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Irish Republican Music and (Post)colonial Schizophrenia

Abstract

Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom, yet its postcolonial position is subject to fierce debate amongst British loyalists and Irish republicans. Using Tommy Skelly's 1972 "Go On Home British Soldiers" as its central focus, this article unpicks the various (post)colonial narratives played out through republican music in the North of Ireland, challenging the parameters of the postcolonial, and demonstrating how Irish rebel songs continue to function as a form of political engagement and cultural resistance within and against the British state.

Introduction

In 1922, the island of Ireland was partitioned into the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland.[1] While the former faced challenges similar to other emerging postcolonial states, the six counties of Northern Ireland remained tied to Great Britain, which gerrymandered electoral districts to subdue and disempower Northern Ireland's minority Catholic, Irish-nationalist, and republican population. In Northern Ireland the power of the Protestant, unionist majority was total. The establishment used the country's many Orange parades to assert its cultural and political supremacy through ritualized musical performance,[2] the largest of which featured tens of thousands of participants and culminated in a speech from the Prime Minister, illustrating that Northern Ireland's was "a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people" (Ferriter 281).[3] By contrast, Irish-nationalist and republican music was suppressed and driven underground where it served to support and maintain a countercultural Irish consciousness that functioned as a key weapon of resistance.

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[1] It should be noted that, while responsible for running its own affairs, the Irish Free State was a dominion of the United Kingdom until a 1937 referendum, when it was renamed "Ireland" and adopted its own constitution. Although a *de facto* republic, this was not made official until 1948, when the *Oireachtas* passed the "Republic of Ireland Act," severing its ties with the United Kingdom and establishing a wholly independent twenty-six county Irish state.

[2] "Orange parades" are musical processions organized by the Orange Order, an exclusively Protestant fraternal organization that was created during the sectarian skirmishes of late eighteenth-century Ireland, and are held all over Northern Ireland from April through August.

[3] This phrase was coined by Daniel Mageean, a Catholic priest from County Down, and derives from a misquote from Sir James Craig, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, who spoke of it as "a Protestant Parliament and a Protestant State" when comparing Northern Ireland to its southerly neighbor, which he called "a Catholic State" (Stormont Papers 1095).

Ireland's colonial experience is complex and unique. This article focuses on the performance of Irish rebel songs in Belfast to illustrate the use of popular music as a form of political engagement and cultural resistance for republicans in the North of Ireland. Specifically, the article focuses on two songs written during Northern Ireland's Troubles (1968-1998), before turning to the recent controversy surrounding an outdoor concert in Belfast where Irish rebel band the Druids performed "Go On Home British Soldiers" prefaced by an appeal that they and Northern Irish Orangemen be loaded onto buses and "fucked off back to England where they came from" (BBC). The Druids were accused of "hate speech," with one politician calling their performance a "glorification of terrorism," adding: "Their introductions to their songs, parts of the songs and also the songs that they chose to play were deeply offensive" (BBC). The band and its audience's demanding that British soldiers and Northern Irish Orangemen "go home" is indicative of their identifying these groups as colonizers responsible for the ongoing subjugation of the native population.

Yet while many British soldiers stationed in Northern Ireland reside outside its borders, the reference to Orangemen, the majority of which settled in Ireland several centuries ago, is much more problematic. Further, although inspired by events in Northern Ireland, "Go On Home British Soldiers" was written by a songwriter from the Republic of Ireland, which is also home to the Druids. Thus, that a band from what is—technically—another country was demanding British state forces and Northern Irish Orangemen leave their own country, further problematizes notions of the postcolonial in Ireland. This article uses the performance, reception, and interpretation of "Go On Home British Soldiers" as a means to understand the competing (post)colonial narratives in Northern Ireland, challenging the parameters of the postcolonial, while exploring the role Irish republican music plays in the performance of resistance and the creation of an Irish republican identity.

England's First Colony?

> [T]he crucial question of whether or not Ireland was a colony, and whether its history is therefore in large measure a colonial and subsequently a postcolonial one . . . is no mere antiquarian or academic squabble, since what is at stake is nothing less than the whole question of Irish identity, the present course of Irish culture and politics, and above all, the interpretation of Ireland, its people, and the course of its history. (Said 177)

Ireland was first colonized by the Anglo-Normans in 1169 when, deposed and stripped of his power, the Irish provincial King Dermot MacMurrough made a pact with the Anglo-Norman King Henry II that he would aid and support Henry's rule over Ireland if Henry helped restore Dermot's royal status. The subsequent Anglo-Norman invasion marked the beginning of a binarism which, arguably, persists to this day. By establishing an English colony operating under English laws and institutions, and rejecting the native language and culture, the settlers insured that they would not be assimilated and maintained their sense of separation (Martin 1i).

For centuries, the Irish fought their colonizers culturally as well as militarily, using song as a means to articulate what they had lost, as well as what they hoped to achieve (Zimmermann 10). Following the Irish Rebellion of 1798, which was strongly inspired by the French Revolution, Britain believed that the best way to prevent further uprisings was to incorporate Ireland into a political union, following the successful merger of England and Wales in 1536, with the addition of Scotland in 1707 (Bew 77). In 1801, the two islands joined to become the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, with Irish politicians voting in the British Parliament alongside elected representatives from England, Scotland, and Wales. Although largely the project of elites who sought to secure Ireland and reduce the cost of pacifying its inhabitants,[4] rather than any genuine desire for parity between peoples (Young 291), Ireland's incorporation into the United Kingdom stands in stark contrast

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[4] Of the £5 million spent on England's wars during the preceding Elizabethan era, half was spent subduing Ireland (Curtis 15).

to other colonies such as Jamaica, India, and Nigeria, which experienced a far more asymmetric relationship to Britain.[5] Ato Quayson's notion of "extraverted" and "introverted" colonialisms is useful in articulating the differing, yet dialectically related, experiences of colonialism, the former involving the conquest of external territories, while the latter relies more on "the deployment of devices for the management and control of populations, especially when such populations are considered heterogeneous and require placing under the 'empty' signifier of the nation-state in the process of nation building" (Quayson 59-60).

It goes without saying that such asymmetries lie at the heart of critiques around the usefulness of "postcolonialism" as a unified—and unifying—term. Several scholars have pointed to the allochronic nature of postcolonialism as problematic, with Ella Shohat perturbed by the tacit implication that postcolonialism goes "beyond anti-colonialist theory as well as its move beyond a specific point in history, that of colonialism and Third World nationalist struggles" (101).[6] Others reject the usefulness of postcolonialism on the grounds that it relies on earlier notions of state sovereignty not readily applicable in today's globalized world (Agnani 638). Discussions of postcolonialism are particularly problematic for those places that constitute the leftovers of empire. Indeed, as McClintock posits "Ireland may, at a pinch, be 'post-colonial,' but for the inhabitants of British-occupied Northern Ireland, not to mention the Palestinian inhabitants of the Israeli Occupied Territories and the West Bank, there may be nothing 'post' about colonialism at all" (McClintock 87).[7]

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[5] Much of the population opposed Ireland's union with Britain and there were various attempts, both constitutional and revolutionary, to sever the connection between the two. Such attitudes can be found in both nineteenth century broadside ballads, as well as the more secretive revolutionary song tradition. For more on the distinctions between the two, see (Murphy 79-102).

[6] Armed Irish republican groups continue to wage a war of national liberation against Britain and Northern Ireland. A recent Europol report revealed that 109 shooting and bombing incidents took place in Northern Ireland in 2014, more than every other EU member state combined (European Police Office 8).

[7] It should be noted that McClintock's comments predate Northern Ireland's historic Good Friday Agreement (1998), which saw the main paramilitary groups lay down their weapons and enter into a power-sharing government, brokered by Britain, the Republic of Ireland, and the United States. Northern Ireland remains part of the UK and the Republic of Ireland has relinquished its constitutional claim to the

Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom, yet its (post)colonial position is fiercely contested by British loyalists and Irish republicans. The former, as the name implies, consider themselves equal citizens of the United Kingdom, while the latter reject the partitioning of Ireland in 1922 as a means to create an artificial Protestant, unionist majority in the North, which has actively disempowered and discriminated against Catholics, Irish nationalists and republicans. That both sides engaged in a thirty-year conflict over Northern Ireland's position in the United Kingdom is indicative of the split over its (post)colonial status.

The Troubles

The Troubles (1968-1998) began as a Civil Rights campaign against Northern Ireland's discriminatory treatment of Catholics but escalated into an ethno-nationalist conflict in which republican paramilitaries fought the British security forces, as well as loyalist paramilitaries, to prompt Britain's withdrawal from the north of Ireland and create a thirty-two county republic. In August 1971, the British army initiated Operation Demetrius, which saw the mass arrest and internment without trial of 342 republican suspects (de Baróid 72). The operation was a response to the 320 shootings and 300 explosions in the first seven months of 1971, which saw over 600 people hospitalized and caused millions of pounds in property damage (Faulkner 115-16). The two-day operation, from 9-10 August, was accompanied by a further two days of rioting; some 22 people were killed across Northern Ireland during this four-day period—eighteen of them civilians (de Baróid 77).

Operation Demetrius exclusively targeted Northern Ireland's Catholic, nationalist population and, seeing the effects of this played out in front of them, a crowd from the loyalist Springmartin area in Belfast sang "where's your daddy gone" to those in the neighboring nationalist area of Ballymurphy, before launching bottles

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Six Counties. Yet Britain has pledged to honor any referendum where the majority of those in Northern Ireland and the Republic vote in favor of unification.

and bricks, which escalated into a gun battle between both sides. When it arrived, the army installed itself on the loyalist side, firing indiscriminately at those within Ballymurphy (80). Although the army initially announced that it "had taken a great toll of 'gunmen', '20 to 30 of whom have been killed'" (81), it transpired that only two the twenty-two killed were IRA volunteers. Seven Ballymurphy civilians—including a priest—were killed while trying to shepherd children out of the area, or while attempting to assist those injured, and a further three were mortally wounded (77). Such scenes enabled the IRA to justify military action through the frame of anti-colonial struggle, with Provisional IRA leader Ruairí Ó Brádaigh referring to British soldiers' behavior in Northern Ireland as "typical of an imperial power," and Provisional IRA Chief of Staff Seán Mac Stíofáin referring to Northern Ireland as "a neglected colony of a decaying imperial power" (English 124).

In response to such attacks, and with an unsympathetic media through which to articulate any alternate narrative,[8] Paddy McGuigan penned "The Men Behind the Wire," a rousing rebel song that functioned as a form of cultural and political resistance which would go on to serve as the anthem for those interned (McGuffin 89). McGuigan founded The Barleycorn in 1971, with whom he wrote several Irish rebel songs that have become favorites in the republican music scene, including "The Boys of the Old Brigade," "Irish Soldier Laddie," and "Bring Them Home."[9] Yet it was "The Men Behind the Wire" that proved McGuigan's biggest hit. The song was produced in Belfast and released in Dublin on December 14, 1971. One month later it topped the Irish singles charts, where it was number one for five weeks, with all

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[8] For a detailed account of Britain's restricted and partisan media coverage of Northern Ireland during the Troubles, along with journalistic accounts of self-censorship, see Liz Curtis' 1984 *Ireland The Propaganda War: The British Media and the "Battle for Hearts and Minds*."

[9] All of the songs mentioned in this article are available to listen to on YouTube.

royalties donated to the families of those interned (*Irish Times*).[10] The song's chorus is listed below:

> Armored cars and tanks and guns
> Came to take away our sons,
> But every man must stand behind
> The men behind the wire.

The song makes no mention of the unprecedented wave of bombings and shootings that rocked Northern Ireland in 1971. Instead, it places internment within a decontextualized, free-floating zone with "marauding" British soldiers "Dragging fathers from their beds/Beating sons while helpless mothers/Watched the blood pour from their heads" all for no apparent reason. Its phrase "Cromwell's men are here again" collapses the current context with ancient atrocities, equating Cromwell's killing tens of thousands of Catholics in the seventeenth century with the internment of suspected republicans in 1971, a point also noted by May McCann (5). More interestingly, the song also constructs a *musical* connection between past and present in the final stanza. By invoking Thomas Davis' nineteenth-century rebel song "A Nation Once Again," "The Men Behind the Wire" underscores the historical parallels between the Young Ireland rebellion of 1848 and the Troubles, music's role in resisting the British state and the continuity of the Irish struggle a feature of both periods. In a further instance of the song's reflexivity, the line "Round the world the truth will echo" is an acknowledgment of the appetite for such songs amongst the Irish diaspora, as well as the communicative power of music and song, and its ability to effect political change.

McGuigan's music was deemed so subversive that he himself was interned, despite having never been a member of the IRA. On January 13, 1972, Brian

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[10] Responding to the song's release, loyalist paramilitaries targeted the Belfast studio that produced "The Men Behind the Wire" shooting its owner, Billy McBurney, five times (McGonagle). Although McBurney survived, such actions are testament to the perceived power of political song.

Faulkner, Northern Ireland's Minister for Home Affairs, issued an Internment Order

that McGuigan be held on the *Maidstone*, a British navy submarine depot ship

adapted to house suspected republicans (PRONI NIO/5/960). The following

statement featured on the sleeve notes of the 1972 compilation album *The Men*

Behind the Wire, which helped situate the songs and propagate their message:

> HEREAS it appears to me, on the recommendation of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, that for securing the preservation of the peace and the maintenance of the order in Northern Ireland, it is expedient that PAT McGUIGAN, SONGWRITER who is suspected of having acted or being about to act in a manner prejudicial to the preservation of the peace and the maintenance of order in Northern Ireland, should be interned [capitalization in original].[11]

Republican songbooks had combined image and text to great effect in the past. Yet

with its stark cover, featuring a prison camp topped with barbed wire, turrets and

world war two-style Nissen huts, and the names of the four prison camps in which

they were interned, *The Men Behind the Wire* is one of the first instances in which we

see image, sound, and text combined to act as a form of multimodal resistance

against the British state.

The literal connection between music and internment continued in the form of

the 1972 album *Smash Internment*, its being recorded *inside* Long Kesh and

smuggled out of the prison. The album contains performances from a concert staged

inside one of the prison's Nissen huts and features recordings of the internees

singing songs themselves, specifically "Óró sé do bheatha abhaile," "We Shall

Overcome," and Paddy McGuigan's "The Boys of the Old Brigade." This selection

well illustrates the sense of continuity republicans were trying to create, between an

Irish traditional song adapted and given new words by republican revolutionary

Padraig Pearse; the international Civil Rights anthem; and the new phase of

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[11] The original Internment Order document differs from the reproduction in that it does not refer to McGuigan as a songwriter, nor are his name and occupation capitalized.

resistance represented by McGuigan's "Boys of the Old Brigade," which itself points to the past so as to contextualize and explain the present.[12] As with the revenues from its predecessor, *The Men Behind the Wire*, all proceeds were donated to prisoners' families and *Smash Internment* also included an inserted copy of the regressive Special Powers Act, used to intern suspected republicans without trial.

Rebel songs' propaganda power helped transmit the republican narrative throughout Ireland and the wider world.[13] As the Wolfe Tones' Tommy Byrne stated:

> In America, in the 70s and 80s, before computers, before PCs, they were hearing the story from London, of what was happening in the North of Ireland. We told the story through the medium of song to them over there and they'd come up and ask questions about what was happening. Of course we gave the republican point of view, because we felt that they were the downtrodden side, but I think that they learned an awful lot and they went out and they did something about it. They went out and they bought books, or they went out and they made enquiries, but at least it gave them an interest in what was happening in Ireland. (*Let The People Sing* 2011)

Yet while such songs reached many sympathetic ears, the events of January 30, 1972 drew unprecedented attention to the conflict in Northern Ireland, prompting a new wave of rebel songs, as well as recruits for the IRA.

Bloody Sunday

With contestations of public space so often the center of conflict in Northern Ireland, various marches and parades were banned in both the approach to the Troubles, as well as during the conflict itself. Exceptions for "customary" parades, which were pro-

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[12] Scott posits that when resisting imperialism "people are likely to draw upon old songs, or invented old songs, to establish continuity with the past" and points to "The Boys of the Old Brigade" as an example of a patriotic song which serves as "as the musical equivalent of the heroic ancestors mentioned in [the] song lyrics, those whose sacrifices place the next generation in debt" (240).

[13] During the Troubles, Irish republican songbooks appeared in many languages, including German, *Irish rebel songs: 30 Irische Lieder mit Noten und Deutschen Kommentaren*. Frankfurt: Internees-Release-Association, 1975; French, *Ballades Irlandaises.* Imprint Grenoble: Centre d'Information Inter-Peuples, 1981; and Italian, *Il Verde e il Rosso; Dossier Irlanda*. Padova: Comitato Irlanda Padova, 1981. Each of these songbooks contained cartoons, photographs, and sociopolitical commentary on Ireland and its history.

establishment and supported the invented traditions invoked to legitimize and solidify the Northern Ireland state, exposed the two-tier system wherein loyalist parades were permitted and Civil Rights marches denied (O'Callaghan 87). Such hypocrisy eroded confidence in the Northern Ireland government to the extent that when Brian Faulkner announced a ban on *all* parades in mid-January 1972, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) defied the ban, planning a Civil Rights march in Derry on Sunday January, 30 (Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry). Yet, rather than march into the center of the city as planned, the final destination of the march was altered on the day of the protest so as to prevent clashes with the security forces (Report). Between ten and fifteen thousand protesters marched through Derry, in what was described as a carnival atmosphere, while singing Civil Rights songs such as "We Shall Overcome" (Report).

The recently published *Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry*, quoted above, noted that "there were a substantial number of people on the fringes who saw it not as a means of protesting for civil rights, but as an opportunity to engage in rioting against the troops" and that these people threw bricks, bottles, and iron bars at the troops, and attempted to dismantle barriers, while singing pro-IRA chants (Report). Yet the report concluded that:

> The firing by soldiers of 1 PARA on Bloody Sunday caused the deaths of 13 people and injury to a similar number, none of whom was posing a threat of causing death or serious injury. What happened on Bloody Sunday strengthened the Provisional IRA, increased nationalist resentment and hostility towards the Army and exacerbated the violent conflict of the years that followed. Bloody Sunday was a tragedy for the bereaved and the wounded, and a catastrophe for the people of Northern Ireland (Report).

Bloody Sunday incensed Northern Ireland's Catholic, Irish-nationalist, and republican community, and IRA enlistment increased exponentially.[14] For Britain the event was a public relations disaster, which was quickly seized upon by republican musicians.[15]

Two hours after the event, Irish republican songwriter Tommy Skelly vented his frustration that British soldiers were killing Irish civilians in Ireland by writing one of Irish rebel music's angriest and most popular diatribes "Go On Home British Soldiers." Skelly described the song as "a direct protest against Bloody Sunday and nothing else" and relayed the sequence of events, thus:

> I was practicing with the band and on the way home, I had a little small portable radio and I put it on and I heard what was going on. I couldn't believe it. Just couldn't believe it. I got off the bus and I went into the pub to see the news . . . and I said "fuckin' bastards." This is what I said: "you should go home you bastards, have you got no homes of your *own*?" and BANG it came—"Go on home British soldiers, go on home, have you got no *fuckin'* homes of your own."

Skelly's song was soon followed by others from outside of Ireland. Released the month after the incident, Paul McCartney's "Give Ireland Back to the Irish" entered the British charts' top twenty, despite being banned from radio (Denselow 158). McCartney's imploring Britain to give Ireland *back* to the Irish chimes with the republican narrative that the six counties of Northern Ireland remain under colonial control, in contrast to the postcolonial Republic of Ireland.

Although McCartney's contribution was somewhat conciliatory, referring to Britain as "tremendous" before merely questioning what it was doing "in the land across the sea," this was followed by fellow-Beatle John Lennon's caustic "The Luck

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[14] Eamonn McCann notes that, in the Republic of Ireland, Bloody Sunday marked "the highpoint of 32 county nationalism in the history of the Southern state," where people held memorial services, staged a General Strike, and burned down the British Embassy in Dublin (206).

[15] Today, the Wolfe Tones begin each of their concerts by playing "Sunday Bloody Sunday." Unlike the original, the Wolfe Tones' version begins with synthesized pipes and strings, creating a strong sense of foreboding. This serves to frame the entire musical event, connecting previous acts of injustice to an event still very much within the living memory of its audience.

of the Irish" and "Sunday Bloody Sunday," which featured a much stronger indictment of the British. In the former, Lennon refers to Ireland as having been "raped by the British brigands" and calls the English "bastards [that] commit genocide," while in "Sunday Bloody Sunday" he refers to the British as "Anglo pigs" and demands those living in Northern Ireland who identify as British "repatriate to Britain" and "leave Ireland to the Irish." Although most have refrained from using such incendiary language, many popular musicians have invoked the Northern Ireland conflict as a form of political engagement with, and cultural resistance against, systems of oppression. This serves as testament to how the Troubles in general—and Bloody Sunday in particular—shocked the world.[16]

Go On Home British Soldiers

Four decades later, "Go On Home British Soldiers" sparked renewed controversy when the Druids, an Irish rebel band from the Republic of Ireland, performed the song at an outdoor music festival in Belfast. The band prefaced the song, saying:
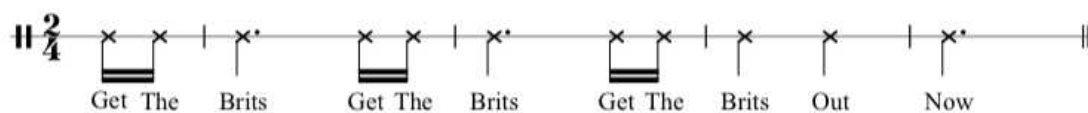
> As we stand here tonight in Ardoyne, we're well aware that here in the occupied Six Counties of Ireland there are still over 5,000 British soldiers parading around the streets of Ireland as if they owned it. It's about time that they took down their little Union Jacks, it's about time that they got all their Orange comrades together, it's about time that they loaded up the boat, and it's about time that they all fucked off back to England where they came from! Let's here you sing it, Go On Home British Soldiers, Go On Home![17]

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[16] The events of January 30, 1972 directly inspired two more songs, a decade later, with Stiff Little Fingers' "Bloody Sunday" and U2's "Sunday Bloody Sunday," both released in 1983. The Wolfe Tones recorded a version of John Lennon's 'Sunday Bloody Sunday', which featured on their 2004 album *The Troubles*. Other popular artists who have written songs about the Northern Ireland conflict more generally include: the Police, Ruefrex, Paul Brady, That Petrol Emotion, Phil Coulter, Simple Minds, Billy Bragg, Sinead O'Connor, Christy Moore, James Taylor, Katie Melua, Dido, and Jun Tzu.

[17] The performance has been uploaded onto YouTube and can be viewed via the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obAuGlMEb64

"Go On Home British Soldiers" formed the final song of the Druids' set, which, in turn, marked the finale of the 2014 Ardoyne festival or '*Fleadh*'. The concert took place in the grounds of a Catholic elementary school in the working-class, and staunchly republican, area of Ardoyne, in North Belfast, where those living in the surrounding loyalist housing estates, could clearly hear such music, as well as its accompanying tirade, which they interpreted as highly offensive.[18]

The speech that preceded the song was accompanied by a riff most often set to the words "get the Brits, get the Brits, get the Brits out now."

Transcribed by author.

This hypnotic riff serves as a powerful mnemonic, triggering a process of collective remembering in which "local groups engage in an on-going struggle against elites and state authorities to control the understanding of the past" in what Bodnar calls "an unending dialectic between 'official culture' and 'vernacular culture'" (Bodnar qtd in Wertsch and Roediger 319).[19] In this instance, the crowd is able to use music as a means to challenge elites' claim to offer citizens of Northern Ireland parity with their British counterparts in favor of the narrative that the North of Ireland remains a

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[18] Two years previously, at the same festival, popular rebel singer Gary Óg prompted 110 complaints to Belfast City Council when he led a spirited rendition of arch-republican ballad "The Broad Black Brimmer," which was clearly heard by those in neighboring loyalist communities. Reacting against the upcoming Fleadh, in 2014, one resident wrote on Facebook: "I dont [sic] usually pray but im [sic] prayin [sic] right now that a bomb goes off in ardoyne this weekend and blows up every single cunt in it men women and kids i dont [sic] give a fuck. That loud that music is, is unreal so kill the fenian bastards" (Tully).

[19] This chimes with Ella Shohat's work, where she writes: "For communities which have undergone brutal ruptures, now in the process of forging a collective identity, no matter how hybrid that identity has been before, during, and after colonialism, the retrieval and reinscription of a fragmented past becomes a crucial contemporary site for forging a resistant collective identity" (109).

colony of Britain. This is particularly powerful in that the thousands challenging this official position are doing so in one of the spaces in which the colonial position of Northern Ireland is most vividly revealed: residents in the small republican enclave of Ardoyne being regularly subjected to disruptive and oppressive stop and searches as well as police raids on their homes and businesses owing to many of its residents' rejection of the British/Northern Ireland state and their perceived—or presumed— support for anti-Good Friday Agreement or "dissident" republican groups.[20]

Go On Home British Soldiers

Chorus:
So go on home British soldiers, go on home
Have you got no bloody homes of your own?
For eight hundred years we've fought you without fear
And we'll fight you for eight hundred more.

Verse 1:
Well if you stay British soldiers if you stay
You'll never ever beat the IRA
For the fourteen men in Derry are the last that you will bury
So take a trip and leave us all to be
Chorus

Verse 2:
We're not British, we're not Saxon, we're not English
We're Irish and proud we are to be
So fuck your Union Jack, we want our country back
We want to see old Ireland free once more.

Chorus
Verse 3:
We'll fight them British soldiers for the cause
We'll never bow to soldiers because
Throughout our history, we were born to be free,
So get out you shower of wankers, leave us be
Chorus x 6

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[20] A Freedom of Information request revealed that between January 2009 and January 2015 there were 4,597 stop and searches and 262 police raids on homes and businesses in Ardoyne under the Terrorism Act and Justice and the Security Act. During that period, 144 people were arrested with a mere two convictions for armed republican activity, both of which were held in Diplock courts, wherein there is no jury and the court consists of a single judge. The British and Northern Ireland state justifies such practices owing to the high level of dissident activity perceived to be taking place in this area, with armed republican groups such as the Continuity IRA, the Real IRA, and *Óglaigh na hÉireann* maintaining an active military campaign against Britain and Northern Ireland.

In "Go On Home British Soldiers," the historical similarities between past and present are overplayed so as to construct a sense of continuity. Here, sixth-century Saxons, twelfth-century Anglo-Normans, the English, and the British merge into one imperial monolith. The songs' transhistorical references create a simplistic, emotive narrative that forces the listeners to experience Ireland's invasion synchronically— that is to say "all at once"—heightening the listener's emotions, encouraging their participation, and performing resistance within and against the British state.[21] Here music is deployed tactically, and its objective is "that of intensification, to the heightening of collective sensation, an attractive, almost magnetic, or vortical force, a force that sucks bodies in toward its source" (Goodman 11). Such devices create difficulties for the undiscerning listener, preventing a more nuanced understanding of Ireland's history and a more diachronic telling of its events. Instead, the various historical players are reduced to two camps: British oppressors and Irish freedom fighters.

The Druids' refused to be interviewed by any news agency following the remarks they made at the 2014 *Fleadh* in Ardoyne. Yet the band's frontman, Mick O'Brien, agreed to speak with me on the subject, stating:

> The mistake that I made was that I included Orangemen in what I said . . . I *shouldn't* have done that. Basically, I moved into this area of sectarianism and it was something that I didn't do consciously, it was an absolute mistake that just came out . . . and I got fuckin' *crucified* for it. But what I had said, we say at *every* gig, every single gig, only we don't include Orangemen.

O'Brien explained that the band had got lost on their way to the gig and found themselves in one of Ardoyne's neighboring loyalist housing estates, the residents of which would have experienced the loud republican music played in previous years. Recognizing the band's Republic of Ireland license plate, and knowing that they were

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[21] This resonates with Benjamin's notion of "revolutionary nostalgia," which Terry Eagleton defines as "the power of active remembrance as a ritual summoning and invocation of the traditions of the oppressed in violent constellation with the political present" (136).

to perform in the area later that day, a loyalist mob attacked the Druids, O'Brien citing

this as the reason for his comments about Orangemen. Nevertheless, he reiterated

that he bitterly regretted the comment, adding:

> On the Monday morning, I woke up and I had Sky News, BBC, the Stephen
> Nolan Show in Belfast, I had the Telegraph, the Star, the Mirror, the Sun, I
> had a newspaper in France, I had a paper in Mexico, a paper in Brazil, the
> New York Times, the Washington Post, I had *fuckin' everybody*—my phone
> was fucking *red*! And I thought that was game over. I thought I was locked
> up—I really did. They tried to do everything to prosecute me . . . [but] I was
> never questioned, and I think the reason why I wasn't questioned was
> because I live in a different jurisdiction.

That O'Brien was able to avoid prosecution because of the ongoing partition he was

railing against is deeply ironic. Yet the attention garnered from the band's

controversial performance has had other ramifications. While the Druids enjoyed a

brief moment as the most famous band in Ireland, O'Brien's being recognized

wherever he went, this came at the cost of credible death threats to himself and his

family. Politically, there have also been other consequences.

The chief republican protagonists during the Troubles, Sinn Féin, the political

wing of the Provisional IRA, is now the second largest party in Northern Ireland,

jointly governing its six counties as part of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Sinn

Féin distanced itself from the Druids—and continues to do so—as such controversies

are believed to damage the party's appeal to those outside the narrow confines of its

working-class republican base. Sinn Féin frequently invokes elements of its

paramilitary past, but—crucially—references to colonialism are always framed in the

past tense. The party portrays the Peace Process as the only viable method to obtain

a thirty-two county Irish republic and avoids any attempt to frame the north of

Ireland—its preferred term for Northern Ireland—as a colony, lest this undermine its

accomplishments and aspirations, as well as the sacrifices it made to get there, and

empower dissident republican groups that seek to paint Sinn Féin as having "sold

out." That such postcolonial narratives are invoked by some *republicans* is indicative of the complex (post)colonial schizophrenia that currently exists in Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement was an historic event that saw Northern Ireland's largest loyalist and republican paramilitary organizations lay down their weapons and commit to securing their goals by peaceful and democratic means. Northern Ireland is often referred to as a "post-conflict" society, yet, as attacks on British and Northern Ireland state forces continue to mount, this moniker seems an awkward fit; that these attacks are carried out by dissident republican groups, which consider Britain to be an occupying force in the North of Ireland, similarly problematizes any meaningful use of the "postcolonial" as a label to describe the Six Counties.

This article has explored some of Northern Ireland's (post)colonial complexities as revealed through the prism of Irish republican music. By focusing on the examples of two songs written after partition, by Irish republicans on either side of the border, it has shown how music functioned as a form of political engagement and cultural resistance for those living in the North and helped propagate their message to those outside of Ireland. Focusing on the Druids' controversial performance of "Go On Home British Soldiers," the article demonstrates how those living in the working-class and staunchly republican area of Ardoyne continue to use Irish rebel music as a means to engage in a dialectic with "official culture," challenging the narrative that Northern Ireland's citizens enjoy parity with their British counterparts in favor of the notion that the North of Ireland remains a colony of Great Britain. More negatively, it illustrates how musicians invoke the depiction of Northern Ireland as a colony and couple this with music to intensify audience reaction to that of collective individuation in the mobilization of affect. In so doing, Irish rebel songs

and their performers demonstrate the communicative power of music and its

transformative potential in mounting resistance to prevailing notions of the

postcolonial in Ireland.

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