



HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS OF THE IRISH AVANT-GARDE

edited by Jennifer Walshe



Steel Thewel that belonged to the Earl of Mar. 1715.

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with contributions from John Berndt, Felicity Ford, Panos Ghikas,
Paul Gilgunn, Stephen Graham, Majella Munro, Simon O'Connor,
Rían O'Rahallaigh, Nick Roth, Benedict Schlepper-Connolly,
Jennifer Walshe

for Bob Gilmore

First published in 2015 by Milker Corp and the Aisteach Foundation (aisteach.org).
Produced with the support of the Arts Council of Ireland



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Designed and typeset in Dublin, Ireland by Simon O'Connor using *Newzald* and *DinPro*.



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The Aisteach Foundation is the home of Ireland's avant-garde archive – committed to preserving, communicating and encouraging interest in the historical documents of the Irish avant-garde.

The Aisteach Foundation is a repository and archive for historical documents, recordings, materials and ephemera relating to avant-garde music in Ireland. Established in 1974 by composer Frank Ó Conchubhair and poet Síle Ní Maoldomhnaigh, the centre has operated variously at Parnell Square Dublin, An Rinn and finally its current home in Joshua Lane, Dublin 2.

Following the receipt of a generous grant from the Arts Council of Ireland, we have been able to digitise a considerable portion of our archive and commission articles for this book, the first overview of key historical practitioners of avant-garde music in Ireland.

“The most original compositional voice to emerge from Ireland in the past 20 years” (The Irish Times) and “Wild girl of Darmstadt” (Frankfurter Rundschau), composer and performer **Jennifer Walshe** was born in Dublin, Ireland. Her music has been commissioned, broadcast and performed all over the world. Walshe has been the recipient of fellowships and prizes from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, New York; the DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm, the Internationales Musikinstitut, Darmstadt and Akademie Schloss Solitude among others. She is currently Reader in Music at Brunel University, London, and lives in London and Knockvicar, Co. Roscommon.

Please visit our website to listen to recordings of the pieces mentioned in this book – www.aisteach.org



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Foreword

Before you begin reading the articles in this book and listening to the recordings on the Aisteach Foundation's website, I have a confession to make – all of the composers and artists are fictional. The Aisteach Foundation and the Historical Documents of the Irish Avant-Garde are a communal thought experiment, a revisionist exercise in “what if?”, a huge effort by many people to create an alternative history of avant-garde music in Ireland, to write our ancestors into being and shape their stories with care. We played fast and loose with history and the truth and we like to think Flann O'Brien would have approved.

I am extremely grateful to the Arts Council of Ireland for funding this project and allowing me to collaborate with the contributors listed below.

If you feel there's something we missed, something you want to have happened and would like to bring into being, please let us know.

This project is dedicated with love to Bob Gilmore.

DR JENNIFER WALSH, *President, Aisteach Foundation*

The contributors who wrote the texts and scores are:

John Berndt, Felicity Ford, Panos Ghikas, Paul Gilgunn, Stephen Graham, Majella Munro, Simon O'Connor, Rian O'Rahallagh, Nick Roth, Benedict Schlepper-Connolly, Jennifer Walshe. Thanks very much to Richard Devine for his recordings which brought *Zaftig* to life and Jack McMahon for his performance as Ultan O'Farrell, and to Malcolm Tyrrell for his dream of an episode of *Hands* focussing on Irish performance art.



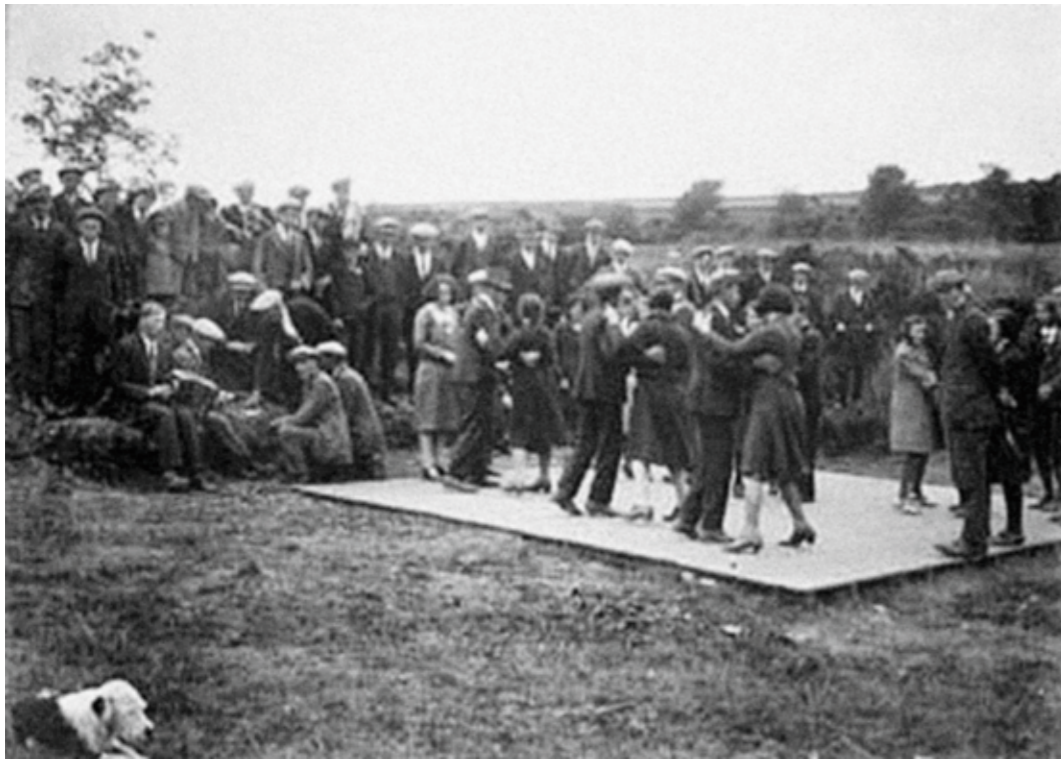
ZAFTIG GIOLLA

THERESA FLYNN

CHANCEY BRIGGS

THE KEENING WOMEN'S
ALLIANCE

DUNNE'S DÉRIVES



Galway 1929

Crossroads dance with Zaftig Giolla in the right middleground

Giolla, Zaftig

[aka Proinsias Mac Giolla aka Frank Carr]

(b Galway, 13 Aug. 1906; d Galway, 19 June 1959)

Musician-composer-poet-field recordist. An early example of a kind of bedroom radical in the mould of glitch pioneers of the 1990s and sound recordists of recent years such as Chris Watson and Hildegard Westerkamp.

Stephen Graham

BASED IN THE VILLAGE OF MONIVEA just outside Galway, Giolla took up the fiddle in his early teens, later playing professionally as a solo performer and, later still, in dance halls around Galway and Clare in his twenties.

Though this early experience as a trad. performer enmeshed in local ritual and community would prove crucial, what was perhaps the pivotal moment in Giolla's musical life came in the late-1920s. As described by Andrew Andrewne, author of the most substantial extant critical text on Giolla (2008), somewhere around 1928 or 1929 Giolla heard 2RN's early transmissions in the local Parish Hall in Monivea and duly became fascinated by early radio and recording technology. Combining his love of folk music of Ireland and America (the work of Francis O'Neill and also, notably, John Lomax's *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* are said by Andrewne to have been key musical influences), his fascination with anthropological studies by Franz Boas and Margaret Mead and ethnomusicological collecting by the likes of the Lomaxes, Giolla began to explore folkloric traditions as a collector. Now known to friends and locals as 'Zaftig,' after he took a fancy to this term upon hearing it on Yiddish radio broadcasts from New York, Giolla acquired a Presto Model "K" Recorder in 1933 and spent a number of years documenting village rituals such as keening funeral rites and crossroad dances (capturing a number of interesting examples of the latter before the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935 effectively imposed commercial controls on these). A fairly wide selection of Giolla's recordings of this kind can be heard in the Giolla-McKiernan Collection at the Irish Traditional Music Archive.

Giolla's ears turned towards Europe in the 1940s and 1950s. He paid keen attention to the melding of electronic and acoustic music in the work of composers such as Edgard Varèse and John

Cage, as well as developing what was to turn into a near obsession with Futurism's pursuit of the clang and thrum of city life – Andrew-nine even describes Giolla's fundamental achievement and desire in terms of constructing a 'Futurism of the fen and the bog' (2008: 90). After getting his hands on a rudimentary theremin in 1943 and constructing his own version of Luigi Russolo's intonarumori 'noise box,' Giolla began to combine his field recordings (now made via a wire recorder and a reel-to-reel tape machine, and dominated by landscape recordings of marshes and bogs near his home in Galway) with these otherworldly electro-mechanical sounds, developing highly sophisticated methods of tape manipulation and tape/theremin/intonarumori synchronisation based on a complex system of pulleys and triggers.

Combining these techniques with light projections and self-written poetry inspired by William Carlos Williams (see appendices beginning page 22 for a putative example of Giolla's poetry, as collected in the Keening Women's Alliance *Extraordinary Proceedings*), Giolla began in the late-1940s to put on what he called 'Lighttrancing dances' in small rooms around the country. At these dances, according to Andrew-nine, Giolla would coordinate recordings and live electronic sounds with lights and poetry readings, sending small but receptive audiences into reverie (2008). These dances continued intermittently throughout the 1950s, with one, for example, taking place in O'Brien's pub in Cork in 1957 and another in Wesley Rugby Club in Dublin in 1958 (DarkMatterBird 2011). Giolla used income from lectures about his work to support this activity, although the meagre income Giolla received from these lectures was not enough to parlay the resolutely non-commercial lightrance dances into anything more regular than occasional diversions into the ether of the avant-garde for unsuspecting, strange-starved Irish audiences.

Giolla died on 19 June 1959, three days after falling asleep whilst recording the burps and harrumphs of a marshy area near his Monivea cottage and being bitten by a stray dog believed to have rabies. His relatively early death, at a time when electronic music was soon to evolve dramatically and great social change was likewise on the horizon, means that much of Giolla's music has been lost to the fug of 1950s cultural indigence. Beyond the ethnographic field recordings of the 1930s, indeed the only surviving recorded examples of Giolla's work can be found on *Before The Who*, a 1998 anthology of electronic music that includes Giolla's 1957 theremin and tape depiction of the birth of knowledge, *Logoverse*, and his 1958 electric bog piece *Prismatic Sounds*.

Despite this dearth, however, curio interest in this near-lost era of electronic music means that Giolla's work has not been completely lost to time. Authors such as Andrew-nine and various web sleuths have uncovered oral accounts of Giolla's innovations substantial enough that at least some concrete sense of what this unheralded pioneer, this seer of Irish traditional culture as magico-electro ritual enchanted with the imminent and the impossible, was actually up to in all his grand small sonic, spiritual and technical explorations and experiments.

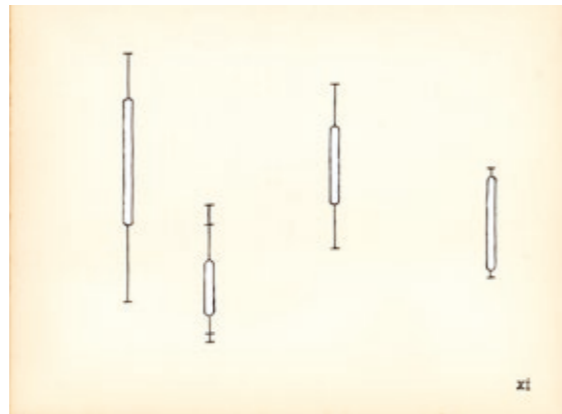
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A fairly wide selection of Giolla's recordings of this kind can be heard in the Giolla-McKiernan Collection at the Irish Traditional Music Archive.



TERESA FLYNN, 1960



MOON IMAGE NO.7 by Bella Maher



Theresa Flynn on a Teachers' Union march, 1965

Flynn, Theresa

(b Dublin, 13 Aug. 1929; d Dublin, 19 June 1970).

Pianist, Teacher.

Stephen Graham

THERESA FLYNN IS KNOWN TODAY primarily as both teacher and political agitator. Flynn studied Music and English at University College Dublin from 1948 to 1952, going on to gain an M.A. at the same College in 1954. Flynn taught piano and theory at the Municipal School of Music in Dublin (now the DIT Conservatory Of Music And Drama) for three years after graduation, spending much of the rest of her career from that point as a teacher at the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

Having always espoused comparatively radical pedagogical methods in her career as a teacher and educator, Flynn's election to the board of governors of the RIAM in 1961 allowed her to influence Maude Aiken and other figures' adoption of a more wide-ranging and inclusive curriculum. However, Flynn's ambition to push the RIAM and other institutions into wider public participation and socially responsible recruitment was to be unsuccessful in the face of a craven musical and political establishment.

Flynn encouraged students to move outside the strictures of requirements. This can be seen in her two early-1960s books of exercises for recorder based on Irish folk tunes, *Playful Studies for Treble Recorder*, which loosely adapted tunes such as 'Washerwoman's Pardon' and 'Crumlin Air' for solo recorder and *ad lib* percussion, with accompanying text giving various theatrical, experimental options for realisation of the notation. These studies circulated widely in Germany and then France following a visit to the Royal Irish Academy in 1964 of a delegation from the Hanover Female Music Teacher's Group. Relatedly, a lawsuit was even proposed in 1982 by the Studies' publishers, Granthum Mighty, pointing out suspicious similarities between the main theme of Part 4 of Jean Michel Jarre's *Oxygène* and one of Flynn's studies (the reader is invited to compare the contemporary recording on aisteach.org of the study in question, No. 7 – 'Dandy's Lament,' to Jarre's piece), although lack of concrete forensic musicological evidence meant that the case did not make it to court.

Flynn's commitment to radical teaching and repertoire was such that she even sent brave pianists to compete at Feis Ceoil competitions with graphic scores from Morton Feldman, Earle Brown and marginal Irish composer Bella Fagher that directly contradicted the given Feis syllabus (see Harty 2004, which describes Grainne O'Shaughnessy's 1961 performance of Fagher's *Moon Image* 7). This emphasis on early forms of critical pedagogy was matched in Flynn's wider political commitments. Flynn was an active member of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation throughout her career (see image of Flynn on a INTO and ASTI march in 1965), and regularly assembled staff and even students at the RIAM to join her in union branch meetings and other political actions.

Despite Flynn's popularity with students – Harty quotes one former student, Donal Soye, saying that Flynn's class 'made him see an affinity between life and art,' and even led to him becoming a political campaigner for environmental causes in later life (2004: 45) – she was sacked from the RIAM in July 1968. This sacking happened after Flynn attempted to perform John Cage's *O'OO* in the main hall of RIAM. This action was executed, in Flynn's own words as quoted by Terence Brown, 'in homage to the student demonstrations of May 1968, whose total commitment to the possibility of the current moment was so spinelessly hammered down by a society in fear for its life, in fear for a world in which it had learned how to win' (Brown 2010: 513). Flynn destroyed a grand piano in the main hall of the RIAM with a blunt hammer as part of this performance of *O'OO*, to the meek cheers of students and the apparent befuddlement of other teachers.

The extremity of this 1968 action, though the first to get her sacked, was almost matched by Flynn's attempts to organise a 'happening' at the RIAM in 1966 (surely a first nail in her coffin), and, later, by her Austin Currie-inspired 'sit-in' in January 1969 in the flat of a Dublin single mother being evicted for alleged social impropriety. This latter action is as described in a 1970 letter to the *Irish Times* written by Jim O'Flaherty, a letter whose decrying as a scandalous reflection of the myopic horizons of Irish intellectual life of the lack of coverage both of Flynn's 1968 sacking and her death two years later from bowel cancer might in fact be seen as an fitting epitaph for Flynn – she always having been a lone voice for unpopular views within large Irish institutions after all.

In recognition of her achievements as an educationalist, and in spite of the sad neglect into which she was already falling at the time, the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany was conferred on Theresa Flynn in 1976.

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CHANCEY BRIGGS,
1932

Briggs, Chancey

(b Clare, 13 Sep. 1892; d Dublin 19 July 1970).

Philanthropist. Prominent in the GAELIC LEAGUE as a young man (Briggs describes himself in the 1911 census as a 'scribe for *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the League's paper), Briggs was well known in the first decades of the Free State as a supporter of various alternative and radical cultural practices.

Stephen Graham

NOTABLE PROJECTS TO WHICH BRIGGS gave financial and curatorial support range across music, theatre, literature and poetry. These included a sound poetic performance of Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* at Westland Row and Merrion Square on the 50th anniversary of Wilde's release from incarceration in 1897; Artist Retreats on Achill inspired in their emphasis on group collaboration and dramatic catharsis by the 1938 Cromlech Tumulus *Kirkintilloch* theatrical experiment by Irish surrealist Sean Cullinane (see Munro 2014) - these Retreats took place in 1948, 1949 and, following a scandalous bacchanalian group theatrical intervention in a community barn dance, finally in 1950; an all-male silent performance of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* in the foyer of Cork Opera House in 1956; and, most ambitiously, a series of inevitably doomed attempts to put together Ireland's first gay Brechtian cabaret showband in the 1960s. Briggs' long-mooted plan to stage a so-called 'dreaming musical memoir' of the Ladies of Llangollen remained unrealised at the time of his death.

Chancey Briggs' philanthropic activities were enabled in the first instance by the profound wealth he inherited from his parents, Edgar and Josephine (Chancey's grandmother, Elizabeth Musgrove née Aykroyd, was the only surviving child and heir to the 3rd Baron of Birstwith Hall in Somerset - see appendices beginning page 22). This wealth was augmented over the course of Briggs' life through canny investments in British companies such as Jaguar and Marks and Spencer's, as well as key backroom lobbying for semi-national Irish organisations such as the Turf Development Board (Bord na Móna) throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

His wealth and the perceived eccentricities of his character allowed Briggs to ascend to a prominent position in Irish social affairs

at the time. But despite this prominence as an unusually moneyed and dandified figure on the Irish cultural scene through decades where the country, as described by Tim Pat Coogan, was experienced by many as ‘an emigration-drained land wherein poverty, priest and publican dominated’ (2004: xii), both Briggs himself and his philanthropic activities in particular are less well known today than they might be.

Why this is the case must remain something of a matter of speculation. But certain facts of Briggs’ life give clear pointers as to his neglect. What historically would have been seen as the artistically and socially outré character of many of Briggs’ undertakings – from the aforementioned Achill scandal to his many unusual artistic ventures to his rumoured key support for Dunne’s *Dérives* in the 1950s and 1960s to his now obscured personal links with revolutionary figures such as Roger Casement and Pádraig Pearse – surely made his neglect almost inevitable in a country where rigid puritanical values directly contradictory of Briggs’ character and tastes remained very much in place and even enshrined in law throughout his adult life. Nevertheless, as a laudatory 1956 survey of Briggs’ efforts up to that time in *The Bell* has it, ‘Chancey Briggs has no match on this island for either bravery artistic ambition or the means with which to put this into action.’

Changing social mores, as well as renewed methodological approaches and a widening scope in recent Irish cultural historiography suggests that this kind of view of Briggs – generous, praiseworthy – both as a person and as a key player in the cultural life of marginal forms in Ireland in a time when such things very much struggled to sustain themselves, may yet win out over the current obscurity in which he (and others like him) unfortunately languishes.

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THE 'CONTRACEPTION TRAIN' Members of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement, Dublin 1961
(image courtesy The Irish Times)

The Keening Women's Alliance

Vocal group. A fugitive women's improv singing group based in Cork in the 1950s and 1960s.

Stephen Graham

STARTING OUT AS A COMMUNITY-BASED CO-OPERATIVE women's group formed in opposition to the local branch of the Women's Institute, which was felt to be excessively 'hierarchical, hefty and church-worshipping' (as a member of the Alliance is said to have put it, Quinny 2000: 7), the Keening Women's Alliance was set-up in 1957 or 1958 as a performing arts group for women from around the Carrigaline and Ballygarvan areas south of Cork. Inspired by emerging trends in experimental classical music and improvisation, key member Shauna McCabe pushed the Alliance both into the wider Cork scene and into more exploratory musical areas throughout 1959 and 1960 (Quinny 2000). Activity was now no longer to be confined merely to private society meetings based on nebulous communitarian principles, but also to public performance inspired by composers such as John Cage. This exploration and expansion was such that by the time of the KWA's first public performance, as part of the Cork International Choral Festival in 1961 (on May 21 at City Hall in a non-competitive event), the group could be seen, in the words of critic Stephen Fitzmaurice appendices beginning page 22), to produce 'strange, feckless sounds without apparent order.' These sounds were 'based sometimes in poetry, sometimes song and other times scream.' The City Hall performance, which 'lasted only fifteen minutes but felt like a shattered eternity,' saw the women move about in a 'ritual frenzy' that 'climaxed with strange monotone group chanting, as if at the close of a wake' (all Fitzmaurice 1961: 7).

The only concrete documentary evidence that survives of KWA's activities, *Extraordinary Proceedings of the Keening Women's Alliance* (see Appendix 4), echoes the descriptions offered Fitzmaurice's review. It also suggests that KWA meetings and, later, performances would proceed according to something of a type. Each 'programme-

diagram,' as performance schedules were described, was headed with a mission statement-like short piece of prose. Below this would be printed various short texts (which sometimes included directions for performance). Amongst these can be detected a clear formal sequence, where a short solo 'introit' would be sung or recited by a different member of the group; massed vocal performance and readings of various poetic and political texts would follow from different factions; a central, wordless section of unloosed keening from all in attendance, in tribute to the 'As we keen' of the mission statement, would bring meetings to a climax; and finally unison chanting of Endocil 4 KWA would serve as Exit Music.

The KWA's emphasis on turbulent, collaborative and largely improvised group performance, as described by Fitzmaurice and Quinny and as is suggested by the tenor of the texts collected in Appendix 4, was obviously modelled not on classical choral conventions but rather on both experimental classical principles of indeterminacy and local traditions of social performance. It can be seen to be taken up by later important figures in improvised music, from Phil Minton to Maggie Nicols, the latter of whom may even have attended one of the Alliance's rumoured two performances at Dunne's Dérives in Dublin in 1963 on a visit to Ireland that year (see Brand forthcoming). The Alliance also pre-echoes singing traditions such as Sacred Harp, which has lately taken up something of a position of prominence in Cork musical life. But spiritual correspondences such as these are some of the only traces of the Alliance that can be detected in the historical record post-1968 or so, which, apart from images of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement's trip in 1971 to Belfast to buy contraception that show three separate members of the KWA amongst the throng (Margery Bird, Josephine Qualaney and Imelda Gogan), falls completely silent after the publication of *Extraordinary Proceedings* until Quinny's valuable act of retrieval in 2000.

So as with other avant-garde and exploratory practices of the time, such community-building through radical culture as can be seen in the efforts of the KWA had little oxygen to breathe in Ireland, which remained culturally and socially both a broken and a somewhat isolated country at that time. Beyond the tremors the group no doubt injected into its members' lives during its ten or so years of existence and indeed into the few audiences lucky enough to see them, the improvised communal tempests of the Keening Women's Alliance left little mark, being now heard only as faint scratches on the grunting pages of self-same history reproducing itself forever.

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Dunne's Dérives

An underground avant-garde venue and concert series running circa 1959 to 1964 in the backroom of one of Dublin's first gay bars, Bartley Dunne's (at the current site of Break for the Border on Stephen Street Lower). Bartley Dunne's was modelled on Parisian left bank bistros and served throughout the late-1950s, 1960s and 1970s, in the words of Senator David Norris, as 'a notorious haunt of the homosexual demi-monde' (2012: 79).

Stephen Graham

DUNNE'S DÉRIVES HOSTED OUTSIDER and semi-covert music, poetry and theatre events roughly once a month to a variety of patrons from the Dublin cultural scene as well as a host of visiting international artistic and musical figures. Although solid documentary evidence about activities at this world-within-a-world-within-a-world is scarce, oral testimony from surviving clientele and buried allusions across the historical record attest to a rich seam of fringe cultural activity. Former patrons Clancy Makem, Thomas McKenna and Brian Pace told me about concerts of experimental trad. sessions, modern classical chamber music and jazz, modernist poetry readings and even pro-to-free improv and electronic fusions in the vein of Group Ongaku, whose Takehisa Kosugi and Shukou Mizuno were said in an account of the group's 1962 tour of the UK in *The Wire* to have visited the venue. Other notable visitors to Dunne's Dérives, according to the most regular concert attendee of my interviewees, Pace, included Seán Ó Riada, the poet John Berryman, Brendan Behan and even composer Pierre Boulez, whom Pace described as 'moonlighting' in Ireland during a visit to the UK in the early-1960s.

Participants in 'cessations,' as the largely improvised performances at Dunne's Dérives came to be known, were drawn largely from the 'avant-garde' clientele of Bartley's (Sam 2013). This included members of the Irish wing of the then burgeoning Radical Faerie counter-cultural queer movement, literary and artistic modernists inspired by Russian Zaum, Dada cabaret and Irish literature (see aisteach.org for a modern recording of a sound poem, *Drumsna*, Sam 2013 quotes as being performed regularly at the venue - the author is unknown, but the direction that it be performed "into a violin" has survived), as well as a pool of tinkerers from local theatre bands. The cast of performers was even said by Thomas McKenna to have included various pub singers



BARTLEY DUNNE'S. 1985

and street wailers based around the Capel Street area of North Dublin, who in 1963 supposedly followed some rumours down to Dunne's and became semi-regular attendees from then on in.

Cessations would typically begin at 11 or 12pm, with about 20-25 patrons from Bartley's and other interested parties collected behind locked doors in a small room in the back of the pub. Performers were arrayed amongst them and on the small stage at the back of the space. Concerts would sometimes be organised around different sets of people and themes – as Makem and Pace each pointed out to me in our interviews one event in 1962 is said to have been entitled 'Cross-dressing transvestites and their poetry,' whilst another in 1964 was modelled on Cage's happenings and put together writers, cabaret dancers and electronic tape music in what was possibly the first event of its kind in Ireland – but most often they would be run loosely according to the abilities and allegiances of those present. In this spirit, performers and a loose running order would be adjudicated each night by the manager of Dunne's *Dérives*. (A diary entry in the *Irish Press* of 21 February 1962 alleges this manager was known socialite and philanthropist CHANCEY BRIGGS, although little other evidence exists to support this claim.)

The lack of boundaries around cession performances and the inevitable lack of pre-planning going in to them seem to have habitually led to them throwing up unexpected cross-disciplinary and cross-genre collaborations as well as fruitful stylistic inventions. Such things are indeed affirmed in the sole surviving review of one of these cessations (see appendices beginning page 22), written by Seán Flanagan and published in *Hibernia* in May 1963. The particular cession under review featured 'performances...with the virility of a session but the refinement and opacity of the university, a blasted strange mix that brought new colours out of the music and the setting and the people.' All of this amounted in Flanagan's eyes to a 'capsule history of various European avant-garde movements through a Hiberno-filter.' Flanagan thought this a highly unusual concoction that he hoped would 'spread beyond the small walls of the room and into Dublin outside,' pushing 'its staid concert scene into unexpected areas' (all 1963:11).

Although as noted the place of Dunne's *Derives* in the historical record is precarious and piecemeal, it can be seen in the concert review just quoted and in the surviving testimony collected here, in the calibre of visitor the venue attracted and in the nonpareil range and flavour of culture whose existence it sanctioned, actually to have served as a crucial cog in the fragile chain of radical cultural practice in Ireland in the late-1950s and 1960s. It not only provided respite for audiences from what today we would call the 'glass closet' of homophobic Irish society

but also allowed various practitioners to bond together as the nucleus of a nascent scene, through this putting out vapour trails to Europe and beyond in a time of great artistic and social penury for Ireland. Activity at Dunne's *Dérives* seemed in this way to brush aside the potentially constraining colonial burden of classical music and oppressive nationalist ideology of the corpus of Irish folk music. It promoted atypical social identities. It also looked towards America whilst also pursuing other cultural possibilities. In doing so Dunne's *Dérives* pointed to a novel avant-garde Irish cultural identity sitting in a heretofore unidentified sweet spot across the past and present, and across America, Europe, Britain and Ireland.

Had the vapour trails to scenes and cultures outside Ireland just mentioned been allowed to cohere into something more sustained and discernable Irish culture and even Irish society more broadly speaking would surely have felt substantial benefit. But that, alas, was not to be the case. The series and venue was closed down in December 1964 after Department of Defence censors accidentally picked up the thread of its existence whilst examining letters in a Censorship of Publications Board investigation into obscene pamphlets distributed amongst audiences at October 1964 performances of *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* at the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin (Bartley Dunne's itself only narrowly escaped threat of closure after distancing itself from its basement tenants). Dunne's *Dérives* therefore fell prey to the echo effects of a puritanical social apparatus only five years into its ultimately truncated and now near-forgotten run as the leading light of radical culture in Ireland of its time.

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Appendices

CHANCEY BRIGGS

From The Official Roll of Baronets (as at 31st October 2014 – available at <http://www.baronetage.org/official-roll-of-the-baronets/>)

Aykroyds Of Birstwith Hall

Following herewith are extracts from the family history – The Ackroyds first settled in Cheshire; are mentioned in Dugdale serving the office of high sheriff; represent a borough in three successive parliaments; show exertions of loyalty and are awarded the dignity of a baronet in the first year of Charles II.

...

3rd Leaf: Elliot Branch

Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1780, married, July 15, 1807, Elizabeth, daughter of James Stevenson, Esq. of South Park, in the county of Gloucester

By which lady (who died 1814) he has issue Elizabeth, born June 1, 1808; Anne, born August 9, 1810; a still-born son, November 5, 1812; Mary, born November 20, 1813.

Mary Married, December 16, 1842, Charles, son and heir of Charles Aykroyd, 2nd Baron of Birstwith Hall, in the county of Somerset.

Charles, 3rd Baron of Birstwith Hall, and Mary have issue Jane, born June 20, 1844 (d 1847); Walter, born April 1, 1848 (d 1850); Elizabeth, born July 18, 1854.

Elizabeth Married, September 28, 1872, Joseph Baliol.

Joseph Baliol [Aykroyd], 4th Baron of Birstwith Hall, and Elizabeth have issue Charles, born November 21, 1873; Josephine, born October 11, 1874.

[Addendum: Josephine Married, April 20, 1892, Edgar Briggs, County Clare. Chancey, born September 13, 1893]

...

Principal seat, Birstwith Hall, in the county of Somerset.

Heir Presumptive: Sir James Alexander Frederic Aykroyd, 8th Baronet.

DUNNE'S DERIVES

Seán Flanagan – Music at Bartley Dunne's, from April, 1963.

What is this astonishing thing, this thing that is cloaked in so much secrecy? Rumour has spread about town recently of a cabaret evening running on occasion in Bartleys at Stephen's Green, where Messers Behan and Cronin are said to have camped down alongside all sorts of quare folks, but I didn't dare credit its existence until I could verify it for myself.

This past week I did indeed manage to get along to a show, where I saw a jazz combo picking up from the most recent sounds in America, a burlesque to a noisy and rough tango, a brief and aloof poetry recital and an extremely odd young man interfering with a reel-to-reel machine (to the evident delight of a small section of the small audience). None of these performers had handles that they wanted to give out beyond their given Christian names. Despite or perhaps because of this, rapport between doers and watchers was strong, helped no doubt by a free-flowing bar but also by the chummy secrecy of proceedings that shrouded everything in a thrilling sense of danger no doubt given even more cause by the odd spectacle and sounds we were witness to.

Though I was nonplussed at certain moments, these performances were presented with the virility of a session but the refinement and opacity of the university, a blasted strange mix that brought new colours out of the music and the setting and the people. By the end of the evening I felt privy to a kind of capsule history of various European avant garde movements through a confusing if strong Hiberno-filter. What would happen if this kind of thing spread beyond the small walls of this room and into Dublin outside? Could it help to push its staid concert scene into unexpected areas, perhaps, maybe even build some small bridges from here to there?

KEENING WOMANS ALLIANCE

Stephen Fitzmaurice – Highlights from the Cork Festival of Choral Music, June 1961.

The following is extracted from a much longer overview of the festival, available in the *Cork Press*, 21 June, 1961.

...amongst the English choirs, harp music from local lassies, Indonesian dancing and various sturdy European groups on the programme for our evening concert on the 21st, could be heard an unbilled act, the so-called 'Keening Women's Alliance'. Though they excited much tremor in the hall, these ladies are rightly named, for they keened in blunt union and without the solace of an object cause.

This was wicked odd stuff. The 'Alliance' made strange, feckless

sounds without apparent order. One woman looked to be at the centre but really the centre kept shifting. The words of the group were based sometimes in poetry, sometimes song and other times scream. The Women's Alliance performance lasted only fifteen minutes but felt like a shattered eternity, with members of the confused audience leaping out of their seats in peculiar public emotion and others bristling politely at the commotion. This was all while the women moved about in ritual frenzy on the stage. The various movements and swells of the keening eventually climaxed with strange monotone group chanting, as if at the close of a wake. Apt.

Though not, I may add, so apt as a lead-in to the august Edwardian sounds of the Nelson Civic Ladies Choir, which followed our strange keening Irish women's contingent with...

Extracts from the Extraordinary Proceedings of the Keening Women's Alliance (Chapter 3 – 'Texts'), printed by Scabrithe Press and available in the National Library of Ireland.

Endocil 1. KWA.

Printed on each 'programmadiagram' for KWA meetings

It is only when we are anxious that we wake easily and for a minute do not know why our hearts beat faster than usual. Then we remember. The old reason. We have no home. We have to invent one from the dust of this Irish planet, from memories of sorrow and from present sobbing sniffing singing sounds, as we ourselves sing, sob, sound. As we keened.

Adapted from Edna O'Brien

Endocil 2 (fragment). KWA.

Solo Introit

Text, text, grace grant me favour

Spend myself still, capture our labour.

Text, text, grace give me favour

Long and forgotten, never we waiver.

Siobhan Sallowdown

Endocil 3. KWA.

A rough poise

...the air like a swallow

high

Twice, and once more

Ventriloquising cut and swerve

Walk the mapled path dark, cuddled by night memories and warmed muddy sounds

Alone, together, alone

...

Believed to be extracted from Zaftig Giolla's *Eyre Square Encyclical*

Endocil 4. KWA.

Declaimed by members in rough unison 3 times at the close of meetings.

Strathmoring winds have us poised for survival, flowering from there to here: We are solid invented figures, secret poets through and through
Wind and rain

Hale and swelter

Stone and batter

on to a side that feels new, broken and found, voiced like a rough set

Keening Women's Alliance Keening Women's Alliance Keening Women's

Alliance

KWA.



SLIGO'S SECRET OUTSIDER



Sligo's Secret Outsider

by Julian A. Dalton (Weekend Arts Section, The Irish Times, Saturday, 24 August 1991)



THE NUSSBAUM'S COTTAGE Aughris

“I HAVE SOMETHING THAT WILL BE OF INTEREST TO YOU,” the phonecall began, in a direct tone that was unmistakably foreign. It was December 1990, and this was the voice of Ingrid Nussbaum, architect and west Sligo’s most recent addition (her words). She and her husband Bernd, a homeopath and poet, were in the process of renovating an old fisherman’s cottage and had made a discovery that could not be described over the telephone. They had read my piece about the Swiss “outsider” artist Adolf Wölfli and had evidently decided that I was the person to decipher their find. How soon could I get there?

I have never been one to pass up an obscure lead, and the following weekend, after some time plotting a circular path around the damp lanes of this more forgotten part of Irish countryside, my ailing Volvo finally reached the Nussbaum’s cottage. “We are only living in the one room now,” Ingrid began, as I stepped into dimly-lit room crammed with a rickety camp-bed, an electric stove, a small wooden table, some Quinnsworth bags on hooks acting as an impromptu refrigerator, and a small, smoking stove. “By the winter we are hoping to have a little less water in the house,” she joked. “But what we really have to show you is outside.”

Clearly not one to waste time on ceremony, Ingrid Nussbaum ushered me back out into the damp, salty air. Her husband Bernd, a more hushed character, joined us holding an old key he had collected from a nail on the wall. They led me further down the lane towards the shore where, nestled in behind a great dune, stood a small shack of wood and rusted corrugated iron. “When we bought the house earlier this year,” said Bernd, softly, “we didn’t know about this. Technically it is not on our land, but we tried the key and it is working.”

The door creaked open and I was ushered inside. A small shaft of light entered through a crack in the metal roof; it was difficult to make out anything at first, but as my eyes adjusted I could see that the room was full of strangely shaped objects – so many that I could barely move without stepping on them. Bernd lit a candle (revealed to be one of dozens sitting on a large stone in the centre of the room) and I could

see that these curious things were in fact the remnants of some kind of driftwood sculptures, held together with pieces of rope, netting and seaweed and adorned with shells, sea-worn glass and stones of various sizes.

A downpour commenced, and Bernd suggested we might return to the cottage. To my eternal regret, I did not photograph the contents of that place there and then – the whole lot was destroyed in the storms of 5 and 6 January of this year that raged along the Irish coastline (Ed: Since the first publication of this article has been possible to recreate some of these works, leading to the photographs produced here.).

“We don’t have a clue what these are,” said Ingrid as we walked back to the cottage, “but there’s something else that might help explain them.” From under the camp-bed Ingrid pulled an large, battered leather suitcase and lifted table. Bernd unbuckled the leather straps and opened the suitcase flat. Inside lay a somewhat bruised violin case; the instrument within was intact, albeit with just two strings and a collapsed bridge. Packed in around the violin case, were bundles of papers (seemingly handwritten letters), a stack of five identical notebooks and a stained Manilla envelope containing a single, ragged newspaper clipping, illegible in the dim light of the Nussbaum’s cottage.

Ingrid insisted I take the suitcase back to my B&B, and in our short acquaintance I had learned that she was not easily refused. If this, largely empty, suitcase held the clue to the dune-side sculptures, things were not promising. Much of it appeared to have been damaged by damp and mould, and many of the pages were faded or stuck together. I was beginning to wonder if there was anything to these mysterious artefacts at all.

In my many years writing for this newspaper, I have found that the local pub is most often the best place to start when gathering information. Conveniently for me, this was just across the track from the rose-painted bungalow in which I had taken a room. Tired from a long days’ driving I resolved to start a more liquid form of research, and leave the reading until the following day.

Heads turned as I entered; a mixture of suspicion and enthusiasm. I’ll play it slow, I thought, ordered a pint and retired to the snug with my notebook. Before long, a stout figure appeared, hands pocketed. “You’re here with the Germans then,” he said. It didn’t appear to be a question.

Michael Scallon was the man’s name; he’d lived in Aughris, Co. Sligo – now more a townland than a village – all his life. I was welcome to Aughris anyway, he said with a curious glint in his eye, and I was to

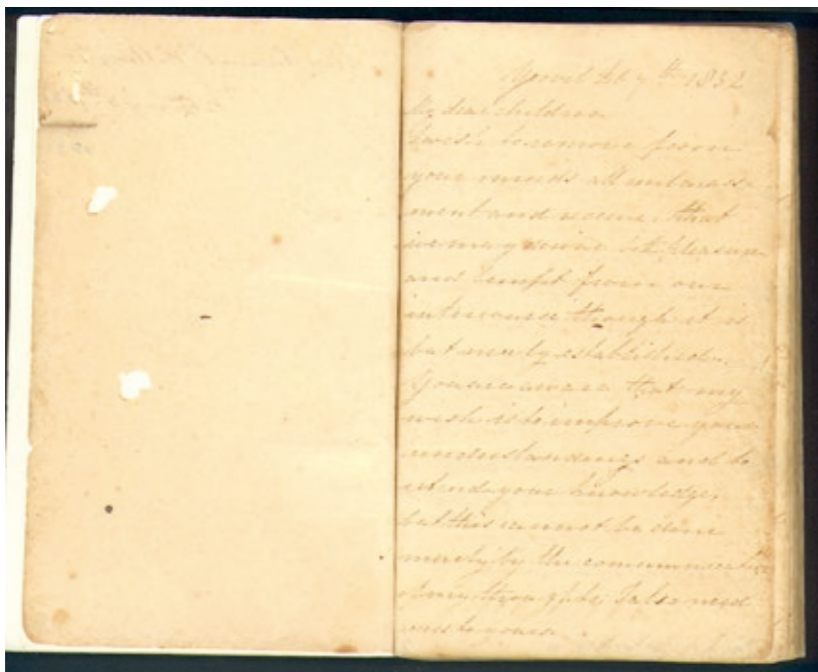
let him know if there was anything I needed.

Had he known the previous inhabitant of the Nussbaums’ cottage, I asked as Scallon turned away? There was a pause. “Aye,” he said, soft-voiced. “Old Black. Well as much as anyone knew. Kept to himself. Died last winter, Lord rest his soul. An awful strange character really.” I got the feeling I shouldn’t probe too far until I’d read the contents of the suitcase.

The following morning I took to leafing through the contents of the suitcase. I began with the newspaper cutting, which was at least legible if part of it had been destroyed. “Sligo Champion, 20 August 1979” was scribbled in the margin. The headline read “Gardaí Called After Incident on Inismurray”. The short report explained how a leading ornithologist Dr William Grey, of Trinity College, Dublin, and his assistant, Ms Amelia Weston, an American, had telephoned An Garda Síochána from a payphone near Raughly Harbour in north Sligo, where they had been deposited without further transport by a “mad and dangerous ferryman” some forty miles from their agreed destination.

The report continued – though some of the details were faded beyond legibility – that Dr Grey and his assistant were on the island to study a colony of eider ducks and that, Ms Weston, on investigating one of the the island’s beehive huts during a rain shower, discovered the ferryman, with whom they had traveled from Aughris Harbour near their hotel in Enniscrone earlier that day, engaging in “an act of terrifying ritual”, the details of which were sadly no longer legible due to damage from the elements. A furious argument appears to have ensued, followed by premature departure from the island and the injured parties’ deposition at Raughly in “a fiercesome wind”. On investigation, the ferryman in question, a Mr Alexander Black of Aughris, County Sligo, was found, but, on being returned by car to their hotel in Enniscrone by Sergeant Fahy of Grange Garda Station, it was decided not to take the matter further, the report concluded, with the last line underlined in red biro.

I turned my eyes to the bundle of letters and carefully prized off the string that held them together. They were written in two different hands – about twenty in total. The first lot four or five, no longer in envelopes, were written in a flowing, decorative hand, all dated 1928 and all beginning with the words “Dearest Alex” and were all signed, without salutation, “Isabella”. The letters were short, but intense descriptions of what – after some reading – I deduced was life as a student of archeology at the Humboldt University in Berlin, someone called Uncle Roddy and increasingly desperate pleas for the letters to



NOTEBOOK OF ALEXANDER BLACK

be answered.

Of particular interest to me, having, in my Footlights days, performed in a production of Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera*, or *Die Dreigroschenoper* as it was cited here, was a description of the premiere of this most important of works, at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm on 28 August 1928, which the letters described as "very stimulating" and, more cryptically, being "painfully reminiscent of our ice house songs, only more vulgar, violent and more angry".

Below these were a dozen or so letters, each in envelopes, stamped and addressed to a Ms Isabella Hardiman, c/o Major Roderick Lynch of 143 Wilhelmstraße, Berlin, Germany, all quite evidently unsent. (I later discovered a mention of Major Lynch, a Press Attaché at the British Embassy from 1919 until 1937, in the diaries of A.L. Kennedy, one time foreign editor with the *London Times*, describing him as "a nice Irishman, with the rather sweeping judgements of his race".)

These letters were in a cruder hand and written in an abbreviated style, but nonetheless literate and not unlike a series of telegrams:

*Good catch to day. Father pleased. Walked to cave at Toberpatrick.
Good sound. Did Song No. 3. Red sun above Ox. Goulden dead. AB*

They continue in this fashion, a strange compilation of everyday events, local news and enigmatic references to numbered "songs". The last of these curious messages, dated 10 October 1928 was perhaps the most revealing.

Wind strong. No fish. Dangerous walk to cave. Need new song place for Winter. Played "Die Aughris Oper". Fighting fiddle. Storm voice. Father ill. AB

There was little wonder, I thought, that the Nussbaums had summoned me all the way from Dublin to see all of this, but there was still little to tell me if the mysterious driftwood creations I had seen amount to more than a case of creative hoarding.

I picked up the notebooks in the hope that they might hold more of a key, but they were as perplexing as the unsent letters: opening the first one, I found page after page of abstract lines and shapes drawn in pen, distinguished only by markings in the fashion "Inner Music Play 43", a date (beginning with 1 January 1980), and occasional cryptic comments such as "float above" or "dig dig dig" sketched into the margins.

The next four notebooks, each still marked with a yellow price sticker reading "Keohane's Bookshop 50p", continued in this manner, with the notable variations of sheep's wool sewn into the page with fishing wire and splashes of what I deduced was cow dung was introduced on some pages. And finally, the number system appeared to be abandoned for more poetic inscriptions, like "Song of Red Hill", "Above Hart's Lake" and "Dark Island Music".

Somewhat ominously, the last entry, on 4 January 1990, consisted of a single straight line drawn across the page, drawn in red pen and titled "Future Music".

I left the B&B to return the case to the Nussbaums; if nothing else, I thought, perhaps Bernd Nussbaum could use it as inspiration for his next collection of poetry – if the challenge of rescuing an old cottage from the elements wasn't enough literary fodder.

As I walked to my car I heard a familiar voice. "You know who you should talk to," said Michael Scallon. "If you want to know about old Black, I mean." The local rector, a Reverend Clarke, Scallon said, fancied himself as a sort of local historian; if anyone was looking for information about Aughris, the Reverend was the place to start. Fifteen minutes later I was sitting in his kitchen.

"I have a way of getting the stories out of the old ones alright," Clarke, an energetic man in his mid-fifties, beamed. "What do you want to know?"

Somewhat ominously, the last entry, on 4 January 1990, consisted of a single straight line drawn across the page, drawn in red pen and titled "Future Music".

Clarke knew an astonishing amount about Alexander Black – full name Alexander Thomas Black, born 1908 (according to the 1911 census, a photocopy of which pertaining to the local area the Reverend Clarke proudly showed me) and son of Thady, a fisherman, and Marie, who died of an unknown cause while Alexander was an infant. Thady was the son of poor protestant farmers in Carnaree, had sold up his sliver of the Black land and taken up a life at sea, apparently on account of his general dislike of other people. The young Alexander would have followed his father into fishing at about the age of sixteen, working on the small boat out of Aughris Harbour.

Then, Reverend Clarke said with a measure of excitement as he uncorked a bottle of wine, there was the matter of young Hardiman. Thady Black had supplied fish to the Hardiman family at Longford House up on the hill for a number of years. “Somehow or other young Alexander appeared to have become involved with the Hardimans youngest daughter, Isabella, much to the disturbance of both families. She was sent off to Germany, I believe, where she had some kind of a relative who was a diplomat and that was the end of that,” Clarke said, slamming his fist onto the table with a little too much gusto.

There wasn’t much known about the years immediately after that, except that old Thady Black died not long after of tuberculosis, or consumption as it was noted in the notebooks of the rector priest of the day, himself a considerable source of information (and, at times, entertainment) to his successor. One account did mention Black being a silent, withdrawn type, often seen walking along the rocks to Toberpatrick, returning many hours later. Mostly, however, Clarke assumed, Black was too busy trying to make ends meet than to be noticed.

What happened then, said Clarke, made Black even fewer friends in the community. Sometime in 1938 – the priest had, quite impressively, done his research – Black sold off the boat, boarded up the house (“the same one those Germans are in now”) and went and joined the British navy. Black, Clarke believed, was stationed for a time in Alexandria and would have been involved in (or at least near to) the Battle of El Alamein in 1942, but all he knew was from the local stories and what little he could collect from Black himself.

Black, said Clarke, returned to Aughris sometime in 1948 – or at least the rector of the day’s notebooks referenced an altercation between Black and the publican, Breen, on the night of 3 June of that year. By all accounts, Black returned to fishing, having bought a small boat with a motor, but it seems to have been a more part-time pursuit. “No doubt the old man had some kind of military pension,” said Clarke,

as he filled our glasses once more.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Black appeared to withdraw more and more from the people of the village. “He would have built that old shack down by the dunes at about that time too,” Clarke continued. “After my arrival here in the village in 1978, I always wanted to ask him what he did in there. But he didn’t want anything to do with me – the collar, I mean – not even on his death bed last year. We reckon he died on about the sixth or seventh of January, but nobody can be quite sure.”

Sometime in the mid 1960s, Clarke continued, noting he had skipped ahead in time a little, Black seems to have given up fishing altogether, and instead operated seasonal boat trips out of both Aughris and Enniscrone around the headland, which by then had a growing tourist industry, in part fueled by the Kilcullen’s seaweed baths.

Those who remembered Black’s voyages, said Clarke, spoke of “the silent ferryman”, Black was considered an able boatsman who could be relied upon by the big houses, guest houses and hotels to bring guests to on angling trips, and across the bay to as far as Inismurray, an island that held a growing fascination for visitors ever since Robert Lloyd Praeger’s book *The Way That I Went* was published in 1937.

“Well he did that until a couple of years after I arrived here in the parish,” said Clarke, swaying in his chair. “And I think that’s all I can tell you.”

That evening I dropped by at the Nussbaum’s cottage, and filled them in on as much as I could remember of the story of their predecessor, much to their excitement. In the morning, I told them, I would return to Dublin (I had a report to finish on Damien Hirst’s recent tiger shark work). I wasn’t sure, I said to Ingrid Nussbaum as I pulled away, if they just had a mad eccentric on their hands, or someone who was some kind of fascinating outsider artist waiting to be uncovered.

The possibility of the latter was too much to resist, and three weeks later, following a small amount of sleuthing and a couple of telephone calls, I found myself walking up the stone steps of number 24 Bedford Square, London. Here, I sensed, was the key that would unlock the mystery of Alexander Black, and his strange legacy.

The heavy door opened slowly to reveal a small, frail figure dressed entirely in black lace. “Come in,” said Mrs. Isabella Davidson, ushering me in to the drawing room. I had expected more of a staff, Mrs. Davidson suggested, reading my face, but things were not as they used to be. The house, I took in as Mrs. Davidson went to get tea,

appeared to be quite empty and in serious disrepair.

“You know I only married John because I thought Alex had given up on me,” Mrs. Davidson began before I could even ask a question. “But I always knew he was talented, and that someone like you would come to ask me questions.” It was an impressive grasp of my assignment for someone who had just celebrated her ninetieth birthday the week before, apparently alone.

Isabella and Alexander had begun their friendship quite innocently, she told me, when she stumbled across Black – a few years her senior – playing his father’s fiddle in the old ice house on the ground of Longford House, her family home. “Alex loved the acoustic in there,” said Mrs. Davidson, “and though I found it a bit spooky, I would sit and listen.” Before long, the young Isabella would make up songs, singing above the Black’s fiddle, which, she said, Black could not really play to any degree of proficiency.

“I began singing about quite gentle subjects, like the wild flowers in the fields around the house, but Alexander always pushed me towards darker themes, which I found quite exciting, I suppose.” The only one I remember, said Davidson, went something like, “Dark mountain. You are the wildness of my soul. Ascend in the night-time.” Davidson produced a short laugh. Each song, she said, had a number assigned, and sometimes Black would shout out the number of a different song in mid-performance, and Isabella would have to switch immediately, like a kind of game.

But the relationship intensified, and everything became more complicated when Isabella’s father, William Hardiman, found out about the liason. “To put an end to things, I was sent to my mother’s brother, who was at the embassy in Berlin. I studied archeology at the Humboldt University there.” That was quite a remarkable experience in its own right I interjected. “Yes, but my father’s vision of a pious life under the watchful eye of my Uncle Roddy was misplaced. Through Roddy I witnessed much of the bohemian life of Berlin that you lot now have to read about in books. He was friends with Isherwood, for goodness sake.”

The end of the story, Davidson said, indicating that it was time for me to leave, was that she married an attaché at the embassy, John Davidson, and returned with him to London at the end of the twenties. Her father died in 1931, and with that the Hardiman family’s ailing finances were laid bare; Hardiman’s mother sold up the house and moved, with her two sisters, to a more moderate terraced house in Rathmines.



DRIFTWOOD SCULPTURE

So here I had it: was Black some kind of proto-punk dreamer, a free verse poet ahead of his time? I could be certain, at least, that the life and work of Alexander Black of Aughris deserved far deeper investigation.

As I mulled over the jigsaw of this peculiar man, two final pieces of the puzzle materialised.

On returning from London, a letter appeared on my desk from Bernd Nussbaum. “Enclosed are some further documents that might assist you investigations,” he wrote. “I found them in the roof.”

In a small envelope was a handful of palm-sized cards, fragile but still intact. They were evidently all notations for laments of some description, labelled, consecutively, with titles like “Caoineadh Ruweistat [4 November 1949]” and “Caoineadh Wadi Natrun [6 June 1950]. Below each of these labels was text in the curt manner of Black’s letters. They appeared to be performance instructions, albeit rather oblique. I print the last of these, cryptically titled “Caoineadh AB [11 February 1953]” here:

Continuous noteforming. Shadow sing. Up to the hills. Down down.

Up. Down. Big dip. Up. The rolling waves.

The last piece to the puzzle that would give us some insight into Black’s life and work, was came from a phonecall, from the studious Reverend Clarke, clearly piqued by my interest in the history of his parish. “I was leafing through the notebooks here, and found a mention of a boy who lived here briefly in the late 1960s. Apparently he was from some kind of a hippy commune down in Templeboy. Anyway, the note says that he knew something of old Black that he would tell to no one. His name was Ethan Matthews. I’ve asked around and someone said they might have gone to America after here. Maybe you’d have a way to track him down?”

Luckily, when you work at a national newspaper, there are always ways to track somebody down. I found that the Ethan Matthews, now in his mid thirties, was a computer programmer in San Francisco. Somewhat bemused by my long-distance telephone call from out of the blue, he began to fill me in.

Black had caught the twelve-year-old eavesdropping outside his shed by the dunes. “The man had a reputation for colourful eccentricity that I could not resist,” said Matthews. On being found listening by the window, the young Ethan was led forcibly into the small, corrugated shed.

What the boy Ethan had witnessed, sitting on the floor of Black’s shed, was a near four-hour event, in which Black appeared to

be in “a trance-like state”, moving slowly through the room bowing a two-stringed fiddle making “what I can only describe as vocalisations”, occasionally pausing to add or remove a piece of wood or rope or stone from one of the objects.

From time to time, said Ethan Matthews, Black would knock two stones together in time with “indecipherable incantations”, or would draw diagrams on the sandy floor with his bare feet. “I think those sculptures,” said Matthews, not quite realising the import of his words, “were some simultaneously some kind of musical score and record of his actions.”

The mad fisherman of Aughris? My study of these scant materials and anecdotes left behind by our elusive subject suggests a more nuanced reading. To my eyes and ears, Black’s troubled narrative is of a truly brilliant artist well ahead of his time, struggling to make his innovative work in a time and a place that didn’t understand him – and I have no doubt that further study of this man’s beguiling artefacts will reveal new depths to the life and work of Sligo’s best kept secret.



RÓISÍN MADIGAN
O'REILLY

OS ARD

VOWELING THE
HEAVISIDE

THE ALEATORIC
REVISIONIST
BALLADEERS

THE REVEREND JOSEPH
GARVAN DIGGES, M.A.

“HUMBLE BEGINNINGS”



Madigan O'Reilly, Róisín

(b Dublin, 21 Jan. 1903; d Dingle, 13 Feb. 1974).

Manuscript Conservator, Composer and Founder of Primaudial Language Performances and Voweling The Heaviside.

Ford, F

DAUGHTER TO A GERMAN-BORN GOVERNESS (E. Hessler) and an Irish Literature Lecturer, (E. O'Reilly) Madigan O'Reilly grew up speaking German, Irish and English and travelling sporadically to Potsdam to visit her mother's affluent relations. Both her parents were staunch republicans. Her father wrote poems and articles for *An Claidheamh Soluis* and, aged just 13, Madigan O'Reilly became the youngest member of *Cumann na mBan*, accompanying her mother to meetings. Madigan O'Reilly contributed to the struggle for Independence by gifting her first typewriter to Winifred Carney.

Adversely affected by the violence and unrest in Ireland during the Easter Rising and in Germany during the First World War, Madigan O'Reilly withdrew into her studies at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art where she showed an aptitude for calligraphy, decorative lettering and illuminating. She took these traditional manuscript skills into unexpected territory such as bricolage and collage, often incorporating elements of her father's poetry as visual elements. This unlikely application of traditional skills attracted the attention of the influential German publishing group Potsdam: Müller & Co. Verlag, who, in 1925, were completing a publication entitled *Orientalisches Traumbuch von Mariette Lydis* and wished to explore the possibility of a follow up with an Irish bias. In 1925 Madigan O'Reilly met with Irmgard Kiepenheuer to discuss *Irishes Traumbuch von Róisín O'Reilly* during which time she was exposed to the inaugural performance of Kurt Schwitters' work *Ursonate*, the influence of which can be detected in her later projects including *Os Ard*.

The practical skills gained at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (see *Every Woman's Encyclopaedia*) enabled Madigan O'Reilly to take a post in what has subsequently become the Preservation and Conservation department at Trinity Library. She worked there from 1925 up until

RÓISÍN MADIGAN
O'REILLY

1958, contributing to several major conservation projects including the re-binding of the *Book of Aicill* and the *Brehon Laws*. A recent review of the manuscripts in the archives reveal that she may have added some exquisitely forged illustrations to some of the more obscure fifteenth century manuscripts held in the archives.

In 1926, Madigan O'Reilly developed an original Irish translation of Kurt Schwitters' *Ursonate* entitled *Os Ard* and tried to persuade those in charge at 2RN to allow it to be broadcast on the airwaves. Surviving correspondence reveals that though the idea was proposed to Máiréad Ní Ghrádaa for consideration, the landmark broadcast which Madigan O'Reilly had envisaged never came to pass.

In 1928, through mutual acquaintances at 2RN, Madigan O'Reilly met Edmund Madigan, a former civil servant radicalised during the uprising and reappointed to the Department of Posts & Telegraphs. In his new role he managed interval music and devised strategies for minimising interference on the frequency over which 2RN was broadcast. The two were married in 1930 and little is known of their marriage other than that they had no children; that Róisín insisted on keeping her father's name as well as taking that of her new husband; and that Madigan died in 1950 and was buried with his treasured 3-valve radio set.

In spite of her earlier setback with 2RN and perhaps influenced by her husband's work Madigan O'Reilly became increasingly fascinated by the medium of radio and particularly with the phenomenon of static which plagued broadcasting technologies of the time. She bequeathed a large collection of editions of *Irish Radio Review* to a colleague working in the BBC, along with scientific papers relating to the discovery and physics associated with the Heaviside Layer (see Appleton, E.V.; Ratcliffe, J.A.). It is thought that all of these artefacts were destroyed in the fire at Alexandra Palace which occurred in 1980 during Capital Radio's Jazz Festival. Prior to this tragic loss notes scrawled on *Rose's* magazines prompted speculation that Madigan O'Reilly submitted complaints to 2RN radio station under the pseudonym "Antenna" as a passive-aggressive response to the station's conservative responses to her radical broadcast propositions. There was also evidence that she was a lifelong member of the Irish Radio Transmitters Society from its beginnings in 1932.

During the 1930s, Madigan O'Reilly and her husband accompanied her friend Máire Ní Chinnéide to the Blasket Islands, providing technical support to Ní Chinnéide's intention to collect and record the stories of Peig Sayers.

Following her husband's death, Madigan O'Reilly once again withdrew into her work, finally retiring to Dingle to keep sight of her beloved Blasket Islands and to complete work on *Irishes Traumbuch von Róisín*

O'Reilly. She drifted into an esoteric hermitage, dedicating the last decades of her life to developing Primaudial Language Performances and Voweling The Heaviside. These works explored relationships between the vowel sounds of the Irish language, the sounds produced by natural forces such as the wind and the sea, and the poetic and physical links between the movement of both ocean and radio waves. Primaudial Language Performances were ephemeral happenings conducted a cappella in the landscape while Voweling The Heaviside was a determined effort to get the vowel sounds of the Irish language resounding around the ionosphere perpetually by means of long-wave transmission. It is thought that successful broadcasts of Irish vowel sounds over long-wave frequencies inspired the 1955 fictional story by Lord Dunsany, *The Ghosts of the Heaviside Layer*.

Due to their ephemeral nature very few of Madigan O'Reilly's works from this time survive but several fragments still exist including:

1. sketch for writing vowel sounds onto sand and performing them into a prevailing wind
2. concept collage exploring the transmission of the sound of ocean waves via the medium of radio waves
3. a collection of stones assembled to reproduce the static effects created by the Heaviside layer (the stones are held in the private estate of Róisín Madigan O'Reilly but here are notes explaining their use)
4. a map denoting listening places around The Blasket Islands
5. two mysterious collages including illuminated lettering, Irish calligraphy, feathers from seabirds known to dwell on Great Blasket Island, and pages of scientific journals relating to radio transmissions and the Heaviside layer

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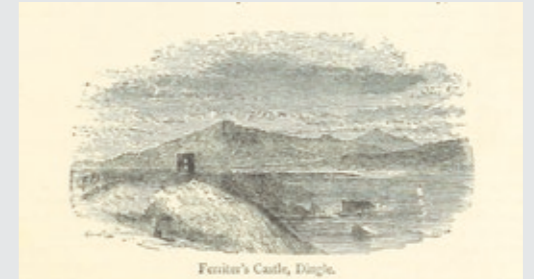
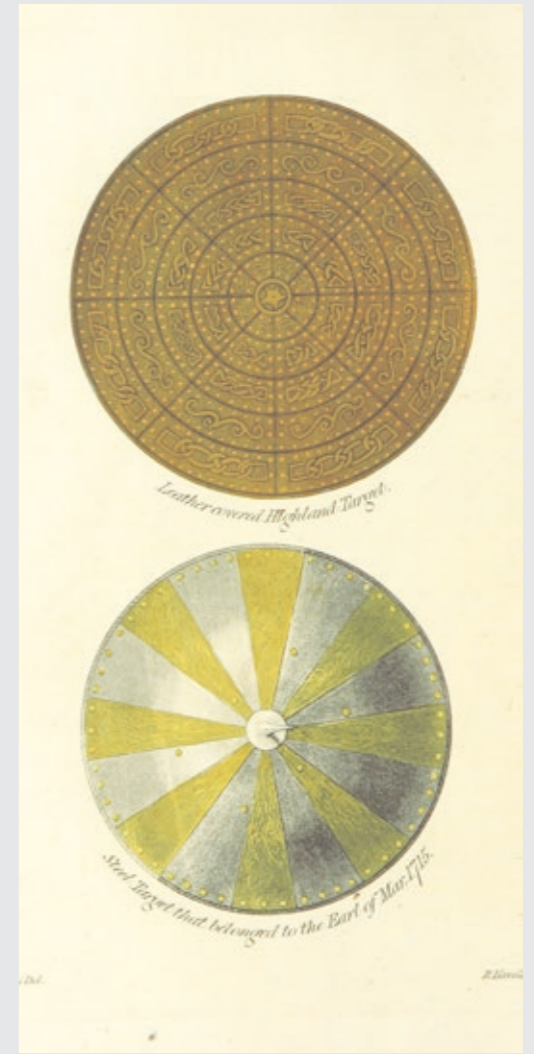
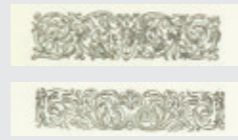
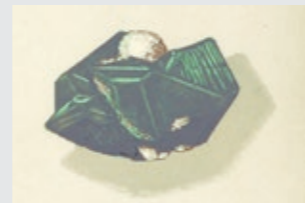
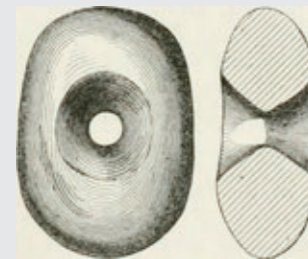
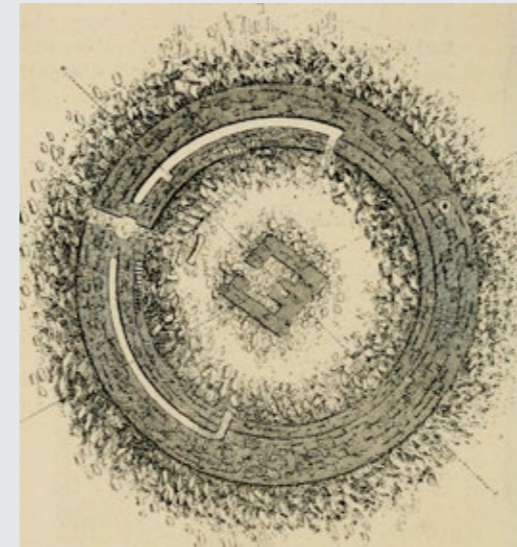
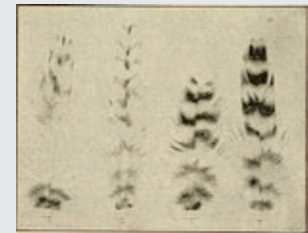
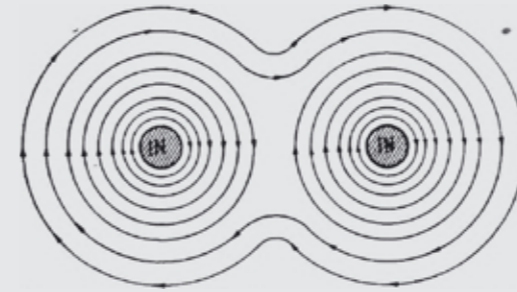
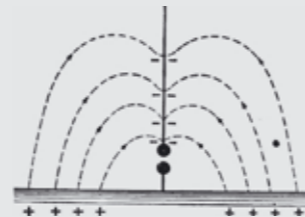
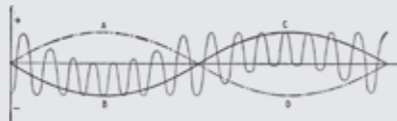
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Appendix

(from the private archive of Róisín Madigan O'Reilly)

various images in her collection



FUNDAMENTALS OF RADIO

Radio Wave.—Each transmitter sends out one radio wave. Each wave consists of electric and magnetic lines of force.

These waves are all of the same wave length. This accounts for the fact that radio waves have wave lengths nearest to those of light waves, which have wave lengths nearest to those of X rays.

At the end of a second the end of a second would fill all the space between the transmitter and the antenna. The number of waves that fill the space between the transmitter and the antenna depend on the number of waves that fill the space between the transmitter and the antenna.

If the frequency of the transmitter is 1,000 kc., the number of waves that fill the space between the transmitter and the antenna is 1,000,000. The length of each wave, therefore, is 300 meters.

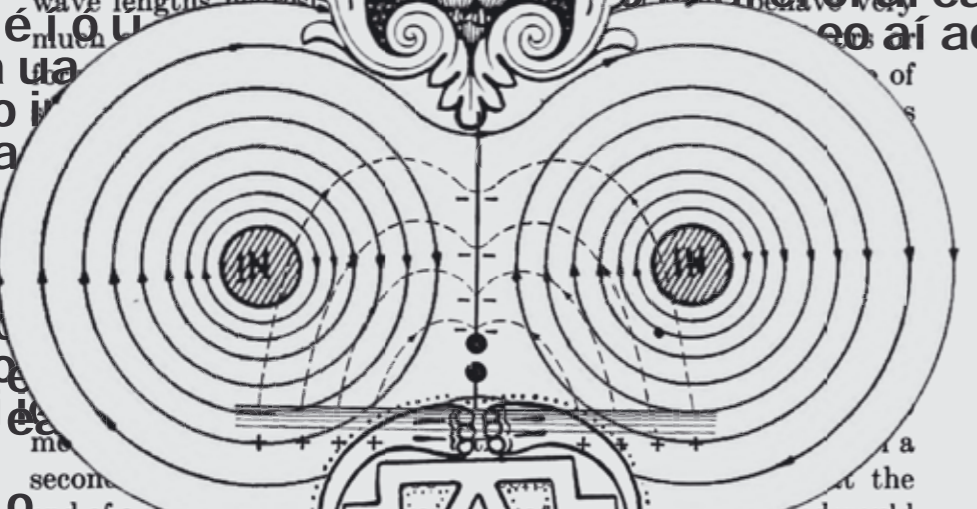
The relations between the wavelength and the velocity of light can best be expressed by the following formulas:

$$\lambda = \frac{V}{f}$$

in which λ is the wave length in meters, V is the velocity of light in meters per second, and f is the frequency in cycles per second. By simple algebra, this formula

can be rearranged to give the following formulas:

$V = \lambda f$
 $f = \frac{V}{\lambda}$

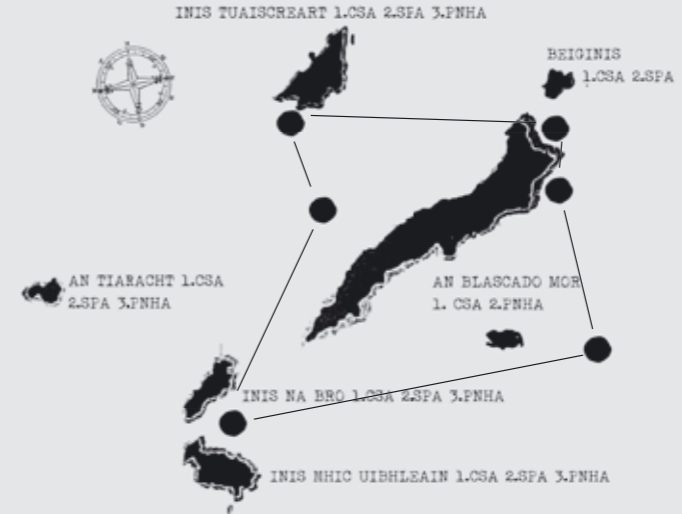


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 in which λ is the
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 frequency in cycles
 can be rearranged

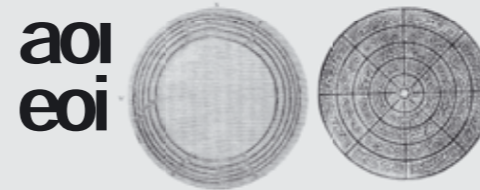
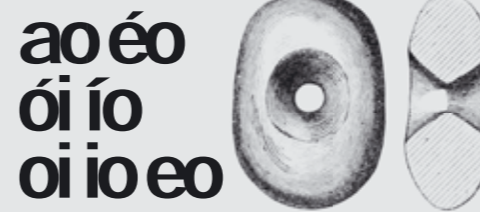
ó
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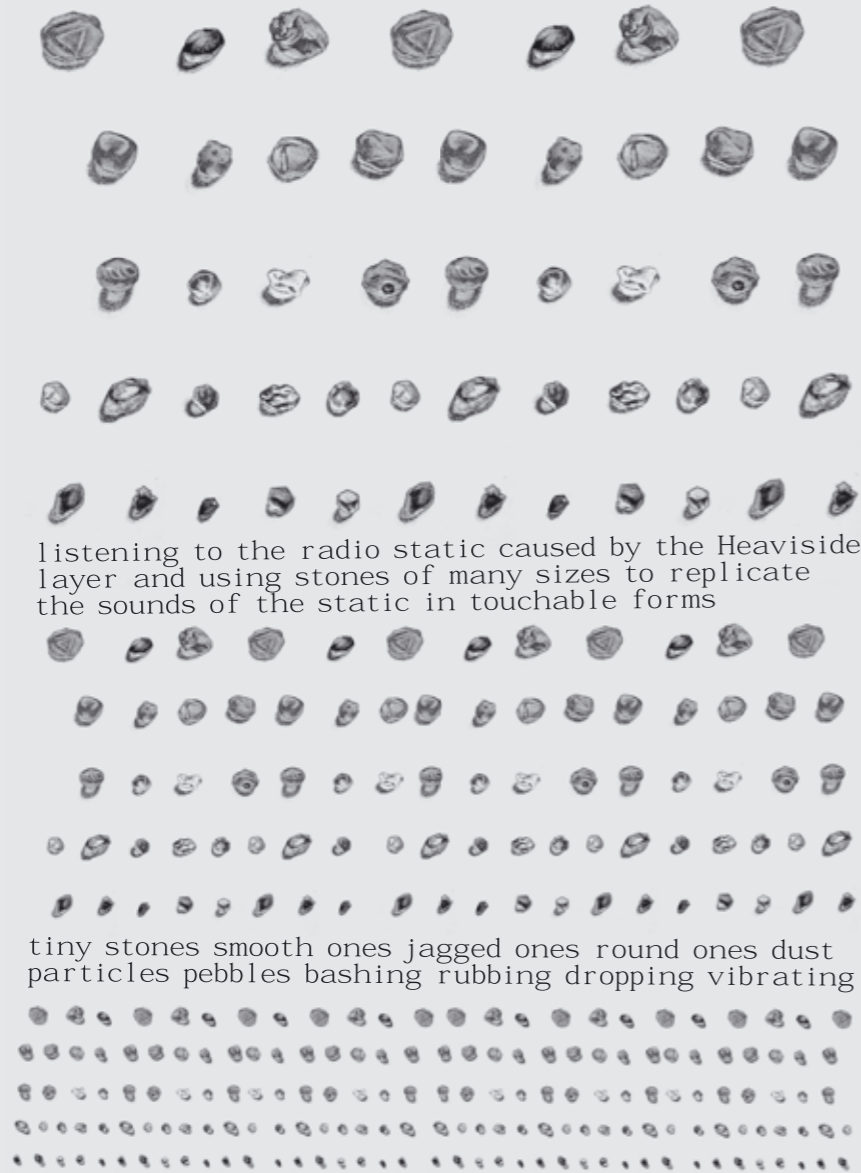
LISTENING TO WIND TRAVELLING AROUND THE BLASKET ISLANDS

● DONATES A LISTENING PLACE



a map noting listening places around The Blasket Islands



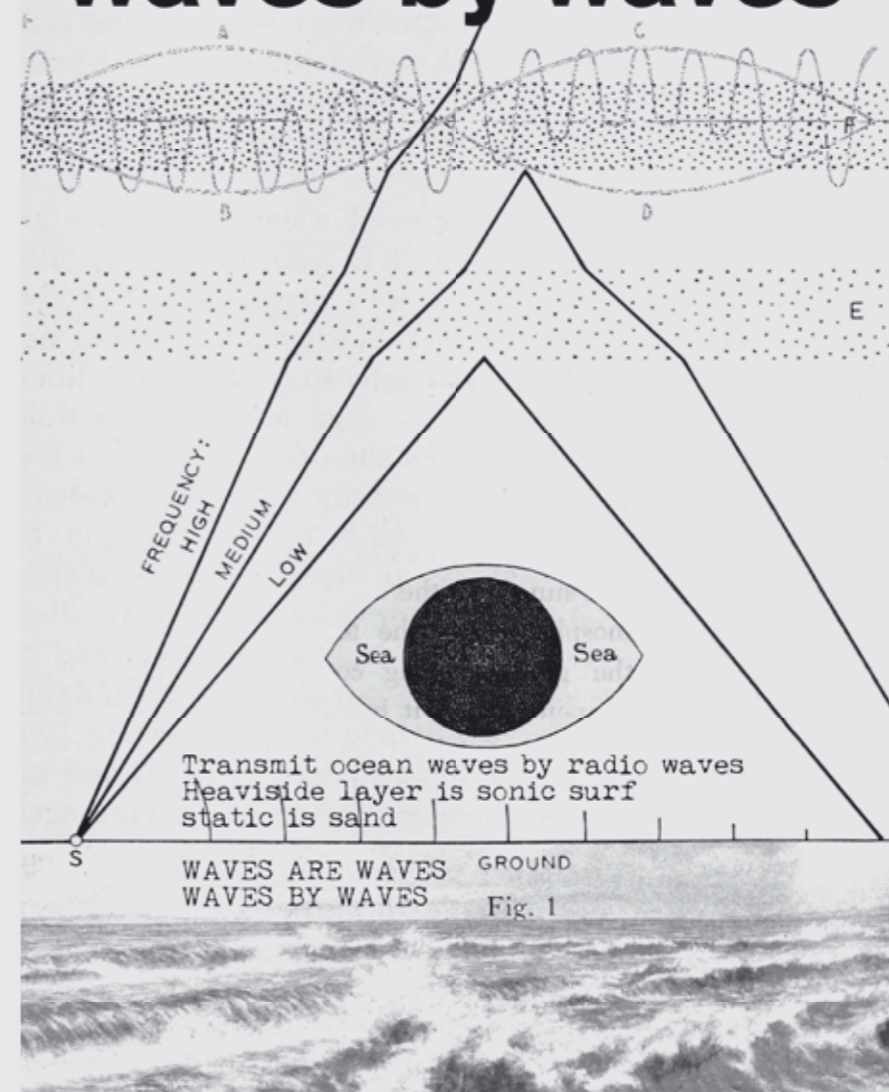


listening to the radio static caused by the Heaviside layer and using stones of many sizes to replicate the sounds of the static in touchable forms

tiny stones smooth ones jagged ones round ones dust particles pebbles bashing rubbing dropping vibrating

A collection of stones assembled to reproduce the static effects created by the Heaviside layer

waves by waves



Concept collage exploring the transmission of the sound of ocean waves via the medium of radio waves

2RN Radio Broadcasting Station

36 Little Denmark Street

Dublin

The Free Irish State

Róisín Madigan O'Reilly

2RN 4 Henry Street

Dublin

2nd February, 1926

Dear esteemed broadcast programmers at 2RN,

Firstly may I just say how enriching your radio station has been to the cultural landscape of Ireland? I thoroughly enjoyed the most timely transmission of Miss L. Doran's Irish slumber song while drifting off yesterday evening, and I am delighted to walk through the streets knowing that radio waves are travelling around me bringing important trans-MISSIONS into the atmospheres - both cultural and physical - of our Nation.

I do therefore hope that you will not interpret my perhaps unusual exposition in a critical light; I merely wish to make a creative suggestion for a future broadcast on 2RN, in relation to a new type of music which I think could assume a key position in the sonic syntax of the relatively recently Free Irish State. I was thinking in particular of producing broadcast material appropriate for future commemorations of the 1916 Easter Rising and what could be more appropriate a platform for cultural expressivity in regards this topic than RADIO on whose waves the very first declarations of Independence were proclaimed?

Now that I have set out a context, please permit me a digression;

I found myself at the home of a dear friend in Potsdam not more than a year ago, wherein an individual gave a most intriguing impromptu performance of incoherent verbalisations. The explanation underpinning his powerful oration related to some form of pre-lingual common humanity, and I confess to have been haunted by those guttural intonations since first I heard them. (You may be forgiven for wondering what this has to do with anything I've already said, but your patience will be rewarded.) You see in spite of a pretense towards dismantling language, the performer's arresting

incantations were nevertheless framed by the structures and special characters of his mother-tongue: German. Even glancing at his scrawled performance directions revealed characters of language whose very shape and structure are far different from our own Gaeilge.

THIS GOT ME TO THINKING: WHAT IF SOME NEW FORM OF PRIMORDIAL GAELIGE FORM PERFORMANCE COULD BE TRANSMITTED ON THE AIRWAVES?
I am proposing to take the very building blocks of the voice of Éireann, and set them free in rhythms as energised as those I heard in Potsdam. I envisage a cavalcade of vowels and consonants speaking richly yet primordially of the Irish character: vowels and sounds set free in the mode of the new electronic transmission apparatus attendant to the setting of radio broadcast;

I propose a an explosive, momentary dissolution of the expected broadcasting structure to bring the voice of the Irish people into league with the new forms of expression springing up on the European continent. (In case you are not aware of it, the influence of Europe can also be felt in some of the less well documented work songs written by the late James Connolly.) Imagine the atmosphere being temporarily riddled with an explosion of raw, PRIMAUDIAL Irish materials.

For your consideration, I attach a prototype score adapted from that which I encountered in Potsdam; it is called Os Ará.

Le teann measa,

Róisín Madigan O'Reilly

Róisín Madigan O'Reilly
writes to 2RN, 1926

Róisín Madigan O'Reilly

4 Henry Street

Dublin

Séamus Clandillon

First Director of Broadcasting

2RN Radio Broadcasting Station

36 Little Denmark Street

Dublin

The Free Irish State

10th February, 1926

Dear Róisín Madigan O'Reilly,

I am delighted to hear that you enjoyed our transmission of Miss L. Doran's Irish slumber song and that you feel something positive is being contributed to the Irish cultural landscape through the 2RN broadcasting schedule.

Regarding the other matter that you mentioned, though your experience in Potsdam sounds extraordinary, I am not sure precisely where to place an oration such as that outlined in your most intriguing score, Os Ará. At the moment we are running a schedule of gardening insights, classical and folk music, and it is difficult to envisage where something of this unusual nature might be best positioned.

If you will permit me, I should like very much to pass Os Ará on to my associate, Máiréad Ní Ghráda; she is a great lover of the Irish language and has recently commenced work on developing programmes for women and children. She may find some way to dramatise or otherwise make appropriate for radio your avant-garde poem, particularly in relation to celebrations of Irish Independence.

Le teann measa,

Séamus Clandillon

Seamus
Clandillon replies
to Róisín Madigan
O'Reilly

Róisín Madigan
O'Reilly responds
to Seamus
Clandillon

Séamus Clandillon

2RN Radio Broadcasting Station

36 Little Denmark Street

Dublin

The Free Irish State

Róisín Madigan O'Reilly

4 Henry Street

Dublin

13th August, 1926

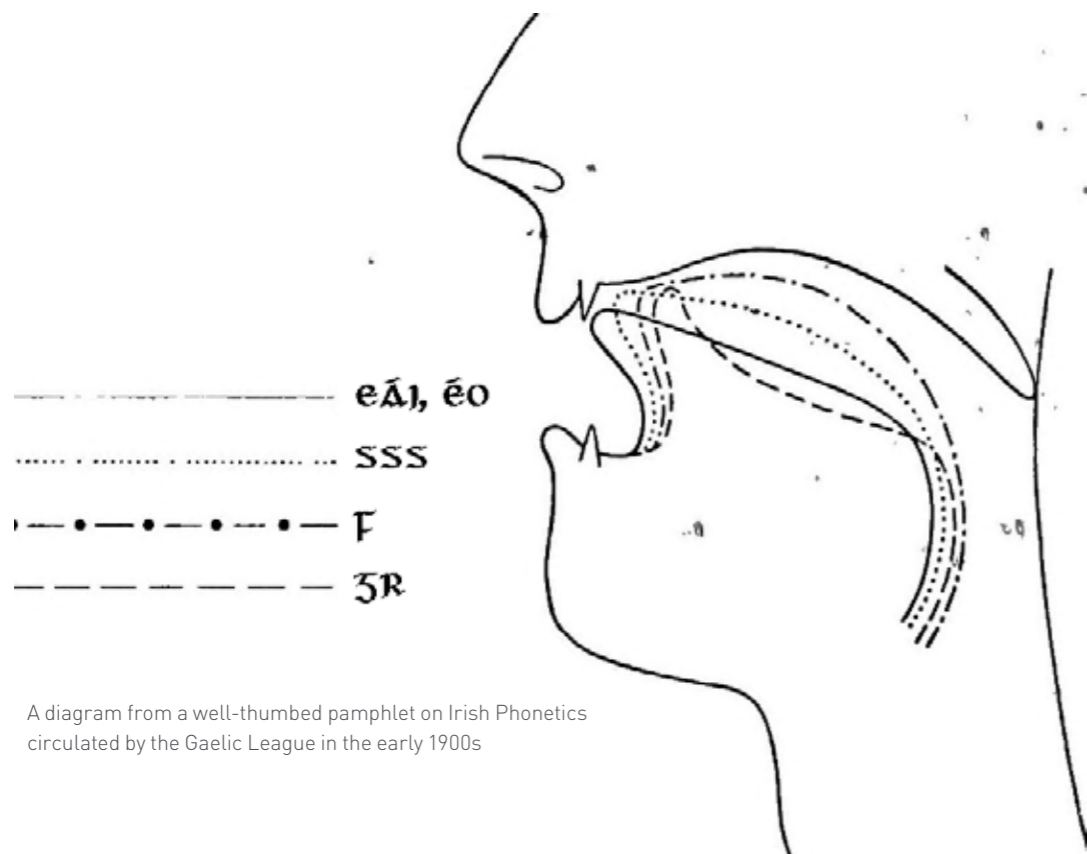
Dear Séamus,

I have heard nothing from your colleague Máiréad Ní Ghráda in relation to my proposition to broadcast Os Ará on radio 2RN. I eagerly await news of how the vowels and consonants of the Irish language might yet flood the transmission waves flowing through the air above and around our Nation!

*racete rinnsecatt
racete rinnsecatt
racete rinnsecatt
racete rinnsecatt
racete rinnsecatt
racete rinnsecatt
Bé
bó*

Le teann measa,

Róisín Madigan O'Reilly



A diagram from a well-thumbed pamphlet on Irish Phonetics circulated by the Gaelic League in the early 1900s

Irmgard-Kiepenheuer

The influential Irmgard Kiepenheuer in 1920, aged 33, five years before her momentous meeting with Róisín Madigan O'Reilly



Kurt-Schwitters Composer of "Ursonate", the "Primordial Sonata" based on the Irish language which gave Róisín Madigan O'Reilly the impetus to write "Os Ard"



Os Ard

Irish Text Score/Composition by Róisín Madigan O'Reilly, completed between 1925 - 1926.

Ford, F

FOLLOWING EXPOSURE TO KURT SCHWITTERS' experimental work *Ursonate* in 1925 during a visit to Irmgard Kiepenheuer in Potsdam, Róisín Madigan O'Reilly set about transposing Schwitters' seminal work into a specifically Irish context. Schwitters' idea of a "Primeval Sonata" spoke to Madigan O'Reilly's instincts to work with the bare bones of the Irish language and to find forms of expression which would allow her to work with its fundamental aural palette of pronunciations and characters.

To produce an Irish translation of Schwitters' score she firstly eliminated any characters in Schwitters' original not found in the Irish alphabet. She also switched many of the umlauts in the German original for combinations of vowels or vowels with an acute accent (*fada* in Irish). The titles denoting each section of the work and the descriptive Spanish terms used in Schwitters' original to denote tempo and mood etc. were also replaced with Irish equivalents in Madigan O'Reilly's transposition, and she titled her new work *Os Ard* (which means openly or publically) to differentiate it from *Ursonate* (which means primordial sonata), emphasising her political interest in making the Irish language once again the dominant sound in Irish public life.

Schwitters' original work is comprised of several key phrases which are dismantled, rebuilt and repeated to create rhythmical sections and Madigan O'Reilly's Irish version is remarkably faithful to this original structure. However hers is not an exact match-for-match translation; in aiming for a quintessential Irishness in the phrases she has replaced certain nonsense words with references to Irish mythology, and has swapped some consonants for combinations which echo spoken Irish more than those used in Schwitters' original. Compare the phrase "Dedesnn nn rrrrr" from Schwitters' *Ursonate* with Madigan O'Reilly's "Danann nn Grrr"; The replacement word for "Dedesnn" is a direct reference to The Tuath Dé Danann, a race of supernaturally-gifted people in Irish mythology thought to represent the main deities of pre-Christian Ireland. Also, in place of the hard Rrrrrrrrrs of Schwitters' original primeval sonata, Madigan O'Reilly's uses soft Grrrrrrrrs,

in reference to the Irish words for love, grain, fragments (grá grán grabhar) and other words pertaining to the fundamentals of human existence.

Though she lived in the Gaeltacht towards the end of her life and her diaries reveal that she wondered about changing more of the sounds in *Os Ard* to actual Irish words, it seems that Madigan O'Reilly decided to keep the sounds as fragments of words and to let the sounds of those fragments speak for themselves: in 1970 after much deliberation and many drafts and re-drafts, her only change to her earlier text was to painstakingly render it in calligraphic script, losing all the visual reference in her original version to the written languages of invading cultures.

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Os Ard, 1926 The version of "Os Ard" submitted to 2RN radio station in a letter addressed to Seamus Clandillon

Os Ard

Intreoir:

Phúimms bó bhó tá chá Úi,
pógíoph,
Cibhií Ée

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

dll Grrrr bé bó
dll Grrrr bé bó phúimms bó,
Grrrr bé bó phúimms bó bhó,
bé bó phúimms bó bhó teá,
bó phúimms bó bhó teá gheá,
phúimms bó bhó teá gheá Uai:

Tosach:

téama 1:

Phúimms bó bhó tá chá Úi,
pógíoph,
Cibhií Ée.

téama 2:

Danann nn Grrrr,
Iíó Eó,
mpiph tíllph tó,
tíllll,
Éo Ca?

téama 3:

Rínnsecatt bé bé ns crr mú?
ghiú éns, ghiú rínnsecrrmúúúú,
Racete bé bé

téama 4:

Grumpph tíllph tó?

Nochtadh:

Ghiú éns, ghiú rínnsecrrmúúúú,
Ghiú éns, ghiú rínnsecrrmúúúú,

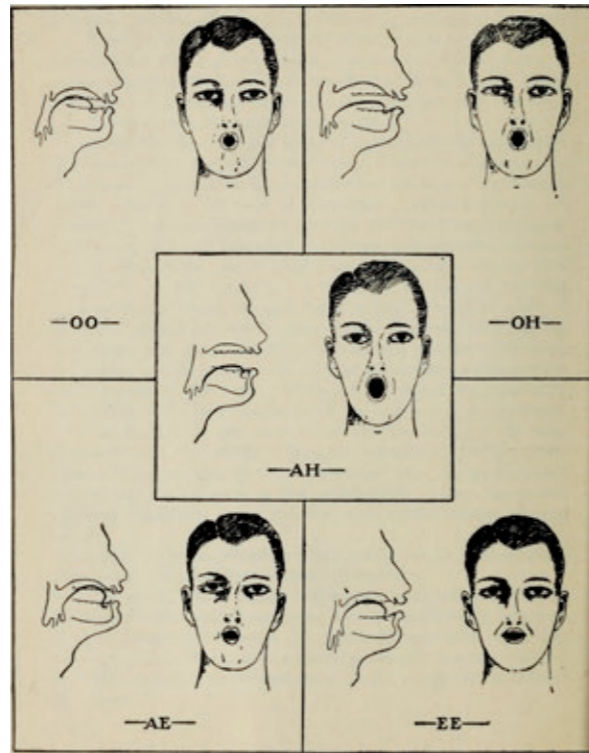
racete bé bé? racete bé mhé.

Forbairt:

Phúimms bó bhó tá chá Úi,
Úi mhé téa bhéa béa phúimms.

vowel pronunciation diagrams -

A pronunciation diagram torn from a book and used throughout various collages and diaries belonging to Róisín Madigan O'Reilly



vowel map of Blasket Island

One of many similar sketches found in Róisín Madigan O'Reilly's collection apparently documenting the vowel sounds perceived by her in the wind moving from (around?) the Blasket islands



PrimAUDial Language Performances

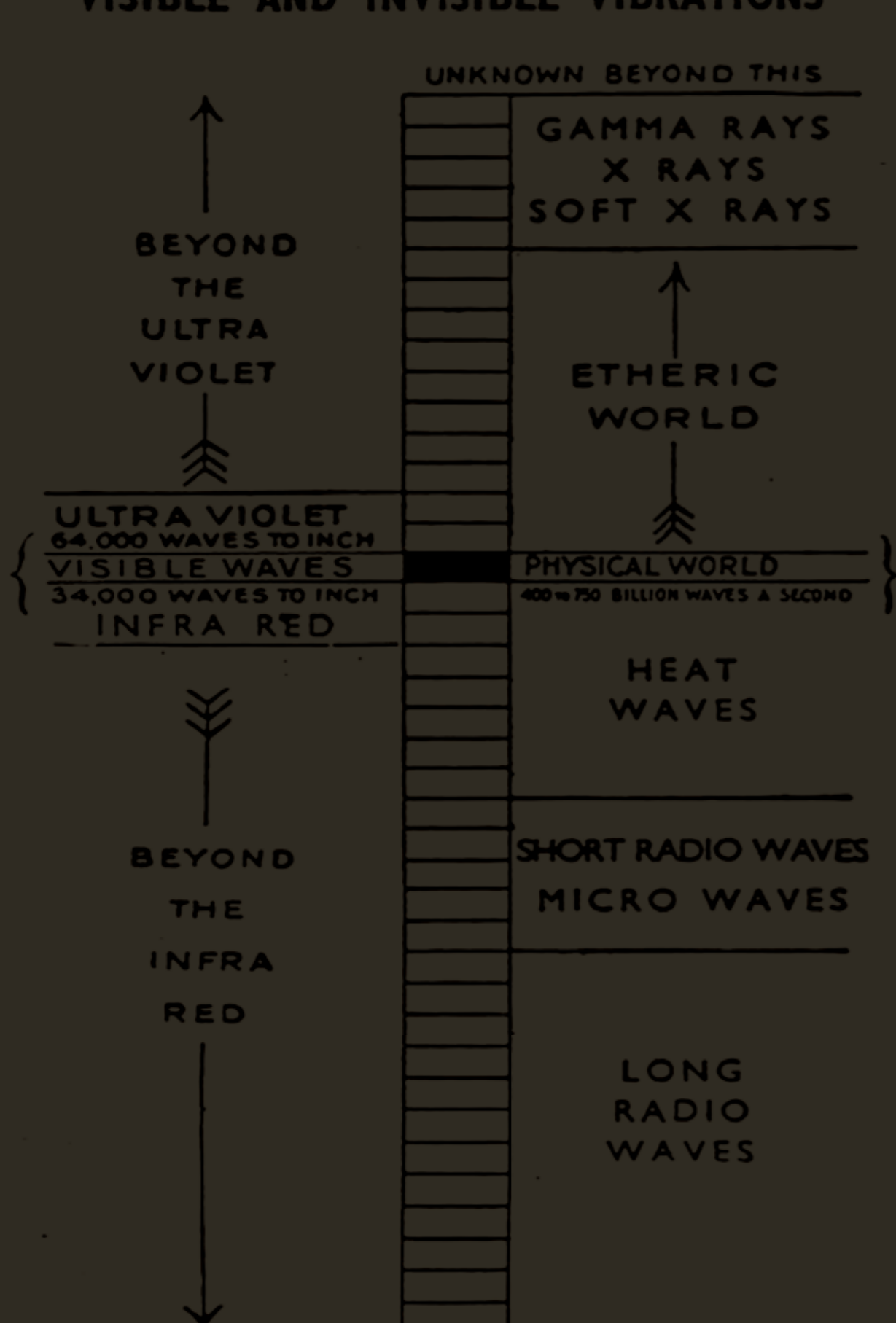
Happenings.

Ford, F.

OCCURRING BETWEEN 1950 – 1974 ON GREAT BLASKET ISLAND and then later around the Dingle Peninsula, Primaudial Language Performances were always executed solo and unaccompanied by Róisín Madigan O'Reilly who is listed as their inventor and sole practitioner. These happenings explored relationships between the vowel sounds of the Irish language and the sounds produced by natural forces in the landscape off and around the west coast of Ireland. Inherently ephemeral, very few traces remain, although several documents exist, detailing various stone/voice/sand Primaudial pieces. Works such as this are held in the private estate of Róisín Madigan O'Reilly. Deeply Nationalist in nature, Primaudial performances built on the legacy of the Guinness Dadaists and sought to “weaponise” the Irish language and imbricate the sounds of the Irish language and the Irish landscape together into a singular mode of expression, so that “one is also forced to see that the word itself creates this landscape” (Perloff, M. and Dworkin, C. 2009). A notebook belonging to Róisín Madigan O'Reilly in the 1960s and held in her private estate documents her regular search for orifices and locations through which the wind blows. Such sites were always noted in the notebook with a long series of Irish vowel combinations, and it is not clear whether these are the vowels which were performed in Primaudial Language Performances or whether they constituted a form of sketch or preparatory work.

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Voweling the Heaviside

Conceptual work and radio broadcast interventions occurring between 1920s - 1974 as part of an ongoing project by Róisín Madigan O'Reilly and her husband Edmund Madigan. Voweling the Heaviside involved transmitting Irish vowel sounds across long-range frequencies so that they would influence the shape and texture of white noise, infiltrating radio space with the sonic spectre of Éireann.

Ford. F.

THE HEAVISIDE LAYER IS COMPRISED of ionised gas occurring between approximately 90-150 km (56-93 mi) above the ground. It is one of several layers in the Earth's ionosphere and reflects medium-frequency radio waves. According to Jane Lewty "in early radio, during the 1920s and '30s, static was often its defining factor. Long-range signals would bounce off the Heaviside and swamp the short-range frequency. If two signals were jammed in close proximity, within the radio spectrum, the distance between them was known as "audial differentiation," a state of flux which resulted in a high-pitched screaming sound hovering above the continually hissing sibilance, known as "white noise"" (2007).

During the 1920s, Madigan O'Reilly and her husband Madigan embarked on a series of illegal experiments that involved misusing the equipment at the 2RN radio station to broadcast long-range transmissions of Irish vowels into radio space. One unintended and un-measurable consequence of these illicit activities was their effect on the literature being developed in Ireland at that time. Lewty has suggested that the characters of James Joyce's modernist literature were "heard," or coaxed, from his mind...from exposure to radio" (2007); T.S. Eliot referred to the Heaviside layer in an unpublished poem leading to its use as a metaphor for Heaven in the musical Cats written by the English composer Andrew Lloyd-Webber; and Lord Dunsany wrote a number of fantasy works which were not published until later in the 20th century but which echoed notions of there being "Ghosts of the Heaviside Layer" (1980).

That the Heaviside layer has come to represent a kind of spiritual geography in the popular imagination is perhaps best summarised by Bruce Kent in his introduction to the physicist who discovered

it: “at the climax of the musical *Cats*, chorus members sing about how Grizabella is about to rise “Up, up, up past the Russell Hotel/ Up, up, up, up to the Heaviside Layer,” they are alluding to Heaviside’s idea that there must be a conducting layer in the upper atmosphere”

It is difficult to prove that voices encountered by Joyce and Dunsany and transposed into writing were those transmitted by Madigan O’ Reilly and her husband – particularly as their transmissions were necessarily unplanned and undocumented: without knowing the full extent of the Voweling The Heaviside Layer radio interventions one can only guess what part they played as a subliminal influence. However that they played some role is at least hinted at in the strong aurality of Joyce’s prose and in the cultural legacies of Eliot, Lloyd-Webber and Dunsany. As Jonas writes, “Those who have heard Mr. Joyce read aloud from *Work in Progress* know the immense rhythmic beauty of his technique. It has a musical flow that flatters the ear, that has the organic structure of works of nature, that transmits painstakingly every vowel and consonant formed by his ear” (1929).

After Madigan died in 1950 Madigan O’Reilly continued to develop their jointly conceived venture of illicit Voweling The Heaviside broadcasts, relocating from the Athlone and Dublin studios that were formerly the place of employ of her husband and slowly commandeering the abandoned radio technology left on Great Blasket Island after its voluntary evacuation in 1954.

Some of the same circuitry found in William O’Neill’s 1980s invention “The Spiricom” bears remarkable similarity to the technology appropriated from Great Blasket Island and related device diagrams found in Madigan O’Reilly’s personal estate: this has led some historians to believe that Voweling The Heaviside created some of the legacy on which EVP (Electronic Voice Phenomenon) enthusiasts later built their work. The radio buildings and some of the equipment on the Blasket Islands can be seen in a film shot by Maurice Lyons who accompanied the Irish Radio Amateurs on a field trip there in 1958.

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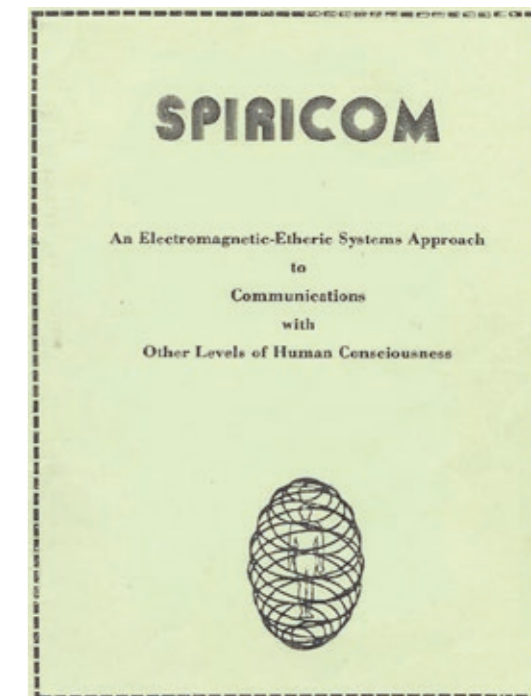
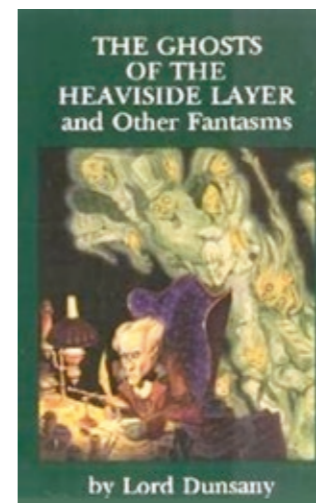
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PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL FROM THE
ATHLONE RADIO STUDIOS

THE GUINNESS BOOK OF IRISH BALLADS



The Aleatoric Revisionist Balladeers

Collective.

Ford, F

LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT THIS GROUP other than that they numbered six and met several times over the summer of 1959 with intentions to dismantle and reimagine popular Irish Ballads using chance procedures. The only surviving artefacts from these meetings are a collection of postcards apparently sent between members of the collective to a P.O. Box as part of an obscure game and several pages detailing dice procedures designed to rearrange popular Irish Ballads. It is not clear whether any of the revised ballads were ever performed, though a list of instruments and sound sources was discovered in a box with an unusual selection of bespoke wooden dice believed to have been produced by the collective. The quantity of non-cubic dice named within the procedures of the Aleatoric Revisionist Balladeers is notable and indicates the presence of carpentry skills and a solid knowledge of polyhedrons amongst the members.

It is difficult to accurately pinpoint the true identities of the balladeers as they operated under non-gender-specific pseudonyms thought to be anagrams of Nationalist Irish ballads including: *Oró Sé do Bheatha 'Bhaile* (a rebel song popularised by nationalist poet Padraic Pearse) and *Amhrán na bhFiann* (*The Soldier's Song*; an Irish Volunteers anthem). The scant documentation that does exist can be traced back to this collective through these pseudonyms as they appear nowhere else in Irish history: *'Bhaileé Soró Bodheatha, Bráf Hinnan Hamna, Firnahm Báhnán, Háinnan Brafhamn, Hésordh Thaealó 'Baiebo, Séatha Boródhaile 'Bohe*.

Several photos from the American composer JOHN CAGE'S 1979 trip to Ireland have these pseudonyms scrawled on the back in faint pencil, suggesting that the collective had some link with Cage at this time. The surviving notes from the summer of 1959 indicate a strong interest in chance procedures and we can safely assume that in this regard Cage was a key point of reference: The P.O. Box address



JOHN CAGE IN IRELAND, 1979

chosen by the collective (433) for their correspondence is thought to be a reference to Cage's influential work of the same title.

The source text which appears to have been most commonly used by the Aleatoric Revisionist Balladeers is an early draft of the *The Guinness Book of Irish Ballads* as many of the outcomes feature phrases and references contingent with the material provided in that collection. The decision to work from this text, with traditionally Irish instruments and with picture postcard imagery suggests that the work of the Aleatoric Revisionist Balladeers was in part an interrogation and reconstruction of constructed Irish identity.

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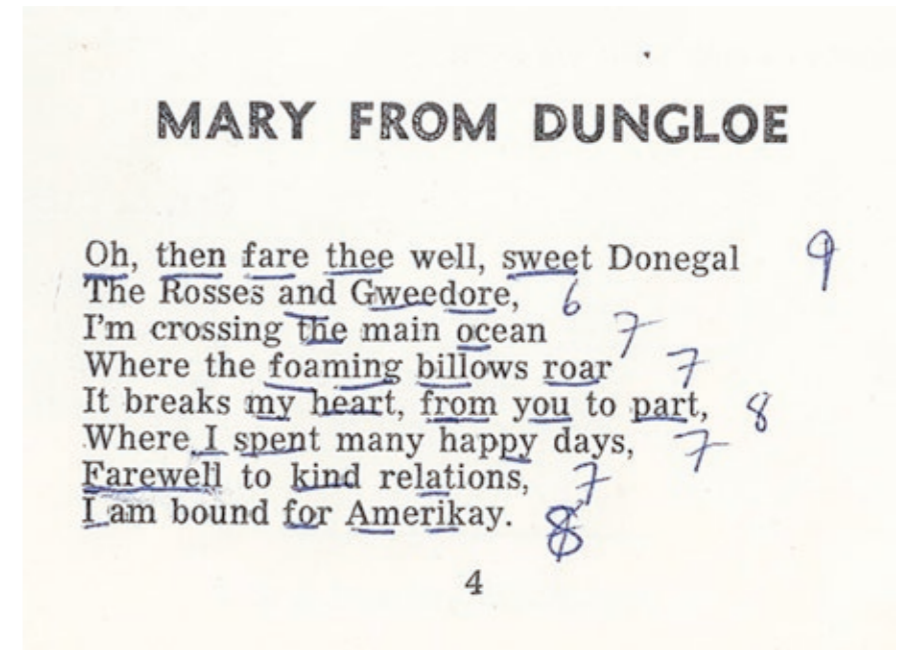
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BALLAD SHEET CONTAINING CRYPTIC DICE ROLLS



TRADITIONAL POSTCARDS USED BY THE ALEATORIC REVISIONIST BALLADEERS

THE
IRISH BEE JOURNAL

(Organ of the Irish Bee-Keepers' Association).

A Monthly Journal devoted to the interests of Bee-Keepers
in Ireland.

EDITED BY REV. J. G. DIGGES, M.A.

VOL. I.

MAY, 1901—APRIL, 1902.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY
100 St. George Street
Toronto, Ontario

The Reverend Joseph Garvan Digges, M.A.

(b 1858 d 1933). Ecclesiastic, Beekeeper, Organist and Composer.

Broadly considered the Father of Irish beekeeping and famously celebrated for his contribution to that subject, the experimental organ works of the late Reverend Joseph Garvan Digges have only recently come to light.

Ford, F

BORN IN DUBLIN, GARVAN DIGGES spent much of his life in Mohill, Co. Leitrim. He was the deacon in Kilmore, Co. Cavan, and then curate in Mohill until 1884. In 1885, he became the private chaplain to the Earls of Leitrim at their Lough Rynn estate at Mohill, serving Farnaght and Mohill churches and - from 1933 - the parish of Cloone. A grand organ in the church of St. Patrick in Mohill is recalled in *Maothail Manacháin: Mohill re-membered*, and though it was removed in the 1960s it is thought that its existence provided the necessary context for Digges to begin composing in his signature style.

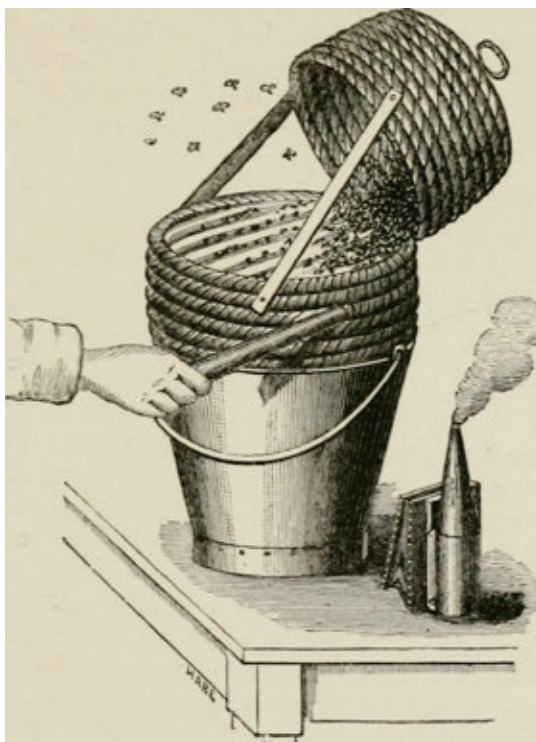
Garvan Digges attended his first bee-keeping lesson in 1885 at Clooncahir and was chairman of the Irish Beekeepers Association from 1910 to 1921. He edited the Irish Bee Journal (from 1912 called *The Beekeeper's Gazette*) published from May 1901 to October 1933. According to Christopher Winn, he was a conscientious editor and in 33 years of publication missed only 4 issues: the May 1916 issue was blown up on its way to the printers during the Easter Rising. Garvan Digges also published a book: *The Irish Bee Guide*, later renamed *The Practical Bee Guide. A Manual of Modern Beekeeping*, which came to be the standard text on the subject.

In terms of his compositional work, fellow Beekeeping associates have testified in letters to each other and elsewhere that Garvan Digges was haunted by the question of whether or not bees could hear. Submitted as a note to Vol. 1 of *The Irish Bee Journal*, the following note seems to have provided one of the motifs that came to define the lugubrious and lengthy style of his signature improvisational style; a sense in his melodies (described by those who heard them) of a voice talking calmly and continuously, as if to reassure and pacify a restless hive:

“Can Bees Hear? — A friend who “kno’ what’s what” says that his bees can, that if you talk over them always they soon learn to recog-



REVEREND J.G. DIGGES, M.A



NOW DEMOLISHED ORGAN AT ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, MOHIL

FROM THE PERSONAL IMAGE ARCHIVE OF J.G. DIGGES

nise your voice, and there be no more stings, unless you crush them.”

In other areas of his improvisational organ work, it seems Garvan Digges was pursuing a kind of exultant menace, in homage to the sonic effects of bees for which the writing in his book shows a complex mix of terror and reverence:

“to the uninitiated there is something terrifying in the vicious buzzing of bees when they have their abdomens curved for the thrust, and the very air around them seems charged with venom. You cannot oppose your courage to theirs, for they are not amenable to the laws of civilized warfare, and they will fight with irresistible bravery, and will die a thousand deaths, if need be, in defence of their homes.”

Finally in looking to the bee-keeping texts of Garvan Digges for keys to his music, it is important to consider his insistence on “A Firm and Gentle Hand”.

There is a rumour that Garvan Digges did attempt to create recordable beeswax cylinders using beeswax gathered from his hives in hopes of playing his organ music back to them. It has been impossible to substantiate this since any cylinders which were produced have almost certainly been lost or melted. There is an old celluloid recording of an extremely time-stretched version of *The Honeysuckle & The Bee* which appeared in the inaugural edition of *The Irish Bee Journal*. In Garvan Digges’ realisation every cluster of notes is held down and repeated for an extended quantity of time with the adjacent sung portion of the song being nasally intoned. The effect is hypnotic and drone-like and bears some similarities to the much later works of Sr Anselme O’Ceallaigh. *The Irish Bee Journal* which contains *The Honeysuckle & The Bee* also describes how beekeepers might “sing into their hives while the hum of the workers gives promise of the harvest, and while still the war-like guards of the colony have to learn that music hath charms to soothe the savage breast!”

It is in such texts that Garvan Digges reveals the sensibilities that defined his music; it seems that he took solace in long, uninterrupted sessions of improvisation on the organ which enabled him to practice the special state of mind required to reign master over his bees and to process the complex and sometimes violent sounds which they produced.

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“Humble Beginnings”

Sloan Ravenscroft, from WFMU's *Beware of the Bog* 13.11.2012



Máirtín O'Heaney, far left

THE SIXTIES IN IRELAND ARE AN OBSCURE TIME for avant-garde activity. Take the case of Máirtín O'Heaney, who is oft credited with bringing Fluxus and Situationism to Ireland but may have done nothing of the sort. It is a strange story and one that gets even more obscure in the retelling.

In retrospect, it is not clear at all if O'Heaney was actually ever a artist at all, though he may have some involvement with political housing agitation in his youth—as he briefly lived next door to Michael O'Riordan in his youth, and attended a few rallies. Born in Dublin in 1946, not much is known about his early existence. After stints cutting carpet and doing roofing for a living in his twenties, O'Heaney seems to have been largely unemployed for most of his adult years.

Apart from a brief period where he appeared on a Dublin radio game show playing the part of a country bumpkin, O'Heaney's public or historic visibility is about nil until 1967. Although the newspaper coverage of his activities during the late 1960s is hyperbolic, fragmentary and inconsistent, it is possible to reconstruct that *something* happened—and whatever it was, it occasionally made for good copy.

Records from this period detail O'Heaney doing performances that were, as far as we could tell in retrospect, not intended for a public audience, though they certainly drew one. For a number of summers—long enough to provide fodder for the art history books—O'Heaney made a strange spectacle of himself, and in some vague sense, the history of the Irish avant-garde received its most cryptic passenger.

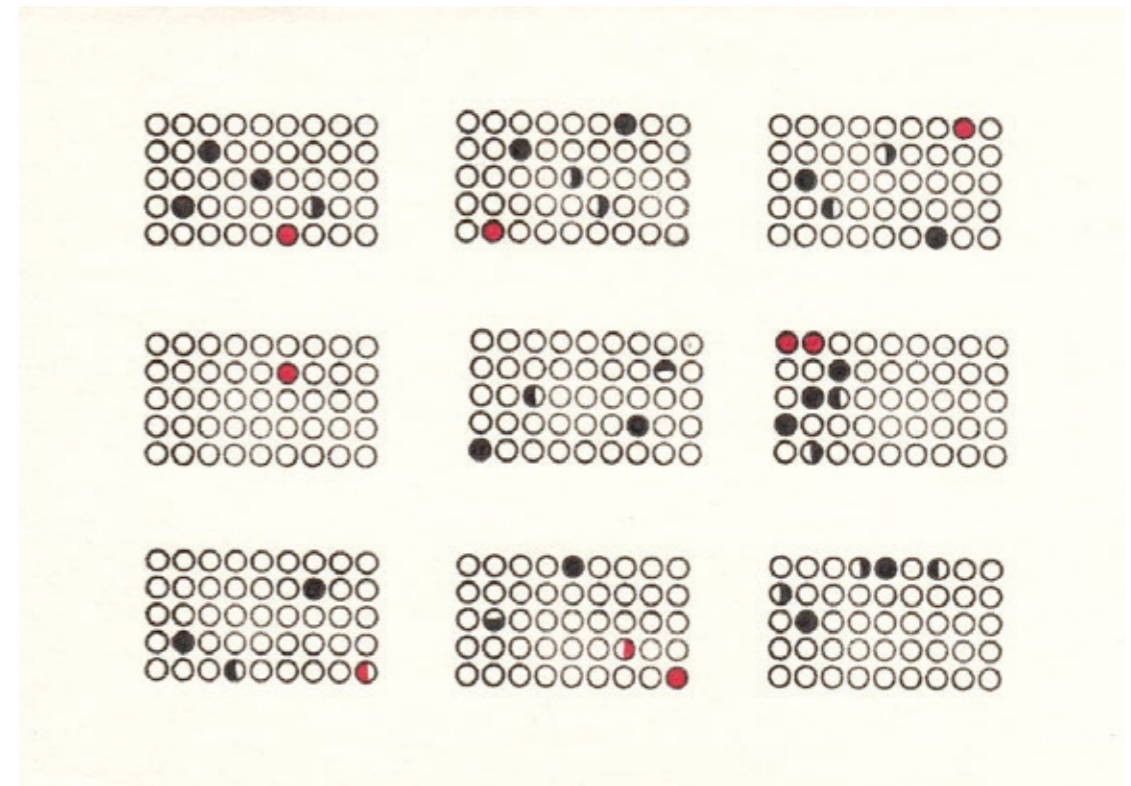
Starting in 1967 at least, each morning at dawn O'Heaney could be seen ritualistically laying 9”x 6” roofing tiles on the ground in the central open courtyard of his housing estate. His focus was on the creation of arbitrary-seeming wide gridded patterns. O'Heaney usually began about 6AM, completing the work by 7AM. By 9AM he would have disassembled the work and put the tiles back into the duffle bag that he used to store them. Tuesdays and Wednesday of each week for some reason he would take a holiday, but notably his practice extended to Sunday morning, a subject which later became cause to comment.

Apparently O’Heaney had been doing this for some time before it was noticed within the housing estate—as was later said, his neighbors merely thought he was getting ready for some kind of job.* Though he was affable and a polite man at all times, the neighbors who spoke to him were entirely puzzled by his replies. He spoke about unknowables like “convex thinking” and “the Hemiola” and “the Black Stripe Changer” and “psychogeography” and “jynx-backs”—all in long, contorted and sometimes agrammatical sentences. When assembled questioners couldn’t understand, O’Heaney was apologetic but couldn’t provide any explanations that didn’t amount to more of the same. Outside of these actions in the courtyard, he went about his daily life much as he had before, interacting as an unremarkable and mild-mannered young man, apparently unable or unwilling to discuss the roofing tile business when outside the courtyard. (Though twice medical examiners were summoned, they met O’Heaney outside the estate, and found him to be perfectly normal).

After a few weeks of these regular performances by O’Heaney word eventually reached the press, who then did its best to keep the story alive in fits and starts over next two years, with only limited development. Headlines rang out in the local, county and national press of an evocative brief: “Roofing Is My Art”; “Here is The Roofer”; “I Make No Sense, Says Man”; “This Is What Modernity Gets You!” (Catholic Quarterly); “Our “Artist” Refuses to Comment!”; “Residents Suffer Over “Abstract” Carpenter”; ““Tiles’ is On About Something... or Perhaps Not!”; “Is this a protest?”; “Franz Kafka’s Grandson” (Literary Review); “O’Heaney The Obscure”; and “Only in Ireland” to name a few.

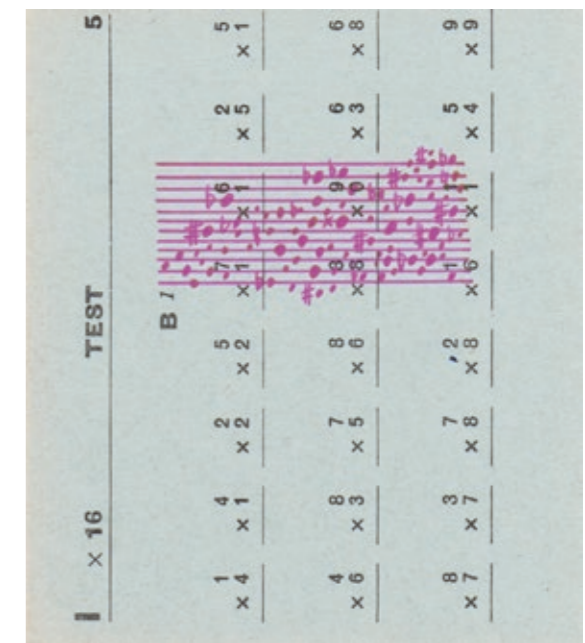
Frequently the articles were near repeats or plagiarisms from one paper to the other and included much reshuffling of information, with a comment (real or invented) inserted here and there to add flavor, though even for casual readers the incessant, incomprehensible sameness of it was a problem. O’Heaney’s neighbors generally liked him, and the police were only called in a few times during his tenure, and did nothing, a fact owing most likely to his extremely likeable disposition. The papers strung it on as much as they could for two years without any real resolution, and eventually it petered out. Two years after the last article Heaney stopped—also without explanation.

Perhaps little would have come of O’Heaney’s behavior if he had not been “discovered” for art criticism in 1989 by Genevieve Libieron, a minor Parisian arts journalist with French father and British mother—who wrote a narrowly published book that leaned heavily on O’Heaney’s legend titled “Origins of Irish Post-Lettrisme.” This seems to have been the first book to situate O’Heaney in the post-war



VARIOUS SCORES GIVEN BY O’HEANEY TO GENEVIEVE LIBIERON

RECORDING:
 1 ANGELUS
 2 ANGELUS
 3 ANGELUS
 4 ANGELUS
 5 ANGELUS
 6 ANGELUS
 7 ANGELUS



avant-garde continuum and it got little notice at the time of its publication, though subsequently it has been the subject of increasing debate within the sort of the culture which has led, ultimately to this web site. Libieron's "*Origins*" was highly ungrounded and speculative in its outlook, and to the extent it has received attention, it has created a very confusing set of complications to understanding Heaney.

How Libieron discovered Heaney is puzzling, though from her other writings, she seems to have visited Ireland a number of times, most productively to attend the post-situationist "Ruins of Glamour" show in 1986. Perhaps at this show she may have made contacts that put her in contact with interview subjects, though attempts to confirm any of her interview contacts mentioned in the book have resolutely failed. Complicating things, Libieron left art criticism definitively in 2008, just as her book was beginning to have an impact on continental art criticism, by virtue of marrying Qatari billionaire Abdel Wassim El Whani, after which time she has been entirely unreachable and absent from public life. In the absence of the author to debate, skepticism and speculation about her work has spun out of control.

To give the flavor of a representative passage from "origins," consider the following:

L' exagération de certains Heaney forme géométrique de base par son complice "insistance" sur regurgitation de quelques formes simples représente simultanément la forme objectivée d'une langue et aussi les exceptions intérieurs à un mode de vie ; celui qui ne peut être simultanément collective et produit par un certain manque dans le totalement des signes.

Déplacer clairement de ses tendances marxistes début, dans ces actions basées sur le temps, Heaney, comme Hegel l' a dit, "déplacé dans deux directions à la fois," mais pas uniquement pour des fins dialectiques plutôt d'une façon typiquement Irlandaise, il a été réinvestit dans idiome tout en déplaçant simultanément l'usage conventionnel. Il ne savait pas, il a été initiant une révolution une esthétique post-dadaïste Irlandais."

The book goes on to suggest vague connections between Heaney a variety of mid-brow artists in Ireland who had their experimental moments, as well as even less substantiated connections to obscure wings of the European S.I. and ties to NYC Fluxus,** making him into a rather cosmopolitan character and a sort of "Dublin Connection" for the post-war avant-garde. As many subsequent commentators

have pointed out, one of the strange things about the book is that each connection between O'Heaney and other culture figures is a very vague one involving multiple degrees of separation, and somehow seems out of phase with the narrative of his story, which in any case is rather garbled by Libieron. Somehow, none of this seems to really have registered among the current booming Irish Fluxus revival, whose curators, critics and promoters are more than happy to have Heaney as a seminal figure, loveable grin and roof tile in hand, inscrutable as ever.

Two further facts may complicate the final analysis forever. First, the present author, on a very outside hunch, made an extensive medical records search in Dublin and was able to find three records of a man named O'Heaney, fitting the description but using incorrect identification numbers, seeking what would be understood today as neurological consultation at St. Mary's Hospital. No notes on the consultations were retained—but the reported symptoms seem to suggest either stroke or severe migraine.

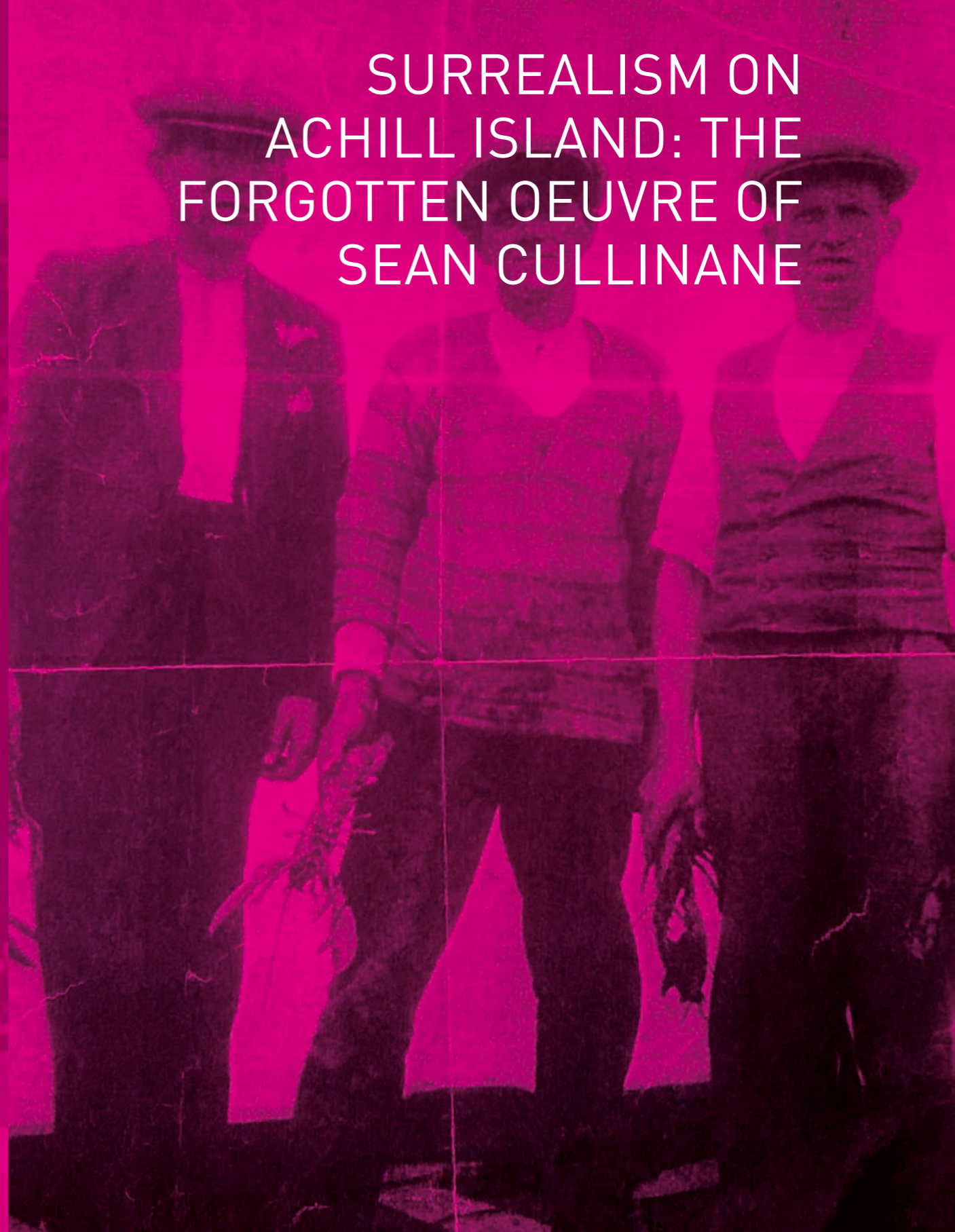
The paranoid winds blowing in the opposite direction, another fact sticks like sand blown right into the eye. 2014 saw the unofficial French publication of the complete letters of Michele Bernstein, the actual brains of the Situationist International, by Stropos Press. In a letter to her homosexual friend Pierre Mongu, Bernstein complains of an Irish couch-surfing houseguest who is lionized by both Debord and Henri Lefebvre as being the embodiment of "the politics of the ineffable." A charming man she refers to only as "M. O. H." that demands nothing of her, she nonetheless can't wait for him to leave the apartment after a long (two week) visit, and makes reference twice in the letter to his carrying a large suitcase containing "some kind of slate rectangles which were to do with his art" about which he was decidedly evasive. Bernstein seemed to have disliked him on purely xenophobic grounds.

Perhaps this last bit is entirely unrelated, to be sure, but it is enough to give a scholar of the O'Heaney affair a graveyard shiver, given the absolute lack of other documentation or available reference to place the tidbit in context.

* perhaps as good a definition of art as any.

** Libieron describes O'Heaney showing her a collection of "sound schemas" by himself and other Irish artists and how he gave her some of these scores as a gift on one of her trips to Dublin; she notes that O'Heaney was corresponding with George Brecht in New York about these works, and had plans to publish an anthology of the schemas. Examples are shown here – these are interesting in that they suggest a burgeoning Fluxus-influenced experimental composition scene in Ireland. The focus on the Angelus bells in one of the scores suggests it might be connected to conceptual artist Donal Heraghty; the composers of the others are completely unknown.

SURREALISM ON
ACHILL ISLAND: THE
FORGOTTEN OEUVRE OF
SEAN CULLINANE



ACHILL ISLAND



SEAN CULLINANE
(CENTER) ON ACHILL
IN 1943

Surrealism on Achill Island: the forgotten oeuvre of Sean Cullinane

Dr M. Munro

THE OEUVRE OF SEAN CULLINANE (1915-70), an Achill-based musician and dramaturgist, represents a rare example of an Irish Surrealist practice that was committed to the radicalism, both formal and political, of its French counterpart. Cullinane first came into contact with Surrealism through an encounter with Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) during the latter's 1937 visit to the Aran Islands. A former seminarist, Cullinane abandoned this vocation after meeting Artaud, and under his influence pursued increasingly unconventional dramatic forms combining narrative and musical contents. As the son of a postmaster, Cullinane had facility in languages and opportunity to correspond with Surrealists internationally. In 1939 he compiled and illustrated a compendium of psychoanalytic renderings of and poetry based on local folklore, which he delivered to French poet and theorist André Breton (1896-1966), the de facto leader of the Surrealist group, in a failed attempt to gain recognition for an Irish contribution to the international Surrealist movement. This manuscript was unknown until Breton's estate came to auction in 2003. The primary sources of information concerning Cullinane's initial turn to Surrealism come from family records and a diary Artaud wrote retrospectively in 1944, which has recently been disembargoed by his estate. Little of Cullinane's work survives: following Artaud's advice to eschew the use of written texts in the theatre, the majority of his performances and pieces were executed without scores or textual support. His notorious productions were, however, well remembered by local people, and the recent discovery of extracts from a radio play produced by Cullinane makes it timely to consider what

can be reconstructed of his oeuvre. Cullinane's radical Surrealism has resisted both contemporary and historical institutionalisation, existing instead in close relation to the land, people and traditions of the rural island, and offering an anarchic contrast to the more staid responses to Surrealism current in 1930s Dublin which have since dominated discussions of Irish Surrealism.

EARLY LIFE

Cullinane's life and practice have been difficult to reconstruct, given the almost total lack of textual material that he left behind. Cullinane was born in the spring of 1915 to Edward Cullinane, a postmaster on the Currane peninsula, and his wife Margaret. He was the second of four children and their second son. The family had benefited from the activities of the Congested District Boards, and their relatively comfortable position was consolidated by Cullinane senior's position as a postmaster: he had a degree of literacy in multiple languages, and the post office's integral role in connecting Currane to the mainland proper ensured steady income for the family. Perhaps as a consequence of this stability Edward Cullinane seems to have had limited and conservative political interests. Cullinane's family could, therefore, be described as belonging to an indigenous petit-bourgeois that was emergent in early twentieth-century Ireland.

Accordingly, Cullinane was well educated, being schooled at the Franciscan monastery in Bunacurry (during which time he boarded with the family of his father's cousin on Achill), and later at Rice College, a Christian Brothers' institution in Westport. At school he excelled in languages and religious studies, serving diligently at mass first as a chorister and later as a sacristan. He had, however, no aptitude for mathematics, which would preclude him from succeeding in civil service entry examinations as his father had intended. Cullinane was instead sent to a formation house in Dublin, where he hoped to pursue a degree in philosophy alongside his seminarian studies.¹ Information concerning Cullinane's life in Dublin is scant. He is recorded as participating in the 31st International Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin in 1932. He sent a postcard to his sister Nora from New Grange in 1935, after having been invited to observe an archaeological expedition by a Trinity student named Brian Carroll. Cullinane described the "strange and startling" impact that his visit to the site had on him.² He wrote of

1 There are no matriculation records for Cullinane at University College Dublin, the institution at which he is most likely to have pursued such a course of study, and therefore assume that he did not obtain or register for a degree.

2 This card, postmarked September 2th 1935, is in the private collection of the Cullinane family.



PHOTOGRAPHY Sean Cullinane on the occasion of his first holy communion c1922. Reproduced courtesy Nora Cullinane.

MANUSCRIPT Sean Cullinane, manuscript prepared for delivery to André Breton, c1937-40, unpag. Reproduced courtesy of Nora Cullinane.



the “unsettling low mound, at the one time both repelling the outsider from penetrating the mysteries within, and inviting us into the passage by lure. I hear the sight of the sun in the hall at the death of the year is nothing short of the splendour of a resurrection.”³

This card seems to be the final record of Cullinane’s life in Dublin. By 1936, he was still not ordained and was now living on Achill Island. It is unclear what affected this change of circumstance: Cullinane’s sister recalls that he originally went to Achill with the intention of making a short religious retreat, but in retrospect it seems that this retreat was motivated by vocational doubts that Cullinane was already, by this date, experiencing. He requisitioned a cottage in Slievemore on the north of the island, adding to the existing “four mostly sound walls” a roof of sheet tin.⁴ Slievemore had been the main site of a Church of Ireland mission to ‘civilize’ the population of Achill, led by the Reverend Edward Nangle (1800–83) between 1834 and the 1880s. Nangle’s practice of distributing food aid to families willing to convert to Protestantism at the start of the Great Famine in 1831, and his success in becoming landlord of much of the island, has ensured that he remains a controversial figure in the history of Achill.⁵

Nangle’s activities, his perceptions of Achill and his descriptions of what he felt to be persecution by Catholic resistance on the island were well documented by the publishing and distribution activities of his own corporation, the Achill Press. Cullinane read as many outputs from the press as he could obtain, including issues of the Achill Missionary Herald and Western Witness. These texts, though authored from a position of clear religious bias and with the intent of raising subscriptions for Nangle’s colonies, nonetheless contain some potentially enlightening information concerning the lifestyles and religious practices of the population of the island in the later nineteenth century. The populace Nangle found was deeply superstitious, and able reconcile faithful adherence to the tenets of Catholicism with strongly-held supernatural beliefs without any apparent difficulty.⁶ Of course, for Nangle, a belief in the supernatural was no less superstitious than a belief in what he termed the ‘Popish idolatry’ of the Catholic church. His initial lack of knowledge of Irish led him to underestimate educational levels on the island, while his ambitions for the growth of his mission allegedly encouraged some disingenuity in his understatement of the depth of commitment to Christianity. He described Achill as both “temporally

and spiritually” destitute, and in urgent need of the intervention of formal religion.⁷ Rumours circulated that he had deliberately overestimated the population of the island, and had fabricated claims that the residents had never heard of Christ and instead worshipped a large glassy stone embedded into the side of Slievemore mountain. Though Nangle disputed that he had made such false claims, he was nonetheless derided for his “calumniation” of Achill.⁸ His own writings made ad hominem attacks on his detractors, “gentlemen [who] do not enjoy the luxury of shoes and stockings, except on Sundays and holydays; few of them know how to read, fewer still can write their names.”⁹ Yet however problematic, it would be Nangle’s writings as much as his own direct experiences that formed Cullinane’s perception of the island. While Nangle’s political and religious agendas were anathema to Cullinane, Nangle’s ideas on the spiritual life of the people shaped Cullinane’s conviction that both the population of the island and the island itself existed in an unusually close communion with the supernatural, a belief which would determine his intellectual interests and the concerns of his artistic practice.

Nangle had primarily been active in Slievemore but had formed a smaller mission at Mweelin, near Dooega village, and these sites also became Cullinane’s locales; he would regularly walk the seven miles between the two villages. In addition to his admiration for the natural features of the island, Cullinane enjoyed visiting neolithic sites, including the Cromlech tumulus, a court tomb on the route. His encounter with this small megalithic structure was formative: having heard a local legend that the mound housed a bain sidhe (or banshee, a female psychopomp in Celtic mythology) Cullinane was drawn to the site, and inspired to begin keeping a notebook of Achill folklore.¹⁰ He interviewed friends and family in Slievemore, Sraheens and Dooega, providing particularly florid detail of those stories with supernatural elements. While Nangle had aspired to eradicate folk superstitions, Cullinane worked in opposition to any attempt to normalise the spiritual life of Achill by codifying what he regarded as its mystical patrimony, documenting whatever evidence of the “living will there is amongst us towards those elements of the spiritual which must

3 Ibid.

4 Sean Cullinane in correspondence with Nora Cullinane, 18th October 1936.

5 See SC Hall, *Ireland: Its Scenery, Character and People*, How and Parsons, 1843, p396.

6 See Henry Seddall, Edward Nangle, *The Apostle of Achill, A Memoir and A History*, Hatchards, 1884.

7 Quoted in Henry Seddall, *Edward Nangle, The Apostle of Achill, A Memoir and A History*, Hatchards, 1884, p54.

8 These claims are quoted in Edward Nangle, *The Achill Mission and the Present State of Protestantism in Ireland*, Protestant Association, 1840, pages 12 and 23.

9 Ibid, p26.

10 Martha O’Mally, in conversation with the author.

remain to man mysterious” he could find.¹¹ Cullinane took a sensitive approach to this material, displaying a cultural relativism that was advanced for someone in his position during this period. Through this work and his series of interviews Cullinane acquired a reputation as a scholar, and though his interest in local traditions was thought by some to be peculiar,¹² the sincerity he displayed in his endeavours led to him being generally well-liked on the island.

CONTACT WITH ARTAUD

It was his repute as an earnest and engaged student of Achill customs that brought Cullinane into contact with the French dramatist Antonin Artaud. In 1937 Artaud arrived on the islands off the West coast of Ireland, seeking to recreate JM Synge’s (1871-1909) visits to Aran between 1898 and 1902. Synge had himself travelled there in search of the pre-Christian Pagan worldview he believed to have been retained by the rural Irish peasantry.¹³ Artaud had previously visited Mexico, where he developed an interest in ancient religious systems and “cosmogonies”.¹⁴ His concern for pre-Christian religions was consistent with Surrealism’s mistrust of the dominant influence of ancient Rome on European patrimony, an expression of the suspicion of teleological historical narratives that the Surrealists held in common with other post-WWI avant-gardes. However, where the majority of these avant-garde movements sought a radical break with established historical, cultural and artistic conventions, the Surrealists attempted to position their production within an alternative cultural history, tracing transhistorical and transnational precedents for their work. Across the corpus of Breton’s writings this lineage becomes extremely wide-reaching and comprehensive: it included Irish writers he admired, such as Jonathan Swift and Charles Maturin, and stretched back as far as ancient Gaul.¹⁵ It was in this spirit of lineage-tracing that Artaud sought to correct “the false conceptions the Occident has somehow formed concerning paganism and certain natural religions, and [to] underline with burning emotion the splendour and forever immediate poetry of the old metaphysical sources on which these religions are built.”¹⁶

11 Cullinane in correspondence with André Breton, 12th January 1940, Bibliothec Litteraire Jacques Doucet.

12 O’Mally, in conversation with the author.

13 See JM Synge, *The Aran Islands*, Maunsell and Company, 1907.

14 Antonin Artaud, “The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)”, in *The Theatre and Its Double*, Mary Caroline Richard, trans., Grove Winfield, New York, 1958, p123.

15 See André Breton, “Second Manifesto of Surrealism” (1930), Richard Seavers and Helen Lane, trans, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Ann Arbor, 1969, pp 117-94, and “L’Art, Véhicule de la magie” (1957), reprinted in *André Breton, Oeuvres Complètes, Vol IV*, Gallimard, 2008.

16 Artaud, “*The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)*”, p126.

Contemporary correspondence detailing Artaud’s itinerary, misadventures, and the international controversy which these generated remains extant, excerpts from which were reprinted in the first issue of *The Dublin Review*.¹⁷ He arrived at Cobh on August 14th, later going to Inismor until September 2nd. He travelled onward to Dublin on September 8th, from where he was deported on September 14th. A period of six days, between September 2nd and 8th, have previously been left unaccounted for. A recently disembargoed 1944 diary by Artaud describes a visit to Achill and his meeting with Cullinane during this period. Artaud recounts a meeting on Inismor with Dr King, a medical practitioner who serviced several of the islands off the West coast. King, who had studied French, was curious to meet the visitor, and during their conversation Artaud informed King of the purpose of his trip to Ireland: he was acting on a self-appointed mission to plant an elaborate walking staff he was bearing into the base of Croagh Patrick, a mountain in Mayo which has been a site of pagan and later Christian pilgrimage for around five thousand years. Achill being considerably closer to Croagh Patrick than Inismor, King offered to take Artaud with him on his return journey, and recommended that he meet there a priest with intimate knowledge of ancient mythology, whom King believed would be the best placed companion for his mission.

In his haste to depart Artaud left behind him an unpaid debt which ignited a small diplomatic incident. On September 4th King introduced Artaud to Cullinane and the three had a brief conversation in French. On September 5th the two men travelled together by road to the Croagh. Acting on the basis of apocrypha which describe St Patrick striking a walking staff into the ground and it growing into a living plant, Artaud plunged the staff into the mountainside in the belief he was achieving a symbolic union of male and female archetypes, a gesture which held for him both cosmological and sexual significance. The next event he recalls was on September 8th when, for reasons that were opaque to Artaud, he was taken by the priest to the station at Westport and boarded onto a train for Dublin. The priest funded his journey and urged him to return home to France. Cullinane seems to have feared Artaud’s obviously degenerating mental health (he was ultimately expelled from Ireland and sectioned on his arrival in France). On arriving in Dublin Artaud had no recollection of these events and reported his staff

17 Extracts from correspondence held at the Department of External Affairs republished in “An absent-minded person of the student type”: Extracts from the Artaud file”, *The Dublin Review*, Issue 1, Winter 2000-1, available at <http://thedublinreview.com/extracts-from-the-artaud-file/>, accessed August 31st, 2014.

missing to Dublin constabulary,¹⁸ but was nonetheless able to describe his visit to Achill in some detail in his 1944 memoir, which was written towards the end of his life and whilst receiving electroshock treatment under Dr Gaston Ferdière in Vichy France. The circumstances in which Artaud wrote the memoir were no doubt trying, and at the time it was undertaken he was being actively encouraged to examine his memories and express himself creatively as part of his therapeutic program. Though there is no way of verifying the details Artaud gives, the strong influence of Artaud's theories is borne by Cullinane's later works.

DEPARTURE FROM THE CHURCH AND EARLY WORK

Despite his apparent concern over Artaud's conduct on Achill, Cullinane remained deeply affected by the encounter. He is recorded as having officially departed from his seminary in September 1937. After meeting Artaud he made effort to order and read his publications, depending on the post office at Doogea for receipt of information about contemporary Paris. Though Artaud had broken from Surrealism by the time of his meeting with Cullinane, having disagreed with Breton's 1927 affiliation of Surrealism to Communism, he remained a conduit of its influence; the texts by Artaud which Cullinane could immediately access were those which appeared in Surrealist journals, as Artaud would not publish his magnum opus, *Le Théâtre et Son Double* (The Theatre and Its Double, 1938), until the year following his departure from Ireland. Artaud's most influential idea, his conception of the 'Theatre of Cruelty', was developed over an extended period between 1921 and 1938: Cullinane's remaining work seems closest to the later conception articulated in Artaud's *Second Manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty* (1933). While the first manifesto derided the "servitude to psychology and 'human interest'"¹⁹ of realist theatre, in the 1933 text he clarified that this did not preclude investigation of "subjects and themes corresponding to the agitation and unrest characteristic of our epoch", as his proposed theatre did "not intend to leave the task of distributing the Myths of man and modern life entirely to the movies."²⁰ Cullinane first read these manifestos in the *Theatre and Its Double*, which he obtained soon after its publication. In the interim he managed to acquire, amongst other texts, the first three issues of *La Révolution Surréaliste* (The Surrealist Revolution), to which Artaud had contributed important texts on

18 See "An absent-minded person of the student type": Extracts from the Artaud file", *The Dublin Review*.

19 Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)", in *The Theatre and Its Double*, Mary Caroline Richard, trans., Grove Winfield, New York, 1958, p90.

20 Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)", p122.

world religions.²¹ Artaud's influence seems, however, to have primarily been exerted by means of direct contact between the two men: it was only weeks after meeting Artaud that Cullinane would perform his best-remembered work, in response not only to their meeting but also to highly emotive events which impacted the Achill community and had repercussions throughout the British Isles.

KIRKINTILLOCH

Cullinane had in the course of his researches into the folklore of Achill encountered the sayings of Brian Rua O'Cearbhain, a seventeenth-century Mayo mystic known as the 'Prophet of Erris'. No contemporary record of O'Cearbhain's prophecies exists, but one particularly concerning Achill has entered into folk memory: O'Cearbhain foresaw 'fire-powered carriages on iron wheels' connecting the mainland to the island, the first and last of which would 'bring death' with them.²² The first part of the prophecy was fulfilled in 1894, when thirty-two migrant workers from Achill drowned in Clew Bay, on route to agricultural jobs in Scotland. The first service to run on the line, which at this point remained under construction, brought their bodies home for burial in Kildownet cemetery. The line was scheduled for closure due to lack of demand for the service, and the last passenger trains ran in 1936. It seemed the second part of the prophecy had been circumvented. However, freight services continued to run, and before the line's ultimate closure it received a cargo of bodies into the island in what would be its final service.

On September 15th, 1937 twelve men and fourteen young women from Achill arrived in Kirkintilloch, Scotland, to take up short-term agricultural employment. By the following morning ten of the young boys, who had been sleeping in a 'bothy', a poorly-furnished outbuilding, were dead. Overnight a fire had broken out in their quarters, and as the building had been locked from the outside the boys, who ranged in age from 13 to 23, were unable to escape. The tragedy had far-reaching international consequences, sparking parliamentary reform of conditions for agricultural and migrant workers. Barry Sheppard's well-informed account of the tragedy and the response describes a "particularly sharp outpouring of grief" across the British Isles.²³ A service was

21 Issue 3 of *La Révolution Surréaliste* included two open letters by Artaud, "Address to the Pope" and "Address to the Dalai Lama", which argued for the moral and spiritual superiority of non-Christian religions.

22 There appears to be no standardised text of O'Cearbhain's prophecy, which occurs in different renderings, in both Irish and English, across a range of sources.

23 Barry Sheppard, "The Kirkintilloch Tragedy, 1937", available at <http://www.theirishstory.com/2012/09/24/the-kirkintilloch-tragedy-1937/#.VDOFtleGNio>, accessed October 5th 2014.

held for the boys in Kirkintilloch, attended by around three thousand mourners and British and Irish dignitaries. After arrival in Dublin, where a service was also held, a special train service took the coffins to Achill for internment. The train was greeted by a large congregation of mourners, and around half the island's population participated in memorial events. Some remember a train entering the island immediately proceeding the coffin train, in which they saw spectors of their deceased relatives seated in passenger carriages as if they were still alive.²⁴ Despite the ramifications, little is known about how the tragedy itself unfolded. The most elaborate accounts describe the girls in the party helplessly witnessing the engulfment of their trapped brothers through the windows of the bothy; the impediment of rescue and fire services through these witnesses' inability to speak in English; and the presence of a Catholic priest on site, administering the Last Rites. It seems unlikely that the blaze would have progressed sufficiently slowly for these events to have occurred, but rapidly enough to prevent the rescue of the boys. Irrespective of their veracity, however, such news reports would have made deep impression on contemporary readers and particularly on surviving family.

Cullinane was profoundly affected; he had himself cousins on Achill who worked under similar conditions. He turned to theatrical expression to process his and his neighbours' feelings on the tragedy, apparently following Artaud's assertion that the most serious and affecting contemporary events were not only appropriate subjects for theatre, but precisely what theatre should address itself to in order to fulfil its social and psychic utility:

“great social upheavals, conflicts between peoples and races, natural forces, interventions of chance, and the magnetism of fatality will manifest themselves either indirectly, in the movement and gestures of characters enlarged to the statures of gods, heroes, or monsters, in mythical dimensions, or directly, in material forms obtained by new scientific means.”²⁵

Thus Kirkintilloch became the subject of Cullinane's most sustained and emotive output. Artaud's strong prohibition against “act[ing] a written play”²⁶ informed Cullinane's improvised approach: he worked with collaborators, including amateur actors and musicians, who generated vocals and dialogue around a set scenario devised and

24 Marie Kilbane, in conversation with the author.

25 Artaud, “*The Theatre of Cruelty* (Second Manifesto)”, p123.

26 Artaud, “*The Theatre of Cruelty* (First Manifesto)”, p98.

directed by Cullinane. While the performances were not spontaneous – by the time they reached audiences the improvised elements had been codified through extensive rehearsal – this working process does mean that no scripts survive. Performance art represents a challenge to cultural historians, who must reconstruct stagings on the partial basis of documents and ephemera. This is further complicated in the case of Cullinane's response to Kirkintilloch, which seems to have been performed in more than one version, both for live audiences and for recording, and under different titles. However, one participant in his performances, Martha O'Mally, has described her recollections of his work.²⁷ O'Mally, who was training to become an Irish teacher in Tuam, spent time at Scoil Acla in order to perfect her language skills. She first met Cullinane in late summer of 1936 at a reading of his poetry. She described this work as a particularly gruesome (though stylistically conventional) thirty-seven verse narrative about a man entering a Faustian pact with a fish, gaining omniscience in exchange for his mortal remains. The poem synthesised the legend of Fintan and the salmon of knowledge with the death a few years prior of a local man who had been blown from the perilous cliffs of the Atlantic Drive: after several days of searching, neighbours found his eyeless corpse washed up on the beach. This performance was extremely poorly received; even those members of the audience that could withstand its content did not have the stamina to stay for the complete cycle of verses. Despite its failure, the poem indicates that Cullinane was already interested in forging narratives from a meeting of myth and contemporary events, and investigating the intersection of trauma and performance. It was through Artaud's influence that the presentation of these ideas would be refined.

Cullinane first presented his Kirkintilloch performance on October 31st. O'Mally recalls that, in his notes, Cullinane referred to the play by the rather uncompromising title *Garçons condamnés à carboniser* (“Boys Condemned to Burn”), but titled it *Lament* in the handbills he distributed on Achill. The performance centred around the myth of the *bain sidhe*, presented as a female ancestor spirit who returns to the world of the living at times of bereavement in order to mourn the deceased in a highly vocal, hysterical outpouring of grief. The Surrealists drew on the trope of unrestrained femininity as an antidote to the rational masculinity of European culture which had, they believed, made the First World War inevitable. Their highly problematic description of femininity as sexualised, mystical and subversive, most notably manifested in their celebrations of hysteria, informed Cullinane's

27 O'Mally in conversation with the author.

treatment of the bain sidhe. Cullinane had been interested in this figure since his first visits to the Cromlech tumulus, and chose to revisit this theme not only for its funerary connotations, but also for its explicit evocation of the bereaved woman. While the deceased of Kirkintilloch had been thoroughly memorialised through a series of services across Britain and Ireland, Cullinane was concerned that no ceremony had yet acknowledged the suffering of the surviving witnesses, the young girls who had become vessels for the ongoing psychological suffering of their community. His play, then, was intended as catharsis for what he called these “living bain sidhe”.²⁸ Drawing on accounts of the presence of a priest on the night of the fire, Cullinane presents a dialogue between the formalised consolations of the Church and the unmediated emotional response of the bain sidhe, taking the role of the priest for himself; his concern for mental or spiritual well-being in the aftermath of trauma revealed his lingering desire to minister, and his purposeful staging of the performance on All Hallows’ Eve enforces the quasi-ecclesiastical aspects of his commemoration service for a suffering that had so far been overlooked. For Cullinane, organised religion was, despite its limitations, well-intentioned: it is notable that he never rejected Catholicism even after abandoning his vocation and applying himself to the study of paganism, a reconciliation consistent with the Achill character as he understood it.

Cullinane’s conception of the bain sidhe was also specific to Achill, featuring deviations from the myth as it has become standard in Ireland. Despite the lack of textual support for the performance, details concerning his understanding of the bain sidhe are contained in an extraordinary illustrated manuscript of psychoanalytic readings of folklore that he prepared for delivery to Breton in 1939. One spread from this book shows her alongside an ogham inscription, which Cullinane may have apprised from extant engravings on Achill, and an early example of experimentation with ancient script as a way of circumnavigating Ireland’s recent linguistic patrimony: it is possible that Cullinane found his own status as a native English speaker politically problematic. That ogham functions as a syllabary, and is not unlike musical notation, may also have appealed to Cullinane. His bain sidhe is not a fairy who acts as a professional mourner for prominent families; instead, she is a specifically matriarchal ancestor spirit, who follows and mourns her descendants in the female line. She has a direct genetic relationship with those to whom she appears. The bain sidhe is most often experienced aurally: she will cry on the death of one of her children, in a voice

28 O’Mally in conversation with the author.

that is only audible to the children that survive. Most unnervingly, she adopts the exact voice of the recently deceased to vocalise her grief. In a departure from the immediacy of Artaud, Cullinane does not accept the magical occurrences he describes on their own terms, but instead subjects them to a psychoanalytic treatment, presumably to appeal to the more epistemological concerns of Breton. The myth was ripe for psychoanalytic exploration: Cullinane describes her as a personification of hysteria, as a collective hallucination, and connects the fantasy of her existence to the frustrated attachments of what Freud termed the ‘family romance’,²⁹ a child’s overwhelming desire for the affection of their parents and perception of them as preternatural beings. Cullinane’s knowledge of psychoanalysis was itself heavily informed by Breton and limited to what he had read in Surrealist journals, as there was scant practice of or information about psychoanalysis in Ireland at that time; indeed, the first Irish Psychoanalytic association would not form until 1942.³⁰

In his use of performance as catharsis; adoption of a real, recent and emotive event as a point of disembarkation; and recourse to mythic narrative, Cullinane realised long-held interests under the guidance of Artaud’s influence. Avoiding the use of conventional theatres in favour of performing in “some hangar or barn”³¹ was the most easily achievable of Artaud’s dictats: Achill had no theatres or non-ecclesiastical spaces large enough to be used for theatrical purposes. Instead, Cullinane held his performance on the hill slope behind the Cromlech tumulus. He and the performers stood in front of the stones, with the hillside forming raked seating for the audience. Both performers and audience were encircled by a ring of torch bearers, lighting the action and further enforcing the proximity of performers and viewers. Cullinane craved audience interaction, whether solicited (in the case of O’Mally and other participants, who were recruited from his audiences to collaborate on future works) or in the form of spontaneous interventions during the performance (though Cullinane seems to have desired this, O’Mally could not recall any unexpected contributions in the pieces she performed). O’Mally remembers being surprised by the turnout of around fifty people. Cullinane endeavoured to treat the subject sensitively, and by dealing with an important event in a way that gave serious accord to folklore and through consultation of local residents, he enabled the play to be well-received. Though some residents,

29 See “Family Romances” in *The Freud Reader*, Peter Gay, ed., Vintage, 1995, pp297-300.

30 See College of Psychoanalysts in Ireland, “A Brief History of Psychoanalysis in Ireland”, available at <http://www.psychoanalysis.ie/about/history/>, accessed October 1st 2014.

31 Artaud, “*The Theatre of Cruelty*”, p96.

including the family O'Mally boarded with (who had not seen the play) regarded Cullinane as “cracked”, many were interested in his productions. The restricted availability of entertainments on Achill was also surely a contributing factor. While many artists of renown had exploited the landscape and atmosphere of the island for their work, including Paul Henry, Robert Henri and Graham Greene, this did not contribute to the development of any institutional culture on Achill. While this lack of conventional precedent gave Cullinane the latitude to execute his experiments, this also meant much of the formal radicalism of his work was lost on his audience: indeed, there was no reason for his audience to understand his recourse to ancient myth as a progressive, rather than retrogressive, intervention, indicating the difficulty of applying Artaud's anti-institutional attack in the Achill context.

CLASS AND COLLABORATION

The socio-economic conditions of Achill would not only reconfigure the significance of an Artaudian theatre, but also determine Cullinane's career. The continued economic dependence on Britain that the Achill emigrations represented was a small example of the serious poverty that blighted rural areas of the independent Irish state. This troubled Cullinane, his Catholic sympathies intersecting with what he had read about Marxism within Surrealist journals, and what he had learned of the threat of totalitarian politics throughout Europe via news of the death of Doega's Tommy Patten, the first Irish volunteer to the Spanish Civil War, in December 1936. Cullinane's own feelings on the Kirkintilloch tragedy and the end of the railway were not unmixed: while the ill-fated line's closure on September 30th was met mostly with relief by a disturbed populace, Cullinane feared the increasing economic and cultural isolation of the island. He was invited to join the Anti-Emigration and Industrial Development Committee, convened after the disaster, specifically to address these questions.

The Committee advocated the reopening of the railway line for the benefit of local industry. However, both a lack of concern at the national level and local aversion to the railway were significant obstacles. Cullinane agreed to re-stage his play for radio, primarily to publicise the plight of the islanders to the rest of the country, but also to exorcise any perceived curse on the railway. The upsetting title by which he privately referred to the 1937 play spoke violently against systems of migrant labour, and for the performance's final incarnation on radio he gave it the title *Iron Rod*, a blend of direct reference to the Irish language term for railway, allusion to the national significance of the rail network, and oblique critique of the unforgiving demands and human costs of capitalism.

The play was broadcast on Radio Eireann in late 1938: with the opening of the Athlone transmitter in 1932, parts of rural Ireland, including Achill, received domestic radio broadcasts for the first time, establishing a national radio network. In contrast to the unrestrained emotion and expression of the first staging, the radio play was altogether more structured. In order to maintain the application of Artaud's principles, one section of the play was recorded with a live audience, though this is not included in the six excerpts from the recording which have been reconstructed on aisteach.org. These reconstructions take as their starting point low-quality fragments of the original recordings which have survived, with additional input from O'Mally, who performed in the original piece, to supply missing details where necessary. Also missing are the narrative and dialogue sections that linked the musical sections and which, unexpectedly, adopted an accessible style bordering on social realism, and described the island as doubly-disadvantaged by both the disasters and its subsequent isolation. This combination of explicatory prose and lyrical sections is not unlike the structure of early Irish legends, on which Cullinane drew for his textual contents.

The first extant section is based on the so-called Alphabet of Cuigne Maic Eoin³², a collection of legal maxims and moral proverbs contained within *The Great Book of Lecan*, a compendium of ancient texts transcribed by Ádhamh Ó Cuirnín, a poet and scribe from Connacht, in the early 15th century. The litanous text lends itself to Cullinane's emphatic, rhythmic treatment. The authoritative, at times dispassionate reading of the main vocalist contrasts with high pitched accompanying voices. Is Cullinane juxtaposing the measure of law against the urgent cries of the deceased, in a critique of the lack of sufficient regulation to prevent the Kirkintilloch fire? Cullinane's adaptation of legislative proscriptions to performance is consistent with oral and performative traditions of law in Ireland:³³ that an effective leader must be a skilled orator is the assumption of Mac Eoin's manuscript. Thus Cullinane both sets the political context of the play, reworking it into an appeal for just and responsive government, and aligns his role, as a playwright positioned within a political campaign group, to a tradition of political persuasion or 'Kingly speech'. This section was almost certainly devised specifically for the radio, and was not included in his Achill performance.

"Birthdays" (excerpt 3) is the first piece known to have been presented on Achill. The text describes how fortune is determined by

32 Also known as Cuigne McEoin and Luigne Maic Éremóin.

33 See Robin Chapman Stacey, *Dark Speech: The Performance of Law in Early Ireland*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

an individual's day of birth: "He who is born on Tuesday, drowning will carry him off, great will be his wealth in small cattle, his power will not be strong", "many will mourn someone born on a Monday". Each refrain opens with a description of the child's death, a blunt acknowledgement of the inevitability of mortality. Again, rather than write a play, Cullinane adapts an ancient prophetic text in a manner of which Artaud would have approved.

The next musical passage is rhythmic and non verbal, evoking the movement of a train (excerpt 4). It is followed by "Lament" (excerpt 5), which has vocal content describing psychoanalysis interspersed with incantations to a solar god. With its trailing female vocal, this was the centrepiece of the first Achill performance.³⁴ It was immediately followed by "Invocation to Bran" (section 6), the penultimate musical section of the play, which describes Bran Maic Febail, an important and complex figure in several Celtic mythologies. Amongst the corpus of stories concerning Bran is one detailing his origins as the child of a union between the god of the sea and the god of the sun (it is worth remembering here that O'Cearbhain's prophesy was fulfilled through tragedies caused by drowning and fire). Bran is also known as a god of regeneration, and there are myths concerning his attempt to journey to the Otherworld: Bran falls asleep while listening to a goddess from the Otherworld sing of the mystical island in the west from which she came, and she compels him to seek it out. The undoubtedly sexual allure of this highly vocal goddess of the Otherworld again underlines Cullinane's conception of the bain sidhe as a signifier for a transfixing femininity. The text Cullinane adopts is a section of the Immram Brain (Voyage of Bran) which describes his visit to this Otherworld, which he finds populated by "a troop of hundreds of women" and deems "a great find for any man who could find it." What Freud proposed as the two primary motivations of human behaviour, the sexual impulses of the erotic drive (which he termed Eros), and the will for death (Thanatos), are reconciled in Cullinane's treatment. The hope for regeneration represented by Bran's mediation of the Otherworld and the land of the living, and the tantalising possibility of journeying to a wonderful island, become in this rendition very obvious metaphors for Cullinane's political campaign.

Unusually, Cullinane eschews the use of instruments throughout these surviving interludes. He was himself most comfortable as a vocalist (though he was also able to play the organ and the violin), and constructs these pieces entirely from vocals and harmonisations supported by improvised percussive sections. These are most apparent in

34 O'Mally, in conversation with the author.

the final section of the play (excerpt 2), where humming generates the melody, and clapping the percussion, enriched by apparently spontaneous vocal outbursts. This short section was a response to Radio Athlone's request that Cullinane provide a concluding piece of music for broadcast before the call sign. In contrast to the other excerpts, it is upbeat and implicitly evokes the national anthem, the Soldier's Song: through reference to Ireland's new status as an independent nation, Cullinane reiterates his case for the need of an intergrating national infrastructure.

Throughout these musical sections the actor is treated as a "living instrument",³⁵ with gesture, dialogue and vocals integrated into a continuous presentation. Artaud advocated the incorporation of music in theatrical performance, especially through the use of "sounds or noises that are unbearably piercing",³⁶ which seems to bear a strong influence on those sections of the recording that survive. The execution was startling, with shifts in tone and expression exploiting a full vocal range. The anti-naturalistic, distorted vocals use words in "an incantational, truly magical sense",³⁷ "experienced directly by the mind without the deformations of language and the barrier of speech."³⁸ The arbitrary, nasal vocal style Cullinane directed also bore some resemblance to sean nós, which may represent a hybridisation of Surrealist and indigenous precedents. However, it is also possible that the influence of Irish cultural forms on the development of Artaud's ideas has been under-recognised: he deliberately followed Synge to Aran, where he could have experienced folk performance at first hand, and did not make his first book-length publication of theatrical theories until after his return from Ireland to France.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH BRETON

Though his local reputation was secured by these efforts, Cullinane never enjoyed much national or international recognition. It has been suggested that post-revolutionary Ireland did not offer the right cultural or political conditions for the development of Surrealism,³⁹ and there is a degree of irony in this assessment given the Parisian Surrealists' sympathy for post-colonial struggles, which saw them lend support to regions where revolution was in progress, including Morocco, Algeria,

35 Artaud, "Preface: The Theatre and Culture", in *The Theatre and Its Double*, Mary Caroline Richard, trans., Grove Winfield, New York, 1958, p12.

36 Artaud, "*The Theatre of Cruelty*", p95

37 Artaud, "*The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)*", p125.

38 Ibid, p124.

39 Cyril Barrett, "Irish Nationalism and Art II: 1900-1970", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, vol 91, no 363, Autumn 2002, pp223-38, p235.

and Tunisia. Ireland offered an example of a stable post-revolutionary state within the Surrealists' European cultural context. In the 1929 Surrealist Map of the World Ireland looms large, subsuming a post-colonial England which has dwindled in geopolitical importance. However, the revolutionary utopia represented by Ireland was not only metaphoric, but also literal. The 1939 outbreak of WWII saw an exodus of liberal artistic talent from the UK to Ireland, exerting transformative influence on Irish modernism. The artists Kenneth Hall (1913-46) and Basil Rakoczi (1908-79), who would go on to form the White Stag group, brought with them from England a post-Surrealist interest in psychoanalysis, politics and sexuality. The Stags and their dissemination of a Surrealist influence through Dublin's Exhibitions of Living Art (which painter Mainie Jellet (1897-1944), a regular visitor to Achill, co-founded in 1943) have dominated discussions of Surrealist influence on Irish art, despite the fact that scholars describing their works remain justifiably cautious in designating their work 'Surrealist'.⁴⁰ Certainly the Stags were attempting to formulate an advance on Surrealism, by retaining its social and psychic contents, but reinstating aesthetic concerns. Though it is unfair to call this "watered-down Surrealism",⁴¹ their paintings can be unfavourably compared to Cullinane's earlier and more ambitious provocations.

The fact that Cullinane left little material contributes to his having been, in comparison to the Stags, overlooked. The emergency, which fostered the work of the Stags, curtailed Cullinane's artistic output and his work with the Anti-Immigration and Industrial Development Committee. Instead, Cullinane turned his attention to international developments. Like many Surrealists outside France, he wanted to position his work within the international Surrealist movement through correspondence with Breton. That Cullinane privately referred to his Kirkintilloch play by a French title suggests he formed the idea of presenting work in France very soon after his encounter with Artaud, but he would not send material to Breton until 1940. Breton was primed by his interest in Celtic material culture, especially Gallic art, which he first wrote on in *Surrealism and Painting* (1930),⁴² and argued offered artistic precedents untainted by Roman or Christian influence. As his own family originated in Brittany, his interest in Celtic forms was highly personal. Cullinane does not articulate any anxiety over melding a movement imported from modern France to

40 For example, Roisin Kennedy calls FE McWilliams a "Surrealist with a small 's'", "The Surreal in Irish Art", available at <http://www.femcwilliam.com/News/Surreal-in-Irish-Art-exhibition-now-open.aspx>, accessed 11th December 2012.

41 Brian Fallon, "The White Stags", *Irish Arts Review*, vol 22, no 2, Summer 2005, pp68-73, p73.

42 See Breton, "Triumph of Gallic Art", *Surrealism and Painting*, Harper and Row, 1972.

his own indigenous culture, possibly as a result of the Surrealists' favourable assessment of Ireland. However, Breton seems not to have received Cullinane's work with much enthusiasm, and seems never to have written on any contemporary Irish artist; his interest was exclusively in Ireland's ancient patrimony, which he fetishised in the same manner as he did the cultures of revolutionising states outside Europe (and which was possibly encouraged by his own reading of Synge). For Cullinane, too, Achill provided an extensive repository of fertile tropes but did not offer the contemporary cultural environment necessary to sustain avant-garde experimentation. Though he never encountered the extreme condemnation with which other avant-garde interventions, such as those of Chancey Briggs, were met, the radicalism of his theatrical forms was drastically curtailed by the lack of any institutionalised theatre on this island. Cullinane was also disheartened by his failure to find any national audience. Breton's lack of interest did not, however, dissuade Cullinane from going to France after the war. He was deeply affected by Artaud's 1948 death, which he learnt of shortly after his arrival in Paris, as he was hopeful that he would eventually be discharged from psychiatric care and that they could resume their exchange. Cullinane had some contact with the Parisian group, and contributed to their enthusiastic support of the Prague spring of 1968. He died later that year, leaving behind only some ephemera, a fragment of recording, and a single manuscript.

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EYLEIF MULLEN-WHITE
BILLIE HENNESSY
CAOIMHÍN BREATHNACH
SINÉAD AND
FIACHRA Ó LAOIRE
KILBRIDE & MALONE DUO
PÁDRAIG
MAC GIOLLA MHUIRE
SR ANSELME
O'CEALLAIGH

Mullen-White, Eyleif

(b Limerick, 8 March 1937; d Liverpool, 17 May 1988).

Composer and mathematician.

Jennifer Walsh

MULLEN-WHITE STUDIED MATHEMATICS AND MUSIC at Trinity College Dublin and lectured in mathematics at Liverpool University. Her work is focused exclusively on microtonal shifts in sound, alternative tuning systems and the compositional deployment of various psychoacoustic and esoteric phenomena.

Many of Mullen-White's early works employ just intonation and microtones. *Quarta* (1962) for string quartet and piano involves seven asymmetric divisions of the octave, and requires all the performers to re-tune their instruments, including an extensive re-tuning of the piano. *Pent* (1964) for four brass trombonists divides the octave into 10 pitches. The extreme technical challenges of pieces such as these has meant that many of these compositions have never been performed.

As Mullen-White's work progressed in the 1960s and she gained access to a Moog synthesizer and tape recorder, she came to focus on instruments playing a limited range of pitches within different frequency bands set up on tape. Compositions such as *Solfège Sextet* (1970) place a string sextet playing sustained notes within the "frame" of the so-called "Solfeggio Frequencies" – a tape part playing six different frequencies ranging from 396 to 852 Hz.

After reading Gerald Oster's paper "Auditory Beats in the Brain" published in *Scientific American* in 1973, Mullen-White began to radically reduce the size of the intervals she worked with in her compositions. Much of her work from the mid-1970s onwards is concerned with binaural beats, created both with sine tones and instruments. In her tape piece *294-303 Theta* (1974) Mullen-White uses a violin to navigate the microtonal space between 294 and 303 Hz, the interval of the quarter-tone between D and D $\frac{1}{4}$ tone sharp. The maximum difference in tuning between any two pitches heard in the pieces is 7Hz, thus supposedly inducing a frequency following response in the brain within the Theta range, the brainwave range associated with deep meditation and non-rapid eye movement sleep. Mullen-White was also interested in Oster's theories which linked the heightened perception of binaural beats in women to phases of the menstrual cycle and designed "sound environments" for the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp as well as other feminist protest sites.

Hennessy, Billie

(b Carlow, 7 Oct. 1882; d New York 21 June 1929).

Painter and composer.

Jennifer Walsh

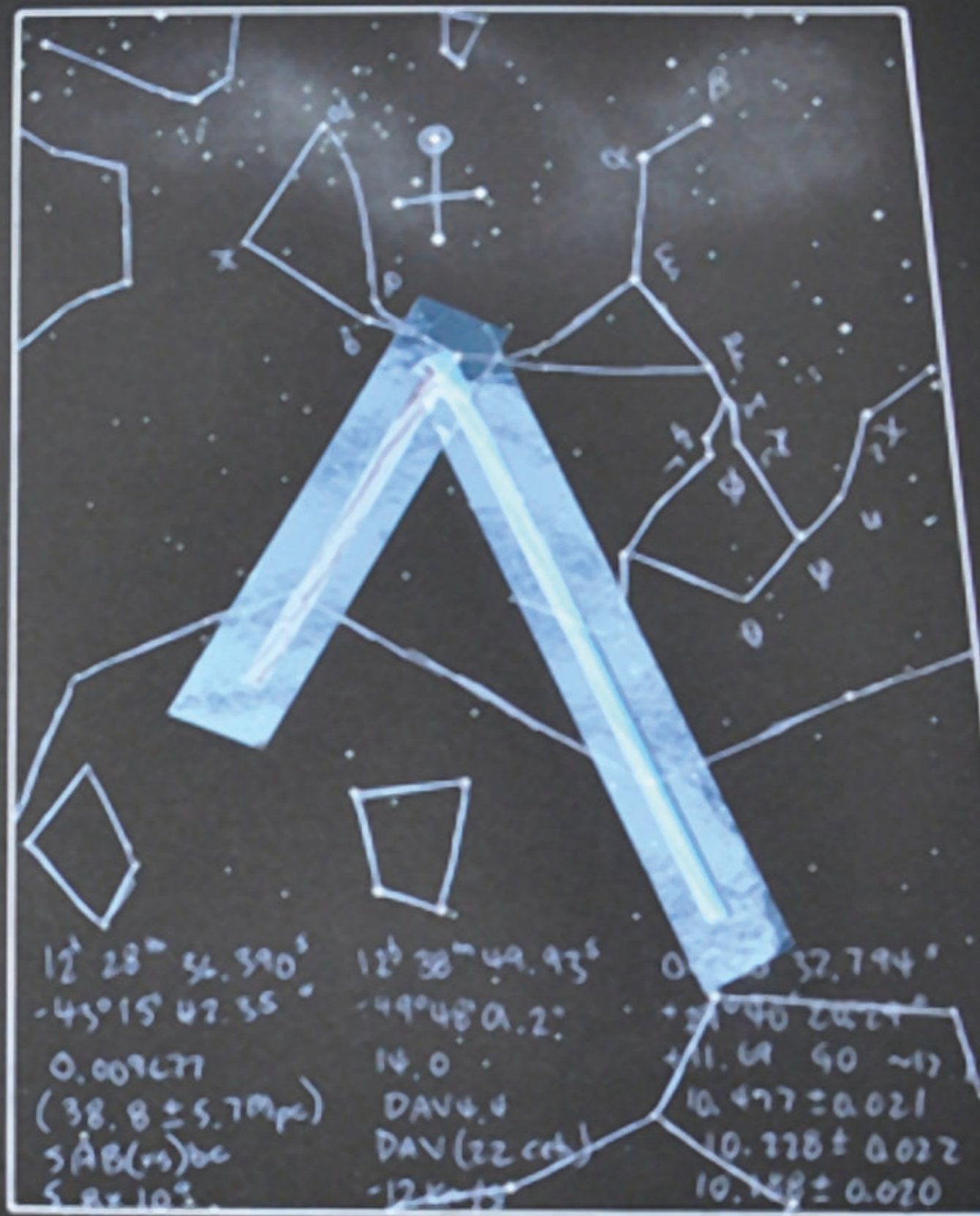
HENNESSY TRAINED AT THE METROPOLITAN School of Art in Dublin and at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. Hennessy's work first came to attention through the endorsement of Hugh Lane, in particular through Lane's purchase of her cubist series *On Aran*. In addition to the 14 paintings which make up the series, Hennessy composed a suite for multiple pianos titled *On Aran Soundings* (1906). The piece is designed to be performed by pianists positioned throughout a gallery in which the *On Aran* paintings are exhibited. As such it is considered an early example of intermedia composition.

Hennessy's compositional activities were secondary to her work as a painter, but she continued throughout her life to compose works, mostly for piano. On a trip to London in 1917 Hennessy was introduced to the concept of automatic writing by Elizabeth Fortnot, a member of George Hyde-Lees' social circle, and began to both paint and compose melodies in this mode. Hennessy called the melodies she composed in this way "Scripts"; according to her diaries she composed over 30, most of which have been lost. Hennessy's manuscript for *Script 4* runs to over 20 pages and was the result of an automatic writing marathon which took place in early 1918. The piece runs over 50 minutes in duration. A short excerpt, performed by Hennessy's grand-daughter Emer Tyrrell, can be heard on aisteach.org.

Hennessy's early *Scripts* unfurl seemingly endless, meandering tonal single-voice melodies, with apparently arbitrary moves to different keys. They are notable for their lack of standard compositional concerns, similar in this vein to the works of Erik Satie "...one finds jumpcuts, anti-variation, non-development, directionless repetition, absence of contextual relationships, logic, transitions" (Nyman 1999: 35). According to her diaries, Hennessy's later *Scripts* departed entirely from any standard tonal models of the time, often alternating between sparse repeated motifs and extended passages of clusters, as in *Script 23*, "received" in 1926.

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Caoimhín Breathnach

(1934-2009)

Outsider artist.

Jennifer Walshe

IRISH OUTSIDER ARTIST CAOIMHÍN BREATHNACH lived in Knockvicar, Co. Roscommon, as a recluse for most of his life. Upon his death in 2009, a huge archive, including diaries, drawings, photographs and tapes was found in his cottage.

The main focus of Breathnach’s artistic practice was the creation of his unique brand of “subliminal tapes.” This was a two-fold procedure - Breathnach began by recording sounds onto cassette tapes, before subjecting the tapes to a wide range of physical processes, such as burying, burning or encasing them in various materials such as velvet, paper or moss. In most cases, these physical processes rendered the tapes unplayable, so that the sounds recorded on them can now only be imagined.

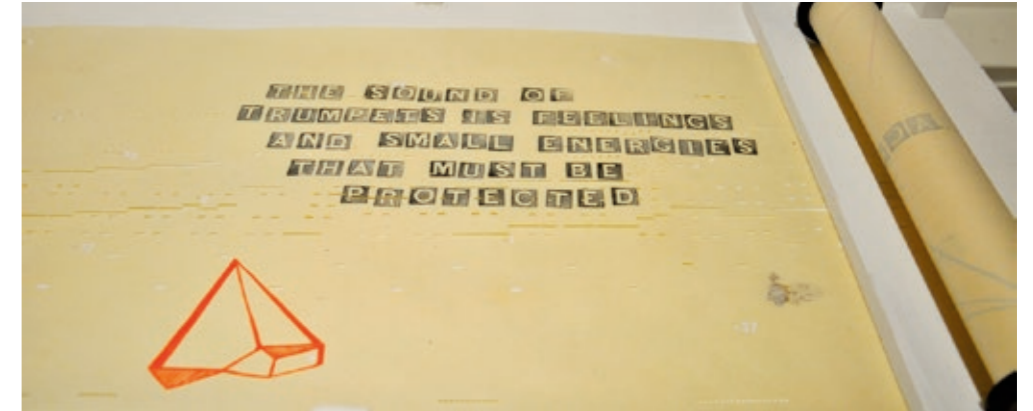
LAB NOTES

Breathnach’s extensive diaries detail his bizarre methods for making the tapes and the wide range of behavioural changes and experiential benefits he felt them to have had on him. Decoding Breathnach’s diaries is a tricky task, as he used the Ogham alphabet to write in a mixture of Irish and English.

For tape 79, Breathnach notes how he rose at dawn on the summer solstice (“grian-stad”) in 1982 to record himself playing a series of chords on the harp against the backdrop of his radio broadcasting at 1485 Khz. After sleeping with the tape under his pillow for a night, he then wore the tape strapped to his abdomen for a week, noticing significant improvement to his “strampail” and “glórghail” (both obscure words are defined in Dineen as referring to stomach noises).

Breathnach’s notes for tape 80 begin with a description of a series of recordings Breathnach made of himself playing harmonica. He then wrapped the tape in masking tape and “screened” several kung fu films for it. On 13th July 1982, he buried the tape, with the intention of unearthing it on May 31st 1984, a time period which coincided with the 1982-84 eclipse of Epsilon

ONE OF MANY OF CAOIMHÍN BREATHNACH'S MODIFIED STAR CHARTS



(TOP ROW) 'Patrún' images

(BOTTOM ROW) Breathnach's 'Sonic relics'

(TOP) Breathnach's 'Ogham' divination tiles

(BOTTOM) Annotated piano roll

Aurigae. Early in his notes Breathnach uses the term “luanchad” which refers to a lunar eclipse, and then later changes to “dorchacht” which is a poetic term for an eclipse of any sort. This shows both his depth of knowledge of Irish linguistic nuance and his astronomical knowledge about the eclipse of Epsilon Aurigae, which was not caused by the moon.

Breathnach did not limit his use of Ogham to his Lab Notes – he also employed it to inscribe many of his musical instruments. The Book of Ballymote (1390ca.) details over a hundred different Ogham “scales” – different variants for writing the alphabet, many with esoteric implications. Breathnach's violins are usually inscribed with characters from these different Ogham scales.

Breathnach's interest in Ogham also extended to his personalised set of divination tiles, similar to runes, which he had inscribed with the Ogham alphabet. Breathnach used these tiles to carry out chance

procedures and compose pieces such as the Song Rolls series (see below).

SONIC RELICS

The physical processes Breathnach subjected his tapes to often transformed the tapes from sound recordings into contemplative objects. Breathnach treated the tapes as corollaries of Catholic religious relics – for him they were sonic relics, complete with special powers of healing.

DREAMIC INFUSION & THE PATRÚN

Breathnach believed his mental state affected tapes in close proximity, and so often slept with tapes under his



(LEFT) Violin with ogham scale inscriptions

pillow to effect what he called “dreamic infusion.” He would frequently tuck small pictures into the pillow-case with the tapes. Breathnach refers to these pictures as “patrún” in his diaries. It is a curious choice of word, as while “patrún” means picture or photograph, the word is more commonly used in the phrase “tógaim patrún leat” which means “I follow your example.” The linguistic implication seems to be that Breathnach saw the pictures as examples for the tapes to follow.

STAR BURIALS

Breathnach was an avid amateur astronomer, and often buried tapes for periods of time aligning with certain astronomical observations. His enigmatic calculations and notes on these “adhlaicthe réaltaí” or “star burials” can be seen on these star charts.

“BEARERS”

Breathnach believed that if a person carried certain objects in their hand or upon their person, over time the object would come to “bear” whatever energies, thoughts or feelings the individual wanted to be rid of. He thought the best candidates for this practice were nuts, chestnuts, pebbles, shells and even very small fireworks.

Breathnach carried one “bearer” chestnut in the pocket of his coat for over 30 years, and was buried with it upon his passing in 2009.

SONG ROLLS

In the 1980s, Breathnach began annotating piano rolls. Abandoning the use of Ogham, Breathnach wrote exclusively in the English alphabet, using pencils, stamps and transfers. He called these works “song rolls” in his notes.

Breathnach’s interest in astronomy and music intersect in the song rolls, as he traces constellations and crystallographic forms with pencil and needle to create a new type of score.

Ó Laoire, Sinéad and Fiachra

(b Belfast, 11 June 1890; d Donegal 23 Aug 1958 and 27 April 1917).

Composers, instrument builders, teachers. Considered early exponents of Futurism in Ireland.

BORN IN BELFAST, THE Ó LAOIRE TWINS MOVED around Ireland and England for much of their formative years before settling in their mother's native Donegal in 1908. Their father Stephen Ó Laoire, a mechanical engineer who worked at various shipbuilding firms, inculcated in the twins a deep respect for industrial design and educated both siblings in mathematics, applied mathematics and other engineering basics, often bringing them to his place of work to demonstrate practical points. These early experiences left strong sonic impressions on the twins - Sinéad recalls how as child she and her brother "had full run of the shipyards in the holidays...we didn't swim in the sea like other children, we bathed in that mad vortex of sounds... hundreds of men shouting, hammering, driving piles...the bash and rattle of huge cranes, vast clanking chains tumbling across plates of metal, the fizz and spurting crackle of welding..."

In 1908 the twins' mother, Clíodhna, and Fiachra were both badly injured in an accident at the Harland and Wolff shipyards. The accident left Fiachra blind in one eye and with only 20% vision in the other; Clíodhna's head injuries left her disabled for the rest of her life, and the twins moved with her to Donegal in 1908 in order to care for their mother while their father moved on to London to work. This was a bitter time for the family, with Fiachra's hopes of following his father's footsteps dashed to pieces by his injury. Sinéad began teaching lessons at the local school and the family tried to settle into country life. The twins longed for the city, however, and in the rural quiet of Donegal their memories of bustling urban and industrial landscapes took on epic imaginative proportions. This longing was only further stoked by their father's periodic visits, with tales of his latest engineering feats and stories of experiences in Dublin, London and other metropolises.

By early 1910 the twins were designing and building their own experimental musical instruments, investigating a highly unorthodox noise environment which brought them back to the sonic experiences of their youth. They called their instruments "ruaillebuailles" from the

Irish expression "ruaille buaille" meaning pandemonium or mayhem. In her diaries, Sinéad refers to 17 different RBs. All are characterized by the use of bows to activate strings, and most exploit subtones, undertones and scratch tones. The twins wrote numerous pieces for the instruments, abandoning standard musical notation for graphic schematics. Scores for compositions such as "The Death of King Rí Rá" (1910) show simple lines depicting contours, entrances and exits.

The Ó Laoire twins only presented one public concert of the RBs - this took place in 1911, and was poorly attended. Critiqued in the *Donegal Post* as "a night of horrible scraping", the siblings did not make any further public performances. Despite this discouragement, they kept designing and building instruments up to Fiachra's death from tuberculosis in 1917. After her brother's passing Sinéad did not continue working with the RBs and over the years the instruments fell into disrepair and were eventually destroyed.

Considered by many to be examples of Futurism in Ireland, it is notable that these Irish intonarumori emerged in a rural context, divorced from the art-world connections of the Italian Futurists. The Parisian life of Irish painter Mary Swanzy, considered one of the very few Irish artists to dabble in Futurism, could not have been further from the twins' existence. The Ó Laoire's work was largely unknown either in Ireland or abroad until a 1988 paper by Dr. Barry Walken opened the door to interest in their work. It has since been the focus of attention from many Irish and non-Irish noise musicians. Lee Ranaldo of Sonic Youth described how "reading about this Irish brother and sister, off in a field just coming up with this jagged, vibrant sound-world blew my mind."

The recording presented on aisteach.org was made using RBs 1, 4 and 7. The instruments were built using Sinéad Ó Laoire's notes by engineers working at University College Limerick directed by Sinéad's grandson Prionsias Madigan and Dr. Barry Walken. The construction of the instruments was funded by the Arts Council of Ireland.

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Kilbride & Malone Duo

(Niall Kilbride, b Limerick, 22 Sept. 1950; d Boston 8 April 1999; Karen Malone, b Limerick 3 Oct. 1952; d Boston 17 July 2013).

JAZZ MUSICIANS Niall Kilbride (saxophone) and Karen Malone (drums) were among the earliest practitioners of free improvisation in Ireland, beginning in and around Limerick in the very early 1970s. The two musicians played with many different experimental musicians and groups, but their duo was known for particularly discordant, noise-based performances.

The Kilbride & Malone Duo came to nation-wide attention briefly in 1974 when the British military intelligence used one of their recordings as part of a “psy-ops” operation against paramilitary groups in the North. Between 1972 and 1974 Captain Colin Wallace’s Information Policy group planted fictional press stories and created fake “Satanic Mass” settings around Northern Ireland in an effort to link these practices with paramilitary groups and scare the local populace off engaging with such groups. A bootleg recording of a highly distorted Kilbride & Malone Duo performance was left playing in an abandoned farmhouse near Larne as part of one of the Information Policy group’s “Black Mass” set-ups. An RTÉ news clip filmed at the farmhouse described the music as “played by people possessed” and “demonic”. An excerpt from the recording can be heard on aisteach.org.

Kilbride and Malone immigrated to the USA in the mid-1970s and lived in Boston for the rest of their lives, where they worked as instrumental teachers at local high schools. They played with a number of local musicians in Boston and New York including John Zorn and Lydia Lunch and are featured in several films by maverick “no-wave” Irish film-maker Vivienne Dick.

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SUNDAY WORLD
Vol. 1 No. 32 October 28, 1973 6p
DUBLIN'S ONLY COLOUR SUNDAY

RAIN TO SHINE
RAIN clearing to bright weather with isolated showers, light or moderate southerly winds force 3 to 4 along the coast, temperatures between the 11 to 14 mark. Future forecast: cold and rain.

Be-Leagured!
IRISH SOCCER—MONEY SHOCK
THIS Football League 1 of Ireland is a mere 400 from the red. And to realize that, they would have to sell their bonds and investments.

TURN TO BACK PAGE

Joan gan focal ar bith!
From LIAM MacGABHANN, Moscow, Saturday.

BLACK MAGIC FEAR IN TWO BORDER TOWNS

BY BRIAN BRENNAN

He's a little brick!— TURN TO PAGE 11

Pádraig Mac Giolla Mhuire

(Patrick Murray)

In 2009 Irish musicologist Antoine Ó Murchú was digging through the audio archives of the Irish Folklore Commission when he came across a set of bizarre recordings made in Cork in 1952. The only information noted on the tapes was “Pádraig Mac Giolla Mhuire,” a name completely unknown in Irish traditional music circles. As Ó Murchú listened to the recordings, he immediately recognized that they were a precursor of late 20th-century minimalism. Ó Murchú noted afterwards “I was shocked and immensely excited....layers of grinding drones from the fiddle and accordion with a tin whistle whirling above like some demented Eric Dolphy solo....to think that the roots of minimalism could lie in Irish outsider culture..”

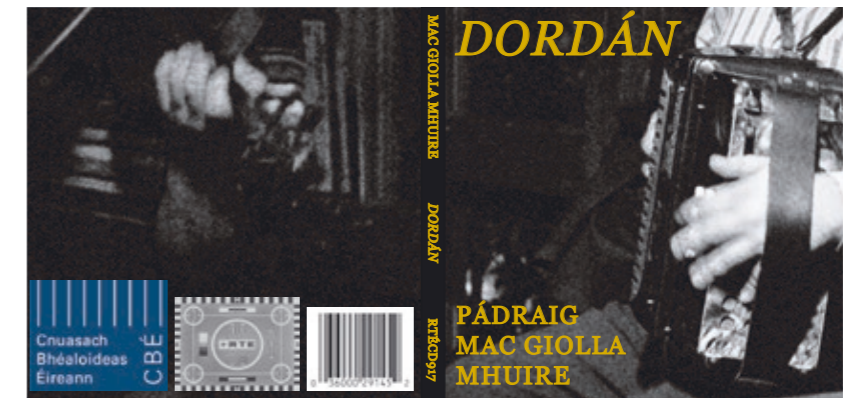
Ó Murchú immediately began researching the provenance of the tapes. From 1935 to 1971 the Irish Folklore Commission (Coimisiún Béaloideas Éireann) sent recording units around Ireland to document speech and music. Notable collectors included Séamus Ennis, Alan Lomax and Robyn Roberts. Ó Murchú discovered that the Commission recorded Pádraig playing with friends Dáithí Ó Cinnéide and Eamon Breathnach sometime during autumn 1952. The results were considered too eccentric for broadcast and the tapes languished in the archive of the Commission until they were discovered by Ó Murchú over half a century later. Further research unearthed the immigration records of Pádraig’s parents, Maggie Leary and Michael Murray (lines 5 and 30 in the ship’s manifest shown here). Both from Cork, Maggie and Michael immigrated to New York in 1921. They were married in New York in 1923, and the following year Maggie gave birth to their first and only child Pádraig. After Michael’s death from tuberculosis in 1950, Maggie and Pádraig returned to Ireland, living in Cork until they passed away in 1978 and 1992 respectively.

Michael was a gifted folk musician, his primary instrument being the uilleann pipes, an instrument which he taught his son to play. Michael’s death affected Pádraig very deeply, and he never played the pipes after the passing of his father. The structure of the pipes seemed

to be in his blood, however, most significantly the instrument’s focus on fixed drones.

Upon Pádraig’s return to Cork in 1950 he began playing with local musicians, developing a style of playing he titled “dordán” after the Irish word for drones, Ó Cinnéide, one of Pádraig’s musical collaborators from this time, has described how “he was a soft, kind lad with a strange ear...he wanted to get rid of everything except for the held notes of the pipes...no tunes, no chanter, just the drones...truth to tell, it was a very quare sound...”

DORDÁN: Pádraig Mac Giolla Mhuire will be released by Radio Telefís Éireann on CD in 2015. RTÉ have supplied the printer’s proof of the CD cover and excerpts from several different tracks can be heard at aisteach.org.



No.	Name	Age	Sex	Color of Hair	Color of Eyes	Complexion	Place of Birth	Occupation	Remarks
5	Maggie Leary	38	F	Brown	Blue	Fair	Cork, Ireland	Housewife	
30	Michael Murray	35	M	Brown	Blue	Fair	Cork, Ireland	Housewife	

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Color of Hair	Color of Eyes	Complexion	Place of Birth	Occupation	Remarks
5	Maggie Leary	38	F	Brown	Blue	Fair	Cork, Ireland	Housewife	
30	Michael Murray	35	M	Brown	Blue	Fair	Cork, Ireland	Housewife	

O’Ceallaigh, Sr Anselme

(b Galway, 12 Dec 1940; d Galway 27 April 1988).

Composer and conductor.

SR ANSELME WAS THE YOUNGEST OF 7 CHILDREN, born into a poor family in Galway city during the Second World War. Sr Anselme entered the enclosed community of Carmelite Nuns in Loughrea, Galway, at the age of 16, and remained there until her death. Over the course of her life she became responsible for all aspects of music within the convent and raised the quality of the nuns’ singing to a very high standard. Her organ playing was considered particularly fine.

In 1972 Sr Anselme came to the attention of the producers of “In the Footsteps of Hildegard”, a radio documentary series which focused on music-making by nuns in enclosed orders. The documentary was commissioned by National Public Radio in America, and produced by a team headed by musicologist Dr Judith Schäfer and anthropologist Verena Shaw. In late 1972 the team traveled to Loughrea and made various recordings, including two of Sr Anselme performing the compositions for organ she called *Virtue II* and *IV*. According to notes made by Schäfer, Sr Anselme considered her “Virtue” compositions a form of contemplative prayer. She composed and performed them for herself alone and did not normally perform them for the other nuns in the order. The *Virtues* are quite long in duration, and focus on incremental changes in organ stops. They are regarded as unique examples of drone music composition in Ireland; two examples can be heard on aisteach.org.

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SR ANSELME IN PRIVATE PERFORMANCE, 1985



A BRIEF
INTRODUCTION TO THE
GUINNESS DADAISTS

THE KILKENNY
ENGAGISTS

A Brief Introduction to the Guinness Dadaists

IRELAND WAS AN EXTREMELY CHAOTIC PLACE to live throughout the teens and 1920s. Ireland was one of the poorest countries in Europe, with over half of Dubliners living in appalling slum conditions. Coupled with this poverty the Irish were engaged in two wars – fighting World War 1, and a civil war against the British, who still occupied and ruled Ireland until 1922.

The art scene in Ireland was split between conservative painters such as William Orpen and Sean Keating, who painted in a traditional style using Irish folk scenes as subject matter, and more modern painters such as Mainie Jellett, who were interested in modern techniques such as abstract painting, and very sensitive to developments in art on the Continent. This split was again mirrored in literature - the nostalgic folk leanings of WB Yeats and his fellow Celtic revivalists were set against modernist experimental advocates such as James Joyce.

Despite their differences, all these artists were dealing with how to negotiate one's identity and nationality. Dada in Ireland emerged as a product of and a reaction to these different senses of national identity. Indeed, it can be viewed as a synthesis of these polarities.

The Irish Dadaists are often called the “Guinness” Dadaists because the three most active members of the group worked at the Guinness brewery. This was important, because unlike the other prominent artists and writers of the time, the Guinness Dadaists were working class. Guinness was a remarkably progressive employer – it was one of the few places they could have worked and actually had time to make art.

The three main protagonists of the group were Dermot O'Reilly, Kevin Leeson, seen here in the middle and on the right, and Brian Sheridan. The group was most active from ca. 1920 through 1922. Led by O'Reilly, the group put on performances, wrote sound poetry, and produced drawings and sculptures.

The Guinness Dadaists were pacifists where World War 1 was concerned, but not with regard to Irish civil war. Brian Sheridan was a member of the old IRA – this photograph shows him with a group of IRA volunteers (he is third from the left in the front). The term “Old IRA” is used to distinguish between the IRA who fought for independ-

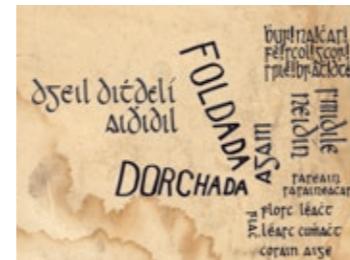


MIDDLE AND RIGHT - O'REILLY AND LEESON

DERMOT O'REILLY'S SCORES



THIRD FROM THE LEFT - BRIAN SHERIDAN



ence in the Civil War, and the terrorist force of the same name. The participation of members of the Guinness Dadaists in conflict set them apart from all other Dadaists, and may have been reason they were disconnected from other Dadaist groups.

What we do know of the Guinness Dadaists' activities comes from O'Reilly's notebooks and papers, held at Trinity College Dublin. These notebooks feature plans of performances, descriptions of sculptures made by Leeson and Sheridan, general notes and ideas. The entry dated April 12th 1921, for example, shows a rough plan for a wall hanging to be made by Leeson. Leeson was a cooper at Guinness, and the wall hanging was made from braces from barrels. O'Reilly describes in a later entry how he placed a pile of potatoes in front of the wall hanging, and stood on the potatoes to perform, wearing a green jacket which he had twisted out of shape with wire.

As well as the diaries, we have multiple examples of sound poetry written by the group. This is fortunate because very little of their drawings and sculptures survived the civil war. O'Reilly's notebooks detail the different methods of declamation that were used. Some poems were designed to be performed simultaneously creating a cacophony of sound. Sheridan in particular was very interested in different types of chanting. Other poems were extremely rhythmic and percussive.

The Guinness Dadaists' sound poetry is interesting because it is written mostly using the Irish alphabet, following Irish rules of pronunciation. Irish is one of the most difficult languages in the world to pronounce, and decoding the poetry for performance can only be done by Irish speakers. While the Guinness Dadaists' choice to work with Irish was a political one, it was not nostalgic – it was not about looking to folk culture for a sense of identity. The Guinness Dadaists used Irish as a medium rather than a symbol, if anything they sought to weaponise it. O'Reilly wrote how:

“...the Irish language is a material which can be broken into fragments which can be mobilised against all sense and meaning”

In this, they forged a completely new way of dealing not only with art and language, but also with nationality and identity.

DERMOT O'REILLY
SCORE

ΔΙΣΕΑΝ ΤΕΥΣ ΜΑΖΟΤ
Α CÚIRLE Α ΤΑΙ Α ΤΑΙ ...
ΤΥΝΔΟΙΡ ΦΥΙΖΝΕΙ
ΡΕΑCΑΙΝ ΣΟ ΒΡΥΙΛ
ΜΙΝΙΡΕΙΔΙΛ ΒΑΤΑΕΙΡ?...
ΠΛΥΠΛΥΡΑΡÍ,
ΠΛΥΠΛΥΡΑΡÍ,
ΠΛΥΠΛΥΡΑΡÍ, {ΡΤΑΙΡÍ?}
ΡΕΥΣΤΕΡΙΝ ΜÍ ΗΟΛ→→
ΒΟΛΙCΡ ; ΣΑΕΜÍ γ γ ;
ΡΤΑΙΡ ΤΕΥΣ ΙΑΙΤΡ!
ΡΤΑΙΡ ΤΕΥΣ ΙΑΙΤΡ!
ΡΤΑΙΡ ΤΕΥΣ ΙΑΙΤΡ!
ΡΤΑΙΡ ΤΕΥΣ ΙΑΙΤΡ!
ΡΤΑΙΡ ΤΕΥΣ ΙΑΙΤΡ!

The Kilkenny Engagists

Performance artists. A group of musicians and artists working in Kilkenny, 1973-75 approximately.

THE KILKENNY ENGAGISTS – known mostly in abbreviated form as the K/E – consisted of a loose affiliation of individuals who came together for a brief period in the 1970s to give performances. The group identified their aesthetic as “engagism” – a political performance art deeply engaged with contemporary issues. The group was formed mainly of graduates of the National College of Art in Dublin who all were inspired to make forays into performance-based, politically motivated art through Brian O’Doherty’s adoption of the name “Patrick Ireland” at the 1972 Irish Exhibition of Living Art in the Project Gallery, Dublin. While the group started staging some small performances from as early as 1973 – their first performance was a version of Christian Wolff’s *Stones*, performed using stones found on the street after riots in Belfast – their commitment to performance art and the fervour of their work seems to have been intensified by the 1974 visit of Joseph Beuys to Dublin for his “The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland” show at the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (now the Hugh Lane Gallery).

The K/E were strong supporters of Beuys’s efforts to establish his Free International University in Milltown, Dublin and took on Beuys’s call, in the Free International University’s manifesto, for a “creativity of the democratic” as a central tenet of their philosophy, incorporating large numbers of people, both artists and non-artists in their work. As a result, early membership of the group fluctuated wildly. By late 1974, however, membership of the group had stabilized – core members included Claire Donegan, Malachy Fallon, Nuala McCarthy, Ferdia O’Brien and Maeve Ryan, and the group is best known from the work created by these artists. The K/E’s work now focused on the performance of extremely violent, visceral, theatrical actions, usually political in subject matter, and can be seen as a sister movement of the Viennese Actionists.

The K/E’s pieces show a concern with Irish politics and the Troubles, often expressed using quite violent ends. In *Cealachan* (performed in October 1974) four members of the group installed themselves in an abandoned farm-house in Kilkenny and starved themselves for three weeks. The fifth member of the group (Fallon)

studied Brehon law and force-fed himself the food the starving members would have eaten during this period. All members of the group had to be hospitalized after this performance, an experience which seemed to deepen their commitment to extreme actions. In *All Around the Anti-Riot* (1974) Donegan and McCarthy took turns firing rubber bullets at each other across a fairy circle (the rubber bullets used by the British Army in Northern Ireland were identified as “Round, Anti-Riot, 1.5in Baton”). The medical documentation of the injuries they suffered was exhibited later.

In *Transubstantiate*, (1975) the work considered by most critics to be the most significant piece made by the K/E, the group turned their attention to the Catholic Church. The piece consisted of numerous tableaux, with performers entering dressed as priests, bishops and nuns accompanied by music composed by McCarthy and O’Brien. McCarthy and O’Brien contributed music for a number of K/E performances; the style was primitive and ritualistic, at times playful and deliberately inane, sometimes with a jazz-inflected flavor, often involving the use of traditional Irish instruments. The pair particularly favoured the use of multiple tin whistles, usually played in unorthodox keys or using non-standard playing techniques.

According to production notes, *Transubstantiate* including actions such as Fallon stripping naked, then using a sharpened crucifix to create an incision in his thigh, before urinating on the incision, and clumsily sewing the wound closed. In other parts of the piece O’Brien attempted auto-erotic asphyxiation, masturbating while using a set of rosary beads, as Donegan stuffed pieces of turf and crushed Communion wafers into her vagina.

Paul Reilly, the chief art critic for *The Irish Times* spoke about the piece in an interview at the time:

“It was horribly powerful. At first I thought ‘oh, this is ridiculous, they are just trying to cause a stir’ because you see the first part was very funny, parading in with this silly tin whistle music and them all got up as priests. But as they performed, stripping off the habits and showing us weak, pale Irish skin, something we had all been reared to think of as so shameful, as it went on, with them wreaking havoc on their own bodies with a deep sadness and commitment, I began to feel a huge anger building in me. An anger at the way this country has been warped into violence by religion, at the sectarian violence we pursue on a daily basis with aspects of our own psyches being the frontline victims, at a Church who polices and abuses so many.”

The three movements available on *aisteach.org* are taken from a performance of *Transubstantiate* given on April 12th 1975. The material has been made available by German broadcaster BWR, who recorded the first part of the performance before the obscene and violent nature of the performance resulted in the technicians refusing to participate further. The material was intended to be included on a BWR documentary on performance art which was never completed.

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CHEERIO. Tell me something new.

Did you ever hear tell of the Irish Dadaists?

Cheerio. I did not.

Well, comport yourself and engage in a reading of the material below.

Helmut O'Cinnéide (1889-1940), born of a man from Limerick and a German mother. It is believed that he met Tristan Tzara when visiting family in Germany while a teenager. He eloped with his wife Susan O'Briontaís to Algiers in 1919. Susan was born a man.

When in Algiers Susan got in a mining accident and was forced to live out the rest of her life out of Helmut's pocket. Helmut, an introverted and flamboyant man, was fascinated by the occult, rowing, and dinosaur fossils. This is exhibited throughout his work. His performance pieces involved trying to raise and speak to the spirits of dinosaurs: this was frowned upon.

His posthumous play, called 'The Death of Eider Herenderson,' was recently banned from performance.

Brian Bealaithe (1895-) is a painter, mainly focusing on sham-rocks (which were, to quote one reviewer, "never the right colour"), platonic forms and spiders. He tried to sell his paintings door-to-door from the Burren all the way down to Kerry. He considered himself a war painter during the Anglo-Irish war and caused great annoyance to the flying columns.

Tom Barry, who was acceptant of his presence at first, became outraged upon discovering that the paintings were non-figurative and contained mainly cobwebs, flying triangles and spoons. His later work

CRUISKEEN LAWN

By

MYLES NA
GOPALEEN

was mainly painted in ditches with mud and so does not survive.

The last I heard of him is that he spends his time roaming the Burren, trying to befriend goats (to the consternation of local goat farmers). He has been completely forgotten, except for this.

DID YOU KNOW ABOUT...

Oisín O'Dubhghaill (1887-1936) was said to be, at best, a charmer, and at worst, a womanizer. Many of his fellow Dadaists couldn't bear to have him in the presence of their wives. Whole Magdalene laundries were said to be erected in his name.

And so he became an outsider of an almost nonexistent group. His work mainly focused on the female form, Satanic rituals, and the restoration of something. He was kicked out of the IRB for protesting about the absence of female members while dressed as his mother.

During the Easter Rising of 1916 he walked from his home in Salthill, Galway to Dublin to join the Revolution. Arriving on the final day, he was bemused to find that the fighting had stopped, and took up residence under the O'Connell bridge.

He had mainly worked with paint, but from then on his work

became mainly performance-based, and was mainly targeted at Civil Servants on their way to, and from, work. Therefore we have little evidence of his later work.

But George Russell or AE wrote in his diary "I saw the most foolish man this morning. Unlike other vagrants around this city, this one seems to be completely possessed by the spirit of Art, declaring that 'Purgatory is for the English, and Hell for all civil servants!'"

Jim Paddy O'Mackitty (1883-1920) was a visual artist and poet (he called himself an "ealaíontóir lasmuigh") mainly active in Carrigaline, Co. Cork from 1910-1920. In December 1920 he was shot by a flying column while shouting Yeats' 'The Second Coming' at them, hence giving its location away to the a nearby British patrol. Yeats' poem had just been published in *The Dial*.

In a fit of rage, the only surviving member of said flying column, Patrick Gearney, burned every painting and poem of O'Mackitty's he could lay his hands on, which happened to be the entire corpus.

All we know of him is contained in a single diatribe from the local newspaper, *The Carrigdhoun*, on 23rd December 1920. The column praises O'Mackitty for his "hilarious" and "nonsensical" verse, but stresses the irritation many of his "performances" caused to locals.

The perplexed descriptions of the poems suggest that some may have been sound-poetry, and a description of one painting gives little clue as to its content, simply asking "as for his paintings, why bother discuss them at all?", before moving on to describe his demise.



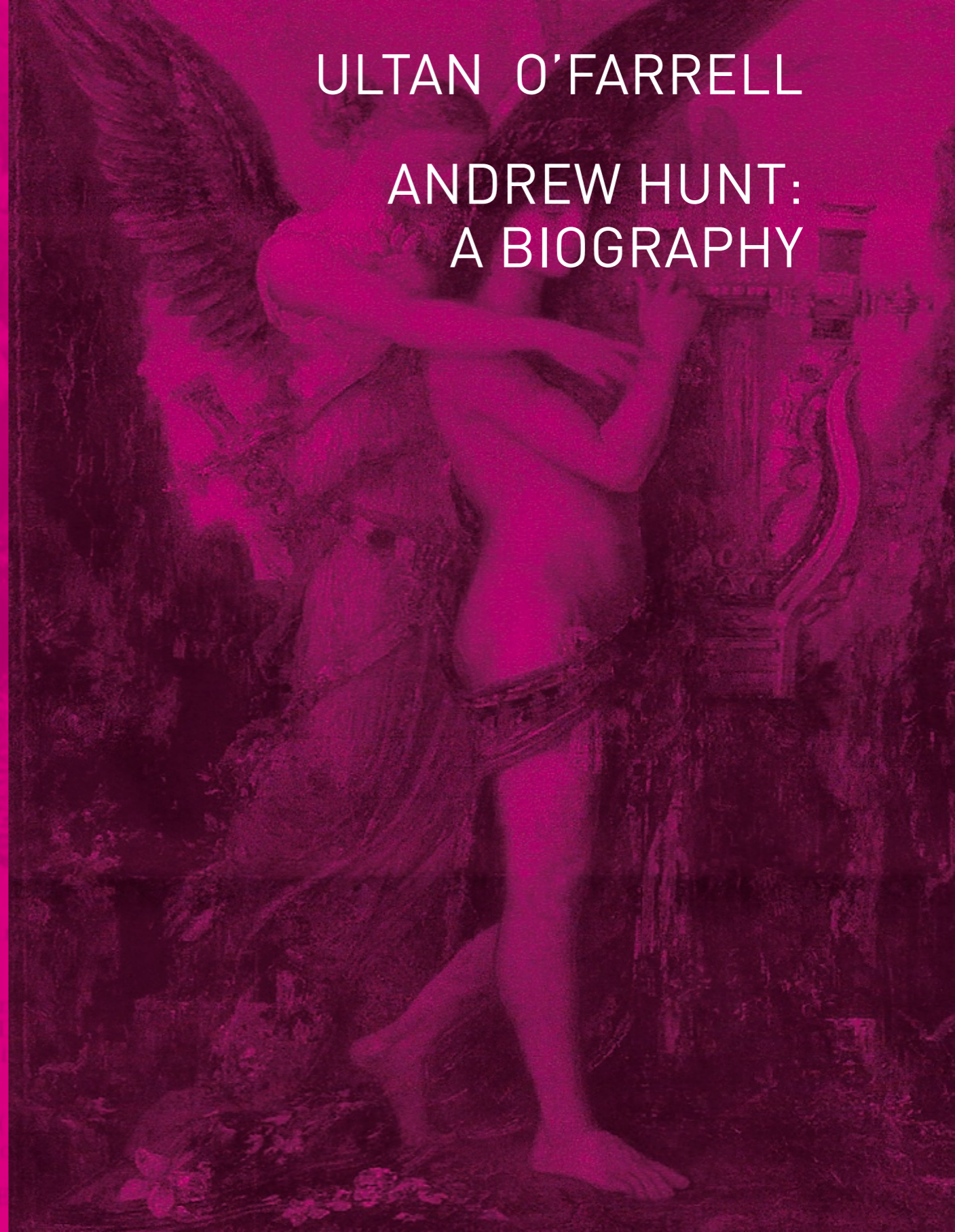
It was taken by Ross McMahon at the instance of the Pipers' Club, Dublin on Tuesday, the 2nd July, 1912.

(Galway); John Potts (Dublin); Tom Matthews (Greenanstown, Balbriggan); Carl (Drogheda); Nicholas Markey (Teacher, Dublin Pipers' Club); Daniel O'Donoghue (Hon. Sec. Dublin Pipers' Club); Risteard O. Fogarty

Clonade (Dublin Pipers' Club); John Kenny (Dublin); Hugh Newman (London); J. F. Flanagan (Dublin); Edward Mulvey (Mohill); Michael MacAughasa (Dublin Pipers' Club); John O'Reilly (Dunmore, Co., Galway); P.

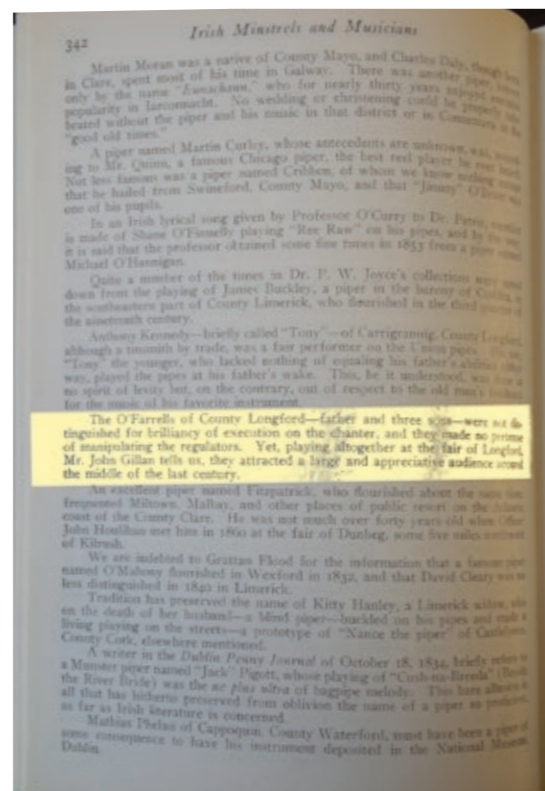
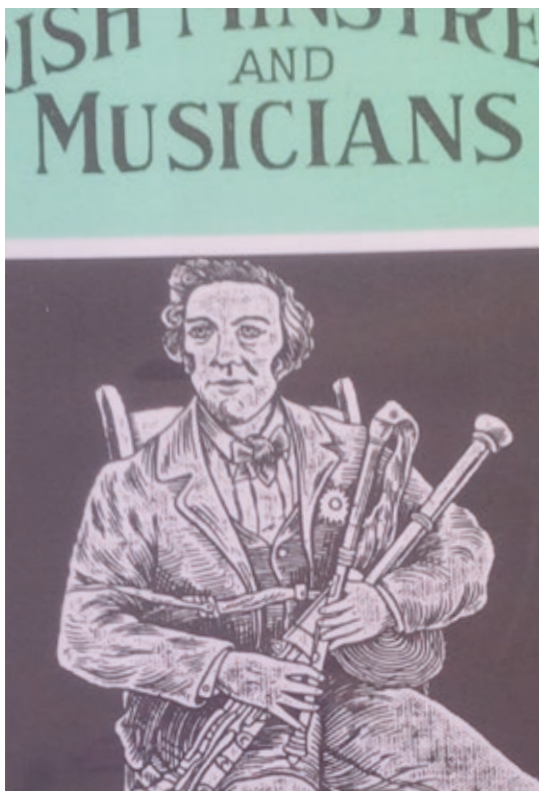
ULTAN O'FARRELL

ANDREW HUNT:
A BIOGRAPHY





PHOTOGRAPH BY ROE MCMAHON AT THE INSTANCE OF THE PIPERS' CLUB, DUBLIN, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE UNION PIPES COMPETITION IN THE ROTUNDA ON TUESDAY 2ND JULY 1912.



IRISH MINSTRELS AND MUSICIANS, AND REFERENCE TO ULTAN O'FARRELL

O'Farrell, Ultan

(b Longford, 14 February 1872; d Dublin, 23 April 1938).

Uilleann Piper.

O'FARRELL WAS THE THIRD and youngest son of Padraic O'Farrell, also a piper, and performed at regional fairs and fleadh's with his father and two elder brothers, Michael and Fiachra, in the late 19th Century. Initially achieving moderate popular acclaim as a family band, as documented in Captain Francis O'Neill's "Irish Minstrels and Musicians"¹, in later years O'Farrell was shunned by the traditional music establishment for his tendency to emphasise the sonic capacities of the uilleann pipe's regulators over the chanter as was common in standard practise. His pariah status was confirmed when his name was omitted from a group photograph taken after the Union Pipes Competition at the Rotunda (Dublin) in July 1912². After this public humiliation O'Farrell withdrew from public performance and died in obscurity in Dublin in 1938.

O'Farrell made only one known recording during his lifetime, a fragment of which survives as part of the Busby-Carelly Collection of wax cylinders at the Irish Traditional Music Archives³. The recording, from 1910, is highly unorthodox - the sound recordist's notes document that after a spoken introduction by Michael O'Shaughnessy, who was perhaps expecting a reel or jig, O'Farrell proceeded to play extremely long drones on the pipes' regulators, ignoring the chanter completely. The recordist tried to record as a faithful a version of the performance as he could, changing wax cylinders as rapidly as possible as O'Farrell played without break, but unfortunately ran out of spare cylinders after about 15 minutes; O'Farrell apparently kept playing for almost half an hour longer. This recording is presented here - it has been digitised for presentation and the recordings from the different cylinders edited together as closely as possible. For this reason, O'Farrell's work is considered an early exponent of drone music in Ireland⁴.

In the 1960's O'Farrell achieved a moderate cult status after the recording was taken up by the experimental radio station WFMU in New York and subsequently played on Radio KPFA, Pacifica Foundation station in Berkeley. O'Farrell was cited as an influence by Pauline Oliveros in a 1972 interview with Orland Boulanger⁵.

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¹ Captain Francis O'Neill, Captain Francis. 1913. *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, Chicago. Regan Printing House.

² Photograph by Roe McMahon at the instance of the Pipers' Club, Dublin, immediately after the Union Pipes Competition in the Rotunda on Tuesday 2nd July 1912.

³ The Busby-Carelly Collection of 48 wax cylinders and associated MS and TS material was acquired by the Irish Traditional Music Archives (ITMA) from Ellen Carney and digitised in 2008.

⁴ White / Boydell. 2013. *Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland*. Dublin. UCD Press.

⁵ Pauline Oliveros in interview with Orland Boulanger. American Public Media. June 1972.

Andrew Hunt

Dr. Leopold Robartes

ANDREW HUNT (1860-1946) WAS A HEDGE-SCHOOL TEACHER, occult adept, and music-maker whose practical knowledge of bardic, folklore, and mystery traditions and his connections to contemporary art in the late 19th and early 20th century led to the creation of a body of avant-garde music, written materials, and treatises.

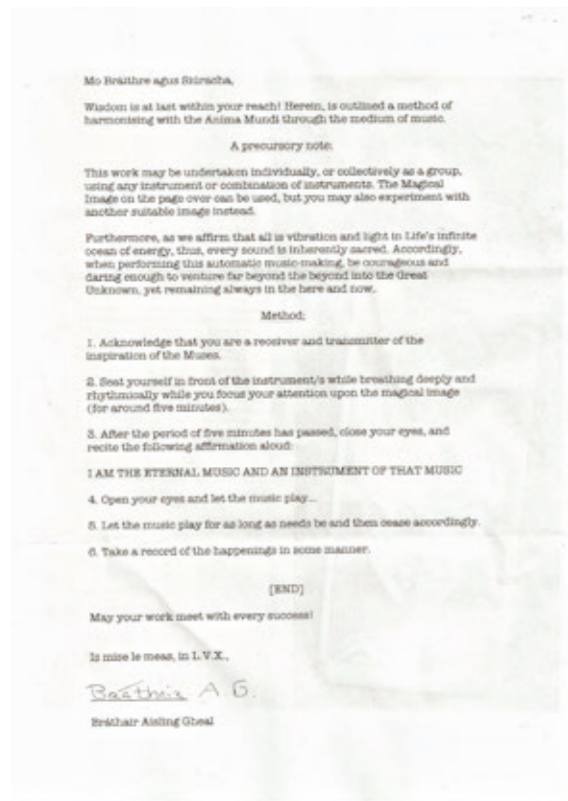
Hunt was born in Shanwallagh, Mayo to Bridget and Patrick Hunt in 1860. His mother's family were well-known as musicians and teachers while his father's family had resided in the east Mayo area for several generations. Thus, the Hunt family's well-known associations with folklore, music, and scholarship would provide the young man with a plethora of knowledge from which a singular and inimitably Irish avant-garde art emerged. In time, Hunt naturally became a musician and teacher, the latter role giving him access to an oral tradition that encompassed bardic knowledge, in addition to the curriculum of the hedge schools where he taught.¹ Crucially, the prodigious Hunt also began to corresponded with like-minded individuals from his late teens, a habit he maintained throughout his life, and from the age of nineteen he would travel the North-Western region of Ireland teaching fiddle, flute, and voice in the Irish traditional style.² Indeed, one notable account of the young master depicts him as 'handsome, brightly dressed with his gaze skyward, and the blackthorn stick over his shoulder with the satchel hanging from it'.³

It was during the last decade of the nineteenth century that Hunt came into close contact and correspondence with members of the

- 1 As Yolanda Fernández-Suárez documents, hedge schools were in operation in Ireland as late as 1892. For more, see 'An Essential Picture in a Sketch-Book of Ireland: The Last Hedge Schools', *Estudios Irlandeses*, Number 1, 2006, pp. 45-57.
- 2 Hunt's granddaughter Mary Robinson recalls an early childhood memory from around 1944: "when [Hunt would] visit her parent's home I'd often awake to hear a haunting, beautiful piece of music on the piano in the house" (correspondence with author, July 2014).
- 3 George Moore, diary entry dated 17 May 1881 (courtesy of Moore's estate). Moore's connection with the French art world and in particular the Symbolists, would prove crucial for Hunt as their friendship developed. In addition, Moore's subsequent move to London in 1890 would pave the way for Hunt's engagement with artistic circles there and in Paris, where Moore was close to a great number of prominent European artists, thinkers, and writers.

In the above example from this document, Hunt uses a monochrome reproduction of Gustave Courbet's *Hesiod and the Muse* (1891) for the purpose of providing the participant or participants with a 'Magical Image'.





secret societies An Druidh Uileach Braithreachas⁴ and the Hermetic Society of Dublin, the latter formed by William Butler Yeats in 1886. These developments would shape Hunt's life and art significantly as it was through these contacts that he would converse and engage with like-minded individuals further afield, in Great Britain, continental Europe, and the United States of America. Furthermore, Hunt was intimately familiar with *fin de siècle* European music: amongst his possessions are numerous such musical scores, the earliest of which is *Trois Sonneries de la Rose+Croix*, a rare Erik Satie score dating from 1892.

It was during the 1890s that the first written evidence of Hunt's unique approach to music-making is evidenced, via his correspondences, diaries, and most obviously, in the document known as *Automatic Music-Making* (1893).⁵ This latter two-page document,

- 4 This organization has documented roots that can be traced back to 1717. Furthermore, the Druid groves involved with the historic merging of 1717 can be traced further back in time to the tenth century when Haymo of Faversham laid the foundations of the Order; after Haymo's death, Philip Brydodd would establish Mount Haemus Grove, Oxford in 1245.
- 5 Hunt's directions for this piece are included below in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* of this document.

present in several private collections, was written by Hunt using the pen-name 'Bráithair Aisling Gheal', perhaps as part of his identity within a larger organisation or in an effort to protect his name.⁶ Nonetheless, whether Hunt was operating alone in creating the material for these 'knowledge lectures'⁷ or with a group of associates known as 'The Four Masters', he brought forth an art that fused elements of the Hermetic tradition of Pythagorean music⁸ with then current movements in contemporary European art, a project that would lay the foundation for future developments in the avant-garde.

Hunt uses a monochrome reproduction of Gustave Courbet's *Hesiod and the Muse* (1891) for the purpose of providing the participant or participants with a 'magical image' in *Automatic Music-Making* (1893).

The written directions for *Automatic Music-Making* bears witness to the creation of a ritualistic music, fully improvised, for one or more musicians using whatever instruments they see fit. Crucially, the openness to the world of sound espoused by Hunt allowed 'nonmusical' sounds to be introduced into musical practice:

*All is vibration and light in Life's infinite ocean of energy, thus, every sound is inherently sacred. Accordingly, when performing this automatic music-making, be courageous and daring enough to venture far beyond the beyond into the Great Unknown, yet remaining always in the here and now.*⁹

Within the wider context of the Irish avant-garde, the music of female composer Billie Hennessy (1882-1929) would employ similar compositional approaches to Hunt's automatic music, albeit her idiosyncratic use of such strategies led to the creation of non-improvised, automatic compositions that often extended

- 6 The music analysed in the course of this research, along with several other key written surviving documents of Hunt's own art, are sourced from materials provided by his family's estate, private collections, and his correspondences with others. Increasingly, items relating to Hunt are coming to light as scholarly interest in early Irish avant-garde art continues to develop.
- 7 *Automatic Music-Making* first appears in the privately published *Knowledge Papers*, Course C, Lesson 19, 1893.
- 8 As Joscelyn Godwin notes 'the two great insights that emerged from the Pythagorean school are, first, that the cosmos is founded on number, and second, that music has an effect on the body and soul'. (Godwin, 'Music and the Hermetic Tradition', in van den Broek & Hanegraaff (editors), *Gnosis and Hermeticism: from Antiquity to Modern Times*, New York: SUNY Press, p.183, 2003).
- 9 Andrew Hunt, *Automatic Music-Making*, written instructions, 1, 1893.

for an hour or more.¹⁰ As documented in the artist's own extensive personal diaries, Hunt certainly had an awareness and appreciation for Hennessy and her music as one entry acknowledges her as a 'True Gnosister of the Art'.¹¹

Significantly, Hunt's private correspondence reveals the extent to which he engaged with avant-garde artists during the twentieth century. His love of French symbolism¹² led to an invitation to visit Marcel Duchamp -- the 'modern alchemist artist'¹³ -- at his Puteaux home in the period prior to the outbreak of World War I. Here, among the company of Sonia Delaunay, Juan Gris, Fernand Leger, and Francis Picabia, Hunt discussed the Golden Ratio, Orphism, and the role of art in relation to the Spirit. Subsequently, on his return to Ireland, Hunt would explore the issues discussed on his visit to the Parisian suburbs, and in a letter expressing his gratitude to Duchamp, he noted 'the need for new forms of representation to express that which is inexpressible, a post-symbolist art for [Hunt quoting Kandinsky] "the great epoch of the Spiritual [...] had already begun yesterday".¹⁴ Thus, Hunt's engagement with his peers detail an artist who relentlessly sought to perfect his art, seeking a myriad of methods by which to transform consciousness through the creation of art and by the art itself.¹⁵

Another excellent source of documentary evidence that demonstrates the influence of Hunt's music and the 'pioneering Spirit'¹⁶ therein is to be found in the correspondence of American composer Henry Cowell and Irish poet John Varian between 1917-1918. Both Cowell and Varian had taken to study Irish mythology and folklore during this time, and it is apparent that fellow Theosophists brought

the work of the redoubtable Hunt to their attention. Furthermore, Cowell had obtained a typed copy of *Automatic Music-Making* along with other of Hunt's music, including *Poem for Kettle, Mantel, and Table* (1918), and the proto-Fluxus-minimalist work *Whhhsst!* (1931).¹⁷ This latter piece comprised a set of performance directions that instruct the solo vocal performer to 'extemporise a one-note hieratic vocalisation interspersed with long periods of silence using the word "Whhhsst"'.¹⁸

In addition to musical scores and written directions, Hunt also wrote a treatise on sound-colour correlation that built upon theories of his contemporaries Paul Foster Case and Edward D. Maryon. In particular, Hunt's insights into the magical properties of sound and its relation to spiritual traditions -- most especially in healing, ritual, and transforming consciousness are outlined. As further examples of Hunt's written music and treatises come to light, documents uncovered during the course of this research suggest that recordings of his oeuvre may exist also.¹⁹

In his latter works from 1930-1944, Hunt applied the knowledge of the power of sound in conjunction with Pythagorean tunings, improvised sean-nós singing in a florid Connaught style, and aleatory procedures. *Now, Here* (1939) best exemplifies the combination of these diverse compositional approaches with instrumentation that included three gramophones, three radios, and three typewriters. This piece, the last documented music by Hunt, is a fitting finale for an artist whose music connected archaic traditions with the vanguard of contemporary art.

10 Erik Satie's influence was another point of intersection between these two artists. As an artist who functioned on the fringes of a largely indifferent society, Satie's music and resolute individualism was a great inspiration to both: Hennessy's *Dada's Mama* (1917) and Hunt's *Poem for Kettle, Mantel, and Table* (1918) were inspired by Satie, with the latter piece dedicated: 'To the great phonometrician of Paris' (Satie had declared himself to be a phonometrician, 'he who measures sound', in 1912).

11 Andrew Hunt quoted in his artist's diary, 8 November 1919, courtesy of the Hunt family estate.

12 For example, see the artist's use of Courbet's *Hesiod and the Muse* (1891) as a magical image in *Automatic Music-Making* (Figure 2 of this document).

13 For more, see John F. Mofitt, *Alchemist of the Avant Garde: The Case of Marcel Duchamp*, New York: SUNY Press, 2003.

14 Hunt, letter to Duchamp, dated 2 January 1914.

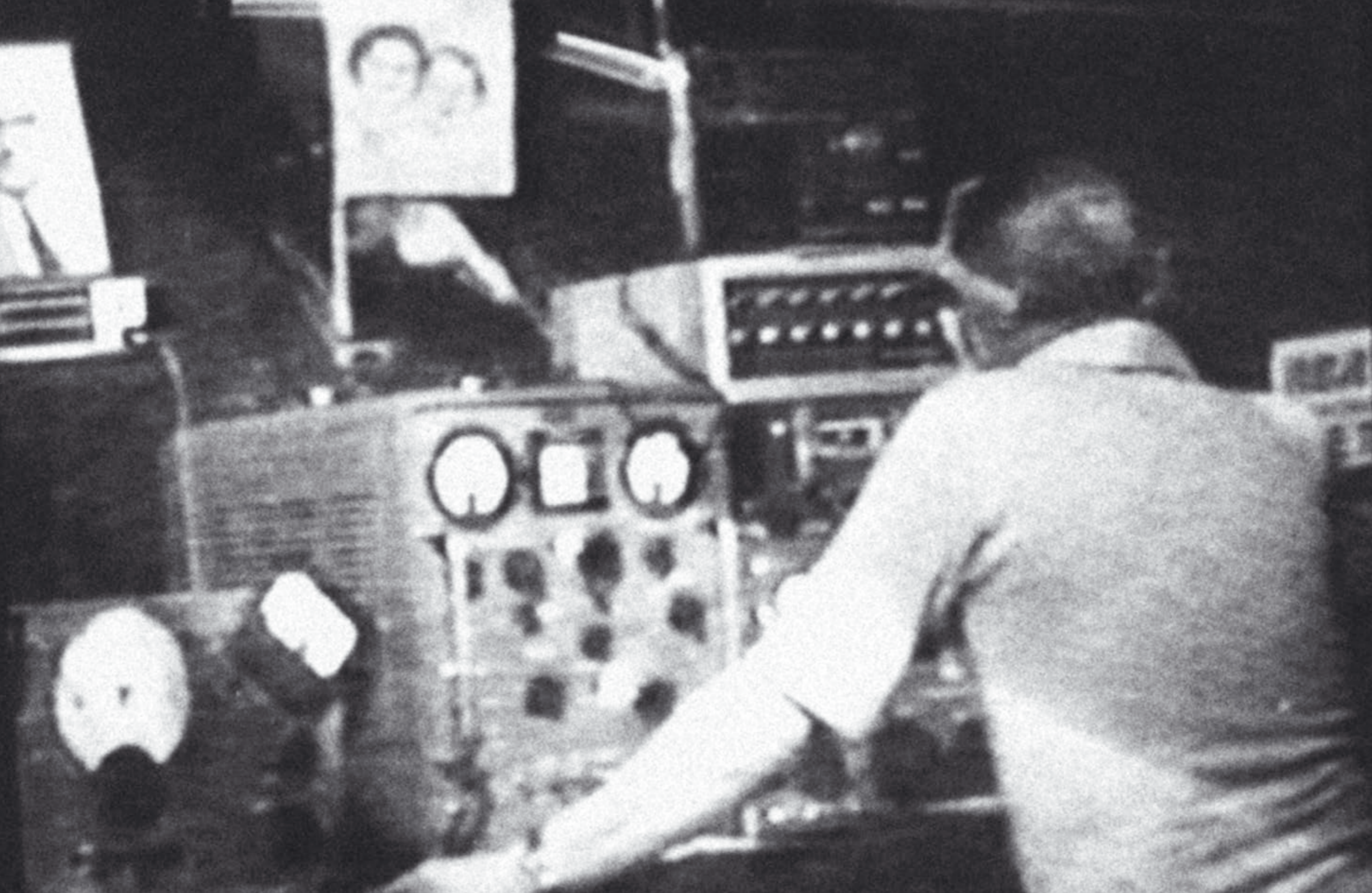
15 As such, Duchamp's own exploration of alchemical, magical, and mesmeric techniques may be viewed in a new light, and as Professor John F. Mofitt notes regarding techniques such as mesmerism 'in its strictly artistic applications, its corollary became "automatism," a somnambulist tactic producing the Duchampian procedure of an "art made by chance". (John F. Mofitt, *Alchemist of the Avant Garde: The Case of Marcel Duchamp*, New York: SUNY Press, 2003, p. 28.)

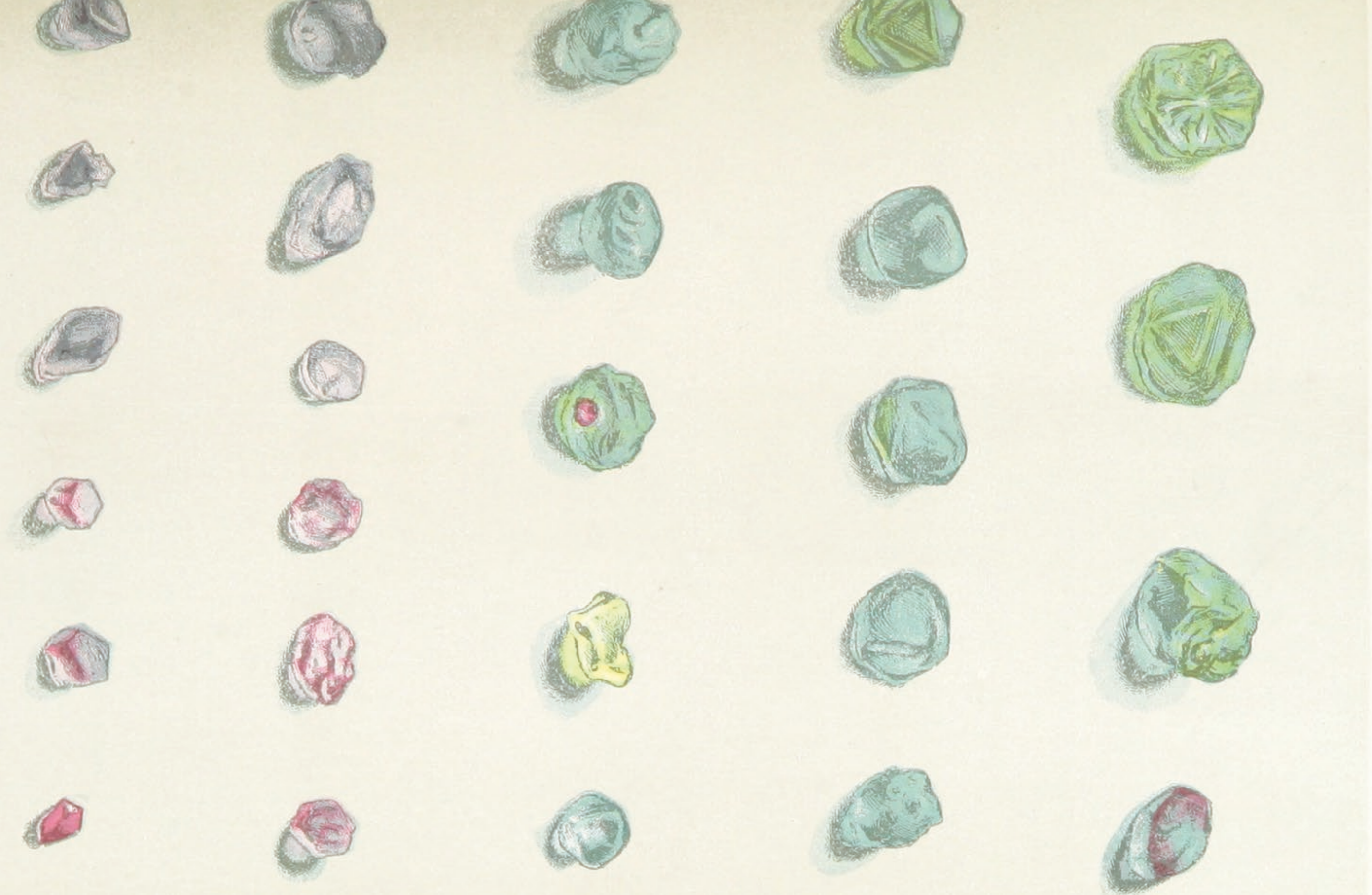
16 Henry Cowell quoted in a letter to John Varian dated 17 September 1917.

17 In 1933, Cowell tutored John Cage, an artist whose meditative and open-ended approach to sound was perhaps foreshadowed by Hunt's pieces, most especially *Whhhsst!*

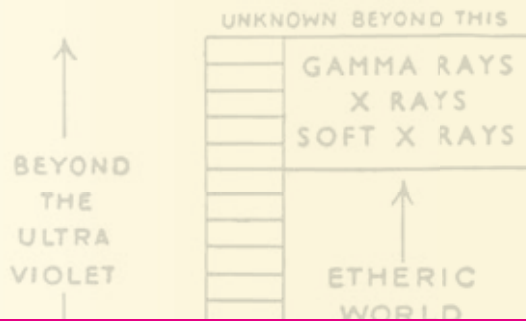
18 Andrew Hunt, written directions for *Whhhsst!*, 1931.

19 These recordings, reportedly made between 1929-1931, may yet prove to be among the earliest recorded documents of Irish avant-garde art. However, the private estate holding Hunt's recorded music is not willing to make these documents available at present.





VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE VIBRATIONS



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