the technical superiority of modern performance practice, more musical and engaging.

The Thatch Céilí Band, The Drunken Gauger. This is a recording of a céilí band (a ten piece traditional dance band) playing a set dance (one of the few tunes that is appropriately performed for a particular solo dance and unusually this particular one is in 6/8), from their album, The Legacy. The céilí band, though seen to be a conservative expression of traditional music, is a twentieth century reaction by the community of traditional music and dance to the growing development of an entertainment industry that took social life outside of the home and more traditional historical venues (such as the crossroads and agrarian markets) into dance and parochial halls serviced by professional and semi-professional dance-bands from a number of genres. The style of performance of this céilí band is that of a late twentieth-century band geared for competition (indeed The Thatch won the premier céilí band competition at Fleadh...
Cheoil na hÉireann twice, in 1986 and 1987) and involves eight ‘mainstream’ melody players performing the melody in tight unison with piano and basic jazz drum kit (snare, block and bass) accompaniment. The band consisted of the following personnel and instruments: Bobby Casey, Brendan Mulkere and Adrian Burke (Fiddles); Roger Sherlock and Paul Gallagher (Flutes); Mick O’Connor (Banjo); Tommy Keane (Uilleann Pipes); John Bowe (Button Accordion); Kevin Taylor (Piano); and Mick Whelan (Drums). The band consisted primarily of first generation traditional musicians (only four of the ten musicians were born outside of Ireland) and was based in the North London club of the same name, owned by Whelan, where it had a Sunday lunchtime residency. The band would be considered as consisting of some of the cream of traditional musicians from the English diaspora (in particular the legendary Bobby Casey, originally from the traditional music heartland of West Clare) by traditionalists who might otherwise reject the céilí band form.

Part of the reason for choosing this excerpt is because the tune is unusual. Most set dances are tunes that are accounted for as being in 2/2 or 4/4 and they often have a structure that varies from the standard multiple eight bar parts. This is in 6/8 and fits the standard structure so can be, and is regularly, played as a straightforward jig. The main difference between this performance as a set-dance and that of a jig is that it is considerably slower and the quaver note values would tend to be more equal rather than the often heavy swing heard in jigs (where some of the value of the second quaver of the group of three is taken by the first). The tune also has a piano introduction.
which is a stylistic marker for céilí band performance although the style of introduction, four bars with an upbeat taken from the end of the A part of the melody, is unusual, more usually associated with performance for dancing competitions. It is also reasonably rare to hear céilí bands performing set dances, especially in a competition band format as we have here.

Nearly all of the respondents recognised that it was a céilí band straight away but were thrown by the tune type in this context. When played the example Majella responded as follows:

M. Well it was a band. It wasn’t a céilí band was it?
N. What makes you think it wasn’t a céilí band?
M. Because was it a set dance they were playing yeah. You don’t normally play a set dance in a céilí band.
N. Ooh!
M. Well, normally.
N. ….. That’s the Thatch Céilí Band.
M. The Thatch Céilí Band is it?
N. The name of that one is the Drunken Gauger.
M. Oh right, right. It was unusual even from the beginning…

(Bartley April 2002)

The tune confused the informants in two ways. Firstly not all were acquainted with the tune and assumed it was some form of jig, however, the speed of the tune caused these informants to doubt their response. Those informants more acquainted with traditional music from Clare were more likely to know the tune and its type.

Donal O’Connor responded when played the excerpt:
D. That’s a group playing a jig ah, I’d say probably Clare, from the Clare, the jig would come from the Clare area and ah there are pipes and fiddles and very prominent piano there.
N. Yeah. It’s actually it’s the Thatch Céili Band I think.
D. Is it?
N. Yeah it is. It’s Kevin Taylor on the piano.
D. Oh right. Right yeah. Ah nice with very deliberate time and very, very pronounced. I supposed the piano maybe is adding to that, but it’s slowish.
N. Yeah.
D. And the exclusion of the playing but it’s nice.
N. I think in Clare they play that as a, Willie Clancy plays that as a jig and the way they put it there they call it a set dance.
D. Yeah I’d regard it more as a jig than a set dance and I’ve heard it played as a jig. I’ve heard it played in Clare more than any place else.
N. Yeah.
D. And I would classify it regardless as a Clare jig.

(O’Connor June 2000)

The fact that such an exalted group of musicians as that in the Thatch Céili Band regard this as a set-dance does not shake his classification of the tune as a jig!

Also many didn’t think it was appropriate for a céilí band to be playing a set-dance.

Máire O’Keeffe, a self-confessed fan of céilí bands, says:

M. I just think there’s a great lift, maybe because I like dancing and so a céilí band instantly brings dancing to my mind. Mind you that particular tune doesn’t because it’s a set dance, Isn’t it?
N. Yeah.
M. (hums first two bars of tune) and its much more formal, you can nearly see a solo step, it just brings the image of a solo step dancer with a kilt and a long thing flapping off the back, a fella probably dancing it more so than a girl, that music just puts into focus for me anyway the first thing I would see is a fella in his kilt, flapping around his white knees. But I like it, it’s nice. I don’t know if I’d listen to it at home. Not that particular tune, maybe the Thatch Céili band playing jigs, reels, hornpipes as a céilí band but I think when you go into set dances you don’t have as choice if it’s in the middle of a record.

(O’Keeffe July 1996)

And Verena says:
N. Yeah. Do you like set dances?
V. I do actually. I don’t know what I think about céilí bands playing set dances. I always think it’s a bit of a cop-out you know. Instead of playing a march. No. Yeah. Because you have to have four pieces [in competition] right so you usually end up playing a set dance going into a march just to be different, kind of a comical....I always think it’s kind of a, because you’re forced into playing four categories for a competition that that’s kind of the main centre for doing it rather than, I don’t think a céilí band would normally be playing a set dance. It would be highly unlikely that you’d get somebody dancing a set dance with a céilí band. Usually you’d get one-on-one.

(Cummins October 1997)

Máire and Verena both show how set-dances are considered inappropriate from two different view-points that betray an aspect of the complex, conflicted world of céilí bands. In the assessment of céilí bands in the Irish tradition are two often contrary aesthetics - one based on dance (i.e. a good céilí band is a band that is good to dance to and would have what Máire, and many others, call ‘lift’) and another based on competition (i.e. a good céilí band is based on a list of criteria independent of dance used in isolation in a competition context). Máire’s response leans into the first aesthetic but she prefers céilí bands playing ‘jigs, reels and hornpipes’ and set dances are for more formal dance competition culture where one musician plays for a male dancer (interestingly she roots the set dance in a context far removed from her own experience of traditional culture by putting in this formal, dance competition and engendering it as for males). Verena firmly places the céilí bands in a competition context, talking about the categories of tunes expected to be adhered to in the Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann senior céilí band competition and views the use of set-dances with a palpable distaste (interestingly this tune was used by the Thatch Céili Bands when they won both of their All Ireland titles). However she does enjoy set dances but not performed
by céilí bands, firmly believing that the tune type is suitable for a solo musician playing for a solo dancer. Perhaps the central factor of this competition aesthetic for céilí bands is what a number of the informants call ‘blend’. When asked what makes a good céilí band Verena responds:

The blend is the most important thing I suppose. It depends what kind of sound you want to go for. I mean that’s quite, in fact that actually reminded me of Luton [céilí band] this year because there’s a banjo and pipes. I’m not particularly keen on pipes in a céilí band. You can always hear them, like they always stand out you know. I’ve just been listening to the Ballinakill Céilí Band, it’s all fiddles, not even accordion, it’s all fiddles and flutes and it’s gorgeous you know. It’s a really unusual sound. But then again I think my own preference would be a button accordion or two and the piano is really important. The piano is wonderful, I mean Kevin Taylor is.

(Cummins October 1997)

However about this recording she says:

There wasn’t a very good blend I don’t think. I don’t know. It didn’t sound like a professional recording. It sounded like you’d gone in and taped them playing somewhere.

(Cummins October 1997)

Blend is therefore essentially produced in the balance of the instruments and there are a number of different blends depending on the instrumentation of the band. Interestingly enough, although audibility in the blend is important, some instruments (such as the pipes in this case) can be considered to stand out too much in the blend and take away from it. Of course it is apparent to Verena and all the informants that this sort of issue is affected directly by the use, or misuse, of technology. Verena thought this was a field recording and a professional recording should have a better balance (from a multi-track recording in the studio). Different informants react
differently to the place of the piano in the ‘blend’ in this context. Some, like Verena, enjoyed it while others such as Donal, found it a bit high in the balance and thought that contributed to the slow, deliberate rhythm.

*Céilí* bands attract some criticism in the context of the interviews. Denis Doody puts them outside of the context of the categorical structuring of regional styles and emphasises their functional rather than artistic nature.

DD……. But by and large I find that with *céilí* bands there really isn’t a lot to be said about *céilí* bands, you either like them or you don’t you know. If you ask me about Martin Hayes you know, I mean I could talk about him for probably about half an hour because I knew his father I know was East Clare playing and there would be people up there like Vincent Griffin now em, you know, who is not of the East Clare style of playing, a good fiddle player of course but if you heard him you wouldn’t say he was East Clare or a Paddy Canny type of player at all. But you’ll hear Martin. There is never a style in a *céilí* Band from a regional style by and large …. by definition there is no such thing as a *céilí* band. A *céilí* band to me is a group of people who get together and play for dancing and then the Gaelic League put a name on them when the *céilís* started and they called them just a *céilí* band but they could have been there for years and years. They were there forever and a day probably.

NK Yeah, but you wouldn’t be mad about that, you wouldn’t listen to it, you wouldn’t buy the tape and put it on in the car?

DD Well I don’t….

(Doody April 2000)

An appreciation of *céilí* band music in the interviews seems to be related to the informants’ involvement or, lack of involvement, in the bands themselves. Indeed I would suggest that Alan’s reaction to *céilí* band music would be indicative of many musicians.

N. Ah they’re a good band. That was after they won their first all-Ireland. They won two in a row. Would you like or would you listen to *céilí* band music?
A. No not really. Like at the fleadh I wouldn’t be caught dead going to, I wouldn’t really be going to the céilí band competition or the big competition, unless of course I was playing in it which will happen this year…. I wouldn’t mind playing in one because it would be good old fun to be playing in but to listen to, I don’t know. There’s just something uniform about it that wouldn’t interest me.  

(Dooley April 1998)

Very often céilí bands are perceived as a type of music, described so eloquently by Barthes in his essay ‘Musica Practica’ (Barthes 1977, 149), for playing rather than listening to.

Joe Burke, ‘Duke of Leinster’s Wife’ (reel) accompanied by Noreen Donoghue (harp) *The Leg of The Duck* (1992), Shaskeen, Galway. This recording is by a musician who would be widely regarded as the living exemplar of the B/C accordion style. This style, created and promoted initially by north Tipperary musician Paddy O’Brien (1922-1991), became massively popular throughout Ireland and the diaspora, after the release of O’Brien’s three 78 rpm recordings made in 1953 before he emigrated to America. This style introduced a new type of box and a ‘fluid’ sound which is commonly associated with fiddle performance as opposed to the older D/D# and D#/D tuned accordions, the performance of which involves a lot more opposing bellows motion. Joe Burke (b. 1939) from Kilnadeema in East Galway, has been known for his performances with Belfast fiddle player Sean Maguire and often testifies to the influence of early twentieth century fiddlers, in particular Michael Coleman. Indeed, his influential own label 1965 recording made with Andy McGann (fiddle) and Felix Dolan (piano) was entitled *A Tribute to Michael Coleman*. The reel ‘The Duke of Leinster’s Wife’ (recorded with ‘Paddy Murphy’s Wife’) is particularly
associated with Coleman as is this particular title, the tune more commonly known as ‘The Lady’s Pantalettes’. This style of accordion playing has become the dominant style in the Irish tradition but, as we have seen, the instrument has had many detractors, such as Seán Ó Riada (see chapter 3). This style has perhaps become the main focus of distaste for such commentators who may otherwise tolerate older, more apparently authentic approaches.

Virtually all the informants immediately recognised the performer as being Joe Burke (although many confused the harp accompaniment with a piano). Most informants tell us that they do not enjoy this style of accordion playing, often because of its popularity. Denis Doody says:

The unmistakable Joe Burke… This is the Joe Burke that put accordion playing as we know it now on the map, it must have been forty years ago. It obviously coincided with the arrival of the Paulo Soprani in Ireland… I’ve great time for Joe Burke, and if Joe Burke was just Joe Burke I would listen to him all night and all day but it was a pity that all the hundreds and thousands of people came along and copied him. And of course carbon copies are not exactly the original. So to that extent it has taken away from the Joe Burke thing because so many people copied him because once you’ve heard one you’ve heard the lot…. So they [he includes Paddy O’Brien in his comments] made a contribution and they probably did a bit of damage as well, in fact they were good, they were new and too many people who copied them could have spent their time much better by pursuing their own kind of, what would you call it, feeling about music rather than feeling that they had to do what somebody else had done but I’d say there were a lot of other things involved there, there was a certain amount of inferiority complex about the music which was probably left over from other days of probably been colonialised, all these things you know. We, they didn’t have the independence of mind, free thinking as we have today where all the young Irish people are very clearly, very pride of their identity and their music and they’re not afraid to go out and do the things that they want to do because they feel it is the right thing to do. Whereas before there was Joe Burke I think and they said, well, they didn’t have the confidence to say ‘well I have my own identity, I like music’ and that my theory about the thing rightly or wrongly. And because of
the independence the country has got in the Celtic tiger, it is wrapped up of course, in the past ten or fifteen years and we’re so independent and confident now that we all do our own thing and of course it has to be good for the music because once we get away from the stereotyping of anything we end up with something that is evolving all the time.

(Doody April 2000)

Denis here articulates the commonly accepted influence of Joe Burke on generations of young accordion players, especially promoted through CCÉ competitions, and the fact that this sort of over exposure has gone some way to make this style unpopular. This view is expressed by most of the informants, although Denis’ theory on how this was caused by a post-colonial insecurity is his own.

Majella describes Joe’s style as being “good and steady and it was nice and traditional you know, there was a flow to it you know and a good steady pace. Good laid back listening” (Bartley April 2002). Verena says “he’s got that lovely rolling kind of non-stop sound which like you were saying yesterday is quite synonymous with that whole East Galway kind of rolling continuous…” (Cummins October 1997). Máire says “His playing is real em, it’s flowing but it’s got great, you can almost see his shoulders rising when he plays. It’s flowing because I suppose the style he plays in is very flowing but it has little kicks in it. It’s also very controlled, I feel from it there’s a control about it” (O’Keeffe July 1996). All the informants like using water based metaphors of flow which is one that is synonymous with the tradition of his own area, East Galway. The metaphor ‘rolling’ also commonly used, again giving the impression of this steady, uninterrupted progression, in the same way as ‘flow’ but perhaps also alluding to the prominent use of rolls and other ornaments in his playing.
Joe Derrane, ‘The Bird in the Tree’ from Joe Derrane: Irish Accordion (Track 10, 1993). Joe Derrane is perhaps the last representative of the great Irish American accordion tradition of the first half of the twentieth century. Born in Boston in 1930 of Irish parents he was greatly influenced by the music of John Kimmell, Peter Conlon and Jerry O’Brien. He is a prodigious talent and at the age of 17 in 1948 he recorded 16 tracks of 78s issued by Copley Records. This is taken from one of these recordings. Derrane plays the older, American ‘outside-in’ system (D/D#) which produces a rhythmical and more staccato sound than the previous recording of Joe Burke. Interestingly Joe Derrane gave up playing this accordion, and Irish music entirely, shortly after these recordings were made and only came back to the tradition in 1994. He is still playing. This tune is second in the set of hornpipes but would more normally be played in contemporary tradition as a reel. A reel, as said previously, is perhaps best accounted for being in 2/2 and a hornpipe in 4/4. In tradition hornpipes would be considered slower despite that if we just measure beats per minute hornpipes invariably are faster (in this performance there are 205 crotchet beats per minute). Speed in Irish traditional music thus tends to be judged according to the speed of the quaver motion rather than the frequency of beats.

It is interesting to show how the melody is altered to play the tune as a hornpipe and a reel. In the system below there are the first two bars; the top stave is Derrane’s
The hornpipe version and the bottom is a common reel version taken from www.thesession.org.

The 4/4 feel is partially made in the intervallic quaver motion especially in the first bar when there are the consecutive jumps of a third or fourth, contrasting sharply with the much less busy reel version.

Fairly staccato playing in a heavy dotted quaver, semi-quaver motion, marks the style of performance. The one notable exception to this motion is the scotch-snap in bar 13. Ornamentally it is fairly straightforward with occasional single-note and double-note ornaments. Bar nineteen has an interesting single note ornament on the same note as the tone being ornamented. There are none of the more normal contemporary larger ornaments (such as rolls and crans) but a lot of triplets (e.g. bars 3, 9, 13, 17, 25) and groups of four semiquavers (e.g. bars 4, 7, 8, 12, 15, 18, 32) that Derrane and the wider traditional community would undoubtedly regard as being ornamental. Variation of phrasing is apparent (most notably in bars 5, 13 and 20) but variation is generally subtle, not altering the tonal structure of the melody significantly. Interesting
also for this style of performance was the ‘wet’ tuning of the accordion (a New York made Baldoni).

Fig.21. Transcription of Joe Derrane’s ‘The Bird in the Tree’. Each stave on the system represents a round of the melody. Blank bars indicate the bar is played as above.
The informants nearly all commented in some way on the performance as a hornpipe. Most identified it as a hornpipe, and some thought it was a very peculiar way to play a reel. PJ responded:

PJ What’s the name of the tune?
NK He calls it ‘the Bird in the Tree’.
PJ The Bird in the tree? Is that the Bird in the Bush like?
NK Same thing.
PJ It is actually, yeah, it’s so different… Not my style. No didn’t particularly like that one.
NK No?
PJ Well I knew the tune well but I couldn’t recognise it there. Maybe it’s just me.
NK You’d play that as a reel…
PJ He’s a very jumpy, a very non continuous music. Who is he?
His music was very as I said jumpy and non-continuous and half lifeless, well maybe not half lifeless but no continuation really.
NK Yeah. It’s all there with the arm, it’s not in the fingers at all. He plays that tune as a hornpipe.
PJ Yeah, it sounded that way, slow and jumpy.
NK Yeah. You won’t be buying any Joe Derrane albums anyway.
PJ No (laughter).

(Vaughan August 1996)

Approximately half the informants recognized it as Joe Derrane playing and three spoke of it being a ‘melodeon style’ or ‘inside-out’ or ‘back-to-front’. ‘Melodeon style’ is a reference by informants to the obvious use of the bellows as a central stylistic element to the performance as this is central to single-row melodeon playing. The other two terms were used by accordion players interviewed and are rooted in the special arrangement of the keyboard playing the melody. The phrase ‘inside-out’ is related to the performance of the tune predominantly on the inside row of the accordion with the outside row used to provide fewer of the notes of the tune. This arrangement of the finger-board is particularly associated with early twentieth-century north American based Irish traditional accordion players and the early arrangement in Ireland would
have been the reverse (outside-in). Therefore the phrase ‘back-to-front’ refers to the fact that this spatial arrangement is the reverse of the Irish arrangement. Thus these metaphors are specifically embodied for accordion players. Three of the informants also recognized this as being an ‘old’ style of performance, sometimes associating it with early north American recordings of traditional music.

The main stylistic factor that informants comment on is ornamentation although there is some disagreement regarding its effectiveness and extent. Majella says that “The ornamentation isn’t exactly perfect” while Denis speaks of the repetition of the ornamentation.

Joe Derrane. I like Joe Derrane. I couldn’t listen to him all night.
No?
Because there is a certain repetition and once you’ve heard him once, emm, the rolls and such he is doing, he repeats them all.

(Doody April 2000)

Alan however speaks of ‘mad ornamentation’, Donal speaks of it being ‘complicated’ and Máire says he is a ‘flashy and showy player’. Interestingly enough it is here that the informants leave the spoken word and attempt to illustrate the ornaments by singing or lilting them. For example, Verena says:

Yeah. Again, it’s kind of a, a lot of it’s to do with the accordion like. I just think it’s such a, the sound of that accordion is horrible. I can’t bear it. It’s just wet tuned and it’s really harsh and I hate his ornamentation. I’m being really hahahaha. I really loved that céilí band earlier on. Da da da…the ornamentation really, you know the first album that you brought out, his comeback album?
Yeah.
Like it’s, you kind of almost can’t hear the tune some of the time, he does that much ornamentation and it really sticks out and it comes out and hits you. I find the whole time I’m hearing didle da da didle da da and whatever he’s doing.
N. What sort of ornamentation?
V. It’s kind of like the da da da. They’re not triplets really. I’m trying to get this into words. Dadadadad.....
N. Three or four notes very quickly.
V. Yeah. They’re like rolls. They’re rolls but they kind of...
N. On the one note.
V. Da dadle …two notes. But they’re just, they’re not, I suppose they’re opposite to like I mean Joe Burke who does nice rounded rolls and they’re more sort of like dotted rhythms in there. I’m not being very articulate here at all. But they stick, they jump out. They kind of impose on the music you know. It’s not flowing, doesn’t flow. He plays all of his tunes, I mean I think that’s the style he plays in but sometimes I can’t hear the tune from what he’s playing with the embellishments he’s sticking in around the place.

(Cummins October 1997)

Clearly Verena is struggling to find words to articulate what she is trying to say about the ornamental practice and in the final few sentences she relies on using everyday spatial metaphors – ‘nice rounded rolls’; ‘they stick’; ‘they jump out’; ‘they impose’; ‘embellishments he’s sticking in’. Like Verena, other informants compare Joe Derrane with Joe Burke, who was played to them immediately beforehand. Denis Doody comments on Derrane’s individuality compared to Burke whose style is frequently copied by other accordion players. Donal uses different metaphors to Verena to describe Derrane’s playing in comparison and in opposition to the metaphors used by PJ (‘very jumpy, a very non continuous music’) when he says:

D. From America. Ah with accompaniment on the piano. Ah a very distinctive style again but ah and he puts in an awful lot of notes and a lot of ornamentation, am I suppose a unique kind of a style of playing. Or, fairly complicated you know, but ah completely different from the last one, from the playing of Joe Burke.
N. How would it be different? How would he?
D. Ah, he’s kind of em, Joe’s [Burke] ah I suppose it’s, it’s more free-flowing in, in the way he [Derrane] plays and ah he seems to hit a lot of notes kind of singly and rather than ah joining notes but ah a nice style.

(O’Connor June 2000)
So what for PJ was best represented by spatial metaphors, ‘jumpy’ and non-continuous’ and explained more technically by Donal as coming from hitting ‘a lot of notes singly’ (i.e. staccato), is contrasted with the water metaphor of ‘free-flowing’ to describe the style of Joe Burke, ‘joining notes’ (legato).

**John Carty / Brian McGrath, *The Cat That Ate the Candle*, 1994, self-published –**

**Haye’s Favourite (Barndance), track 4, side 2.** John Carty is a second-generation, London born musician best known for playing the banjo and fiddle. He has lived in Roscommon in the west of Ireland for most of his adult life and would be regarded as a creative and yet very traditional performer. He has been particularly influenced by the early American recordings of Michael Coleman, various banjo players and dance bands. This barndance (and even the form itself) would be regarded as typical of these related styles of performance (this tune was recorded by Michael Coleman and a dance band led by James Morrisson). This recording comes from John Carty’s first recording which focuses on his banjo playing, thus the fiddle on this track, also played by Carty\(^{16}\), is particularly low in the mix. The performance on the banjo is complex, featuring extensive use of ornamentation (in particular single note triplets, sometimes repeated and single note grace notes), very dramatic variations in the phrasing structure and the regular use of accompanying notes below the melody to accentuate rhythm. The fiddle performance, as far as I can hear, is comparatively understated and sparse, maintaining

---

\(^{16}\) In a number of the transcriptions of the interviews I claim that North Leitrim fiddle player Ben Lennon is playing instead. This was a mistake as I was misinformed and the cassette sleeve didn’t specify who was performing.
the focus on the banjo. The track features accompaniment on the piano by Brian McGrath.

Many of the informants do not recognise the tune type. Only Verena, Máire and Donal immediately recognise as being a barndance while others follow PJ’s first instinct and say it’s like a hornpipe (another 4/4 dance tune). The banjo also is disliked by a few of the informants. Verena, who instantly recognised the performance as being from John Carty says:

V. Oh that’s lovely. I love John. In general I hate the banjo like, I think it’s an awful instrument but I love John Carty’s banjo playing. I think the banjo is horrible. It’s real twangy kind of banjo playing. Wah…. John Carty’s really, I don’t know, he’s got a gorgeous style on the banjo. I don’t know what he does like, he just. If I could describe what he did now I could tell all banjo players and everything would be ok but…

(Cummins October 1997)

Denis also tells us why he dislikes the banjo;

D….the banjo, because you can only play a crisp note it doesn’t seem to be an ideal instrument to be playing with a fiddle where you can use long notes and short notes and everything and I find the two of them not being. My reason not for particularly liking that would be there is no, what’s the word, they cannot play on the same note in the same note, in the same way that two fiddle players would.

(Doody April 2000)

This would be a common perception amongst the traditional music community. The banjo is not generally regarded as a particularly traditional instrument, very often because of its association with American music and its lack of sustain, necessary for ornamental practice on other instruments and an engagement with the song tradition in air playing. Virtually all the informants commented on the unusual balance of
instruments, with the banjo in the foreground and fiddle in the background. This comment perhaps reflects expectations within a tradition where the fiddle is central and banjo ostensibly peripheral. Most informants used these sort of common spatial metaphors to account for this - Patricia says “I would like the banjo playing to come back and the fiddle and the banjo levelled or equalized more. I didn’t like the way one’s in front of the other” (Daly April 2002) and Máire builds a metaphorical house to describe the balance.

M. it seems to be a strange, the sound seems to be mixed very strange because the banjo is much more to the forefront, it’s like it’s right in your face where as the fiddle is like it’s out in the toilet or somewhere.
N. Would it used to be the other way?
M. Well, I reckon it should be pretty even but because the banjo is such a strong instrument anyway and cuts through whatever else is there the balance, I would fell it should be back a bit more. It should be a bit more balanced cause then it sounds a bit, he sounds out in the corridor a little bit.
(O’Keeffe July 1996)

When describing the style of performance three metaphorical orientations emerge from the informants. Firstly Verena and PJ see the performance as being ‘relaxed’, ‘laid-back’, and ‘unobtrusive’. These very embodied metaphors seem to particularly refer to the style of banjo playing. The second metaphorical orientation is of the performance being ‘old’ (despite the fact the recording was actually relatively recent to the majority of interviews). Patricia says “It’s like someone playing in an old pub somewhere” (Daly April 2002) while Máire says of the recording and John Carty (a musician in his late 30s at the time of the recording):
I'll tell you something that is deceptive, that sounds so old. That sounds old, old, old, but then now that you say John Carty. John Carty plays, he’s like an old man, he just plays like an old man. Gorgeous.

(O’Keeffe July 1996)

Alan comes up with the most colourful metaphor which perhaps says more about his own experience of the mediation of traditional music when he describes the recording as being ‘a bit vinyl’ (Dooley April 1998).

Obviously the ‘old’ and relaxed’ metaphors are entirely positive aesthetic reactions by these informants to the excerpt but the last metaphorical orientation isn’t quite so cut-and-dried. This is a geographical metaphor which accounts for the performance as being ‘American’ and is related specifically to the barndance tune type. Máire O’Keeffe specifically associates it with music from Philadelphia.

I thought it might have been Mick Moloney and maybe Eugene O’Donnell because it’s a barndance and I associate them so much with barndances. That whole Philadelphia thing.

(O’Keeffe July 1996)

Denis Doody’s first reaction to the performance is to say that it is American but he goes on to explain how he finds this style of music alien, saying that it reflects urban rather than rural life. This creates a dichotomy between music from Irish musicians in the two locations and implicitly queries the authenticity of the American-based expression.

One thing that I find about a lot of the music that came back from America that. I think the environment in America affected the music a lot. A lot of the music I call it concrete jungle music. It has an image of blocks of flats and concrete mixtures and a whole lot of things impinging on the music whereas here you had
the land, the people, the farmers and the whole environment was totally different. So I see a big gap between the two, that one is very, how do you describe it? Tends to be a bit more harsh and I think that it is because of the environment that you live in, whereas you wouldn’t get that sort of thing played in West-Clare or down by the fiddle players of Sliabh Luachra like Padraig O’Keefe.

(Doody April 2000)

The only two other geographical metaphors used by informants to account for this performance was ‘Sligo-Leitrim’ by Donal which reflects the perceived influence of that region on the early American recordings of traditional Irish music and also PJ who says, when asked whether he likes the performance or not, “I suppose the way that it’s played there would be half close to Clare style” (Vaughan August 1996). This is interesting on two counts. Firstly it implies an alternative musical geography to the one promoted by the artist and other informants. The style of performance is ‘close’ to PJ’s own style. And also it presents his aesthetic as something that is geographically bound. He likes it because it is close to his own style.

**Tommy Potts (1972), ‘My Love is in America’ (Track 12) The Liffey Banks, Claddagh Records.** Tommy Potts is perhaps one of the most cited traditional musicians of the second part of the twentieth century. He is held up as an icon for creative practice by commentators from within the traditional music community even though he did not particularly engage his contemporary world of traditional music practice (he didn’t play in a band and recorded one LP, eschewing modern conventions of sets of tunes and accompaniment). Quite definitely the single most thorough and insightful style analysis of an individual traditional musician is Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin’s PhD thesis *Innovation and Tradition in the Music of Tommie Potts* (1987). In this thesis he examines five separate recordings of Pott’s performance of ‘My
Love is in America’ (including this one from his only commercial recording) and states that this is:

…his most effective piece in that it seems to strike a balance between the reel in its traditional format and in its new format. In terms of ‘traditional ears’ this balance creates a controlled ambiguity which at once makes the piece more acceptable and yet excitingly new.

(Ó Súilleabháin 1987, p.206)

Ó Súilleabháin focuses on ‘melodic deviation’ (in his 1996 article ‘Crossroads or twintrack? Innovation and tradition in Irish traditional Music’ he goes on to change his terminology for this to ‘melodic alteration’ (p.184) as the principal innovatory ingredient of Potts’ interpretation of the tune, describing this as “a definite disturbance of a succession of these set-accented tones [the tones on the beat]” (ibid., p.207). Potts’ ‘deviations’ certainly do radically alter the melody, quoting themes from melodies taken from other traditions and completely altering the structure of the tune.

However Potts is perhaps most notable for the contrasts within his own playing. His technique and much of his performance style is extremely traditional, associated today with older fiddle players from Clare such as Bobby Casey and ‘PJoe’ Hayes. His use of ornamentation is sparse, including occasional rolls, single note grace notes and triplets. His approach to intonation is fluid, especially in his treatment of his Fs and Bs. Indeed, in the very first bar of the melody the first and third notes are F, the first closer to F natural, the second to F# and the intonation of both tones moves internally upwards. His bowing is predominantly single but he regularly bows over the beat to create a very
traditional rhythmical tension associated with fiddle playing from Sligo and Clare. Such rhythmical tension is further accentuated by him missing the tone on the beat (bar 2-3) which would be unusual. Ó Súilleabháin’s initial thought was that this was an influence from jazz, but Potts informed him that it comes from how he perceives a flute player to break the phrase for breath (ibid, p.209), and indeed would not be uncommon at the beginning of the tune. This effect is reflected through the performance by him regularly tying notes across the barline (as in Bar 4-5 in A1, A2, A3, and A5). The traditional feel of the recording is certainly helped by the inclusion of occasional mistakes (such as the A flat in A2), bar 4, fluffs (such as the lack of rhythmical clarity in A4, bars 1 and 2) and missed notes (such as the consistently missed notes in the articulated triplets of bar 7).

Such traditional technique contrasts with his ‘melodic deviation’. In the short extract we have used for these interviews he structures the tune as AAAAAABB instead of the usual AABB. This allows him to radically alter the A part in a number of different ways. He keeps reasonably well to an accepted model (ibid, 208) of the tune in the first round but immediately radically alters the tune for the first four bars of A2. In A2, bar 7, Potts begins a variation that hides the structural break between that repeat of the A part and the third reprise of it, only returning to the model of the tune in A3, bar 3. Traditional musicians would sometimes disguise phrase endings, or delay them but this completely hides a major structural division in the performance of the tune and is perhaps his most radical innovation in this performance. At the start of A5, Potts introduces another variation that, in interviews with Potts, Ó Súilleabháin discovers is a
A quote from 1950s pop song *Hey Mambo* (Ó Súilleabháin 1987, pp.298-303). Ó Súilleabháin has illustrated elsewhere (O'Súilleabháin 1990, p.127) that such a process of quotation is a traditional technique but usually only internally within a tune. Potts quoting a melody from an entirely different tradition is certainly an innovation.

The interview subjects have mixed reactions to the excerpt played for them. Most recognized that it was Potts (apart from some of the younger informants) and most recognized the tunes, although some did express difficulty because of its treatment. Many commented on him being unique and a few interestingly made a connection
between his style of performance and that of the contemporary east-Clare fiddler, Martin Hayes. Máire perhaps gives the most complete account of his performance style, excluding the aspects that Ó Súilleabháin would refer to as ‘deviation’.

He did everything, you can hear mixtures of Clare, east Clare, west Clare, you can hear, I can hear a Donegal kind of a thing because of the tripling he’s doing, the very strong bowing triplets that he does on I think the D note. He’s also sliding into stuff and sliding out of stuff. He’s rolling, his rolls are really gutsy rolls, gravel, you can hear the scrunch of the gravel in his rolls are so strong and he’s very very distinctive, he’s immediately recognisable. For a little bit, if you heard it in the middle of it I would question is it Martin Hayes or is it Tommy Potts but I know it’s Tommy Potts because Martin Hayes doesn’t play that speed unless he’s playing with John Williams and Denis Cahill and bopping along.

(O’Keeffe July 1996)

Indeed Máire wasn’t alone in associating Potts’ performance style with Clare. PJ said – ‘I thought he might be knocking around the hills of Clare you know (laughter)… the way he slides his fingers is typical Martin Hayes really’ (Vaughan August 1996).

Surprisingly, the informants who enjoyed the recording and praised its excellence tended to be the older musicians, more established in the tradition. Denis Doody in particular was in particular awe of Potts and the recording:

DD  Tommy Potts! [in first round]
NK  Yeah
DD  Beautiful work. [excerpt plays out]…Well obviously Tommy Potts. I would consider Tommy Potts as being a man that stands apart from all other musicians. There is no other musicians that you could compare him with. I never met the man, never knew the man, but judging by his playing he was a highly artistic character who played his own music in his own way. Every tune, every bar, every note that he plays, and when he replays when it comes around again, it has a different meaning altogether. Today we have a tendency, people just play straight notes everyone of the same as if you put it into a computer.

(Doody April 2000)
Interestingly enough the attribution of words, such as ‘artistic’ and ‘meaning’, used to describe creative output usually associated with western art practices, only occurs in this one instance. In all the interviews concerning all the excerpts never do such expressions appear apart from in the talk about Potts. This is reflective of the fact that much of the language of contemporary arts practice is not generally adopted by members of the traditional music community and also of the ‘otherness’ that is so obviously felt about ‘the man that stands apart’, Tommy Potts.

Of the younger informants, some appreciate Potts’ technique. Majella said:

M. … but he’s great stuff and as a technical player he’s really good as well.
N. His fiddle playing is it?
M. Yeah, yeah for that era he was very good so it was.  

(Bartley, April 2002)

But many others rejected it as being not technically very adept, PJ saying it has ‘poor flow’ (Vaughan August 1996) and Alan stating that ‘his technique isn’t up to much’ (Dooley April 1998). Whether the informants liked Potts’ fiddle technique or not, most recognised it as being ‘old’.

Verena has mixed feelings about the more innovative aspects of Pott’s performance (interestingly enough she associated the playing with the more contemporary, Irish-American fiddle innovator, Eileen Ivers). She says:
V. I know so many people, I can just picture so many people who absolutely
would hate that and I think particularly people in England more so than you
know, the real trad-heads in England who would absolutely...but I quite like
that you know there's no harm in farting around with a tune like. I mean I do, I
enjoy listening to it. I'd die if I sat through something like that in a session you
know, but I don't know would he play how he played there in a session?
N. No he didn't play in sessions...
N. How would you describe, what makes it so off the wall?
V. He goes off, it's like an improvisation on My Love is in America and like it
gets to the point where he could be playing anything really. As a rule there's a
jump recognising the tune out of what he's playing. I don't know it's like Eric
Sweeney. He did a version of (ma bu ni da) the song and like I just though in
some ways if you're going to, why don't you just make up a new tune and not try
and sort of you know, you've absolutely wrecked the most beautiful air do you
know what I mean. I mean he could have, he just could have picked a few notes
out of thin air and done it, and sometimes I think the same, you could just, I
don't know you could just not call it, not try and pass it off as being a reel or an
air or whatever it is and just, I don't know, I mean, I don't know. One part of
me says that's really exciting and it is, it's exciting what you can do but at the
same time I just think it's a grand tune as it is. Leave it alone you know.
N. Yeah, I know what you mean. ......
V. Yeah and there isn't any, it's exciting, it's like experimenting with a tune, but
at the same time there's no harm in leaving them alone either.
N. ...experimental....
V. It's totally, I mean it's so improvised I mean you don't, ... I don't know. It's
like a whole jazz kind of influence going on in there. I can't pinpoint exactly
what they are but there's a big jazz thing going on. And it's great. I love the F
sharp/F natural kind of.

(Cummins October 1997)

Verena here is reflecting an important and dominant traditional aesthetic which is
enabled by the metaphorical embodiment of 'the tune'. She also reflects some of the
feeling of what Denis said by comparing Potts to contemporary Irish composer, Eric
Sweeney, while assuming an improvisation aspect to the performance (which Ó
Súilleabháin has shown not to be the case). This she associates with jazz and she is not
alone in associating Potts with jazz - Donal too comments on the performance being
'jazzy'. She recognizes that Potts threatens aesthetics held dear amongst the 'trad-head',
diasporic community of musicians from her home place in England, while at the same
time it excites her.

Other younger informants are less ambiguous in their response to the recording. Majella likes the style of fiddle playing but doesn’t like the ‘mad stuff’, while Alan reacts against the phrasing, saying:

> Seemed to be the way he phrased the tune was a bit odd too. He was flying up the notes when I thought he should have been playing another note or two to finish it off and he was missing notes all over the place.

(Dooley April 1998)

PJ also does not like the way the phrasing seems to be irregular. Most informants use special metaphors to describe Potts deviations from the model of the melody. Denis states that Potts, in the performance ‘…disappeared into the wilderness’ (Doody April 2000) and Máire says that he ‘goes off on a tangent’ (O’Keeffe July 1996). However Majella speaks of him ‘losing the tune’ (April 2002), again reflecting the central traditional aesthetic which objectifies the tune. Donal, though not stating whether he enjoyed the recording or not, focused on the performance being ‘complicated’, ‘involved’ ‘difficult’ and ‘convoluted’ (O’Connor June 2000).

**Cathal Hayden, Mark Mohan, Brian McGrath, *Time to Dance ‘Kitty’s Wedding’* (hornpipe) self-published cassette, Side one, Track 7, 1989.** This excerpt is taken from a cassette of music for competition style step dancers. The musical scene around competition is a lucrative, if peculiar, world for many traditional musicians, piano and piano accordion players especially. Indeed some musicians specialise in this context
professionally. This context for traditional music brings a different set of aesthetics to its performance and we will comment on this as we discuss the recording. The recording is especially peculiar as it is made by musicians who are well known for their performances of music for listening rather than dancing to. Cathal Hayden, playing fiddle here (he is also a well regarded banjo player), plays with the band Four Men and a Dog and Brian McGrath on piano (also a renowned banjo player) is another professional musician, who formally played in the same band but is in much demand as a traditional accompanist in recordings and concert settings. Mark Mohan on banjo is a well respected amateur musician. Cathal Hayden in particular is usually associated with very lively, improvisational music that would be very dissimilar to the style of music usually expected (and provided here) for dancers.

The performance is of a hornpipe, ‘Kitty’s Wedding’ played at a reasonably slow pace and a heavily dotted rhythm. The fiddle is the dominant instrument with the banjo in near unison and the piano vamping in a straightforward 4/4 rhythm. Both the fiddle and the banjo play the melody in a reasonably uncomplicated fashion, maintaining the natural phrasing and using single note triplets and occasional single note grace notes and slides on the fiddle. This uncomplicated style is delivered purposefully for dancing where the function of the performance is to produce a rhythmically unambiguous and consistent recording for dancers to practice with in preparation for competition.
Firstly only one informant, Majella, recognised the recording and the performers but this was because she is from very near the home base of the recorded musicians. Nearly all of the informants recognise that the recording was for dancing, the instrumentation and tune type, but the identity of the musicians performing, in particular Cathall Hayden, surprised the majority of informants. Maire didn’t believe me:

M. Is it Sean Maguire?
N. No.
M. No.
N. Do you want me to tell you? It’s Cathal Hayden.
M. No. That is not Cathal Hayden!
N. It is Cathal Hayden, and Mark what’s his name, the banjo player and Brian McGrath playing the piano.
M. That is not Cathal Hayden.
N. It is Cathal Hayden. A tape they put out years ago called *Time to Dance* - it was for dancing.
M. Cathal Hayden. That isn’t him. When was that done?
N. Oh it was done years before Four Men and a Dog and all that craic….
M. I would never, never have believed and nobody would believe that that’s Cathal Hayden. Because his style today is much racier, flat, and obviously he must have been very young then, was he?

(O’Keeffe July 1996)

However, a couple of informants recognised the fiddler as being ‘northern’ (Cathal is from Pomeroy, Co. Tyrone, in Ulster) and a couple also thought it might be Seán Maguire (the legendary Belfast fiddler). Maire stylistically pins this down to them having the same intonation and using vibrato. Only one informant, Majella, said she particularly enjoyed the recording:

Perfect dancing music. Nice hop lift and stuff, very tight as well together and stuff like that. I’m very much into that there the way they play there now whenever they do, they can kind of get a bit mad but when they’ve settled down there I like that playing. Some of the stuff that Cathal’s like done I’m not overly fond of ‘cause he’s a crazy man, a total crazy man altogether so he is.
However the majority of informants said they would not particularly listen to this style of music. Denis says:

It doesn’t have any great polish or anything about it you know. Not developed, didn’t say good. Obviously since then his style has become more polished, more refined. For what reason, it’s only he could answer that but that is a fairly, because of the straight version, not that there is an awful lot you could do with that tune anyway, it’s a very staccato style’ - I wouldn’t , I most certainly wouldn’t be putting it on in the morning or anything [laughter]. But the Cathal Hayden of today I certainly would be putting him on.

(Dooley April 2000)

Virtually all of the informants commented on the rhythmical consistency of the performance and its suitability for dancing (Alan comments that the first part being played three times helps in coming to that conclusion). Donal notes that:

D. …ah you could see that it was made for a purpose now, like the timing it is so very definite you know and you know measured and emphasized so that ’twould be useful for you know you could see it for dancing, with a bit of dancing. The beats are very pronounced, the timing…
N. Would you listen to it?
D. I, I wouldn’t.

(O’Connor June 2000)

Verena, when asked would she listen to it, comes to the conclusion that ’…there’s no life in it’ (Cummins October 1997) while also recognising its suitability for dancing. It is very interesting that the words used for rhythm in the Irish music tradition are not used to account for this performance. We don’t hear the often-used words such as ‘lively’, ‘bouncy’, ‘rhythmical’, but instead words like ’deliberate’ (O’Keeffe July 1996), ‘measured’, ‘pronounced’, and ‘emphasised’ (O’Connor June 2000). Indeed the only
informants who mention the type of rhythmically orientated and embodied metaphor to describe the rhythm are Majella, as we have seen, and Patricia who speaks of the lift of the third but primarily the first beat of the bar. It is perhaps reflective of the general bifurcation of the Irish music and dance traditions that the embodied rhythmical aesthetic of the music tradition seems to run contrary to that of the dance tradition, although it is perhaps paradigmatic to assume that there was ever a unitary tradition.

**Session – Dermot Byrne (Button Accordion), Brian McGrath (piano), Frankie Gavin (fiddle).** This is a recording made from an amplified session in the Lisheen Pub in Galway in the summer of 1992. This style of amplified session is common in larger pubs in Ireland where the publican is anxious that the music is heard throughout the pub and the musicians are equally anxious to maintain the social and musical context of the session. The session is the most common performance context for the majority of traditional musicians in Ireland and is often regarded as the ‘natural’ context for the performance of traditional Irish music despite its relatively recent development. As you can hear from the crowd noise in the session, the music is treated as something in the background and it would be true to say that the majority of sessions are not occasions for attentive listening for the majority of the audience. This is a very good example of the plurality of function and use of a session. Dermot Byrne, a prominent accordion player from Donegal (now a member of the group Altan) starts a tune typical of his regional tradition, ‘Con Cassidy’s’, and leads this tune with McGrath accompanying on piano (again) and Frankie Gavin, the virtuosic fiddler player playing the melody. This tune is usually accounted for as being either a strathspey, a tune type associated with
Scotland but frequently played in Donegal, or a highland, commonly regarded to be a variant of the strathspey form, particularly associated with Donegal. Interestingly Gavin is obviously not sure of the tune and is learning it as he goes, there are several small mistakes (for example R1, bars 5-7), and occasionally he takes to playing rhythmical chords in accompaniment (R2, bar 1 and R2, bar 13). We can see here that there are performance and pedagogical agendas at work here even at this superficial level.
Fig 22. Transcription of melodies played on fiddle and button accordion in session recording. Again, Both rounds on both instruments are recorded on different staves of the system.
Firstly, none of the informants recognised the tune type as a strathspey, while four say it’s a highland, one said it was a hornpipe and the rest did not know. Virtually all of the informants recognised the style as being from Donegal or northern. Quite a few of the informants, including all of the accordion players, very quickly recognised the playing of Dermot Byrne. Most of the informants recognise the session context but it didn’t seem to effect their enjoyment of the recording (indeed Alan states that he likes listening to session tapes). Alan also recognises the learning process engaged by Frankie Gavin.

You see he can get away with it there because the pitch of a fiddle and the pitch of a button-box are so very similar and of course and it’s because Frankie’s known for playing his chords that he could get away with it very easy without knowing the tune. I barely, jees you were playing tunes on Tuesday night and I didn’t know them at all but sure I’d play anyway and I’d put something in that might be in the right key. Now it might sound totally wrong but sure at least I’m playing. And then because I’d be listening to ye and trying to follow your patterns that I’d pick them up you know. I did notice now actually because that’s, I noticed now that the fiddle was coming in strong in places but I was just presuming he meant to do that. He didn’t mean to do that because he didn’t know what the part was.

(Dooley April 1998)

Bothy band – jig – The Hag at the Churn – from Out of the Wind and Into the Sun (track 5) (1977), Mulligan Records. The Bothy Band (1974-79) were perhaps the seminal, iconic ensemble for the performance of traditional dance tunes (although they did also perform songs). They certainly were the first band to arrange sets of tunes and place the performances on a popular / folk music stage. The line-up of the band very quickly settled as Matt Molloy (flute), Tommy Peoples (fiddle, to be replaced in 1976 by Kevin Burke who plays on this recording), Donal Lunny
(bouzouki, guitar, bodhrán), Mícheál Ó Domhnaill (guitar, vocals), Paddy Keenan (uilleann pipes, whistle), Tríona Ní Dhómhnaill (clavinet, vocals). This recording comes from their third album and is the last tune of the fifth track, a set of jigs (informants would have heard a fade in over the first 2 bars of the tune and then five rounds of the tune). Through the extract the pipes hold the melody, initially with the flute that, from round three, introduces a contrapuntal line, as does the fiddle from round four. The guitar plays from the start a continuous D in the quaver motion of the jig (very occasionally breaking into a crotchet-quaver motion). The clavinova begins a drone, also on D (concluding phrases on A) from the second round and develops a busy counterpoint in the next round that is developed as the excerpt develops. The bouzouki is introduced in the B part of the second round, playing a basic, syncopated chordal accompaniment that develops in complexity as the piece moves on. The overall feel is one of a growing dynamic and complexity around the melody performed on the pipes.

All, apart from three of the informants, recognised the excerpt as coming from the Bothy Band and all recognised the tune type as a jig and most of the instrumentation (although the keyboard was understandably confused with a bass by a couple of the informants). Interestingly, one of the informants who didn’t recognise the band, Patricia, did recognise the style of piping as being traveller style (Paddy Keenan, the piper in the band, is recognised as one of the foremost exponents of this style). Both Máire and Denis referred extensively to the seminal nature of the band. Denis notes
that, despite being a contemporary band in an era when many traditional musicians held such developments with suspicion, the Bothy Band were held in high regard.

…it was by-and-large some of us who had fears that it was going in the wrong way, I mean we all fell in line fairly quickly and we realised that the Bothy Band were just a great band and all of the older musicians would have said the same thing, maybe you would have criticism 'they played very fast' and all the rest of it but don’t think whether you play fast or slow music is important one way or the other it is the actual quality and the depth and keeping onto the tradition that came from you know?

(Doody April 2000)

Of the informants who did not enjoy the recording most did not enjoy the elaborate nature of the of the arrangement, Majella felt that the tune was lost in the arrangement while Donal and PJ thought the arrangement was too ‘busy’. Verena’s feelings were contrary to this as she said the band did not ‘mess’ with the tune too much. Alan, who enjoyed the recording described the arrangement as being ‘classical’ (Bartley April 2002) which is unusual, - a metaphor taken from the title of another tradition is usually derogatory in intention. Donal and PJ see the uilleann pipes as central to the arrangement perhaps because the melody of the tune remains with the pipes throughout the performance. Denis said that excerpt had ‘fire’ (Doody April 2000).

The use of metaphors for arrangement in this sort of context is hardly peculiar to Irish traditional music but paramount in this is the objectification of the tune and what the arrangement does to this, being busy or messy. Denis interestingly comes up with a common metaphorical structuring of the tradition being a living entity with agency
that rejects or accepts innovation. When speaking of the surviving relevance of the Bothy Band and their music he says:

One of my theories, I think I said it about you one time, at a lecture that I gave, if people were talking about you in twenty years time it would be said that Niall Keegan has made a contribution to music, but if nobody was to play you in twenty five years time you can take that your contribution was minimal [laughter]. Wrongly or rightly in my view I think it stands up to scrutiny that if something you do today is incorporated into the music somewhere and people want to hear it in 25 of thirty years time, yes. There’s an awful lot of stuff that happened in the last thirty years people tried to do and it’s gone and never again will it be heard and never again will it be heard. So traditional music will always absorb what is good for it and reject, says I definitively, what is not good for it.

(Doody April 2000)

Brian Finnegan, (1993), ‘Purvey’, from *When the Party’s Over*, Track 6, ARADCD101. Brian Finnegan is a flute and whistle player from Armagh. His unique style centred around his articulation techniques, contemporary compositions and arrangements place him in common perception as part of the more innovative, commercially sensitive wing of the tradition. He is perhaps best known for his performances with the band Flook, a British based band centred around Brian and English flute player Sarah Allen. This performance is fairly typical of Brian’s style. In this performance he uses very few standard ornaments such as rolls which would be regarded as typical of his playing style (in this 64 bar excerpt of the performance he plays just 14 rolls and one single note grace note from above). His ‘ornamental’ technique is dominated by his tonguing although the piece is not completely staccato, he regularly slurs across the beat very like many Irish fiddlers. Here he is playing a self composed jig with unusual amounts of syncopation on a bamboo flute pitched in G
(above concert pitch), an instrumentation different to the usual conically bored wooden flute pitched in C. The tune in itself is structured unusually with two sixteen bar parts repeated rather than the usual eight bar parts. He is accompanied by keyboard player Shane Power but not in a typical vamping style, reflecting the syncopated nature of the melody.

Fig 24. Transcription of Brian Finnegan’s recording of flute part of ‘Purvey’

Again, the informants are quite divided in their appreciation of this excerpt. Most of the informants recognised tonguing technique as being central to the performance and some recognised Brian as the performer. All the informants recognised the tune type as a jig despite the fact that the structure of the tune is twice as long as normal –
illustrating that traditional musicians recognise tune type according to the internal structure of the beat and their immediate relationships with the surrounding beats rather than the length and overall structure of the tune. Many of the younger informants said they enjoyed the performance, in particular PJ and Alan who said it was ‘brilliant’ (Dooley April 1998). Verena also enjoyed it but associated the performance with other flute players like Mike McGoldrick (a flute player from the Irish diaspora in Manchester) and Jean Michelle Veillion (the leading exponent of Breton flute playing). Indeed she said that it was particularly un-Irish and ‘breton sounding’ (Cummins October 1997). Denis enjoyed the originality of the performance, happy in his Darwinian structuring of the tradition as a species that would accept or reject innovation despite what he, or anyone else, thinks.

Many of the informants did not enjoy what they regarded as the over-reliance on tonguing techniques. Even Verena said that she would get ‘tired’ of listening to it (Cummins October 2007). Maire found that it sounded a bit too much like Jazz and found the use of the tongue to me too ‘technical’ and ‘mechanical’ (O’Keeffe July 1996). Donal also wasn’t mad about the performance saying ‘t’isn’t any of the older flute players!’ (O’Connor June 2000). Patricia enjoyed the piano, stating that it wasn’t the ‘straight vamp’ (Daly April 2002). Majella provided the most descriptive account of the excerpt. Even though she enjoyed the piano playing she found that the over-use of the tonguing techniques ‘cut up’ (Daly April 2002) the performance and that the tune was too modern, she would have preferred if it had been ‘more straight’ (Daly
April 2002). She also did not like the tone of the bamboo flute, finding it a bit too ‘airy’ (ibid.). Such metaphorical constructions of tradition and aesthetic are common and are often built around simple schemata with two focuses. For instance, flute tone can be ‘airy’ or ‘solid’ (ibid.), the solid orientation more often than not being the preferred. Tunes can be ‘smooth’ or ‘cut up’ and a traditional tune will be ‘straighter’ than a contemporary one (ibid.). In my experience musicians would not refer to modern tunes being bent and only would mention a tune being ‘crooked’ because of their familiarity of the term being used to describe French-Canadian tunes that break from the eight bar part structure normal to Irish practice. Of course the straight / bent metaphor can carry with it the more general metaphorical projections around honesty and integrity. Virtually all of the informants recognised the performance as being modern, some react by perceiving it in a continuum of tradition or see it as being a performance outside the tradition.

**Planxty, (1973) ‘Planxty Irwin’ from the album Planxty, Track 3, Shanachie Records.** Planxty were another seminal band in the 1970’s who created new paradigms for the ensemble performance of traditional Irish music. They were immensely successful in presenting tradition material (English language songs in particular) in a contemporary folk / popular music format. This track, a piece of harp music composed by eighteenth century harper, Turlough Carolan, features on their first album, recorded in 1973. The excerpt here features hurdy-gurdy, an instruments not native to the Irish tradition, and uilleann pipes, perhaps the central traditional
instrument. The piece begins with the hurdy-gurdy playing the tune with a single drone. In the 'B' part the pipes join with chanter while the hurdy-gurdy continues with a counterpoint. In the repeated A part a mandolin joins with a further counterpoint and the hurdy-gurdy eventually returns to play the melody in unison with the pipes. The style is typical to the formal, literal way that traditional musicians approach the music of Carolan and harp music generally. O’Carolan is often presented as Ireland’s national composer and the harp as Ireland’s national instrument (indeed Ireland is the only country in the world that has a musical instrument as its national symbol). Despite this, Carolan and harp music have a peculiarly peripheral place in the world of traditional Irish music and would rarely be heard on the context of the session (the central contemporary context for performance practice).

Only one informant, Verena, recognised the hurdy-gurdy and none said they liked it. Interestingly nearly all the informants mistook the mandolin as a bouzouki, which may say something about their respective journeys into and out-of tradition that both instruments have taken. Most informants recognise the recording as being of the band Planxty. Denis went further to describe it as ‘early Planxty’ (Doody April 2000), it comes from their first studio album. Most of the informants recognised the tune as a harp piece or a planxty and most said they enjoyed this type of music but some explained how it would exist outside of the mainstream repertoire of the tradition. Denis says that it is a parlour music.
Is it one of Carolan's? That's right yeah. The first thing that strikes about this is that it's smacks of the old parlour music especially because Carolan's stuff was a parlour music. That's my view of it anyway.

(Doody April 2000)

This sort of special organisation of music to different areas of the house or common social settings is fairly typical of older traditional musicians – traditional dance music happens in the kitchen or the pub; more refined, middle-class and perhaps even female music belongs in parlour or drawing room. Alan also explains how he wouldn't play this harp tune in a session and also gives us an indication of his perception of session hierarchies.

N. Would you play it at a session?
A. I wouldn’t. Not a hope. Unless somebody respectable started playing it you know. It’s getting into the politics of a session. If I started it up people would look at me but if you started it up now.
N. People would still look.
A. I don’t know. I wouldn’t play it in a session, I mean a session is to do with participation whether you’re listening or…
N. Sure most people would know that tune wouldn’t they?
A. They’d know the tune but that’s more a tune that you sit down and you listen with your cup of tea or you stare at the ground and you listen to it and it’s a nice tunes but at a session the most common setting would be a pub you know to have a good time. You don’t want to be depressed by listening, it might be a good tune but you don’t want to be put into a state of depression from listening to this tune which it would do. Whether you knew it or not it’s just going to, the tone or the theme of it would be, I don’t know.

(Dooley April 1998)

The consensus from informants is that this is not a music for the pub (music to have a 'good time') but is about more melancholic and reflective emotional responses and for listening too. PJ likes it because it is ‘relaxing’ and Alan knows the tune (but can’t name it) because he has played it at ‘a couple of weddings’ (Dooley April 1998).
‘Fitzmaurice’s Polka’, Buttons and Bows, *The First Month of Summer*, 1984, Green Linnett Records. Buttons and Bows were a band consisting of Jackie Daly (accordion, although on this track he plays the single row melodeon), and brothers Manus and Seamus Maguire (fiddles). They recorded three albums, *Buttons and Bows* (1984), *The First Month of Summer* (1987) and *Grace Notes* (1991). This excerpt is taken from track 4, ‘Fitzmaurices Polka’, from their second album – a tune recorded by early twentieth century American accordion player, John Kimmel. The performance is dominated by the metronomic melodeon style of Daly and the tune is quite dissimilar to the type of polka common today. Contemporary polkas are essentially those played historically in Cork and Kerry and can be described as featuring a quaver motion in 2/4. This polka is far more like a reel (the beat tends to be divided into four rather than two in its normal motion) and resembles the polkas recorded in America and played historically, particularly in Sligo. Accompaniment is provided by Charlie Lennon on piano.

All of the informants recognise the instrumentation of this excerpt but very few recognised the tune type, quite a few saying that it was not Irish. Noting that it was not like an ordinary polka, PJ says “A different type, kind of ah [polka], the Sliabh Luachra boys keep the copyright of the Polkas [laughter]” (Vaughan August 1996). Here he is referring to the common possession of more marginal tune types by particular regions and eluding to the fact that the now more popular form of polka is
validated by it’s association with Cork and Kerry. The ‘copyright’ is a stamp of authentication that privileges one form and implies the unauthentic nature of others. What is particularly interesting here is the borrowing of a concept from the worlds of business, invention and intellectual ownership to create a metaphor of authenticity and exclusion.

Maire recognised the recording instantly and Donal very quickly recognised the accordion player as Jackie Daly (both because of their personal relationship with Jackie). Some enjoyed the style of performance. Alan said:

It was a good full sound and everybody was playing the exact same thing and was there a piano there? There was a piano there and ’twas as if they had the old Kilfenora [céilí band] trying something that… you had bribed them into playing foreign music.

(Dooley April 1998)

Here Alan is painting a wonderful picture of one of the central historical dance ensembles for Irish traditional music and arguably the central sound for music in north West Clare ‘being paid’ to play foreign music. The fact that the picture shows a band having to be paid to play something foreign implies that they would not normally do so (which is untrue, the Kilfenora would have included much very obviously foreign material in it’s history, from country songs to European brass band marches) and that they would not normally be paid for playing an authentic Irish repertoire (which they certainly would as a semi-professional dance band). This is not meant as a criticism of Alan’s wonderfully colourful metaphor but does illustrate underlying assumptions.
around an isolationist view of Irish music and culture that historically do not bear examination but are still substantially prevalent amongst traditional musicians today.

Interestingly also, Majella and Verena give contrasting accounts of the use of ornamentation by Jackie Daly. Majella says “Mad ornamentation well it was like da da da da all the time, there was no actual rolls as such, it was all da da da da all the time…. Not my type of thing at all” (Bartley April 2002) while Verena responds to the following cue to compare the excerpt to that of Joe Derrane examined earlier (Jackie Daly learned Fitzmaurice’s polka from John Kimmell who would have been the instigator of the style of accordion playing adopted by Derrane):

N. Doesn’t that remind you now of the sort of the stuff, the Joe Derrane stuff?
V. No, no, not at all. … Joe Derrane is just full of this ornamentation that just comes out and interrupts and interferes with the tune the whole time, whereas what Jackie is doing there, dum dad a dadle, Is lovely. It’s totally neat and rhythmic and lovely.

(Cummins October 1997)

Firstly it’s interesting that both informants vocalise the sound of the ornamentation to describe the ornamental practice of Jackie Daly – essentially both describe the staccato motoric rhythm of performance. Certainly the style of performance is very staccato and, as Majella says, does not involve any rolls (or any other mainstream ornaments such as single or double grace notes). Indeed an examination of the transcription shows that the there is very little ornamental practice going on within the performance apart from occasional harmony notes (bars 19, 26, 27) and triplets. Majella thinks it is a ‘bit mad’ (Bartley April 2000), quite probably accounting for her aesthetic take on
the staccato, motoric approach. Verena however is approaching from another common traditional music aesthetic, especially when discussing ornamentation, that ‘less is more’. Derrane is ‘full’ or ornaments that ‘interrupts and interferes with the tune’. Jackie’s less ornamented style however is ‘neat and rhythmic and lovely’ (Cummins October 1997). This is again an expression of the common traditional music aesthetic built on the metaphorical imagination of the tune having an existence and perhaps even an agency outside of performance that can be damaged in performance.

‘Pride of Macedonia’, Track 5, *Eastwind*, Andy Irvine and Davy Spillane, Tara CD3027, 1992. This excerpt is taken from a track from the collaborative recording of piper Davy Spillane and singer, guitar and bouzouki player Andy Irvine. This recording is regarded very much as a precursor of the dance show *Riverdance*, involving melodies from Macedonia and Bulgaria arranged and recorded by Bill Whelan who went on to write the music for Riverdance. This track features Davy Spillane on uilleann pipes & low whistle; Andy Irvine on bouzouki; Nikola Parov on gadulka, kaval & gaida; Bill Whelan on keyboards; Carl Geraghty on saxophone; John Sheahan on fiddle; Anthony Drennan on guitar; Tony Molloy on bass; Noel Eccles and Paul Moran on percussion. It is therefore a very contemporary arrangement of a traditional Macedonian tune played by traditional and popular musicians from Ireland (with the exception of Bugarian born Nikola Parov). It has become popular for
contemporary traditional bands to perform this type of melody in what to traditional musicians would be an unfamiliar time signature (11/8).

Understandably this recording baffled all the informants to a certain extent. None knew the tune or the recording. Verena recognised the involvement of Bill Whelan from the arrangement and perhaps also his association with what all the informants regarded as an odd time-signature. Alan and Patricia wondered was it the Chieftains performing, a band noted for their work with repertoires and musicians from other cultures. All the informants commented on the unusual rhythm and some stated that they couldn’t work it out. In conversation Verena tries to work out the time signature:

V. I was trying to work out the rhythm but I couldn’t do. One two three, one two three four….
N. One two three, … yeah it was two threes and two twos together and I think It . changes over as well.
V. ’think it did yeah.
N. …. You think you have it sorted and then suddenly
V. And then you’ve lost it again

(Cummins October 1997)

The metaphor Verena uses of the rhythm being something that you can catch on to but lose again. This has implications of embodiment and agency for the rhythmical dimension of the excerpt and is common in a western context as is the initial metaphor of rhythm as something to be worked out. The ‘working out’ metaphorical schemata is rooted in physical engagement with something that will reveal something about its nature or transform it (the obvious example would be working out dough in the
process of making bread). All the tutors tried to place the music geographically or, perhaps, more accurately, politically. Some informants thought it was Breton, while Verena said it reminded her of Galician, Asturian and Spanish music generally, having a ‘celtic feel’ (Cummins October 1997). Most informants recognised that the melody came from eastern Europe while Denis and Alan were content that it was ‘European’. Most also thought it was pleasant but they didn’t like it much particularly either and certainly would not play it. Majella’s response is fairly typical; “I’m not all that fussed on it. It was something foreign anyway whatever. Mad stuff. There was kind of a weird tiddly tiddly sound in it. What’s that?” (Bartley April 2002). Verena noted that the excerpt was ‘easy listening’ (Cummins October 2007) as far as she was concerned which is a reference to the contemporary style of arrangement.

The metaphors used by the informants in the context of this excerpt is common in a western musical context but still interesting. Patricia produces a common metaphor to account for the rhythm by saying the tune was not ‘straight’ (Daly April 2002 - i.e. was not in a more usual simple of compound meter or with the usual 8 bar part structure). This is a common metaphor cross culturally in western folk traditions and very commonly used in the context of French-Canadian music where many tunes are regarded as straight (with an eight bar structure) or ‘crooked’ (where this structure changes). Maire also produces another metaphor commonly used in the context of rhythm when she recognises her own inability to play in these rhythms, saying “I seemed to be locked into an even pattern” (O’Keeffe July 1996), imagining something
exterior to herself preventing her playing outside of the meters of traditional Irish music. A lot recognised the ‘feel’ of the melody being ‘foreign’ or of another nationality or identity. The main hook for this metaphorical understanding of music as having texture and being of a foreign place was the perceived unusual rhythm. This texture or ‘feel’ is of other places and sets it beyond the experience of the rooted Irish traditional musician and justified their lack of engagement with it or desire to do so.

The Words

The approach used by Hargreaves and Colman (1980) to the examination of aesthetic reactions to music is of interest to us here. In their research they played 18 musical extracts to 44 people (who they categorised according to 3 levels of musical experience) and asked for them for a written response to combinations of the extracts which they were required to treat comparatively. They then categorised these responses (interestingly, at a textual level) according to the following categorical structure:

1. Categorical. These responses classify the music in terms of a stylistic label such as “pop”, “folk” or “classical”.
2. Objective-Analytic. Objective responses are those that refer to intrinsic qualities of the music itself… and those objective-analytical responses are those that refer to specific “technical” elements such as instrumentation or tempo…
3. Objective-Global. These refer to the intrinsic qualities of the music itself, but they are different in that they describe qualities of the music as a whole rather than specific, technical elements of it (e.g. “American”, “religious”, “twentieth century”).
4. Affective. This category... includes subjective, emotional and evaluative responses to the music (e.g. “cheerful”, “weird”, “horrible”)

5. Associative. These responses.... refer to extra musical associations evoked by the music (e.g. “birds singing”, “the sea”, “a log cabin in Canada”)...

(Hargreaves and Coleman, 1981, pp.16-17)

Although this model is problematic outside of the context it was intended for, it helps us generate something useful in the context of research presented in this thesis.

Hargreaves and Colman’s subjects came from a broad community of musical experience, including music teachers, music students but many with little or no experience of the production and theoretical structuring of music. The community engaged in this thesis are all performers within the narrow cultural confines of traditional music performance practice but from a variety of backgrounds within that. As can be seen from the brief biographies of the subjects above, some of the subjects are relatively inexperienced, learning the performance practice tradition and the cognitive structures that come with it. Some are associated with particular regions with distinctive practices while others are experienced in the international practice of traditional Irish music (and some, strangely unparadoxically, are involved in both). Some are associated with particular instrumental practices that would be considered central or peripheral to perceptions of the mainstream tradition. Perhaps a lesson to be learned from Hargreaves and Coleman’s structures is not to present the musical experience of individuals as being hierarchical. It is hard in any context to regard people as being musically experienced on non-experienced, experience can be aesthetically measured, even comparatively but to imply a greater level of ‘experience’
for the musician than the listener would be to diminish the importance of the engagement experience (e.g. through listening, dancing etc.) of the individuals not engaged in the physical production of the sound. Indeed it can be argued that music is only really created in the act of creative listening. Even in a western context in the fields of aesthetics and criticism we have specialised areas of knowledge that performers rarely engage. However, it is certainly more likely that performers will be more likely to generate responses that could be categorised as ‘objective-analytic’.

As we shall see, another important issue with the categorical structuring of responses here is that they are not exclusionary and will obviously be presented in association with each other, producing a responsive gestalt that can incorporate two or more of the above categories even in a single term. The distinction between ‘categorical’ and ‘objective-global’ is perhaps the most indefensible and will depend on the type of expertise of the informant. The distinction in the research implies that the categorical terminology does not account for quality of the music it is describing when it blatantly does. There is also the additional implication that the objective-global does not have a day-to-day categorical function, which it also very evidently does. The use of any term can have an affective meaning depending on the context and the aesthetic values of the person uttering it. Much has been written about how the term ‘pop’ implies a music less-serious, substantial, and important than other genres such as classical, religious and even rock – we all know people who would consider some genres of music as inferior than others and indeed would use the term to describe aspects of their preferred music
pejoratively. For example a traditionalist in the context of Irish music would refer to a performance or a performer of being jazzy as a negative. Associative terms, with their living metaphorical activities, very obviously have an effective dimension, if we think of a ‘soaring’ melody we metaphorically see the music as flying up and over us but it also has a distinct, uplifting emotional quality too. The example that Hargreaves and Coleman use of “a log cabin in Canada” would have very different emotive qualities if you spent happy childhood holidays in such a place rather than if you were held hostage there!

In my analysis of the words used by traditional musicians I will examine the use of categorical terminology using some of the structures used by Hargreaves and Colman.

1. Objective-Analytic. Technical and descriptive languages used by informants to describe the performances played to them. This language is used to refer to specific aspects of the performance, highlighting significant parts of sensory and social experience of ‘musiking’ (Small 1998) as perceived by informants.

2. Objective-Global. This is language used to categorically structure musical sounds in relation to each other. This combines Hargreaves and Coleman’s ‘categorical’ and ‘objective-global’ categories allowing us to consider categorical structures (e.g. traditional music, folk music, pop music etc.) and pseudo-scientific structurings within them (regional styles, instrumental styles etc.) together.
3. Affective. This category includes the emotive, subjective responses mentioned by Hargreaves and Colman and also recognises the potential for the emotive and subjective nature of all responses. This category, because of the nature of the subjects is the hardest to evince and I perhaps the one most directly sought and prompted.

4. Associative. These responses are anticipated to be the least prominent outside of the metaphors of place that play an important part in the structuring of the objective-global category above. However from an etymological perspective this associative dimension to informants response is central – if all language about music is essentially metaphorical then a process of association is intrinsic to such language.

We will now examine the insights that this structuring of responses to our excerpts provides us.

**Objective-Analytic**

Naturally, as these interviews are conducted with performers, objective-analytic responses dominated. I have subdivided this set of responses into four sub-sets – instruments, instrumental roles, structure and aspects of style. Of course there is a natural over-lap with other categorises of response, in particular with objective-global responses. It is in the nature of objective-global responses that their nomenclature is taken from specific aspects of performance style and technique that seem to be the
main aspect of the sound perceived by cultural actors. Also the place of instruments in this categorisation of response is ambiguous. I have noted elsewhere (Keegan 1992, pp.45-55) that categories of performance style often generate instrument names for definition, determined to a large extent to the physical limitations and possibilities offered by the instrument itself and historical practice and custom. This sort of rhetorical, synechdocheal and metonymic structuring of some of the objectival-global nomenclature must be born in mind when speaking of responses in both categories examined here.

Most of the informants have very specific shared conceptions about the sounds of instrumentation. With the more straightforward examples taken from the traditional music cannon, all the informants respond reasonably uniformly regarding instrumentation. When the informants move away from the central instrumentation of the Irish cannon (especially when there are other instruments in the cannon with a similar sound) their responses are less uniform. We can see this in the confusion that occurs between bouzouki and mandolin in the excerpt from Planxty (excerpt 11). Also in the track where flute player Brian Finnegan performs on a cylindrical bamboo flute instead of the normal wooden conically bored flute (producing a very different sound) some confusion was created. This is perhaps because bamboo flutes are rare in the tradition and only generally used in recent years as beginners instruments for small children (some respondents thought the instrument was a low whistle). When the instrumentation can be seen to leave the cannon of the tradition entirely, instrument
recognition becomes entirely dependant on the experience of other music cultures of the individual informant (for example, Verena was the only informant to recognise the hurdy-gurdy in the Planxty track perhaps because of her experience growing up in England where the instrument would be more visible).

**Synonyms**

Certain instruments have a few synonyms but it is unlikely that the relationship between multiple words for the same concept are purely linguistically synonymous (i.e. the words have exactly the same meaning). Common synonyms in traditional Irish music are violin and fiddle. However the most prevalent term is fiddle (it occurs 164 times with basic variants in the interviews) while the term violin is used by just two informants, Verena who speaks of teaching classical violin while in school and Maire who responds when asked what she teaches, “Well, I teach the fiddle, the violin,..” (O’Keeffe July 1996). This suggests that for normal traditional use the instrument is termed a fiddle and when perceived in a classical context will be called a violin. However Maire’s response adds an interesting dimension as she does not teach classical violin so will use the term to account for her instrument in a more formal pedagogical traditional music context (where a musician and trained teacher like herself would teach traditional ‘violin’). This perhaps reflects a hierarchy of practice that places playing the fiddle in a particular context which requires a change of name when the instrument and this particular tradition of performance, crosses societal bounds into more formal, and maybe even more privileged settings.
A more equally distributed set of synonyms are accordion and box (although in my interviews they did show a preference for the term accordion, perhaps because of the perceived formality of the context). However, the use of these terms is complicated in a different way to that of the fiddle / violin set, as these terms are used to describe a number of different instruments. The ‘standard’ box or accordion is a two row, single action instrument (usually tuned in B/C) but they both can be use to describe different tunings of accordion (B/C, D#/C, C/D#, - all often with other defining terms such as ‘fiddle style’ for B/C or ‘outside-in’ or ‘inside-out) different numbers of rows (one row accordions are called boxes as are larger three or four-rowed instruments) and piano accordions are often described in either way (but frequently with the piano prefix). Indeed the concertina, though rarely called an accordion would often be termed as a box. Interestingly the term ‘box’ seem to be firmly rooted in the common two row image (sometimes but only occasionally prefixed with ‘button’) and it is acceptable for other types of accordions, but in the interviews it is always used with the piano prefix to describe the piano accordion. Thus some of these instruments are better examples of accordion or box than others, the further away from the ‘best example of’ or mental image for the box, the more necessary a qualifying prefix becomes. However the strongest association of the two terms to the central image of a two-row accordion in these interviews was the box. Only two of the 32 instances of the word ‘box’ occur with a prefix, and that on both occasions is the word ‘button’, reinforcing the central
box image. No informants refer to a ‘piano box’ while there are three mentions of ‘piano accordions’.

By indicating such variations in use, definition and inference among these terms, their nature as true synonyms is called into question. However their nature as terms that are socially active in accounting for a traditional music world is also highlighted. Dirk Geeraerts (1988, pp.207-209) shows us that true synonyms are extremely rare and even among them he shows how some synonyms have different conceptual centres (or prototypes). What the responses here suggest is that the conceptual centres of accordion and box or violin and fiddle are different. For the box / accordion there is a tendency to use ‘box’ more exclusively for an account of the more prototypical category members at the centre of the box / accordion concept (the ‘button box’) while ‘accordion’ seems a little more inclusive. This is interesting as the term ‘box’ has more of an obvious ‘folk’, and metaphorical root (although it is used cross culturally either because of the strength of the metaphor or the cross-cultural spread of the term, probably a combination of both). It is called a box because it looks like a box, no matter which type of accordion played. The term ‘accordion’ came with the instrument from outside the Irish tradition (from popular and classical nineteenth century European music culture) and it’s etymological roots are less obvious (coming from the Italianate musical term *accord-are* which means ‘to tune’). The violin / fiddle synonym is different in that both terms account of different spheres of activities for the same instrument. There is no substantial difference in the object accounted for,
although the instrument is very often ‘set up’ a little differently in these traditions, (i.e. the size and shape of the bridge, types of strings etc.) but there are two very different prototypes at the centre of each word. These prototypes have nothing to do with their physical nature but more to do with the physical interaction of the musician with the instrument and the context for performance. Context is perhaps paramount – if a traditional fiddle player in a session plays a piece of Bach the community of sound there does not instantly change their perception of the instrument from fiddle to violin, no matter how ‘authentically classical’ the performance.

No other synonyms occur in informants’ accounts of musical instruments and terminology for instruments within the tradition is consistent and mostly recognised (especially when we take into account the contexts that some informants listened to the examples in).

There are qualifying terminologies that place instrumentation in certain socio-political roles and hierarchies that are facilitated through spatial metaphors. The obvious ones are used for the instruments that supply accompaniment (itself an obvious special metaphor). The most common of these is ‘backing’ (i.e. guitar backing, piano backing etc.). In the general hierarchy of traditional instruments, those that are perceived as particularly native (pipes) and particularly old (fiddle) in the tradition are seen as central, those others that have more recently added (such as flute, button accordion and banjo) would be acceptable while others (such as the piano accordion and tin whistle)
would be regarded as peripheral or even untraditional for a variety of reasons. However, all of these instruments all play the melody. More recently added instruments such as bouzouki, guitar, bodhran and piano have been co-opted into the tradition according to stricter, conditional criteria – ie. they are used for chordal and rhythmical accompaniment. This role is policed by terminology such as ‘backer’ or ‘accompanist’, restricting their role and preventing these instrumental and their players become part of the more central world of engagement with the personified, and often nearly deified, ‘tune’. There are of course exceptions to this practice with a few virtuosic piano players and less so guitar and a miniscule amount of bouzouki players who will play tunes. However it would be common to hear informants speak of ‘musicians’ (who play the tune) playing with ‘backers’ (who don’t play the tune and thus are not musicians). In a recent controversy acted out on the RTE radio afternoon chat show ‘Liveline’ accordion player and retired television produced Tony McMahon heatedly says to bouzouki player Alec Finn, ‘Alec, you don’t play, you’re an accompanist!’ (Liveline, 5th August, 2009).

Therefore, this musical segregation is maintained and produced by language. Certainly the language is reflecting the privileging of certain historical instrumental practices and the exclusion of certain new instruments from the holy ground of the ‘tune’. However, it is playing an active role in the maintenance of this hierarchy and it could be argued that a linguistic agent such as the terminologies of the backer is essential in it making hierarchy. Guitar players within the tradition are told that they are backers, and thus
don’t play the tune and have their own peculiar, peripheral place in the tradition. Most
guitar players (especially many leading ones such as Arty McGlynn) accept and
promote this role.

**Objective-Analytic as Operational Responses and Prototype Theory**

Members of this objective-analytic mode of response have also a role that would be
categorised by the ethnomusicologist John Baily as ‘operational’ (as described in
Chapter 2). Baily terms the operational model as a taught music theory that informs an
entire musical performance and indeed plays an active role in the performance as
opposed to representational models which have no direct role in performance (Baily
1988, 114). This fulfils the objective-analytical role as ‘technical’ language referring to
‘specific parts of the performance’. However, it is obvious that much language plays a
role in both of Baily’s models to different levels of efficacy in the context of traditional
music where terms perform differently in in different contexts, a fact more explicitly
recognised in the development of Hargreaves’ and Colman’s model above. There is
certainly an operational language that is necessary for the social function of traditional
music but one would wonder that an etymological examination of such terminology
will not always show that the root of the language is not essentially representational or
descriptive. On the other hand, much language that would be credited as being
representational obviously has a role in an operational context. And some terms
perhaps have an equal existence in both models. For example the ‘life’ metaphor,
common in Irish and other musics, and its extensions occur frequently in performance instruction (‘put some life into it’) or in accounting for performance (‘The Bothy Band had fire and life in them’). Also, in a discussion of traditional Irish music it is useful to not insist on the possible use of operational terminologies in performance as this would be fairly uncommon – these terminologies more often occur before performance, being perhaps more prescriptive than operational in nature and never informing the totality of performance. However, the fact that terminology has a role that allows for it to be used in both of Baily’s models does not mitigate from his structure but shows the utility of such terminology as a musical, political and social set of tools that not only account for our music but allows musicians to make it and shape the way it is perceived and imagined.

These two models for understanding terminologies also have some obvious connections with the structure proposed for understanding the way we categorise our world by Eleanor Rosch – basic level effects. Rosch proposed that the way we create categories is central to our processes of reasoning and that this is achieved by the use of prototype category members as ‘cognitive reference points’ (Rosch 1975). Prototype category members have special function in the category that inform the structure and membership of the category, these category members are the most representative members of and for that category – in short, are ‘best examples’ of. She goes on to point out, drawing on the work of cognitive anthropologists such as Berlin, Breedlove and Raven (1974) on native taxonomies, that the most basic level of category is in the
middle of the taxonomic spectrum. George Lackoff presents the following structure as an example of basic, as opposed to superordinate and subordinate categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPERORDINATE</th>
<th>ANIMAL</th>
<th>FURNITURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BASIC LEVEL</td>
<td>DOG</td>
<td>CHAIR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBORDINATE</td>
<td>RETREIVER</td>
<td>ROCKER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(from Lackoff 1987, p.48)

He goes on to say

Thus basic-level categories are basic in four respects:
- Perception: Overall perceived shape; single mental image; fast identification.
- Function: General motor programme.
- Communication: Shortest, most commonly used and contextually neutral words, first learned by children and first to enter the lexicon.
- Knowledge Organisation: Most attributes of category members are stored at this level. Lackoff 1987, p.47)

Basic level categories are also maximally distinct, enhancing perceived similarities between members whilst maximising perceived differences with other, distinct basic level categories. Basic level categories are made up of clusters of interactional properties shared by the category’s members. These basic levels of categorisation are also often based upon metonymic models where the category is represented by a prototype with a metonymic relationship with other members.

It is very evident from an examination of the interviews that there are a number of
particular levels of basic level categories concerning traditional Irish music consistently expressed. The particular basic level categories that are apparent are some of the instruments and some of the tune types mentioned. It is important to note from the start that not all members of what is arguably the superordinate categories ‘tune type’ and ‘instrument’, are basic level categories.

This is not a complete survey or a quantitative account like the research on primary colours made by Rosche in the early 1970s (1973, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1976, Rosche-Heider 1971) but the responses do indicate that the following categories are basic level. Among the tune types, informants seem to have very active, complete and accurate concepts of categories such as ‘reel’, ‘jig’ and ‘hornpipe’ and among instruments ‘fiddle’, ‘flute’, ‘box’, ‘uilleann pipes’ (or just ‘pipes’). These are categories that evidently have the most commonly perceived, single shape (or more specifically in this case, sound), a common motor programme (ie. informants would know how to physically interact with the sound or the instrument that makes the sound). These basic level categories also tend to have shorter titles and, although I cannot give data on this, they certainly are the first to enter the lexicons of younger, learning traditional musicians.

Therefore ‘jig’ is a basic level category showing prototype effects. ‘Highland’ however is not a basic level category as it is not as easily recognised, has not got a commonly shared perceived shape, hasn’t got a common motor programme (many traditional
musicians would not know or be happy that they know the form well enough to play convincingly or dance to it). Also many other categories related to the prototype category ‘jig’, such as ‘hop-jig’ and ‘single jig’, have longer titles, thus not exhibiting basic level properties.

Lackoff tells us;

…the level of categorization is not independent of who is doing the categorizing and on what basis. Though the same principles may determine the basic level, the circumstances under which those principles are employed determine what system of categories result. (Lackoff 1987, p.50)

Categories are created by human beings to suit their particular environment or zone of action. Rosch and Lackoff tell us that these categories behave in certain ways and according to certain principles (such as basic level and prototype effects) and are themselves determined by ‘circumstances’. Some categories are perhaps universal (those that are most relevant and basic to our embodiment) but others are shaped by peculiar environments and particular ‘specialisations’. For example Lackoff (1987) regularly give types of trees as being basic level categories (oak, beech etc.) but personally for me, as a city dweller for most of my life, basic level effects occur more frequently in the category ‘tree’ itself. This is particularly relevant to the specialisation ‘Irish traditional music’ and even with the tradition there are terminologies that betray different category behaviours, depending on levels of specialisation determined by environmental factors. For instance, the term ‘highland’ did not betray any basic level behaviours in interviews but I suspect that it would if I had interviewed Donegal fiddle
players exclusively (I didn’t interview any), as the form is popular there.

Where basic level effects and their encultured nature can be distinguished very obviously is in the language used to account for stylistic aspects of performance. This is the terminology used in day-to-day situations (particularly, but not always and not exclusively, in pedagogical contexts). These terms also usually focus on the individual, solo performer although, the more superordinate and descriptive they become the more they are applied to ensembles, especially terms associated with aspects of rhythm. These terms tend to have a role in both operational and descriptive domains (although it must be remembered that the domain encountered here is entirely descriptive). However, the terminology has a relative operative status. Some have basic level properties while others obviously do not. Here is a representation of some of these terms used in the interviews according to Lackoff’s model of superordinate – basic level – subordinate used to organise different types of category members. I have modified this structure as this model is perhaps a little too one-dimensional to take into account the relationship between basic level and non-basic level categories. Thus I have not distinguished superordinate from subordinate categories (although they do most obviously seem to be a preponderance of superordinate categories). We must also remember that the position of categories in this structure will always be dictated by the expertise and specialisations of the informant, although for the efficacy of categorical structures there must be some significant level of consistency for their function in the community of sound they support.

BASIC LEVEL – Intonation, Cut-notes, Sharp & staccato, Slowish, First-finger-roll, Chords, Double-stopping, Rolls, Flicks, Cuts, Strumming up, Phrasing, Beat, Tonguing, Syncopation, Stops, Airy, Strong,

I’m now going to highlight a couple of examples where specialisation would shift a term between these categories. The term ‘flick’ (Bartley April 2002) was used by a fiddle player in her responses and in my own experience is used by fiddle players sometimes instead of the term ‘cut’ (usually a single note grace note from above). It is a term firmly rooted in the embodied experience of the ornament played on the fiddle where a finger ‘flicks’ the string above the main tone being played. However, if the term was used by a flute or banjo player, it loses its embodied specificity and could mean any number of techniques or sounds, thus moving into a more non-basic domain. Another example is the term ‘airy’ (Bartley April 2002) as used by a flute player in her response which, for flute players, indicates a quality of tone (usually undesired) but if used by another instrumentalist would be less specific, perhaps referring to a more esoteric or ephemeral style of performance.

What is most evident is the operational role of the basic level categories. The other categories tend to have a role that can be operational but is less specific, and lives as descriptive, aesthetic terminologies. For example, the term ‘roll’, though meaning
different techniques on different instruments, accounts for a particular ornamental technique in these contexts – it will be used in transmissional contexts, for example where a teacher will show a younger musician how to execute the ornament and where, and where not, to place it. However the term ‘lift’ has a less specific operational roll – in the same transmissional context the teacher may show different arrays of technique to put ‘lift’ into a performance but there is no single, embodied mode of behaviour to evince it. However, a member of the sound community of traditional Irish music may enjoy one performance over another because of the ‘lift’, or dismiss a performance for not having any ‘lift’. In this way non-basic level terminology detaches itself to a very small extent from the hum-drum of embodied experience, providing aesthetically based objective / analytical categorisation. This terminology, by emerging from an operational realm and entering that of the aesthetic categorisation of style, also can cross the boundary between objective-analytic and objective-global languages. Certain performances and musics are ‘lively’, some are ‘flowing’, others ‘gutsy’, listeners may prefer ‘simple’ music to ‘technical’ music.

It is natural enough that categories that show basic level effects would also be the most operational of terminologies within the tradition. Their operational nature requires that they inspire a consistent mental image (or auditory image, despite the fact that these are expressed through other more tangible metaphors) and are quickly identified with a consistent general motor programme. However we should not let this become the foundation of an argument that this basic level of categorisation tells us the
objective truth for the tradition and, by implication, that other categories of metaphor used within the tradition are subjective, myth or untrue. We will revisit questions relating to issues of subjectivity / objectivity and truth in the next chapter.

We could say that the objective-analytic words of response produced by informants are divided into two highly interrelated modes. Firstly, one mode with basic level characteristics that tends to be directly rooted in the evident embodied experience of the production of sound. This is focused very much on an operational role for the speech used in the production of Irish traditional music. Secondly there is a mode which tends to not have basic level characteristics and whose role tends to be far less specific than the terms of an operational mode. This crosses into descriptive / representational modes which allow for the language to stray into more aesthetically, rather than bodily bound, structures. However we must be always careful to emphasise the essentially embodied nature of all of the terminologies seen here. We only understand terms such as ‘lift’ through our experience of lifting or being lifted.

**Objective-Global Responses**

As stated earlier, this is language used to categorically structure musical sounds in relation to each other and obviously depends on extensions of container metaphors built round the conceptual axes of inside-outside. Again, we should be very careful to point out the that this category of response is in no way in itself exclusive of rigidly structured, containing terminologies that can be used in other response contexts and
others that are less prevalent but do occur in this context. The container metaphor is one of the most basic ontological metaphors based in our embodied experience. As Lackoff and Johnson explain to us:

We are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. Each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. Thus we also view them as containers with an inside and an outside. Rooms and houses are obvious containers. (Lackoff & Johnson 1980, p.29)

Not only do we project this metaphor onto spatial domains of experience (I’m ‘in the country’, ‘in the river’ or ‘in the pub’ etc.), we also project onto others, producing more complex effects. For example Lackoff and Johnson go on to speak of the same metaphorical structuring for time (ibid, p.118): we need to be ‘in time for a meeting’, or we may be ‘out of time’ for the submission of an academic assignment (the ‘in’ or ‘out’ of time metaphorical structures also have extra significance as a metaphorical structure in a music context that I will not discuss here). Both of these types of essentially embodied container metaphors interact in the categorical practices within traditional Irish music.

I have written elsewhere (Keegan 1992) about the categorical structurings of style in Irish traditional music (if not of their metaphorical roots). There I speak of a ‘second mode of dialect’ (Keegan, 1992, 66), a category of language (what I describe as the ‘first mode’ is a categorical extension of the objective-analytic responses described above)
with sub-categories defined as ‘regional’, ‘virtuoso’, ‘time’, style accounted for by genre. All these rely on the container metaphor. A musician could be ‘in’ a regional style, or have no style; may play in the style of a virtuoso musician; may play in an ‘old’ or ‘new’ style; or may play in a ‘classical’ or ‘jazzy’ style. The basic metaphorical structuring of these categorical models is essentially formed on the base of the container metaphor but may also feature other basic, and not so basic, metaphorical structurings. For instance in the first example I have above I qualify the idea of playing ‘in a regional style’ with having ‘no style’. I could have just as easily said ‘not in any regional style’ but I wanted to highlight the confluence of the ‘style as container’ metaphor with the ‘style as physical object’ metaphor. These underlying metaphorical bases, ‘music as container’ and ‘music as thing’ (to be possessed, cared for, passed on, destroyed etc.) are obviously essentially related in their metaphorical realisation. However, perhaps because of the more fundamental requirement of the categorical aspect of the metaphor (allowing us to account for diversity in our musical world) the music as container metaphor is more fundamental.

Below is a list of these metaphors in the categories suggested in Keegan, 1992 as used in some of the informants in response to excerpts from performances. I have decided to concentrate here primarily on recordings built around a soloist or main performer.

| Regional | Sligo, East Galway, American, West-Clare, Sliabh Luachra, East Clare, Donegal, Travelling |

322
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtuoso</th>
<th>Michael Coleman, Coleman, Joe Burke, Burke, Frankie Gavin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronological</td>
<td>Old, older,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Traditional, Scottish, Cape Breton, rock,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.25. Metaphorical category structures for Irish traditional music performance

These container metaphors that help traditional musicians categorise their music are of course not independent, relying for definition and structure on their own inherent properties. They are instead interactional, finding meaning through interaction with other metaphors and metaphorical schematas. This is apparent in a number of contexts, such as the basic metaphorical interaction of music as ‘container’ and music as ‘entity’, and can obviously be seen in Denis Doody’s statement about the excerpt taken from the session. This featured Donegal Box player Dermot Byrne and virtuoso fiddler Frankie Gavin playing a highland and Dennis comments: ‘That’s right, but the dominant thing there is Donegal, not Frankie Gavin’ (Doody April 2000). Here we have two sounds, one metaphorically imagined as ‘place’, the other as ‘virtuoso musician’, both competing as entities and one, the place, gaining dominance.

In my interviews some excerpts elicited more dense categorical definitions than others and responses tended to be applied to three aspects of the performance that could be considered as separate. These are the tune, the player, and the style. These three aspects are the main focus points for container metaphors as used by traditional
musicians. For example, in comments about the Michael Coleman excerpt, some respondents decided that he was playing a fiddle tune, others speak of the performance sounding like an old and/or Sligo player. Others focus on the style of the sound itself without a focal reference on the tune or player, saying that the performance was in a ‘Micheal Coleman’, ‘old’, or ‘Sligo’ style. These categories of stylistic definition interplay freely with the categories I speak of earlier but ‘instrument’ is more easily rooted in the embodied experience of the music. A fiddle tune is one that ergonomically suits the fiddle, a fact which becomes evident to the non-fiddle playing musician or listener because of criteria such as the perceived ease of performance and more implicit technical factors such as the melodic range, the structure of the melody and the tonal centre of the tune. Perception of player is a little more abstract but perhaps easier to be engaged by the non-performer. Here sound is rooted to similar sounds in the experience of the listener, directly linked to an individual performer. For example, in this Michael Coleman recording, the quality of the recording (i.e. the crackle and the limited dynamic range of the recording) indicates that the player is old; to some, the pronounced back beat (emphasising the third quaver in the group of four) amongst other musical auditory signals, suggests that the performer is from Sligo. Here we get closer to the final type of response which focuses on the ‘style’ of performance. This is the most abstract level of response where sounds are categorised primarily according to properties of themselves, disconnected to some extent from issues of embodiment and the individual. This removal and perhaps alienation of the language of categorisation from the embodied, perceptual experience of instrument and
performer has significance for the behaviour and role of this categorical language in its everyday life within the tradition. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

**Affective and Associative Responses.**

I have grouped here the last two modes of response because, as I shall demonstrate, they are highly related and interwoven. Affective responses are emotive, more obviously subjective and often lie at the root of a personal aesthetic. To say ‘I like this music’ is essentially an emotive response as is to say ‘I don’t like this music’. To have no feelings of like or dislike of a musical sound is to have no ‘feelings’ for it, to not engage the music emotionally or subjectively, to effectively disregard it (however, we may dislike a music because it has exactly this effect). As stated previously it is difficult sometimes to evince much language about these responses apart from the obvious (I ‘like’, ‘dislike’, ‘love’, or ‘hate’) and when such responses are developed they are developed into associative responses particularly through their specific association to objective-global and objective-analytical modes of response. I have pointed out previously that all responses are essentially associative responses as all possible verbal responses to music are essentially metaphorical, naturally associating musical phenomena to phenomena from other areas of our experience. Therefore there is also some considerable overlap with the other modes of response accounted for here. When we say that a piece of music is ‘Sligo’ music we are associating sound with space. However, despite the universality of the associative response, this mode of response deserves extra attention
because of its association with affective response. It is the emotive aspect of the associative response, created through our experience of sound and associated elements - perhaps a metaphorical target such as 'place' - that brings it to prominence as a mode of response rather than the principal mechanism of response. When we say we 'like' or are 'bored' by 'Sligo' music then we are supplying affective qualities to otherwise apparently 'objective' associative responses.

Affective responses commonly interact and combine with objective-global responses. Verena says she doesn’t ‘particularly care for Coleman anyway’ (Cummins October 1997). She isn’t here talking about the man but the sound - she later qualifies this by saying that the piano accompaniment was ‘nice’ (Cummins October 1997). Conversely, Máire states: “Oh but I do love Coleman anyway. I love everything he did except for his accompanists” (O’Keeffe July 1996). Otherwise there seem to be two main associative focuses of these affective responses in my informants’ responses: ‘time’ and ‘place’.

Affective responses are also often associated with objective-analytic categories especially those that could be characterised as superordinate responses. Majella tells us of the excerpt from Michael Coleman: ‘There was great rhythm to it so there was. Good steady timing… nice ornamentation’ (Bartley April 2002). Here she is putting valuative prescripts onto concepts such as (great) rhythm, (good) timing and (nice) ornamentation.
What are common are responses that combine an affective response with several terms that we can regard here objective-global and analytical global. Here respondents can use these secondary responses to account for and justify their affective response. For example, Verena has the following to say about Joe Burke:

Em, what do I think of Joe Burke? He wouldn’t be my favourite accordion player, mainly, I just find more and more watching accordions it’s just like I can’t listen to them because they really grate on me. I mean he got, I don’t like his style of playing, I mean he’s got that lovely rolling kind of non-stop sound which like you were saying yesterday is quite synonymous with that whole East Galway kind of rolling continuous but I don’t know. I find it a bit irritating. I’ve just slated Joe Burke. Hehehe.

(Cummins October 1997)

So what does our examination of instantiations of the weft of verbal responses to traditional musics tell us about how traditional musicians account for and organise their musical world? Firstly we must now be convinced of the dominance of metaphor, many of them the product of everyday, common schemata. We can see that they behave according to criteria, outlined by linguists and philosophers such as Rosch, Lackoff and Johnson, associated with prototype theory and basic level categories. Such metaphors can be accounted for using conceptual tools such as those developed from Hargreaves and Coleman above but such an organisation has to been seen as something in continuous motion in order to express ideas about organisation and aesthetic in any singular context. As we have seen, all responses are associative (because of the nature of processes of metaphor engaging meaning in two different spheres of experience), and many others exist both as objective analytical and objective global responses. The fact
that there is much crossover between such (artificial) categories does not, however, diminish their power as tools for examining responses. In the next chapter we will examine the relationship between objective-global and affective responses, demonstrating how basic level theory allows for the structure of ideas that privilege space, time and the virtuoso musician in the creation of identities for traditional Irish music.
In chapter one, drawing from the cognitive structuring of ‘representation’ from David Huron as ‘mapping’ (Huron 1992), I speak of a multi-dimensional terrain through which the signifier and signified engage each other. This terrain plays a part in the genesis of the signifier and also in the way we perceive the signified. The negotiation of this ‘terrain’ is made possible through the process of metaphor. The last three chapters have shown, in three different contexts, how structure and meaning are created through the use of metaphor. These metaphors are engaged and motivated through a number of different factors which constitute terrain. In this process the signifier is created through the interaction of embodied and other cultural factors rather than from anything intrinsic in the signified itself. Indeed we can go as far as to say that the signifier informs what we understand of the signified. Thus it can be argued that a chain of meaning starts off with the need to account for auditory phenomena, a need generated by a cultural terrain, which ends in the conceptual formation of the signified itself.
It is easy to illustrate how some of the transformations we are speaking of are metaphorical in nature in one way or the other. Again I must emphasise that when speaking of metaphor I am defining it very broadly, and defining it as a process where one thing is represented by another. Therefore, we include phenomena such as simile, analogy, metonymy and hypotaxis, that in a stricter grammatical sense would not be considered as metaphor but do engage similar processes. In chapter three we examined the metaphors generated through a terrain generated primarily by the embodied behaviour of pipers and onomatopoeia. We go on to show how Breathnach acquires the terminologies of western art music practice (themselves with metaphorical roots) to serve an aesthetic terrain which informs his understanding of tradition. Breathnach and Ó Riada are shown to create hierarchical terrains out of the use of metaphors of place and region. Some words, though obvious and in common usage internationally, are rejected by many of the communities for traditional music as they do not suit the political terrain the music is contextualized in. Most obvious is the imagination of traditional music as an entity, a living object, an ancient object, a body of water in motion etc. by commentators and traditional musicians to create their music as something with certain attributes to suit political and aesthetic agendas. Chapter four illustrates the occurrence of metaphor and its use in the everyday language, or ‘weft’, of the tradition and how we can understand the relationship between affective and objective-analytical and objective-global responses as causal.
If we understand the basis of metaphorical process as one thing being represented by another or, perhaps more accurately, one idea of a thing being represented by the idea of an other thing, then we can understand the notational representations of Irish traditional music as being essentially metaphorical. The most common form of notational system as used by traditional musicians, alphabetic notation, is an obvious borrowing of a prominent sequential form – allowing us to account for and organise our musical experience. Our first historical sources of this type of system where a linguistic organization is borrowed to organize musical worlds has been noted among the ancient Greeks and several types of notational system are found in Europe from the tenth century on (Caldwell 1978, 29-30). The notational structures that are based on a different sequential system from another area of thought are numerical systems. These also have presence in other cultures and historically – perhaps the most complex and earliest form is the jianzipu notational system used for the Qin (a Chinese seven string plucked zither). Even the special organization of contemporary western notation (rooted in the innovations concretised by Guido of Arezzo in the eleventh century, see Gushee 1991, 144-146) is rooted in spatial metaphors that regarded pitches as being ‘higher’ and ‘lower’. We can see that these notational systems themselves are essentially, if very broadly, metaphorical and it is often easy to comprehend the cultural terrain they are created in. For example, Padraig O’Keeffe taught his notational system as it directly related to the embodiment of sound production on the fiddle. This meant that it was easier for the students to relate sound, representation and movement. Students therefore found it easy and quick to learn more tunes. This was important for
O’Keeffe who, unlike today where teachers are paid for the amount of time they teach, was remunerated according to the amount of tunes he was able to teach! (Cranitch 2006, 184)

The Effect of Target Sources (Words) on Input Sources (Music)

Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (1998) show that conceptual blends (these are essentially what I am calling ‘metaphors’) do not just get their meaning from input sources, in this case the music, but also from the target input, the metaphor itself (Fauconnier & Turner 1998, 150). In their discussion of the metaphor ‘digging your own grave’ they come to the conclusion that:

…the emergent structure, although “fantastic” from a literal interpretation point of view, is supremely efficient for the purpose of transferring the intended inferences back to the target input, and thereby making real-world inferences. This emergent structure is not in the inputs - it is part of the cognitive construction in the blend. But, also, it is not stated explicitly as part of the blend. It just follows, fairly automatically, from the unstated understanding that the causal structure has been projected from the target, not from the source.

(Fauconnier & Turner 1998, p.150)

We can paraphrase this in our context by saying that the ‘emergent structure’ (meaning) of a metaphorical construct independently emerges in the interplay of source and target domains rather than emerging and being imposed from the source input. Thus they go on to write “The integration of events in the blend is indexed to events in both of the input spaces” (150). Therefore, when we say ‘Donegal style’, meaning is created in the structure of relationship between source input (sound) and target input
I will argue that meaning is potentially informed largely by the target input (place). In a musical context the balance of the blend has to be towards the target input, because the source input, an auditory experience, is abstract, intangible and ephemeral – indeed the only differentiations between sound and music is cultural. Turner eventually avoids the distinction between ‘input’ and ‘target’ spaces – showing how both can be indistinguishable in the creation of the ‘blended’ space (Turner, 1996, p.68).

However, the site of meaning that I am assuming here, i.e. the emergent structure, is a problematic issue as Fauconnier and Turner write;

> In the many-space model of conceptual projection, meaning is not constructed in any single space, but resides in the entire array and its connections. The "meaning" is not contained in the blended space. We know each space in the array and can work and modify all of them and their connections.

(Fauconnier & Turner 1998, p.158)

However Fauconnier and Turner are perhaps subject to a post-structuralist turn here, intimating that the variety of possible relationships between the elements of their spacial model makes stable meaning impossible. It is possible (as they demonstrate in all of their examples of ‘blended spaces’) to give an account of instances of meaning in cultural and historical contexts that may be shared and are generated in their ‘blended’ spaces even though such meaning may be contested. Turner writes elsewhere that “A blend can produce knowledge” (Turner 1996, p.83).
Fauconnier and Turner go on to show that conceptual blends can be entrenched or novel and that they are often biased (Fauconnier & Turner 1998, p.161). The novelty of blends of metaphor will always be a contentious area and may run contrary to the post-structuralist agenda of Barthes and Kristeva. Indeed the metaphors encountered in this study are always, to some extent, entrenched, pre-existing structures derived from other value systems. Composition, completion, and elaboration all recruit selectively from our most favoured patterns of knowing and thinking. This makes blending a powerful cognitive instrument, but it also makes it highly subject to bias and fundamentally unoriginal in one dimension. Composition, completion, and elaboration operate for the most part automatically, below the horizon of conscious observation and this makes the detection of biases difficult. However, biases are always there, rooted in our embodied, spatial and encultured experience. These biases are found in the target domain and it’s context.

Turner writes:

Inferences, arguments, ideas, and emotions developed in the blend can lead us to modify the initial input spaces and change our views of the knowledge used to build those input spaces.

(Turner 1996, p.83)

An important issue for us here is how the blended space and, through its input, the target input space, impacts on the source space, the music. Because of the relative lack of referentiality in source space, only aspects of the target input transfer significant meaning back onto the source input. For example, Donegal is an area known for and characterised in many different ways. It has a defined physical shape and identity
expressed through so many facets of Donegalishness – football, Donegal Tweed, Daniel O’Donnell, etc. None of these directly impose themselves onto our consciousness of what Donegal music is, although others do – particularly ideas of landscape and ‘northerliness’. This can be seen in the following quote describing Donegal music as:

....geometrical and aesthetic with something of the rugged grandeur of our cliffs and mountains... It has a hard core which serves to check the swelling surge of passion... (and in it) one senses the logic of the hard headed Northerner who recognises...that winter cold and bleak must inevitably follow in the path of the loveliest summer

(Rev. A. MacLoone (1951.) quoted in MacSuibhne 1993, p.11)

Donegal music is thus constructed out of only some of the ideas around the word ‘Donegal’. If this was not the case how could we exclude from the idea of what Donegal music is, one of the contemporary heartlands of authenticity, the music of country and Irish star Daniel O’Donnell17, an artist for whom ideas of Donegal as home are central? Fauconnier and Turner call this process “selective projection” where “Not all the elements and relations from the inputs are projected to the blend” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, p.47). Lakoff and Johnson may consider that the aspects of the ‘Donegal’ input into the musical blend are those that are more ‘grounded’ and more essential – thus ‘music is place’ is more ‘grounded’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p.63) than music is any other more abstracted notion of ‘Donegalness’!

Thus we construct our metaphorical process in the terrain it engages with care. This terrain is again reflective of aesthetic and political agendas and as such is the terrain metaphor has to engage.

17 Daniel O’Donnell is perhaps the leading figure in the world of Country music (sometimes referred to as Country and Irish) in Ireland. He is from Dungloe in North West Donegal and representations of his home and childhood are a central part of his persona as a performer (www.danielodonnell.org).
Differential Systems and their Impact

An important aspect of the sign or the target domain is that it is, according to Saussure, not just arbitrary but also differential. Each sign has a place in a wider system of language, *la langue*, on a combinatory or syntagmatic axis (as opposed to a selection or paradigmatic axis) (Allen 2000, p.9). Therefore, when members of the community of Irish traditional music talk about their music they use words and sentences (parole) that are selected along the paradigmatic axis and combined along the syntagmatic axis. Indeed, this existence of adopted syntagmatic systems is potentially the main source of bias as it generates meaning according to the properties of the target domain rather than the source which, in this musical-auditory context, is incapable of independently creating meaning. Allen tells us that, in the structuralist discourse, “Signs exist within a system and produce meaning through their similarity to and difference from other signs” (Allen 2000, p.10)

We must be careful though not to fall into the structuralists trap of overemphasising the arbitrariness of the sign or target domain. One thing that an examination of a system of signs about music that is apparent is that the target domains are, as we shall
develop later, meaningful and contested because of their metaphorical nature. Indeed perhaps this is one of the post-structural mechanisms that relate meaning to the sign. It is important to point out though, that differentiality is rooted in the target domain, not the source domain. Certainly there are sounds that are different but their differentiality is often only apparent in the expression of the perception of their difference which is largely culturally learned and essentially embodied. When a piece of traditional music is said to be from Donegal, rather than Sliabh Luachra, there is nothing implicit in the music declaring that – it is a differentiation that is culturally learned and organised. Similarly, even when there is nothing actually moving, we often conceive of one piece of music is slower or faster than another. What we are producing here is a differential account of our experience of music which is based on our embodied metaphorical relationship between frequency of beats and tones and the speed of moving objects.

Although this may sound fanciful, it is at the more abstract levels that such processes are most often evident in our everyday interaction with music. For the average middle-aged Japanese person, the differential category ‘Irish music’ probably includes the music of Enya and perhaps is interchangeable or at least closely related to the categories ‘folk music’ and ‘celtic music’. But for a traditional fiddler from Donegal this would certainly not be the case. It could be argued that the Japanese observer is misinformed or lacks knowledge, so their perception shouldn’t be examined or has little value. Despite such a reaction coming from a questionable valuative hierarchy of knowledge,
it still does not take away from the fact that the differential system of signs (the language) can be the same but can mean very different things. As such, differentiality does portray the structuralist and post-structuralist understanding of ‘meaning’ and its role, but most importantly here it shows that any meaning for these differential systems is rooted in the target domain, the sign, rather than the source.

This is of course another way in which the differential structure of target domain can potentially structure the source and we will shortly engage an instance of this in the context of the structure of regional styles in Irish traditional music. However, this is not all pervasive and without considerable exception. We have seen in chapter two how often scientifically different target systems – various notations – have not been allowed to structure performance practice. Traditional musicians have maintained the primary orality of the tradition by not allowing notation to play an operational role in the tradition. This has meant that the differential system that is notation and, in particular, western art music notation, does not structure the performance it is used to serve. This is not the only example in this context where a differential system of signs is not allowed to shape the artistry of the tradition. However, as we shall now see, the opposite can occur.
Target Structuring Source – Regional Styles

I will now take one example of what could, according to Lakoff (1987), be regarded as the over-arching superstructure of regional style. As a conceptual system it seems to be a very modern phenomenon. I have seen sleeve notes that claim antiquity for certain regional styles by saying that Captain Francis O’Neill mentions them. For instance the in the sleeve-notes for the CD by the McNamara Family, *Leitrim’s Hidden Treasure* it says “Much has been written by music collectors such as William Forde and Francis O’Neill of the sweet tonality of the South Leitrim style…” (1998). However O’Neill does not mention regional styles in his early twentieth century account of traditional music, only going as far as to mention some local repertoires (Forde also does not mention style but again does also mention repertoires). Indeed the nearest insinuation of style is when he writes in *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (1913) of piper, James O’Brien.

O’Brien was a neat, tasty Irish piper of the Connacht school of close players, and though his Union pipes were small, they were sweet and musical. (O’Neill 1913, p.21)

However, in any discussion of traditional music, it must be remembered that the uilleann pipes have had the longest history of inclusion in a literate, middle-class context, a context that necessitates the development of structures and lists and within which the classification of experience beyond an operational level is second nature. As mentioned previously, the first (and perhaps the only) account of the diversity of
regional styles in Ireland was by Seán Ó Riada in *Our Musical Heritage*. Ó Riada’s organization of traditional styles was certainly informed by his initial experiences of working and socializing with a community of primarily diasporic (they tended to be from rural parts of Ireland) traditional musicians in Dublin, all of whom were trying to make sense of their different sounds. I would argue that their organization and rationalization of this was achieved in the context of what they hold dearest and idealise, the home place and the people of that place. This is, of course, speculative and is certainly not true for all of the musicians in that circle at the time, but certainly the paradigm that supports the concept of regional style is completely dependent on the modernity of the concept of regional styles. The structure of the paradigm and its implication is as follows:

1. Traditional musicians in the past nurtured regional styles as they didn’t play outside of their locality and had no access to the media which exposes all musicians today to a world of music. Their exposure of other ways of playing was therefore limited, and this allowed for the development of idiosyncratic, regional sounds.

2. The implication is that these musicians did not conceive of other ways of playing the music apart from what was apparent to their experience as learned from the musicians of the locality (who all were of the same regional style) and the occasional travelling musician. If they were aware of a diversity of regional styles, the conditions for the creation of such regional styles could not exist.
This paradigm has informed most discussion on regional style, even in the most academic of styles and circles. For example, Sally Sommers-Smith writes in the first edition of *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music*:

…economic regionalism and the marginalisation of rural communities in Ireland following the worse years of the famine would have ostered a more insular system of music-making and music transmission. In a time of marginalized communities and difficult communication, the continuity of musical tradition would logically also become more locally based. Repertoire and performance would change at different rates as a result of these isolating trends – in some cases not changing at all.

(in Vallely (ed.) 1999, p.309)

As a paradigm this has not been extensively challenged as yet in any context although the latest edition of *The Companion* (2011) has withdrawn from such historicism in its definition of regional styles!

To return to the example of the concept of Donegal style. This is an idea and a sign existing in a larger differential structure of regional style. I would argue that this particular style is essentially rooted by many in the sound of a few iconic, virtuoso musicians from the south west of the county (most notably Johnny and, to a lesser extent, Mickey Doherty). This distinctive sound would be regarded by most traditional musicians and listeners (with the exception of those from within Donegal and those vary familiar with its music) as central to their concept of Donegal music. It is heard by many as heavily influenced through interaction with the Scots and Scots-Irish and is also associated with the term ‘Donegal’ through a process of metaphor, as we have seen in the previous quote from the Rev. MacLoone. Interestingly, and in contrast, he finds that Kerry music is more multi-coloured:
..it has more charm with, perhaps, a suggestion of effeminacy, it’s passionate intensity is nearer the surface, more easily discernible, in pattern it is more luxuriant..... (cited in Nic Suibhne 1993, p.11)

Despite what MacLoone says, there is nothing intrinsically of the soil of these regions that dictates the style of music – Donegal music is not ingrained in the rocks of Glencolmcille, one of the regions of the county believed to be more ‘musical’. The concept ‘Donegal’ is a political construct which undoubtedly has it’s own metaphorical root. It is also a metaphor in a musical context if we understand metaphorical process as basically where a word or concept is taken from one area of experience and applied in another. Like all the regional styles, the concept of Donegal music has flowered throughout the music community because of the mediation of the afore-mentioned virtuosic players and the mediated performances of more contemporary performers such as Tommy Peoples and ensembles like Altan and Fidil. The application of the title ‘Donegal’ has come from a series of motivations and has had a number of consequences that are often difficult to separate.

The principle motivation for the ascription of the title ‘Donegal’ is to organize our musical world – when we hear a new sound we attempt to organize it in our complex mental record-shop, building categorical structures to understand our music-sound-world. This is the primary motivation of all sign systems and is perhaps the motivation behind all human intellectual endeavor – indeed cognitive scientists like Steven Harnard would argue that ‘Cognition is categorisation’ (Harnard 2005, p.40).
When something is different we need a new section with a title to put it, and things like it, into. Of course, for traditional musicians from Donegal and elsewhere, this has the added complication of issues of identity.

However, we must ask why the community of Irish traditional musicians produced a categorical structure of this type? Why does the music structure match the imagined political structure of part of the county? Surely there are parts of Donegal closer to Leitrim, Sligo and their imagined styles of music than the more far-flung northern peninsulas of Donegal? Why aren’t the categories ‘Irish traditional music’, ‘Ulster Music’ or ‘Irish traditional fiddle music’ enough? There are certainly alternative structurings, such as Caoimhín MacAoidh’s radically different geographical breakdown of a ‘North Donegal / West Tyrone / Northwest Tyrone’ style and a South Donegal / Fermanagh / North Leitrim style (MacAoidh, http://www.irishfiddle.com/article_on_styles3.html). Also it would be possible to regard much of what is considered as ‘Donegal music’ as ‘traveller music’ as the music of the travelling families such as the Dohertys of Donegal does bear striking resemblances to the music of travelling fiddlers such as the Dunnes of Limerick and the Raineys of Mayo/Galway. We will postulate later on the importance of issues of locality and nostalgia in the choice and development of these categories.

Certainly a secondary motivation and consequence of the development of such a categorical structure is that people are able to make aesthetic judgments once a title has
been ascribed. Many commentators have traditionally regarded Donegal music as being ‘foreign’ or ‘Scottish’. It has entered the folklore of the tradition that Breandan Breatnach only collected tunes from the Dohertys that he considered Irish (see Nic Suibhne, 1993, pp.26-27) and, along with Comhaltas, regarded the Highland dance tune type as being non-native. However, contemporary commentators such as Caoimhín MacAoidh point out that, because of its geographical and political isolation, Donegal has maintained an authentic culture while other regions have allowed their musical practices to be subsumed by the tourist industry. This, according to MacAoidh makes Donegal music ‘the voice of reason’ (MacAoidh 1997, p.69) when it comes to regionalism and, by association, authenticity.

We can consider Donegal music as a category along the lines of Eleanor Rosch’s prototype theory with the music of Johnny Doherty being the prototype of what is Donegal music and all other performers from the region making sounds relating to it. Rosch spoke of prototypes of concepts like ‘chair’ but in an artistic context the prototype structure takes on an aesthetic and valuative significance. The most ‘Donegal’ music becomes the best Donegal music, everything else relates to that and the closer the music gets to the sounds of the prototype, the better it gets. Thus today, John Doherty would be regarded by many as a better ‘Donegal’ musician than the Inishowen fiddle player Dinny McLoughlin. Specialists, those closely acquainted with the music of Donegal, get over the contradictions if such prototype structuring by complicating it and reducing the structure to various subdivisions of regional style.
Thus we have north-west Donegal style, south-west style, Glenties style, central Donegal style. Doherty would be seen as a central figure for Donegal and South West Donegal style fiddling while McLaughlin would be a the central figure for Innishowen style fiddling. Of course the central aspect of the prototype category in this case is that it is a fiddle music. This is currently immutable and it is impossible to be a Donegal style flute player, whistle player, accordion player, piper, bagpiper etc. It is argued that this is because they are historically not as prevalent as the fiddle which is certainly true (perhaps with the notable exception of the mouth-blown bagpipes – noted by both Nic Suibhne (1993) and MacAoidh (1993) but what is important is that today it is difficult to be regarded as a Donegal style banjo player because the banjo plays no part in the metaphorical construct of Donegal. Personally I find it notable that the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have seen the general acquisition of a number of instruments and forms that have since become central to the dance tune, melody-playing tradition. But the last fifty years have seen these numbers reduce if anything (I am of course excluding accompanying instruments, which have gained acceptability by only being adopted in a peripheral role). This may in part be due to the development of conceptual categories of traditionality with instrumentation and form as essential parts of prototype structure. It is interesting to note that the music listed by Damhnait Nic Suibhne in her thesis on Donegal fiddle repertoire as ‘listening’ music as opposed to music for dancing, have become the prototype forms for Donegal tradition – this is the music of the virtuoso musicians of the area, again musicians like the Dohertys,
rather than the day-to-day music of the vast majority of occasions for traditional music there (Nic Suibhne 1994, pp.74-115, 159).

Of course the word ‘Donegal’ has served to exclude those from outside the county who some regard as part of the stylistic continuum. Mac Aoidh (http://www.irishfiddle.com/article_on_styles3.html), Feldman and O’Doherty (1980) have often attempted to present the music of Donegal, Tyrone and elsewhere as part of the same or multiple regional sounds. It could be argued that this sound has now been effectively hijacked by the title ‘Donegal’, leaving Tyrone musicians in particular without their own sound. I am not sure how true this is but there certainly exists a belief that to truly have the sound of a place, one must be of the area that has given its title to it.

What is perhaps most interesting is when musicians decide to model their own performance practice around their concept of a regional style. I am quite sure that Johnny Doherty didn’t model his performance practice on what was his idea of a correct Donegal style of performance. However it is common-place to see the young fiddlers from all over the world who have decided they like the Donegal sound and are attempting to become part of the Donegal category of sound, engaging in a musical but essentially metaphorical journey into Donegal, at the centre of which lies the music of the Dohertys. The role of concepts like this in the development of traditional musicians, or, perhaps more accurately, musicians becoming traditional, is fascinating
in the way that a conceptual structure mediates aesthetic judgments and the creative choices made by musicians in performance. Such concepts become growingly operational and the more they do so, the more likely that alternative sounds of traditional music become unacceptable and are disenfranchised.

Therefore, the existence of the category ‘Donegal’ builds a music that has a border and as such it exists in a larger continuum of geographically and usually politically bound and defined musical ideas. It also builds an entity with its own aesthetic practices and value systems while generating other heteroglossic musical entities that only marginally challenge the accepted monoglossia. The generation of the differential category / target domain ‘Donegal music’ has created new ways for us to engage with this music as a situated, political and aesthetic object.

We must also remember that the music the virtuoso musicians we model ideas of regional style around is very often born of experience in a context very different to the politically bound county (as in Donegal style), orientation in the county (as in West-Clare style) or culturally defined region (Sliabh Luachra). For example, the music of Bobby Casey, generated in the environs of The Crosses of Annagh in West-Clare, became a paradigm of West-Clare and Clare music when he performed among the Irish community in London after his emigration in 1952. Thus his music, engendered in his locality just outside Miltown Malbay and developed in London from the 1950’s, has become a representative facet of the music of Clare, a very different cultural and
geographical unit to either the Crosses or London. This representation is understood to be the case by the vast majority of informed traditional musicians from Clare and beyond (for an excellent and poetic exposition on the music of Bobby Casey and West Clare read Kevin Crehan’s article ‘Bobby Casey: Virtuoso of West Clare’, 2000).

We have created a geography of music, originally from small places, often performed in urban / big places and accounted for according to a mapping familiar to all the Irish counties. The root of this mapping is indeed its familiarity and as such stands as a metaphorical borrowing – but more than familiarity makes it attractive, as we shall now see. However, in borrowing this mapping and combining it to organize our musical experience, other aspects of the map end up being projected onto the music. The possibilities for this are highlighted in the afore-mentioned quote from Seán Ó Riada’s *Our Music Heritage:*

Like sean-nós singing, but unlike piping, fiddle styles vary from place to place; there is no definitive standard style. I doubt of there is a county in Ireland that has not got its own quota of fiddle-players and its own tradition – thirty-two counties and, you might say, thirty two styles

(Ó Riada 1983, pp.51-52)

I was perhaps a little disparaging in chapter three when examining this remark but it is quite evident that it is generated by the extension of the ‘music is political space’ metaphor or blended space to the entire country and is, as such, quite natural, if completely unfounded (Ó Riada certainly did not present any evidence of every county once having its own fiddle style).
The ‘county’ certainly has a very strong presence in the creation of identity for many Irish people but has also lacked much academic attention. Many counties can contain physical, social and cultural environments that may seem to be oppositional (urban / rural Dublin, Conemara and East Galway) which generate difference, but that rarely threatens the pervasiveness of the idea of the identity. Borders are all important and, at certain times of the year are marked by county colours and neighbours developing rivalries with each other and allegiances with strangers from other parts of the county. The county exists in the context of other identity markers that can be of variable importance – the parish, the town, the city, the province, the country itself – but it is perhaps more pervasive than all. The obvious contexts for the expression of county identity, as accounted for by Patrick J. O’Connor (2006) are in literature, gaelic games, songs and music.

The county is an imagined phenomena – it is not intrinsic to landscape and its borders are not physical (although they can occasionally consist of physical barriers such as rivers and other natural obstructions that may have played a part in historical land ownership). The county structure has its roots in the political development of Ireland in the second millennium and as such is formed by the gradual acquisition of the country by our English neighbours. O’Connor (2006, p.21) tells us that there are 12 counties rooted in the medieval governance of Ireland and the rest were founded in the Tudor period and the rule of James 1st and the first ‘atlas’ for Ireland was Sir William
Petty’s *Hiberniae Delineatio* (1685, see O’Connor 2006, p.43). William Petty was an English academic who was rewarded for his efforts in true Imperial fashion with 70,000 acres of Irish debentures (Finkelstein 2000, 109) and proposed a final solution for England’s Irish problem which involved deporting nearly the entire population of the island which would be maintained as a cattle ranch (Ohlmeyer 2000, p.229)!

Thus, our county map was imposed as a result of growing British power and administration in Ireland and developed according to political and cartographical expediency. However, it has provided for Irish traditional music, through processes of metaphor, what Michel Foucault would have called ‘orders of discourse’ (Foucault in Young (ed.) 1981, pp.48-78). As such it limits knowledge according to its own structures, boundaries and terminologies. Foucault writes:

> Within its own limits, each discipline recognizes true and false propositions; but it pushes back a whole teratology of knowledge beyond it’s margins. The exterior of a science is both more and less populated than is often believed: there is of course immediate experience, the imaginary themes which endlessly carry and renew immemorial beliefs; but perhaps there are no errors in the strict sense, for error can only arise and be decided inside a definite practice; on the other hand, there are monsters on the prowl whose form changes with the history of knowledge. In short, a proposition must fulfill complex and heavy requirements to be able to belong to the grouping of a discipline; before it can be called true or false, it must be ‘in the true’ as Canguilhem would say. (Foucault in Young, 1981, p.60)

I don’t think that Foucault would have complained about this idea being used outside of the realms of ‘science’, in an organization of knowledge that creates ‘immemorial beliefs’ at its core. He does emphasise mechanisms through which ‘orders of discourse’ exclude others from being ‘in the truth’. The ‘county’ is certainly a major organizing facet of the order of discourse for traditional Irish music. We have seen where the
primacy of ‘the county’ becomes the central aspect of the monoglossia of ‘style’ and traditional music generally – regions defined through other parameters are not as valuable (the one exception to this obviously being Sliabh Luachra, a culturally defined area); styles accounted for through ethnic group, gender and class are also not as equally discussed or seen as being as important.

As I have discussed, ideas of county styles are usually built around paradigmatic, prototype performers and their music. But when there is a region without that accepted prototype there is often a search to discover one. The following is taken from a discussion thread from www.thesession.org:

**Tipperary fiddle style.**
I’m trying to find any information on the tipperary regional fiddle style. Can anyone point towards any information... a book, a CD, a player, anything. If you can help at all, please do. Go raibh maith agaibh.
# Posted on January 15th 2008 by session savage

**Re: Tipperary fiddle style.**
This is a tricky one. Tipperary’s not exactly known for fiddlers or fiddle styles. Probably the most well-known fiddler to come from the county was Seán Ryan - see this thread [http://www.thesession.org/discussions/display/16305/comments#comment338563](http://www.thesession.org/discussions/display/16305/comments#comment338563)
Martin Murray, perhaps better known on the banjo and mandolin, plays fiddle on the Damp in the Attic CD 'I Was Flying It ...' (Magnetic Music) and had a solo album on the long defunct Cross Border Media label called 'A Dark Horse'. Gerry O’Connor has been mixing fiddle with banjo as part of Four Men and a Dog and Sharon Shannon’s Big Band, but you’d need a terrier’s hearing to disassemble his playing from the rest. As for tunes, well there’s always Paddy ‘Nenagh’ O’Brien. Sorry, that’s not much help. Perhaps others can add more.
# Posted on January 15th 2008 by MacCruiskeen

**Re: Tipperary fiddle style.**
Thats great MacCruiskeen. I know martin, am going for a lesson tonight. I’m blessed.
😊
# Posted on January 15th 2008 by session savage

**Re: Tipperary fiddle style.**
there is a fiddle tutorial written by Kathleen Nesbitt and she’s from Tipperary here’s a link to this book on her daughter’s
website  
http://www.resonancestore.com/maireadnesbitt/index.html?s=home&m=&c=viewitem&item_id=2141
# Posted on January 15th 2008 by padre

Re: Tipperary fiddle style.
Edward Cronin was from Tipperary. I think he was a piper or a fiddle player. He was a great source of tunes for Chief O’Neill. I don’t know anything more about him but if you catch some recordings or any information on his style, it might give you an idea of a trend among Tipperary musicians.
# Posted on January 21st 2008 by 52Paddy
(www.thesession.org/discussions/display/16386/comments#comment341118, Accessed 9.1.12)

The point is not that there is no such thing as a ‘Tipperary style’. Whether there is or not, what is interesting here is that the discussion starts with the implicit assumption that there is a Tipperary fiddle style, as of course, according to Ó Riada, there must be. The foundation of the idea of a ‘Tipperary style’ isn’t in sound but in the order of discourse – some counties have styles so all must have them. Thus the order of discourse creates new ideas and meanings, not the sounds generated by musicians.

Orders of discourse may also be seen in the adoption of western concepts of tonality and intonation. The rigidity of the nature of the ‘note’ (e.g. the ‘A’ – concert A – above ‘middle C’ is 440Hz) and ideas of in-tune-ness, taken from general western popular and western practice, exclude other, sometimes perhaps more traditional, approaches to intonation. This is so much the case that some commentators bemoan the uniform nature of contemporary intonation (see Keegan 2010, pp.81-83). Foucault would account for this as being the order of discourse limiting knowledge
through a principle of ‘specificity’ where “we must conceive discourse as a violence which we do to things…” (Foucault 1981, p.67)

Structuring of Terrain and the Motivation of the ‘Order of Discourse’ – Nostalgia

Very apparent in the structuring of the worlds of Irish traditional music is an ever-present nostalgia. This music is constantly framed by past practices and cognitive structures based on the perception of these past practices. Festivals in this genre are naturally commemorative and in performance musicians will regularly place their performance in a framework of place and memory.

The study of nostalgia seems to be at a fledgling stage and split between neuroscience and occasional engagement by sociologists, geographers, political theorists, art historians and other academics in humanities realms. The three exceptions to this are the works of sociologist Fred Davies (1977,1979) in the role of nostalgia in popular culture, Svetlana Boym’s ‘off-modern’ poetic engagement with nostalgia in post-communist Eastern Europe (2001) and the positive take on nostalgia from a group of scientists from the worlds of neuroscience and psychology (Tim Wildshut et al 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011). It is quite incredible that a serious examination of the phenomenon of nostalgia as a formulating force in traditional music practice has not been extensively engaged on singular, or across different, performance practices.
However, in her recent work, Aileen Dillane has begun to engage nostalgia as a process in her study of Irish music in contemporary Chicago (2009).

An obvious element of nostalgia is memory, both individual and particularly collective. Memory is not a fixed record or an immutable account of what was. Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone write:

> The past is not fixed, but is subject to change: both narratives of events and the meanings given them are in a constant state of transformation... An event, an emotion remembered, inevitably cannot have the same meaning retrospectively as it had at the time, weighted as the memory must be with everything that has happened subsequently, with the changing needs and imperatives of times and peoples.  
> (Hodgkin and Radstone 2007, p.23)

Memory of course emerges from our individual consciousnesses but is also created in lots of contexts – commemorations, institutions, media, social and familial events. Indeed, it is perhaps more of a social than a personal act. An important part of memory, as well as remembering, is forgetting, or just not saying. The study of memory as such presents us with paradoxes – how do we study what memory remembers and forgets when we can only remember what we remember? (the fourth century St. Augustine postulates this in book eleven of his *Confessions*, transforming the paradox into an article of faith and proclaiming that God is greater than memory, existing in all time, 1960, pp.208-232).

However, despite its paradoxes, memory and recollection is the basis of all that we do. There is really no such thing as a ‘fresh start’ or ‘starting with a clean slate’. Paul
Connerton shows us that, even in the most radical departures in history, ‘All beginnings contain an element of recollection’ (Connerton 1989, p.6). We need memory to make our current actions intelligible and, as such, memory leaves an imprint on such actions. Connerton goes on to write:

…in all modes of experience we always base our particular experiences on a prior context in order to ensure that they are intelligible at all; that prior to any single experience our mind is already predisposed with a framework of outlines, of typical shapes of experienced objects. To perceive an object or act upon it is to locate it within this series of expectations (ibid.)

However, we must remember that the experience, the memories, upon which we base our actions are still not immutable and the contingencies of the actions currently committed in both synchronic and diachronic contexts in turn help us mold memory for current expediency. Indeed the seminal text, *The Invention of Tradition* (1992), edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, is themed around the formation of memory – personal, social and historical – in the service of political expediency and the demands of nineteenth-century identity.

*The Invention of Tradition* concentrates on how traditions were formulated by recent historical individuals. However the remarkable process is how social groups imagined them as ancient memories. The giant in the study of social memory was the Durkheimian sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. He shows in his seminal text, *On Collective Memory* (1991), how the separation of individual memory from social memory is pointless – all of our memory is to some degree social, all exists in a context
informed by memories of other people. We very much make sense of our world through engagement with memories that are not personal – indeed personal memories would be nonsensical without the informing context of social memory. Halbwachs also emphasizes the importance of place and physical context, imagining mappings between different types of memories (all fundamentally social) being reliant on the physical spaces that the social group occupies.

Connerton goes on to demonstrate that memory and particularly the performance of memory is essential in contemporary urban living, indeed much more so than in rural village life.

Consider the case of village life. What is lacking in a village setting is not simply the physical space but the performative space which we habitually negotiate in an urban context. We are accustomed to moving in a milieu of strangers where many of the people who witness the actions and declarations of others usually have little or no knowledge of their history and little or no experience of similar actions and declarations in the past. This is what makes it difficult to judge whether, or how far, a particular person is to be believed in a given situation. If we are to play a believable role before an audience of relative strangers we must produce or at least imply a history of ourselves; an informal account that indicates something of our origins and which justifies or perhaps excuses our present status and relations in relation to that audience. But this presentation of the self in everyday life is unnecessary when, as is the case in the life of the village, the gaps in shared memory are much fewer and slighter.

(Connerton 1989, p.17)

Therefore memory, individual and social, is constructed in the matrix of the present and the chronological space between that and what is remembered, and is even more active and performed in an urban, contemporary context.
However, there is more to nostalgia than just memory. Nostalgia, the combination of two Greek terms, *nostos* (to return home) and *algia* (pain), was proposed to account for what was considered a medical condition noted among Swiss mercenaries in the late seventeenth century. For the next two hundred years it continued to be diagnosed as a medical condition and was considered to be eminently treatable (Boym 2001, pp.3-6).

Nostalgia reached a form of respectability in the romantic movement of the nineteenth century but the word itself acquired negative connotations as the century wore on, seen as an enemy of progress and betterment (ibid., p.16). Indeed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it ‘came to be regarded as a form of melancholia or depression’ an ‘immigrant psychosis’ (Wildschut, Sedikides, Routledge 2008, p.20) primarily associated with homesickness. In more recent years, nostalgia has been rehabilitated, by social psychologists like Wildschut and his colleagues who have

...demonstrated, that nostalgic engagement elevates positive mood, boosts self-esteem, and strengthens social connectedness. In addition to these three functions,... nostalgia serves a fourth function—to increase a sense of meaning in life.

(Routledge et al. 2011, 638)

This is very much perceived to work in the existential anxiety that we all face in contemporary western culture – moving at speed towards our personal and in-personal oblivion. As such they see it as a individual’s mechanism to maintain psychological well being (despite its and social benefits) and don’t address nostalgia as a social or communal mechanism.
Boym on the other hand addresses nostalgia in the societal contexts of post-communist Russia and Berlin. She focuses on ideas of space to define and construct ideas about nostalgia. She stays with the original sense of nostalgia as homesickness, a longing for a certain historical or physical space and postulates two spatial expressions for nostalgia – a restorative nostalgia which is a revivalist movement, attempting to create the imagined spaces longed for (that may never have actually existed) and a reflective nostalgia which is forever in movement, manifesting in ‘the imperfect process of remembrance’ (Boym 2001, p.41). Boym sees these two modes of nostalgia as being tendencies rather than absolutes.

Marcia Herndon has told us that musical systems (and so-called ‘traditional’ systems) tend to seek equilibrium and as such are inherently conservative. She proposes the concept of potential which ‘sums up all the forces acting on a music genre, style, or type in a single quantity’ (Herndon 1987, p.459) that has four dimensions, the first of which she mentions is cognition. Using this model it is apparent that an important force for equilibrium and stability in the context of Irish traditional music is nostalgia, but I would argue that this isn’t a force against or resisting change but one primarily of stability. The distinction is small but important. Forces for stability will be inventive and utilize change and invention to maintain a perceived status quo.

Returning to the concept of regional style, I would argue that this conceptual structure has been generated primarily in diasporic contexts, musicians from rural Ireland living
in urban contexts. These are musicians who literally had to perform their authenticity, not only with their music but with the performance of their social memories, born of memories of home and developed and rehearsed histories and lineages. The emphasis on the home place to illustrate difference in sound was natural. Certainly musicians did sound different but rarely so much that they couldn’t play together. The need to generate a differential system to articulate difference was nostalgic and became part of the social memory of the tradition. It reflected the value of the home place that was no longer home, but in doing so reinvented it. How many of the Clare musicians in Dublin and London who were instrumental in the imagination of the notions of Clare style ever engaged the county as a singular phenomenon? The music of, often virtuosic, musicians, long gone from their place of birth, idiosyncratic to themselves and related to their own local influences very quickly came to represent the music of entire counties.

These differential systems, collections of what we have termed ‘target domains’, have become part of the learned repertoire of a social nostalgia that is performed today internationally among traditional musicians. They serve the beneficial nostalgic functions outlined by the social psychologists like Wildschut and Routledge, placing musicians in a historical heritage of practice, where they engage the greats of the tradition, past, present and future through immediate social interaction. Large numbers of musicians can ‘remember’ the music of great past artists like Michael Coleman (as mentioned in chapter four), a memory made sharp and clear with recordings. However, we not only remember his music but we also remember him as a
South-Sligo, north-Connaught musician and relate his way of playing to other fiddle players since that. We imagine him as part of that tradition and in ways that he himself could not consider. When, through our shared nostalgia, we look back on the music of a particular region we do not do so realistically and engage what we can guess was the day-to-day life of the music in a particular parish or townland, but rather engage the social nostalgia of region and the virtuosos who sit at the centre of this categorical structure.

The division of Boym’s two orientations for nostalgia is not as distinct in this musical context but they both certainly are there. The lesser orientation is restorative nostalgia, although it is evident in many of the most valued and ‘traditional’ performance styles in the music practice. A band like *At the Racket* purposely tries to recreate the historical sound of the bands that recorded in America in the early part of the twentieth century. The Comhaltas *Pléaracha* competitions encourage musicians to put on historical reimaginings of rural music making, incorporating peasant costume, traditional social dancing and farmyard props. However, far more prominent are the occasions of remembrance that are enacted through the vast majority of immensely popular traditional music festivals and the centre points of the traditional musical calendar. Boym would regard these types of nostalgia as reflective, “more concerned with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude” (Boym 2001, p.49), dwelling on “the imperfect process of remembrance” (ibid, p.41). This is manifest in the Willie Clancy week in Miltown Malbay, the Cooley / Collins festival in Gort, the Micho Russell
weekend in Doolin, the Joe Mooney summer school in Drumshambo, the South Sligo Summer School in Tubbercurry, the James Morrisson weekend festival in Riverstown, the Padraig O’Keeffe festival in Castleisland, the Frankie Kennedy Winter School in Donegal, to name but a few. These commemorative events are opportunistic and indeed acts of imagination in their own right, nearly always motivated around the economic needs of a locality as well as the desire to promote aspects a local music, very often in a small town where the music would have happened very rarely historically. In this way, reflective nostalgia is opportunistic, creating nostalgic narratives through which we can reinvent our past, creating new histories, narratives and mythologies, shifting meaning for immediate purpose. These festivals tend to invariably involve classes to promote local musical practices, lectures about the music of the locality or the individual(s) who are the focus of the commemoration, sometimes some manner of religious service, concerts of local music or music that reflects the nostalgic sentiment of the occasion, and always endless numbers of organized or spontaneous pub sessions. The one exception to this practice of commemorative festival is the Comhaltas organized system of fleadhns, culminating in the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil, the venue for which changes with regularity - but even these events tend to incorporate different commemorative events peculiar to each locality.

Of course, nostalgia as imagined here generates ideas around authenticity. To support ideas generated by nostalgia we build up paradigms and of discourses of authenticity. These can support nostalgia but also allow is to commodify the central values promoted
through nostalgia. Most importantly, authenticity in a musical context is ephemeral and doubly intangible – we imagine hearing something that wasn’t a thing in the first place! As such ‘authenticity’ in a music context doesn’t fit the paradigm as presented by Walter Benjamin when he writes “The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity” (Benjamin 1968, p.220) but does give infinite scope for the invention of authenticity. Regina Bendix writes:

The search for authenticity is fundamentally an emotional and moral quest. But this experiential dimension does not provide lasting satisfaction, and authenticity needs to be augmented with pragmatic and evaluative dimensions. Declaring something authentic legitimated the subject that was declared authentic, and the declaration in turn can legitimate the authenticator…

(Bendix 1997, p.7)

Bendix has no cause to examine the role of nostalgia in the establishment of the paradigm of authenticity in the field of folklore studies although she later states that, in searching for the authentic, folklore is “satisfying a longing for an escape from modernity” (ibid). However, by emphasizing the role of the ‘emotional and moral’ she is accounting for the same fundamental valuative and culturally tied fundamentals that inform nostalgia. Authenticity generates its own systems of knowledge, it organizes and systematises a community’s nostalgias into valuative structures with an implicit weight. These structures are represented through a nodal mapping of authenticity, marked by instances of relative authenticity that are very often commodified versions of it.

It is very tempting to regard the word and sign systems that we are examining here themselves as commodities. Members of the traditional music community can purchase
their way into the interior of their community in a number of ways: through their performance practice; through ties of family and friends; but perhaps most importantly (as not everyone in the community is a performer and all will find themselves occasionally in a group that includes neither friends or family) through ties of knowledge as expressed through language. In these contexts it is again important for members of the community to repurchase their entry into it through the performances of memory mentioned previously by Connerton (1989, p.21). As Bendix insinuates, there is legitimacy in the declaration and shared knowledge of authenticity. Legitimacy can thus be found (and, if authenticity is to be seen as commodity, bought) in the repertoire of words that are used to express ideas about authenticity.

A sustaining factor for language systems such as these is the relationship between language and power – Norman Fairclough tells us that;

> It is perhaps helpful to make a broad distinction between the exercise of power through coercion of various sorts including physical violence, and the exercise of power through the manufacture of consent to or at least acquiescence towards it. Power relations depend on both, thought in varying proportions. Ideology is the prime means of manufacturing consent

(Fairclough 2001, p.3)

These extended blended spaces that bring their own logic to our musical world (what are ‘traditional’ instruments, dance tune forms, regions?) also generate their own ideologies out of the blend, often created through the influence of the target domain that brings its own logic to the organization of our music experience. Coercion is evident in the institutional struggle against instruments, styles and forms that are so
evident in the recent history of the music practice. For example, Comhaltas in 2010 stopped its warpipes competition, thus removing it for many from its current pantheon of traditional instruments. However, coercion is supported by ideology that is derived from the organization of blended spaces according to organizational structures taken from the worlds of the target input spaces.

Fairclough goes on to tell us that:

One aspect of power is the capacity to impose and maintain a particular structuring of some domain or other – a particular way of dividing it into parts, of keeping the parts demarcated from each other, and a particular ordering of those parts in terms of hierarchical relations of domination and subordination.

(Fairclough, 2001, pp,10-11)

I am arguing here that one of the mechanisms which maintains structures of power in Irish traditional music at a fundamental level is the extended metaphorical structuring of blended spaces, extended to maintain the monoglossia of power that supports Herndon’s implicit conservatism within the tradition. Such monoglossia (a term taken from Bakhtin’s Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays 1994, which highlights it as a pervasive, conforming discourse) is built around a schema of authenticity versus innovation to be found in many (if not all) traditions and aptly described by Phillip Bohlman (1990, pp.17-24).18

The building of structures such as ‘regional style’ and ‘locality’, creating geographies to understand our music in, is motivated and realized through the processes of nostalgia.

18 We must take care not to expect the pervasive monoglossia to be around authenticity in a traditional music context. There are certainly some contexts where the innovation end of the schema is the monoglossic discourse!
and memory, in particular social memory. This is the site of process where affective responses, as discussed in the last chapter, are transferred, informing objective-analytic and objective global responses and structures. This process is intrinsically social but, most importantly, intrinsically creative, generating shared social meaning for traditional music practices with which we can negotiate and engage the extent of modernity.

Language As Creative Act – Contemporary Structurings Of Arts Practice – Ensemble

It is important at this point to illustrate how such language structures, no matter how nostalgic or shared are not immutable but can easily change their meaning and structures to any degree. In order to illustrate this I have conducted interviews with three members of prominent professional traditional music ensembles about their bands. I asked them about the ideas behind their bands, how they relate to audiences through speech (introductions, stories etc.) and what they found most satisfying and liked most about playing in a band.

Two of the ensembles, Danú and Munnelly, would be regarded as concert bands in a standard, popular format while the last is a new band consisting of just three Donegal fiddle players, Fidil. The language of Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh, singer and flute/whistle player in Danú and Kieran Munnelly, flute and bodhrán player in Munnelly, is business focused and their performance lives revolve around contemporary performance practice occurring in concerts and CD recordings. When asked about
their favourite numbers in a gig they tend to contextualise it first in a recording and then to talk about its effect in performance. Indeed both present their material differently to various audiences - so much so that Muireann conceptualizes performances in two contrasting contexts completely differently, giving them different names.

You have to tailor it [language band members use to introduce performance items] to the audience. A concert in America is very different to a gig in Ireland, even the language we use to describe them are not the same thing. They’ve got a concert, you’ve got a gig, you know?

(Nic Amhlaoibh January 2007)

Kieran, on the other hand, is only concerned about the perceived traditionality of his performance closer to home.

I don’t worry about that [presenting non-traditional material] until we come to Ireland or Europe where people expect it [traditional material]

(Munnelly January 2007)

To all the informants, a central concept is of difference between performances, as described by Kieran:

There’s one set that we’re playing for years.. I like it because over the year it’s grown through live performance, through us being not afraid or not stagnant, something that has changed and is different every night.

(Munnelly January 2007)

Another central concept is difference between band members, as described by Aidan O’Donnell from Fidil:

You can probably hear the three individuals in the band… there’s layers of sound to work with then.

(O’Donnell January 2007)

And finally differences from other bands or the individuality of the band is important, as described by Aidan.
We were playing what we learned at home. The interest was to try and go to that than not try and sound like other bands… We were interested in the traditional tunes but trying to put Fidil stamp on it.

(O’Donnell January 2007)

Each of these bands seems to have a very different central philosophy to their performances. Muireann says about her band, Danú, perhaps the mostly mainstream of the three mentioned here, that their central idea is to get across the feel of a session on the stage. She states:

We like to think of ourselves as a trad band, not a very frilly one, not always the slickest or the most adventurous in arrangements but the heart of it is the session format really and we don’t really stray from that too far….It’s kind of an old fashioned trad band…The thing that works the best for us is to keep it simple and to keep it honest, when we were younger we spent a lot of time coming up with very complicated and very fairly fancy arrangements and chord progressions and harmonies that I enjoy but at the end of the day we have reverted back to good old tunes and songs that we can’t really go wrong with.

(Nic Amhlaibh January 2007)

Of these bands, Danú are musically closest to perhaps the prototype traditional dance tune-based band, The Bothy Band (as mentioned in the last chapter). Muireann is speaking of the rejection of complexity of arrangement and harmony, depending on the value of traditional material, the virtuosity and musicianship of its members and the overall ‘blend’ in the band (‘blend’ is a metaphor like ‘balance’ or ‘mix’ which is commonly heard in comments about a number of performance practices). Also interesting and common is the use of ‘honest’ to describe uncomplicated ensemble performance of older traditional music.

Kieran presents Munnelly as a band that is a co-operative of a number of different musical approaches which does not compromise, but where band members allow each
other to express their own preferences and aesthetics. For both Muireann and Kieran, important metaphors for their sound are ‘life’ and ‘energy’.

Aidan O’Donnell presents a different but not unconnected aesthetic for ensemble. Like the band *Altan*, *Fidil* attempt to represent the music of their particular region, Donegal, or perhaps more specifically south West Donegal (although this was not a distinction made in my interview with Aidan). They want to reflect their roots and, unlike *Altan*, reject many of the musical conditions of contemporary ensemble performance. Aidan tells me about *Fidil’s* sound:

The basic sound was to go back to the roots in terms of listening to Doherty and Frank Cassidy... Every CD we heard, even if was a solo fiddle CD still would have bouzouki or guitar, even though it was deemed solo. So what I wanted to do, and what Ciaran wanted to do was to break that down using just the fiddle. Obviously you had to do something else with it, you couldn’t just leave it static, it challenges you to do something new and different but at the same time the route was through the old octaving, the old Donegal players.

(O’Donnell January 2007)

Central to every aspect of their performance is what he regards as traditional Donegal fiddle performance (although he does admit to taking some liberties for the sake of individuality). Even the way they introduce the tunes is important.

We try and bring a lot of folklore that went with it [introductions]... It’s not just about the music, it was made socially relevant, they tell the story about the place and about the tune that relates the tune to the audience. It’s not just about the music like... We try and get the audience, at the end of the day you’re trying to break down a barrier to make these people comfortable and enjoy it probably the way we enjoyed learning it. We enjoy ourselves first and foremost but then when we do that we try and get the old stories the way we heard them from the likes of Vincey [Campbell] and especially the likes of [Danny] Meehan and all.... It makes the stuff more accessible I suppose.

(O’Donnell January 2007)
Aidan is referring to perhaps an extreme form of a more recent type of ensemble that focuses deliberately on more privileged traditional practices. *Altan*, as has been stated, also do this for Donegal music, and the band *Sliabh Notes* do the same for Sliabh Luachra music. However, these bands do this in the musical context of the model for the concert traditional band set by 70s by ensembles like *The Bothy Band*. *Fidil* have gone as far as to reject that, refusing to have accompaniment from guitar, bouzouki, bodhrán or keyboard. They refuse also to go with the standard inclusion of a singer and performing a significant proportion of their material as accompanied traditional, folk or more contemporary forms of song. It must be remembered that a significant part of the life of their ensemble is more substantially modelled on contemporary performance context (the concert stage, featuring standard length sets), contemporary technology for mediation and promotion and contemporary business practices. Aidan refers just as much as the other two informants to such contexts (the concert, the session) and the ubiquitous CD.

The interviews I made that inform chapter four of this thesis also featured recordings for comment (by musicians) taken from solo musicians and session. In this context issues of place and traditionality were far more prevalent than they have been in the commentary on bands. However, less prominent was operational language that invariably is mentioned after the regional metaphor. The vast majority of ensemble playing (with the notable exception of bands like *Fidil*, *Altan* and *Sliabh Notes*) is not evaluated along the same conditions than the more privileged solo (in an Irish style) performance – they exist in a different if related sphere of language, dominated by
operational terminology, emotive responses (such as excitement) and ideas of individuality. What becomes very apparent in an examination or these responses, in comparison to others, is that much of the rich, privileged language associated with solo traditional music is not there. The local references and the language of technique are not at all apparent. It is really telling that Muireann, when asked if Danú had any regional focus or message replies that this wasn’t the case as Danú are ‘kind of an old fashioned trad. band’. In Fidil, an ensemble that reflects the much paradigmmed old style of Donegal fiddle, Aidan regards this band’s music as different and innovative. This encourages us to believe that the sense of traditionality in a concert ensemble context is more contemporaneously focused.

The late Dennis Doody, as one of the informants for my interviews that inform the last chapter said to me:

There’s no doubt about it that bands do have a tendency at first to compromise, we’d say Altan now for instance, they wouldn’t have compromised at all because they all came from the same background, or if you had a band from Sliabh Luachra for instance, they wouldn’t compromise. But if you get a band from Dublin then they all compromise you know. Because they have to. By and large for a lot of the groups in the break-up, I think that it is a training ground for a lot of young musicians anyway and suddenly as they get more experience and knowledgeable about the music, one day they leave the thing go and go of and do their own thing, they have other ideas. I can’t say that they are doing any harm at all, but what I think they are doing as well as course is they are introducing a new breed of young people to listen to music. (Doody April 2000)

The language of ensemble does not threaten the hegemony of the privileged language of tradition (and as Dennis suggests ensemble may serve what he envisages as more mainstream tradition). For many, ensemble is seen as something ephemeral and,
externally at least, involving a compromise of the individual musician, a compromise that lies at the heart of the ensemble. The language of ensemble does emphasize more contemporary aesthetics of traditional music, in particular terminology associated with individuality and difference and a greater emphasis on operational terminology necessary for 'banding' (see Keegan 2010). It certainly generates a dialectic but perhaps not one that is insurmountably oppositional. An examination of these language practices show us that ensemble rarely does, yet, touch the heart of the tradition (and perhaps survives because it does not) but creates a different discourse, rooted in contemporary expressions of traditional culture, playing to at least part of the identities of many musicians today.

As such, discourse about ‘banding’ (Slobin 1992, p.77) turns some of the normal structures of language practice within the traditional music community on their head. The privileged, ‘authentic’ structures of regionalism are regarded as innovative, giving way to more poetic and operational words that form an alternative authenticity in this context which can coexist in the same genre without seeming to be oppositional.

Conventionalisation

According to Lakoff and Turner (1989, pp.55-56), we must recognize conventionalization as a parameter for engaging with metaphorical process at both the levels of thought and language. They point out that many basic level metaphors are established as truth and as such are unquestioned in everyday use by members of the
community that use them. Their main example of this is ‘DEATH IS A DEPATURE’ (ibid, p.55), a metaphorical structure that they see as “deeply conventionalized at the conceptual level; we probably all have it” (ibid.). In a western musical context, metaphorical constructs like music being ‘high’ or ‘fast’ or ‘going somewhere’ are equally as embedded (and, of course, rooted in the basic metaphorical structuring of ‘music as object’). Lakoff and Turner go on to tell us that, once conventionalized, metaphors are hard to avoid and resist, in their words, they are ‘pervasive’ particularly as, when they are used communally, they become difficult to notice as metaphors. It is tempting to frame such ingrained and unquestioned metaphors as being ‘dead metaphors’ (a concept eloquently argued against by Lakoff and Turner 1989, pp.128-131). Certainly they are dead, as their metaphorical roots are lost to the user, but the conventional metaphor can still be very alive in the way we think about our world. For example, a very brief perusal of some well respected music journalism shows the centrality of ideas facilitated from the metaphorical structuring of music as an object with speed as well as agency in generating speed. This can be seen in Adrian Scahill writing of Cathal Hayden, Máirtín O’Connor and Seamie O’Dowd’s album Crossroads (2009):

Hayden on fiddle leads off on the first tune, holding back just the right amount at the start to allow the tempo to gradually build over the set. O’Connor’s and guitarist O’Dowd’s chording in the second half is wonderfully quirky and fresh, and this keeps the tension building up until the arrival of the second tune…


Siobhan Long tells us about Shetland fiddler, Chris Stout’s album Brazilian Theory:

Driven by the combined forces of Stout, Brazilian guitarist Carlinhos Antunes and Swiss fiddle player Thomas Rohrer, along with Stout’s regular musical collaborator, harpist Catríona McKay, Brazilian Theory freewheels its way
Both these quotes tell us things about the recordings that, in my experience of them, are very true. However, the telling is facilitated by the use of these conventional metaphorical structurings in which understanding and new meaning in particular contexts is created. Scahill’s writing is based upon basic metaphors like ‘music travels’ (‘..fiddle leads off…”), ‘music grows/develops/builds’ (‘…allow the tempo to gradually build over the set…”), ‘fresh is good’ (O’Dowd’s chording… is fresh…”), while Long’s also includes ‘up is good’(‘..”...freewheels its way skyward…”), ‘music is a body’ (“…with one toe cocked towards skeletal rhythms…”) and ‘music is a person’ (“…mischievous…”). It would perhaps be incorrect for us to regard these as truly dead metaphors, as metaphors whose structures do not affect the creation of meaning. These metaphors are chosen to portray an essentially aesthetic and organizational reaction to music. Scahill chose ‘fresh’ over ‘undeveloped’ or ‘immature’ when writing about O’Dowd’s choice of chords. These could be understood to mean the same thing – new – but the words carry completely different aesthetic implications. Though the generative processes in terrain are no longer apparent, the choice and use of metaphors still do affect meaning.
Language as a Creative Act: Creating Community – Creating Music?

A critique of this type of examination of the word and graphic transformations of traditional Irish music may erroneously suspect that the aim is to “throw off the sovereignty of the signifier” (Foucault in Young 1981, p.66). I am not attempting to dislodge the notion of transformation as truth in this context. Neither am I trying to dispel the truth of such structures as ‘regional style’ and hierarchies of authenticity as represented in instrumental styles, and other parts of our ‘orders of discourse’. This thesis is merely an attempt to show how such transformations are achieved, through processes of metaphor, generating an order of discourse in a particular, and far-from-unique, cultural terrain. It also attempts to demonstrate how the transformation of the tradition itself shapes the way we engage and perform the tradition.

Foucault in his influential lecture / essay ‘The Order of Discourse’ (1981) describes a major process in the way that discourse excludes knowledge as ‘rarefaction’ (1981, p.67) and denies that such a process is creative. He encourages a typically proactive philosophical course of action, posing the following question:

...we have noticed these principles of rarefaction, once we have ceased to consider them as a fundamental and creative instance, what do we discover underneath them?

(ibid, p.67)

This implies that, in this context, the processes that cause rarefaction in the ‘creative blends’ spoken of by Fauconnier and Turner are not creative at all. It causes us to
understand such orders of knowledge as limiting knowledge formation. And, in the artistic, scientific and psychological contexts that Faucault intended his critique to be understood, they certainly do lack originality.

Roland Barthes tells us:

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. Similar to Bouvard and Péchuchet, those eternal copyists, at once sublime and comic and whose profound ridiculousness indicates precisely the truth of writing, the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. Did he wish to express himself, he ought at least to know that the inner ‘thing’ he thinks to ‘translate’ is only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely (Barthes 1977, p.146)

This excerpt from his famous 1968 essay, *The Death of the Author*, seems to echo Foucault’s emphasis on the lack or originality in orders of discourse. However, it is tempting to rephrase the central and much ignored statement “His only power is to mix writings…” with “his only ART is to mix writings”. Creative process is, in this world, a recombining of pre-existing textual elements. This occurs most obviously in the conventionalisation we have just examined where commentators can build their critique with carefully selected metaphors from existing orders of discourse. It might not generate the creativity and originality of Foucault’s ‘madman’ (see Foucault 2001) but does allow for the meaningful social engagement of a community of arts practice with each other.
An obvious aspect of the history of these transformations of traditional music in Ireland is the growth in their complexity. This complexity has very evidently grown from the integration of this music practice with the wider world. Whether we imagine the world as becoming a smaller or a bigger place, modernity has brought more of the world in contact with traditional Irish music and to facilitate such an engagement the tradition has had to develop a more complex view of itself. This growing complexity has been multiplied as the community engages a much more apparent and, most importantly, more relevant past. Such a relevance is itself a product of modernity, specifically, the nostalgia generated to engage it.

We have seen many individual creative acts of language, notation and text through this thesis, some of which are created within existing orders of discourse; some, more rarely, not (certainly Padraig O’Keeffe’s notational system at least bends the order of notation practice). However, we must view all of the transformational systems of knowledge presented here as creative acts. The establishment of a transformation must have been the responsibility of an individual somewhere at sometime (very often from a different tradition) and the borrowing of other transformational systems is often done in a creative way, appropriate to the cultural contexts of traditional Irish music (as we could see in the account of notation systems in chapter two). However, appropriation and development of transformations are perhaps more productively characterised as a communal creative practice. The individual is working, generating parole from the
resources (*langue*) themselves derived from orders of discourse that have been generated creatively by community. The generation of this *langue* is a political, nostalgic, opportunistic and valuative process made necessary for the changing relationship between music practice and the wider, mediated world.

The development of the tapestries of transformation, or orders of discourse, have allowed for the community of traditional musicians to account for their practices in a world of apparent growing complexity. Such tapestries have not been woven from materials brought into being for this distinct process but have instead been created from resources spun to shape the needs, the terrain, of the community that has generated it, but sourced from other engagements with our world. The spinning wheel that produces the threads from which the tapestry is created is the process of metaphor. Here traditional musicians have taken structures and ideas from other realms of experience and applied them to account for their music in the context of a complex contemporary terrain. In doing so, traditional musicians have generated structures like ‘regional style’ from maps; taken selectively from the imaginative structures of western art music; built hierarchies for forms and instruments; and imaginatively constructed a place for this music in the world.
Works Cited

Allan, Mozart (c. 1920) *Allan’s Irish Fiddler* Glasgow: Mozart Allan.


Barr, Steven C., ‘Brunswick and Vocalion – History of Recorded Sound in Canada’, [http://www.capsnews.org/barrbru.htm](http://www.capsnews.org/barrbru.htm), accessed 01/03/09


Bunting, Edward (1796), *THE ANCIENT MUSIC OF IRELAND A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music Containing a variety of Admired Airs never before Published and also The Compositions of Conolan and Carolan Collected from the Harpers &c in the different Provinces of Ireland and adapted for the Piano-Forte, with a Prefatory Introduction by Edward Bunting*, Dublin.


Bunting, Edward (1840 / 42) *The Ancient Music of Ireland, arranged for the Piano Forte. To which is prefixed a dissertation on the Irish Harp and Harpers, including an Account of the Old Melodies of Ireland*, Dublin.

Burke, Joe (1992), *The Leg of The Duck*, Shaskeen: Galway


Carty, Paddy, Conor Tully and Frank Hogan, 1986 *Traditional Music from Ireland*, GTD, Galway.


Crowley, Tadgh (1936) How to play the Uilleann Pipes, Cork.


Ennis, Séamus, The Master’s Touch – A Tutor for the Uilleann Pipes, Na Píobairí Uilleann, Dublin, 1998


Dirk Geeraerts (1988, pp.207-209)


Gow, Neil and Sons (c. 1817) *A Complete Repository of Old and New Scotch Strathspey Reels and jigs, adapted for the German Flute*, Edinburgh: Gow & Shepherd.


Hardebeck, Carl G. (1921) *Cnuasacht Port agus Cor don bPiano*, Dublin: Pigott.


Howe, Elias (1883) *Ryan's Mammoth Collection. 1050 Reels and Jigs, hornpipes, clogs, walk-arounds, essences, strathspeys, highland flings and Contra-dances with figures*, Elias Howe, Boston.

Howe, Elias (c.1880) *Howe's 100 songs of Ireland with accompaniment for piano or organ: including 50 of Moore's Irish melodies*, Boston.


Kerr, James (c. 1870) *Kerr’s First Collection of Merry Melodies for the Violin* Glasgow. [the first of four collections, the last published c.1880]


hundred national jigs, reels, hornpipes &c...with easy basses for the pianoforte (the
treble line to suit violin or flute), Dublin: Watsons. (first published 1858,1873)


Festschrift for Richard M. Dorson* Ed. Lind Degh, Henry Glassie, Felix J. Oinas,
Indiana Univ., Bloomington, 335-346.

*Ethnomusicology*, Fall, 41(3), 413-432


MacAoidh, Caoimhín, (1994) *Between the Jigs and the Reels*, Manorhamilton: Drumlin
Press.

MacAoidh, Caoimhín, *Regional Styles in Irish Fiddling*, accessed 21st Dec., 2011,
http://www.irishfiddle.com/article_on_styles3.html

MacAoidh, Caoimhín, (1997) “Donegal: a Voice in the Wilderness, or the Voice of
Reason” in Thérèse Smith and Micheál Ó Súilleabháin (eds.) *Blas: the local
accent in Irish traditional music*, Folk Music Society of Ireland and The Irish
World Music Centre: Dublin & Limerick.

Mallinson, Dave (1995a) *100 Essential Irish Session Tunes*. Cleckheaton, West
Yorkshire: Dave Mallinson Publications.

Mallinson, Dave (1995b) *100 Enduring Irish Session Tunes*. Cleckheaton, West
Yorkshire: Dave Mallinson Publications.

McCarthy, Marie F. (1990) *Music Education and the Quest for Cultural Identity in

Cork: Cork University Press.

McNamara Family, 1988, *Leitrim’s Hidden Treasure*, Drumlin Records, LHTCD1:
Leitrim.


Co..


Neal, John and William (1724) *A Collection of the Most Celebrated Irish Tunes Proper for the Violin, German Flute, or Hautboy*, Dublin.


Neuman, Daniel M. (1990) *The Life of Music in North India - The Organisation of an


Ó Halmhain Micheal & Mac Mathuna, Seamus (1971) *Tutor for the Feadog Stain [tin whistle]*, Dublin: CCE.


Ó Riada, Seán (1982); *Our Musical Heritage*, Dublin: Fundúireacht an Riadaigh.


Owenson, Sydney (1805) *Twelve / Original Hibernian MELODIES, / with English Words imitated and translated / from the Works of the / ANCIENT IRISH BARDS, / with an introductory Preface and Dedication / by / Miss S. Owenson. / Arranged for the VOICE, with an Accompaniment for the / Piano Forte*, London.

Ó Súilleabháin, Mícheál (1984) *The Bodhran : an easy to learn method for the complete beginner showing the different regional styles and techniques*, Dublin: Waltons.


Petrie, George (1855) The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland Dublin: M.H. Gill.

Planxty, (1972), Planxty, Polydor, 2383186: London.


Potts, Tommy (1972) The Liffey Banks, Claddagh Records: Dublin.


Rowsome, Leo (1936) Leo Rowsomes Tutor for the Uillean Pipes Dublin: Walton's.


Zemp, Hugo (1978) “’Are’Are Classification of Musical Types and Instruments” *Ethnomusicology*, 22, 37-68.

Interviews Cited

Bartley, Majella, Foundation Building, University of Limerick, April, 2002.
Cummins, Verena, Foundation Building, University of Limerick, October 1997
Daly, Patricia, Foundation Building, University of Limerick, April 2002
Doody, Dennis, Foundation Building, University of Limerick, April 2000.
Dooley, Alan, Castleconnell, Co. Limerick, April 1998.
O’Connor, Donal, Foundation Building, University of Limerick, June, 2000
O’Keeffe, Maire, Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare, July, 1996.
Vaughan, P.J., Castleconnell, August, 1996.

Returned Questionnaires Cited, February / March 2002:

Kathleen Nesbitt
Eamonn Curran
Brendan Mulkere
Grainne Hambley Sarah Jane Woods
Caomhín Ó Raghaillaigh
Eileen Gannon
Karen Ryan
Frank McCardle
Mick Conneely
Mary Bergin
Aoife Granville
Carmel & John Burke
John Devine
Kevin Rowsome
Marcas Ó Murchu
Maeve Donnelly