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HAUNTING NOISES: IRISH POPULAR MUSIC AND THE DIGITAL ERA

Michael Lydon, M.A.

Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.
to the National University of Ireland, Galway

Research Supervisor: Dr. Méabh Ní Fhuartháin

Centre for Irish Studies
School of Geography, Archaeology, and Irish
Studies
College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic
Studies
National University of Ireland, Galway

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	
Noise's Revolution in the Digital Era	1
CHAPTER ONE	
Perfect Sound Forever to Digital Free Zone	13
Prelude: The Noisy Library of Babel and the Digital Free Zone	13
Introduction: Responding to the Noisy Digital	15
The First Phase of Music's Digitalisation	16
The Second Phase of Music's Digitalisation.....	21
The Return of the King Format	27
Noise as a Trigger of a Sonic Possible World.....	31
Hauntological Metalanguage of Remembered <i>Punctums</i>	39
Conclusion.....	45
CHAPTER TWO	
Hear the Noisy Celtic Tiger Roar:	
Damien Dempsey and an Artisan use of Noise	48
Prelude: A Story of Difference.....	48
Introduction: A Noisy Response	50
Our Damo: The Irish Popular Music Industry Responds	51
Dempsey and the Haunting of John McCormack's Wall.....	57
The Celtic Warrior and Bubblegum Pop.....	62
The Sounds of the Raconteur of the Marginalised	67
Our Sweet Guide: Dempsey, Embalming and Spectral Servitude	71
Seizing the Day, Bringing the Noise	76
Shots and a Seriously Noisy Nation	83
Dempsey's Tradition of Being a Noisy Tribune of the World.....	90
Conclusion.....	94

CHAPTER THREE

Our Noisy Woman: Sinéad O'Connor and the Feminisation of Noise.....	97
Prelude: Sinéad, The Singer, and the Irish People	97
Introduction: Our Noisy Woman.....	99
A Noisy Woman Emerges.....	100
Creating the Noise of Others	106
A Noisy Woman with a Haunting Noisy Voice	109
The Haunting 'She' in Visual Form.....	115
A Noisy Woman's Mastery of Environmental and Media Noise	120
The Developing Noisiness of a Noisy Woman	128
The Two Phases of Noise by a Noisy Woman.....	134
Conclusion.....	143

CHAPTER FOUR

Even Better Than the Real Thing:

The Future of Noise in Irish Popular Music.....	145
Prelude: Noisy Bogmen	145
Introduction: A Noisy Island's Future	148
Weapons of Mass Deception and Record Production	149
Noise's Virtue to Challenge Sound Ireland.....	155
Noise as an Ill-bred <i>Punctum</i> and Spatial Ownership.....	160
David Kitt, Fionn Regan and the Liberation of Noise	165
<i>Skylarkin'</i> and Noise's Affordance of Virtue in Death	171
Conclusion.....	175

CONCLUSION.....	177
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BIBLIOGRAPHY	181
---------------------------	------------

DISCOGRAPHY.....	200
-------------------------	------------

FILMOGRAPHY	205
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DECLARATION

I, the Candidate, certify that the Thesis is all my own work and that I have not obtained a degree in this University or elsewhere on the basis of any of this work.

Michael Lydon

Date:

ABSTRACT

This research examines the response of Irish popular musicians to the changing modes of reception and production in the digital era. In this examination, the use of both media and environmental noise in the recording process is revealed to be crucial in facilitating attentive listening. To undertake this assessment, the temporal framework of Irish popular music's digital era is shown to correspond with its revolutionary period between the early 1990s and mid-2010s. In addition, central to assessing the challenges facing Irish popular musicians is a contextualisation of the impact of dominant modes of reception in the digital era. To define a response to the creative impact of these dominant modes of reception, this study focuses on the production of an album and the inventive use of music, silence, and importantly noise to construct what the research outlines as a temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. The musicians whose response is examined in this thesis include Damien Dempsey, Sinéad O'Connor, and Mic Christopher.

To undertake this examination of Irish popular musicians' response to the digital era, the thesis utilises the multi interpretive modes of enquiries afforded in Irish Studies to broaden an understanding of the response. In adopting an Irish Studies approach to cultural analysis, this research incorporates critical theories from Popular Music Studies; Sound Studies; Literature; Poststructuralist theories relating to hauntology and the omnipresence of the photographic image; and phonomusicology to arrive at a new critical approach to examine popular music's creative response to the digital era. Ultimately, the thesis uncovers that Irish popular musicians in their response to the digital era utilise noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to construct temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction that propel the industry into a newly formed future; thus, revealing the haunting noises of Irish popular music in the digital era.

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INTRODUCTION

Noise's Revolution in the Digital Era

'Sound is the key issue: hasn't the history of recorded music been a constant search for clearer, bigger, brighter, more flawless, more thrilling sound?'

Peter Doggett /Electric Shock: From the Gramophone to the iPhone—125 Years of Pop Music/

'There is no music, no mediation, no son [sound] without noise.'

Marie Thompson /Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism/

Haunting Noises

Michael Chanan in *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording Music and its Effects on Music*, writes that 'today the musics of every society and every historical period are instantly available at the touch of a button ... the result is that musical experience has radically altered' (9). Steve Jones and Amanda Lenhart assert that 'if the Internet's impact on the music industry's distribution practice has been under-scrutinised, then research into the Internet's social consequences for popular music audiences is invisible' (186). This thesis serves as the first comprehensive examination of Irish popular music's response to changing modes of reception and production in the digital era. In the research, I uncover that Irish popular musicians' respond to the era by using acoustic noise in the recording process to realise specific creative virtues. Thus, the thesis is wholly original in revealing the complex use and signalling intent of noise as a sonic component by musicians and recordists in the recording process.

I reveal that Irish popular musicians' response to the digital era is merited for two specific reasons: first, the omnipresence of both historical and contemporary music accessible via digital technology makes it difficult for contemporary performers to establish and/or sustain critical and commercial recognition; and second, the advent of specific digital technologies has seen the development of disconnected practices of listening which realises creative challenges for contemporary recording artists. Thereby, this thesis is innovative in assessing Irish popular music's response to radically altered musical experiences in the digital era, foregrounding audience disconnect as warranting artist creative reaction. The primary creative reaction by Irish popular musicians I examine is the album, with close readings of particular tracks indicating the creative intent realised in the use of both media and environmental noise

(two characterisations of noise I define in the first chapter of the thesis). Marie Thompson writes of noise that it ‘slips between different disciplinary fields: ‘it carries through the walls that separate science, acoustics, economics, politics, arts, information theory and law’ (1). In using the signifier noise, I recognise the ambiguity of the term. However, I primarily assess noise from an acoustic perspective, with both media and environmental noise signalling noise’s sonic agency. Thompson also notes, ‘Noise’s conceptual nosiness means that it often functions as a floating signifier: it can be used to talk about almost anything’ (ibid.). Therefore, I also utilise the floating signification of noise to examine economics, gender politics and nationality; much as Jacques Attali does in the influential *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1977), and Gerry Smyth does in *Noisy Island: A Short History of Irish Rock: A Short History of Irish Popular Music* (2005).

Throughout this research, I recognise the crucial role that a recordist has in fashioning a response to the digital era. Samantha Bennett in *Modern Records, Maverick Methods: Technology and Process in Popular Music Record Production 1978-2000*, suggests that ‘the term recordist is used to describe those individuals who are in some way responsible for either part or whole of a recording process’ (1). As in line with Bennett’s definition, I then ‘apply the term “recordist” as an “umbrella term” to incorporate producers, sound engineers, programmers, tape-ops, as well as confluences of the artist-engineer/artist-producer role’ (ibid.). Hence, central to my examination of the response of Irish popular musicians to the digital era, is an understanding that a musician either as a recordist, or alongside other individuals that can be construed as recordists, implement the use of noise as part of an inherited store of knowledge to signal meaning during the recording process as a response to the creative challenges of the digital era.

In Pursuit of Haunting Noises: Methodology

To foreground the response of Irish popular music to the digital era, as opposed to a broader response of popular musicians, I utilise the multi interpretive modes of enquiries afforded in Irish Studies to broaden an understanding of the response. In adopting an Irish Studies approach to cultural analysis, I incorporate critical theories from Popular Music Studies; Sound Studies; Digital Media Studies; Literature; Poststructuralist theories relating to hauntology and the omnipresence of the photographic image; and phonomusicology, ‘an umbrella term that encompasses an

assortment of approaches toward studying recorded music where the focus is on recordings rather than on other forms of media (or on live performance)' (Bates and Bennett 1). To incorporate these critical theories, I then arrive at a new methodology to examine the impact of the digital era on Irish popular music, and popular music in a broader sense.

In arriving at this new methodology, I develop a number of terms unique to this research. The first of these is the practice of 'i ubiquitous listening' (i as in iPod/iTunes). This term is employed to signal disconnected listening practices, or passive hearing, and derives from existing research outlined in the first chapter by Simon Reynolds, Anahid Kassabian, and Paul Hegarty. In the course of the thesis, I show that i ubiquitous listening is one of the most pressing challenges for popular musicians who desire the reception of their music by attentive listeners.

In the thesis, I repurpose theories from the field of Sound Studies to reframe and rename the concept of a song, and in some instances an album, to the alternative 'temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction'. The purpose of using the term temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, is to foreground the intent of musicians and recordists to facilitate attentive listening upon reception. Crucially, as a signifier a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction (or temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction in plural form) incorporates a number of similar signifying characteristics as a 'song', 'track, or 'release'; thus, it includes music, sound, noise, and vocals. However, using the signifier temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction highlights the complex choices undertaken by recordists to facilitate attentive listening. In developing this term, I adapt Salomé Voegelin's theories on sonic geography, repurposing her concept of a 'sonic possible world' (*Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound* 71) to signal the significant tropes of immersion, interpretation, performance, inhabitation, and traversing as realised upon attentive listening. Thereby, the thesis uses the signifier temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction to enable an assessment of the complex use and signalling intent of sonic components by musicians and recordists in the recording process; thus revealing the implementation of an inherited store of knowledge to signal meaning and facilitate attentive listening.

Central to this research's assessment of Irish popular music's response to the digital era is the crucial role noise undertakes in facilitating attentive listening. To examine noise's haunting presence as a response to the digital era, I recontextualise Jacques Derrida's neologism hauntology and Roland Barthes' philosophical reflection

on photography and his use of the term *punctum* to arrive at a new critical term, a 'hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*'. Derrida develops the theory of hauntology to examine the haunting impact of Marxism in European politics. However, its use in assessing popular music is not without precedent with Reynolds' adopting the theory in his examination of retro culture and the creation of 'old-timey and elegiac atmospheres' (331); further instances of hauntological assessment of music are revealed in the coming chapters. In repurposing hauntology, this research reveals the creative challenges afforded popular musicians in establishing a listening public given that they and the listening public are haunted by the spectres of music's past. As will be outlined in greater detail in the first chapter, I adapt Derrida's theory to indicate the importance of spectral servitude, gesturing to the past and 'positive conjuration' (Derrida 108). Thereafter revealing that Irish popular musicians in serving their past, or gesturing to it with noise, are able to positively address the creative challenges of the digital era, creating, or conjuring, new music influenced by the past.

In using hauntology alongside Barthes' *punctum*, this thesis is unique in aligning these concepts in the examination of popular music. As will be outlined in greater detail in the first chapter, Barthes uses the term *punctum* to signal specific haunting virtues he finds in photographic images; a point of analysis particularly enriching for assessing popular music as Barthes' original use is concerned with the omnipresence of the photographic image. For this reason, I pair the theory with hauntology to further assist an examination of Irish popular musicians' response to the creative challenges realised with the omnipresence of influential spectres. This assessment reveals that Irish popular musicians find in their spectral servitude, or their positive spectral serving, noise as part of an inherited metalanguage that they can use as a positive creative virtue, or a *punctum*, in the recording process. In this research, I then develop a new critical insight that situates noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* that is utilised in the creative process. This work is then the first in-depth examination of popular music's hauntological response to the digital era, and concurrent progression into a post-digital era, that situates noise as a crucial sonic component utilised by creative practitioners. It thereby provides a comprehensive insight into Irish popular music and the digital era's haunting noises.

Irish Popular Music

In his preface to *Made in Ireland: Studies in Popular Music*, John O’Flynn is correct in writing that: ‘Defining Irish popular music is a complex task. No more than anywhere else on the globe, part of the problem lies in negotiating the discursive boundaries and social distinctions that have historically delineated particular music styles’ (xii). In this research, I define Irish popular music in line with Julian Vignoles’ well-worn assertion on the subject:

‘Irish music’ is in one sense a flag of convenience for a rather tatty but indigenous industry struggling against smooth streamlined products from multinational companies ... It has come to mean ... music published in Ireland or recorded in Ireland or performed by an Irish artist or someone resident in the country, or a combination of all of these. (70)

In this study ‘Irish music’ is then broadly defined as that of a recording by an Irish artist, or an Irish resident, either in Ireland or outside of the country, and is published in Ireland. However, the Irish musicians I have selected as case studies in the research are proportionately associated with Dublin, reflecting the centrality of the capital city to national and international interpretations of Irish popular music’s sound(s) and scene(s) (Mangaoang and O’Flynn 8). In terms of assessing the ‘popular’ aspect of Irish popular music, Smyth in *Noisy Island: A Short History of Irish Popular Music* correctly writes that ‘every term of that phrase is loaded with difficulties and ambivalences that complicate the task of analysis; when combined, they present a daunting complex network of affiliations and prejudices with which any critic is obliged to engage’ (5). Therein, in the thesis I use a similar broad definition for the signifier ‘popular’ to refute any ambiguity. I define popular in opposition to Theodor W. Adorno’s desire to differentiate between ‘serious’ and ‘popular’: ‘Popular music, which produces the stimuli we are here investigating, is usually characterized by its difference from serious music’ (301). Simon Frith writes, ‘all twentieth-century pop [popular] music, is a commercial form, music produced as a commodity, for a profit, distributed through mass media as mass culture’ (261). In spite of this, the commodification or popularity of popular music does not negate or marginalise its transcendent qualities or its social functions.

Frith defines these social functions in four parts. First, popular music answers questions of identity: ‘We use pop songs to create for ourselves a particular sort of

self-definition’ (264); which pertains equally to cultural and nationalist forms of self-definition as popular music has always had an ‘important nationalistic function’ (ibid. 265). Second, popular music ‘functions in managing the relationship between our public and private emotional lives’ (ibid.). Third, popular music functions as a way to shape popular memory, ‘to organise our sense of time’ (ibid. 266), as Frith maintains that ‘One of the most obvious consequences of music’s organisation of our sense of time is that songs and tunes are often the key to our remembrance of things past’ (ibid.). Finally, popular music is something possessed: ‘fans own their favourite music’ (ibid. 267); a point open to conjecture given the changing modes of reception in the digital era or the ‘post-artefact age’ (Doggett 603). In this research, I thus define Irish popular music as broadly a commercially released product by an Irish artist, or an Irish resident, either in Ireland or outside of the country, that fulfils one or all the social functions of popular music.

The Digital Era

The timeframe for Irish popular music’s digital era is bookended by the release of two particular U2 albums: the critical and commercially successful album *Achtung Baby*, released in November 1991, and *Songs of Innocence*, released in September 2014. While these two U2 albums usefully bookend the digital era, U2 are not a primary case study analysed in this research. Rather, their inclusion is in recognition of U2’s canonical or haunting position in Irish popular music.

Reynolds and Joy Press write that with *Achtung Baby*, U2 ‘demolished their persona, their distinctive sound, and their reputation as chaste and pompously pious. They went out of their way to absorb ideas from underground rock, defacing their sound with industrial clangour and funk up the previously inert rhythm section’ (82-83). In terms of serving as a marker for the beginning of the digital era, *Achtung Baby*’s critical and commercial success illustrate the rewards that were attainable in addressing the era’s changing modes of reception and production. In relation to signalling the end of the digital era, and the beginning of a post-digital era, *Songs of Innocence*, is an appropriate marker given the caustic public reaction centred around the intrusive nature of the album’s release. *Songs of Innocence* was given to every user of iTunes for free, whether users wanted it or not, a giveaway *Wired* describes as ‘devious’ and ‘worse than spam’ (Assar). To negate the fallout, Bono apologised:

Oops, I'm sorry about that ... I had this beautiful idea and we kind of got carried away with ourselves. Artists are prone to that kind of thing. Drop of megalomania, touch of generosity, dash of self-promotion and deep fear that these songs that we poured our life into over the last few years mightn't be heard. There's a lot of noise out there. I guess we got a little noisy ourselves to get through it. (Booth)

The unwanted intrusive nature of the album is thereby emblematic of the challenges and pitfalls that face Irish popular musicians in their response to changing modes of reception and production in the digital era. If U2, the 'Goliath of Irish popular music' (McLaughlin and McLoone, *Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 8), are unable to get their music heard, what chance have emerging Irish popular performers? It seems that the digital era, with the omnipresence of music and changing modes of reception and production, can be understood as the era of noise, a time when only the noisiest of bands can be heard.

In determining the timeframe, I do not suggest that digital modes of reception or production were not in use, or influential, before or after these releases. Instead, the research understands this timeframe broadly correlates to when the digitalisation of popular music was at its most revolutionary in Irish popular music. In particular, this relates to the commodification of music on dominant modes of reception throughout the revolutionary period. Kim Cascone suggests that it is the "post-digital" [era] because the revolutionary period of the digital information age has surely passed' (12). Ewa Mazierska et al. write that 'significantly, terms such as "post-digital" and "post-internet" do not refer to the period when digital technologies or the internet ceased to operate or matter but, on the contrary, when they became ubiquitous' (3). In this research, I focus on the revolutionary period of the digital era, when changing modes of reception and production warrant a greater response from Irish popular musicians. As will be outlined in greater detail in the first chapter, an assessment of the digital era's impact in relation to Irish popular music forms two phases of digitalisation, which run concurrent to dominant modes of music reception. *Achtung Baby* therefore serves as an emblem for the cultural dominance of the compact disc (CD) as a mode of reception. In juxtaposition, *Songs of Innocence* signals the end of the digital revolution as it pertains to the Moving Picture Experts Group Layer-3 Audio (MP3) as a commercially available mode of reception.

In relation to the production of sound and music, the timeframe under examination can equally be construed as an ‘era of technological hybridity and unique workflows’ (Bennett, *Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 55). Bennett further affirms this point by indicating that the ‘reality is that most recordists and workplaces assimilate technologies from both domains [digital and analogue] into the same workflow’ (9). Therefore, in terms of assessing the revolutionary period in digital media I will not perpetuate the so-called ‘analogue vs. digital debate’ (ibid.), but alternatively consider the complex decision making undertaken by recordists. In addition, the thesis foregrounds the commercialisation of Irish popular music in the digital era, although at points assessing non-commercial modes of listening such as file-sharing sites. For this reason, assessing the digitalisation, and not the digitisation of music is given precedence. Digitisation is the process of converting information from a physical format into a digital one. When this process is leveraged to improve business processes, it is called digitalisation. The response of Irish popular musicians examined is not a luddite refute of technological developments in the reception and production of popular music. Nor, for that matter, do sentiments relatable to nostalgia solely mediate a response. Instead, this research views the response of Irish popular musicians to the changing modes of reception and production in the digital era to be one concerned with utilising a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to facilitate attentive listening. The research then reveals a response that is mediated with the present and future in mind, and not solely the past.

Central to this work’s definition of the digital era is the purported renouncing of noise as a sonic component in the production of sound and music with digitalisation. However, as will become apparent, given the ungovernability of noise, and musicians and recordists choosing to use its many creative virtues, the research reveals noise’s significance as a sonic component in the digital era, and concurrently the post-digital era. Thompson in *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism*, writes that ‘noise and sound become largely synonymous—it remains unclear what it is that makes noise “noise” and differentiates noise from sound’ (2). Nonetheless, as indicated I use noise in this thesis primarily along the dual lines of media and environmental noise, with the use of both, individually and in unison, to be relayed as crucial sonic components utilised by Irish popular musicians in response to the digital era.

Peter Doggett suggests ‘Sound is the key issue: hasn’t the history of recorded music been a constant search for clearer, bigger, brighter, more flawless, more thrilling sound?’ (604-605). In the near twenty-three years between the release of *Achtung Baby* and *Songs of Innocence*, the revolutionary period of the digital era elicited a response by Irish popular musicians that was fated. In spite of the era’s promise of a progressive linear narrative of technological advancement, the quest for unprecedented availability of thrilling flawless sound resulted in pervasive patterns of music reception that altered the creation of music, or the creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Throughout the revolutionary period of the digital era, Irish popular musicians thereby required the creative virtues of a neglected sonic component to facilitate their response. Thompson writes, ‘There is no music, no mediation, no *son* [sound] without noise’ (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 3). In this research, I reveal the revolutionary role of noise in Irish popular musicians’ response to the digital era, disclosing their use of noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to create temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. The thesis thus pursues the haunting noises of Irish popular music that are realised in response to the digital era.

In Pursuit of Haunting Noises: The Chapters

To conduct this work’s critical undertaking of Irish popular music the research is outlined in four chapters. The first of these, ‘Perfect Sound Forever to Digital Free Zone’, begins by outlining the first phase of music’s digitalisation; a timeframe in auditory history that is best demonstrated in the impact of the CD, and notions of sound fidelity that sought to subsume noise’s importance as a creative sonic component. Thereafter, the chapter reviews the second phase of music’s digitalisation and the impact of the MP3, examining its imperfect nature while interrogating the politics of acceptance required to facilitate its dominance as a mode of reception. I then outline further ubiquitous listening, revealing the practice as the most pressing challenge to Irish popular musicians, and the reception of popular music in general, which in turn sees unlikely responses such as the re-emergence of the vinyl record. In all, the significant impact of both phases of music’s digitalisation highlights the merit of a response to the digital era by Irish popular musicians. As the first chapter continues, I underpin the key critical theories that are in use in this thesis. This involves outlining further a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction and its worth as a signifier to examine attentive listening. I then incorporate research by Thompson, Hegarty, and other

theorists of noise to explore in greater detail the characteristics of media and environmental noise. Finally, I recontextualise in greater detail Derrida's critical theory hauntology and Barthes' concept of a *punctum*, to solidify a definition of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered punctums.

Chapter two, 'Hear the Noisy Celtic Tiger Roar: Damien Dempsey and an Artisan Use of Noise', utilises the critical analysis from the previous chapter to begin an exploration of Irish popular music's response to the changing modes of reception and production in the digital era. The chapter focuses on a singular case study, examining in detail the work of Irish singer-songwriter Damien Dempsey. I begin the chapter by focusing on critical musings on Dempsey that position him and his music as a response to the digital era and concurrent socio-political happenings as they relate to 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland. To broaden this analysis, I interrogate industry reports and critical analysis that speculate on Irish popular music's 'authentic' qualities and the commercial worth in foregrounding 'Irishness'. Once Dempsey's position as a response to the digital era is assessed, I review Dempsey's own hauntological creative response to the era. To augment this assessment, the chapter further outlines hauntological analysis, repurposing Jean Hogarty's theory on a 'hauntological structure of feeling' (3). Dempsey's response to the digital era is then examined in greater detail, with an initial assessment on his lyrical foregrounding of his working-class background, political bombast, and an understood persona as an artisan raconteur of the marginalised. I then review the sonic components of Dempsey's work, adopting a theory from Devereux et al. pertaining to 'sound Ireland' to examine Dempsey's signalling of his Irishness. Importantly, this review is contextualised by an examination of the close cultural alignment between sound reproduction, the photographic image, and embalming. To frame this examination, the thesis positions Dempsey's response to the digital era and his hauntological reverence for deceased musicians alongside a passage from John McGahern's influential novel *That They May Face the Rising Sun*. Moreover, central to this critical analysis is Jonathan Sterne's influential *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, a monograph that highlights the importance of viewing sound reproduction as a process, thereby revealing its irreducible humanity, sociality, spatiality, and temporality. Finally, I go into greater detail on Dempsey's use of both media and environmental noise, revealing noise's crucial role in signalling the process of sound production.

The third chapter, ‘Our Noisy Woman: Sinéad O’Connor and the Feminisation of Noise’, is the second chapter to focus on a singular case study, examining the career of Sinéad O’Connor. I begin the chapter with a comprehensive literature review that situates O’Connor as a troublesome yet talented figure in Irish popular music, thereby mediating her career characterisation as an unwanted noisy woman. Accordingly, I refute this characterisation of O’Connor, drawing when necessary from existing critical analysis, a comparative alignment with a literary creation by Franz Kafka, and O’Connor’s own creative reflection. As the chapter progresses, I uncover O’Connor’s ownership of her noisy woman moniker by a process of self-assessment that is realised with O’Connor hauntologically responding to the radical and necessary heterogeneity of an inheritance. As the chapter continues, I investigate a spectral manifestation of a haunting ‘she’, the true grain of O’Connor’s voice that is revealed in the tension between conflicting traditions/grains. As the chapter progresses to examine O’Connor’s creative work, I initially frame her hauntological response by examining her use of noise in a visual sense. Finally, the chapter assesses her musical output from both phases of music’s digitalisation, revealing O’Connor’s responsive use of both media and environmental noise as part of her creative process.

The final chapter, ‘Even Better Than the Real Thing: The Future of Noise in Irish Popular Music’ outlines musicians whose use of noise is concerned with propelling an industry forward. The chapter begins by examining phonomusicology theories that relate to ‘how to do it’ versus ‘how not to do it’ mythologies of sound production. In this examination, I consider concepts of ‘realness’ in Irish popular music, refuting the marginalisation of noise’s many creative virtues and industry ideas on ‘rule breaking’ and ‘best practice’ in music production (Bennett, *Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 75). Next, I examine in further detail the critical definition of a *punctum*, its origin, and deduce how its use relates to a frenzied construction of a future in response to a present challenge or crisis. In the fourth chapter, I assess four specific virtues of noise. First, noise’s virtue to accentuate difference, thereby its refuting of accepted notions of ‘sound Ireland’. Second, I review noise’s virtue to affirm spatial ownership, a point of exploration that examines sound production spaces and contractual obligations to record companies. Third, I then examine a virtue with similar connotations then that of spatial ownership, and that is noise’s virtue to sound liberation. Again, this virtue pertains in part to a recording artist’s creative relationship with a record company, but also illuminates the liberation afforded in sound to

recordists whose creativity is not subsumed by existing mythologies of sound production. In terms of examining these three virtues, the chapter examines primary sources from Irish popular musicians whose career began during the two phases of music's digitalisation, and who will be shown to exemplify Irish popular music's frenzied construction of the future. These artists include Republic of Loose, Messiah J & the Expert, Fight Like Apes, Cathy Davey, Mundy, Gemma Hayes, David Kitt and Fionn Regan. Finally, a fourth virtue is revealed in assessing Mic Christopher's *Skylarkin*, an album posthumously released after Christopher's death in 2001. To conclude with Christopher's *Skylarkin*, I explore the ambiguity of noise, or its ability to act as a floating signifier. Thus, the chapter finishes with a focused examination on noise's virtue to realise whatever individual virtue is uncovered with attentive listening.

Noise's Revolution in the Digital Era

In this research, I reveal the revolutionary role of acoustic noise in Irish popular musicians' response to the digital era, disclosing their use of noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to create what I define as temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. The thesis thus pursues the haunting noises of Irish popular music that are realised in response to the digital era.

CHAPTER ONE

Perfect Sound Forever to Digital Free Zone

‘When it was announced the library contained all books, the first reaction was unbounded joy. All men felt themselves the possessors of an intact and secret treasure ...’

Jorge Luis Borges / ‘The Library of Babel’/

Prelude: The Noisy Library of Babel and the Digital Free Zone

In early 2016 the city of London welcomed a new bookshop. Nestled not far from Liverpool Street Station and Hawksmoor Church, among vintage clothes and record shops like Rough Trade East, Libreria’s opening received both national and international coverage with media outlets heralding its innovative approach to bookselling. The innovation manifests itself in two ways. First, the bookshop has abandoned standard stock categorisation. As Alex Clark notes in an article for *The Guardian*:

[They] tailor their stock and arrange it not according to standard categories—fiction, biography, science, and so forth—but in suggestive themes designed to provoke browsers into making unexpected connections; early examples include the sea and the sky, family, love, enchantment for the disenchanted, and mothers, madonnas and whores.

Libreria’s homepage notes that its interior is designed by Spanish architectural designers SeelgasCano, acknowledging that ‘Every aspect of Libreria is designed to help you discover new books and ideas, and encourage interdisciplinary thinking’ (‘Libreria: A Bookshop by Second Home’). The second innovation that garnered much more media attention and that Libreria hopes will help consumers discover new books, ideas, and encourage interdisciplinary thinking is perhaps more radical, but also quite simple. It markets itself as not just a bookshop but also a *digital-free zone*. This in itself is of interest, but it is also worth highlighting that Libreria is a brainchild of former Downing Street policymaker and ‘evangelist of entrepreneurship’ Rohan Silva (Clark), with the store forming just a part of the company Second Home—a business space which is ‘a carefully blended mix of start-ups and established businesses ranging from tech and energy companies to film-makers, PRs and investors’ (ibid.).

Libreria derives its name from the Jorge Luis Borges short story ‘The Library of Babel’, which describes the perils of endless choice. The story centres around the narrator, a librarian for a library that contains an infinite array of books, who describes the initial ‘unbound joy’ (Borges 69) among librarians on discovering the library’s limitless knowledge. Yet Borges’ narrator later reflects on a bleaker more creatively regressive aspect of untold access to knowledge noting that: ‘That unbridled hopefulness was succeeded, naturally enough, by a similarly disproportionate depression. That certainly some bookshelf in some hexagon contained precious books, yet that those precious books were forever out of reach, was almost unbearable’ (ibid. 70). Silva maintains that the concept behind Libreria is equally a response to contemporary society’s unlimited access to information. For Silva, the space offers a much-needed escape from the endless choice of the digital era, purporting that people’s lives

are about endless barrages of digital messaging—not so just email and text messages, but *Slack* messages, *WhatsApp* messages, *Instagram* posts, *Twitter*, this whole welter of digital distraction and noise. And there’s this growing awareness, quite mainstream now in this community, that being in front of your screen the whole time, being plugged into digital technology the whole time, isn’t great for your happiness or your creativity. (Clark)

Moreover, Libreria is far from alone in its endeavour to create a refuge from noisy digital distraction, with internet and social media blocker apps like Freedom offering productivity by freeing a consumer from digital fields of distraction (‘Why use Freedom?’). David Sax even considers in *The Revenge of the Analog: Real Things and Why They Matter* that, ‘Surrounded by digital, we now crave experiences that are more tactile and human-centric’ (xvi-xvii); further reflecting that, ‘What the Revenge of the Analog shows us is a model for an emerging postdigital economy that looks towards the future of technology, without forgetting its past’ (xviii). In essence, Libreria is a signifier for what Sax regards as a postdigital economy, a refuge from the noisy perils of endless choice. Significantly, on reflecting upon both Sax and Silva’s rhetoric, their desire for digital-free zones is not driven by a Luddite response for a nostalgic or imagined pre-digital, nor does it signal solely a digital versus analogue debate. It is instead driven by progressive elements which seek to foster digital-free spaces alongside the digital, in a place where new ideas are fostered not by unlimited access

to information, but by restrictions which foster meditative reflection. Libreria, and other companies or entities similar in concept, provide communities with a freedom to respond to the digital era by providing a digital-free zone; a space of contemplation that is creatively autonomous from the noisy distractions of the digital era.

Introduction: Responding to the Noisy Digital

‘The advent of what can be described as “the digital age” has had a profound effect on popular music and the ways in which it is performed, produced and consumed.’

Samantha Bennett /Modern Records, Maverick Methods: Technology and Process in Popular Music Record Production 1978-2000/

As evident in Libreria, in the digital era there has developed an individual and societal need to respond to the distraction afforded with digital access. This thesis examines the response of Irish popular musicians to the digital era, with it shown to be in part the use of media and environmental noise, as they draw upon noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*. To begin an examination, this chapter initially explores further the digital era, broadening an understanding of the parameters before justifying a responsive need. This entails first positioning the response of Irish popular musicians within a broader understanding of a defined digital era, which will allow for a greater understanding of the implications of the digital era and artistic creativity. Central to further defining the digital era is an examination of what Dominik Bartmanski and Ian Woodward identify as the first and second phase of music’s digitalisation (166). To examine the first phase of digitalisation, this chapter investigates the emergence of digital recording technology in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the arrival of ‘perfect sound forever’ as the CD became the dominant form for music reception in the 1990s. Furthermore, the chapter pays particular attention to the ‘loudness war’ of the late 1990s and early 2000s, which saw many recordists seek to construct a dominant ‘loudness’ which had negative implications for the reception of music.

The chapter next assesses the second phase of music’s digitalisation with the emergence of the MP3 as the dominant mode of sound reception, resulting in what Reynolds writes is the *YouTubeWikipediaRapidshareiTunesSpotify* era (58). Upon outlining both phases of music’s digitalisation, the chapter examines the re-emergence of the vinyl record as a desired mode of music reception. To reflect on the re-emergence, the chapter examines a desire for a medium which facilitates a listening

practice counter to what is defined in the introduction as i ubiquitous listening. Bartmanski and Woodward write ‘nowadays the idea of the “analogue” makes sense again, and it is not despite but partly because of digitalisation’ (4), which consequently has seen a sustained growth in vinyl sales and its emergence as the ‘king format’ for music reception (ibid.). Therefore, the re-emergence of the vinyl record will be revealed as emblematic of a response to the digital era.

The chapter then introduces some of the theoretical concepts which underpin the research. To undertake this thesis’s analysis of the changing modes of reception and production in the digital era, it utilises the interdisciplinary nature of Irish Studies and draws upon a number of theoretical concepts from various branches of humanistic research. With this in mind, this chapter serves as a further introduction to much of these critical theories, drawing when necessary from the Introduction. To implement these theories, the chapter augments research with close readings of specific musical examples while looking to writings by musician Damon Krukowski of Galaxie 500 which are reflective of recordist concerns to the digital era. Finally, to incorporate these theoretical concepts from various academic disciplines, the chapter ultimately derives a critical theory best suited to undertake an analysis of Irish Popular music’s response to the digital era, and the use of media and environmental noise by Irish musicians to create temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction.

The First Phase of Music’s Digitalisation

‘Giant steps are usually taken by giants, nobody else having the requisite stride. Last month the world of audio was treated to the rare spectacle of two giants stepping in tandem, departing boldly for the future.’

/Hans Fantel on Sony and Philips development of the Compact Disc/

Perfect Sound Forever

The digitalisation of music began long before the release of U2’s *Achtung Baby* in November 1991. Greg Milner writes the seeds of the digital era can be seen as far back as 1937 when a British engineer named Alec Harley Reeves undertook groundbreaking research into ‘pulse code modulations’ (PCM) (194), and in 1948 when Claude Shannon published a seminal paper entitled ‘A Mathematical Theory of Communication’ (193). Milner reflects that these works greatly influenced digital auditory research that was subsequently undertaken by researchers at Sony and Philips in the 1970s, ultimately resulting in three significant albums that form milestones

within the history of audio technology. Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* is the first of these, as they were the initial 'superstar band' to record an album partially with digital technology in 1976 (ibid. 201). The second was Ry Cooder's album *Bop Till You Drop* the 'first commercially available digital recording' in 1979 (Bartmanski and Woodward 16), and finally, a Japanese pressing of Billy Joel's *52nd Street* became the first ever commercial CD released in October 1982 (Milner 15). In many ways the release of the CD can be regarded as the most significant event in the first phase of digitalisation, with Swiss engineer Roger Lagadec noting at the time that it was 'the biggest jump in technology that the audio industry had ever seen' (ibid. 191). This point is reiterated by former Philips engineer K. A. Schouhamer, who in an interview with Milner says the 'CD was really the big bang ... and everything changed' (ibid.). Accordingly, a historical timeline of digital audio history is far from confined to within the parameters of the first and second phase of music's digitalisation. Nevertheless, with the revolutionary impact of the CD, the history of music reception changed forever, as it became the dominant form of music reception signalling the first phase of music's digitalisation.

One of the most significant breakthroughs in digital technology came when Harley Reeves undertook his ground-breaking research into PCMs. The CD system uses PCMs and takes a sample every $1/44,100^{\text{th}}$ of a second of a recording and expresses the sample as a 16-bit number, with sixteen zeros meaning total silence (or sound too faint for the system to register). Sixteen ones are the most powerful sound the system can register without total fatal distortion (Milner 194). Bartmanski and Woodward acknowledge that:

Digital equipment can encode and play back from 20 cycles to over 20,000 cycles without noise and harmonic distortion produced by analog recordings. No generation loss, noise build-up, or loss of presence occurs with this form of recording through mixdown and tape transfers. The result is that music sounds cleaner, brighter and more dimensional. (16)

As early advertisements for the CD maintain, what you get with this form of digital technology is 'perfect sound forever', or at least the concept of perfect sound forever. The purported promises of music's digitalisation were invariably desired by consumers during this first phase, as a great portion of the market strove to replace their existing music collections. To highlight the impact the CD had on the audio

industry, Milner notes that ‘five years after entering the market with almost zero name recognition, the CD was the fastest-growing home entertainment product in history’ (221). For the consumer, the allure of the CD and digital technology was inevitable, with the promise of noiseless, cleaner, perfect sound forever, and also, the CD’s association with two signifiers of the future in computer technology and lasers (ibid. 218). Bartmanski and Woodward suggest that the extended audio length of a CD in comparison to an LP or audio tape also signalled its desirability; a point of conjecture pertinent to the lack of physical movement/work needed to play a CD: ‘the narrative of clinically perfect sound combined with a truly long-playing device overrode other considerations and helped the industry to convince nearly the entire buying audience to purchase their favourite albums again’ (17). Therefore, it is important to note that by the time U2 released *Achtung Baby*, the CD was the dominant form of music reception signalling the revolutionary period for digital media. To illuminate this assertion, Milner notes that in 1983, just a few months after the release of the Japanese pressing of Joel’s *52nd Street*, 800,000 CDs were shipped to retailers. By 1991, the number of CDs shipped topped 333 million, with a financial value of \$4.3 billion (221). In addition, Milner further maintains that ‘the manufacture of CDs did not peak until 2000’ (ibid.), a significant time period as digital reception was by then transitioning into a second phase of digitalisation with the emergence of MP3.

Mart Katz in his assessment on digital sampling purports that it is a type of computer synthesis in which sound is rendered into data, data that in turn comprise instructions for reconstructing that sound (138). Consequently, some of the criticism of digital technology is focused on this transference from music to data; a criticism reflected in academic analysis, although this analysis often focuses exclusively on issues of copyright infringement, and the financial implications for the music industry. Gary W. Melton suggests, ‘The brand of misappropriation peculiar to the recording industry is labelled record and tape piracy. Such unauthorised duplication incorporates four forms: pirated recordings, counterfeit recordings, bootleg recordings, and home recordings’ (400). This study acknowledges this area of analysis, although mediates its critical consideration away from an exclusivity on commercial impact as it fails to position the two phases of music’s digitalisation within a broader history of auditory technologies, music bootlegging, and more significantly within the history of listening.

Sterne maintains that, ‘The characteristics of the modern sound-reproduction technologies that later authors would characterize as revolutionary were themselves embedded in the flow of nineteenth-century ideas and practices’ (*The Audible Past* 77). While Bennett writes:

The choice and application of technologies to the recording process is, therefore, equally as important as the choice of musical instruments; the sonic alignment of sound recording and production technology to the aesthetic musical intention is so important to the overall integrity of the record, and it is precisely these factors that neither popular music studies nor popular musicology has addressed in any great depth until very recently. (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 10)

For this reason, existing research that assesses the impact of the digital era from solely a commercial viewpoint, fails to recognise the complex history of sound recording and production technology; thereby marginalises assessment of creative choice and application of technology. In terms of this research, the assessment of creative choice and application of technology is significant to examine noise’s purported silencing due to the first phase of music’s digitalisation promising perfect sound forever. Bartmanski and Woodward maintain that to refute this perfect sound, many recordists chose and applied ‘organic’ and ‘warm’ sounding recording technologies (46). In signalling these organic and warm sounds, noise is invariably recognised as a crucial sonic component.

Regardless of these creative choices and applications, the first phase of music’s digitalisation saw the music industry largely abandon noise, as they went to great lengths to promote the CD and its purported perfect sound forever. Thompson suggests that sound perfection can never truly exist with noise forever persisting: ‘Noise is ubiquitous. It is present in every space, every milieu. It infests every medium, modifies every sound signal, takes part in every musical event. It is inescapable, unavoidable, inextinguishable component of material existence’ (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 173). Nevertheless, perfect noiseless sound and other signifiers of the future became the selling point for the CD, resulting in unprecedented profits due to increased sales; a profit margin that was helped as the cost of manufacturing a CD is eight times cheaper than a vinyl record (Bartmanski and Woodward 19). Therefore, the first phase of music’s digitalisation was the golden era for the music industry in terms of economic growth, it nonetheless began a digital era pattern of ubiquitous listening that in time

financially decimated the industry and forever altered listening practices. A significant development towards this time came with the loudness war, when listener dissatisfaction became vocal as the industry sought greater ways to manipulate data during sound production to create music that simply sounded loud as a way to garner a consumer's attention.

The Loudness War

Milner in his examination of the loudness war looks to a discovery by mastering engineer Bob Katz, that in every year since the advent of the CD as the dominant form of music reception, music has gotten louder—or hotter in sound engineering terms (243). The loudness war was a result of recordists seeking to get their products noticed on commercial radio and television, which saw them manipulating the sound as data via a process known as dynamic-range compression. Milner maintains that, 'in the early days of the CDs, mastering engineers were wary of pushing the technology to extreme loudness because [of] concerns that it would overwhelm the first generation of CD players' (246). He further maintains that they left it to the consumer to decide how loud the CD should be (ibid.). However, by the end of the century and into the 2000s, recordists adopted an approach to use loudness as a significant sonic component to garner attention.

A striking example of loudness is evident in Red Hot Chili Peppers *Californication* (1999), an album that found initial commercial and critical success but was subsequently rejected by fans as they found it unlistenable and petitioned for it be engineered again (Milner 239). Moreover, much of the same loudness can be found in Metallica's 'much maligned album *Death Magnetic*' (Krukowski, *The New Analog* 125), and Black Eyed Peas' single 'Let's Get It Started' (2003), which Milner regards as 'one of the worst-sounding, most distorted, overcompressed, and maybe the hottest [loudest] pop record ever made' (243). As a consequence of the loudness war, there developed within the listening public a 'loudness fatigue' as people found it increasingly difficult to appreciate and even listen to music (Milner 259). In fact, some recordists 'maintain that this vicious cycle is a root of the music industry's troubles ... according to this belief, the public, without realising it, [was] repelled by the sound of music today' (ibid.). Accordingly, the decline of the CD as the dominant form of music reception, which record companies and industry analysis has long blamed on CD burners and Napster type music piracy, is in part the result of the conversion of music

into data which in turn was manipulated into perfect, noiseless and loud recordings that were rejected by listeners. Yet this is just one part of the story in relation to changing modes of reception and production in the digital era, as the demise of the CD can in greater part be seen as a consequence of the psychoacoustic concept of masking and the revolutionary impact of the second phase of music's digitalisation.

The Second Phase of Music's Digitalisation

*I feel like an old railroad man
Who's really tried the best that he can
To make his life add up to something good
But this engine no longer burns on wood
And I guess I may never understand
The times that I live in, are not made for a railroad man.'*

Eels / 'Railroad Man' /

Engine No Longer Burning on Wood

Bob Dylan argues that:

You listen to modern records, they're atrocious, they have sound all over them. There's no definition of nothing, no vocal, no nothing, just like-static. Even these songs [a reference to his 2006 album *Modern Times*] probably sounded ten times better in the studio when we recorded em'. CDs are small. There's no stature in it. I remember when that Napster guy came across, it was like, 'Everybody's getting music for free.' I was like, 'Well why not?' It ain't worth nothing anyway. (Milner 356)

A contemporary, Neil Young, writes that he 'dislike(s) what has happened to the quality of the sound of music; there is little depth or feeling left, and people can't get what they need from listening to music anymore, so it is dying' (7). Indeed, this research finds that as a response to the digital era, recording artists and listeners developed a sense of cultural belatedness from a 'hauntological structure of feeling' (Hogarty 5); a concept to be examined in greater detail in the next chapter. An example of this cultural belatedness is evident in Eels' 2005 release 'Railroad Man'. In the track, Eels' principle songwriter and front-person Mark Oliver Everett, better known as E, addresses the sense of belatedness singing:

Feel like an old railroad man,
Ridin' out on the Bluemont line.
Hummin' along old dominion blues,

Not much to see and not much left to lose.
And I know I can walk along the tracks.
It may take a little longer.
But I'll know how to find my way back. (00:00:20-49)

This longing to find a way back, or the desire to position himself within an imagined temporal space, is an indicative characteristic of the current sense of belatedness. In response to this, he further sings:

I feel like an old railroad man.
Who's really tried the best that he can,
To make his life add up to something good.
But this engine no longer burns on wood.
And I guess I may never understand,
The times that I live in,
Are not made for a railroad man. (00:00:59-01:28)

With the reference to an 'engine no longer burning on wood', Everett is inadvertently addressing a sense of dissatisfaction with digital era sound production and recording technology, and a sense of longing for more antiquated forms of sound-reproduction. In fact, this dissatisfaction had previously seen the Eels adopt antiquated recording technology on the track 'Souljacker Part II' (2001). Bennett suggests that 'Souljacker Part II' is a Mellotron-centric composition, that serves as an example 'of contemporary records featuring music technologies associated to an altogether different era of popular music record production' (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 89). Therefore, this longing for an engine that burns on wood has become one of the defining characteristics of the digital era. This is especially the case within the second phase of music's digitalisation, an era of psychoacoustic MP3 masking, i ubiquitous listening, and the paradox of choice made apparent by having access to every song ever.

The MP3 and the Politics of Acceptance

Bartmanski and Woodward write 'the second wave of digitalisation meant unprecedented convenience and thus turned music into a low hanging fruit' (26). Access to this low hanging fruit is afforded with the MP3, which is simply the most 'common form in which recorded sound is available today' (Sterne, *MP3: The*

Meaning of a Format 1). An MP3 functions as it uses data compression and perpetual coding technology to remove parts of the original recording data which have been deemed unnecessary for the listening experience. The rise of the MP3 to the most common form of recorded sound has its origins well before both the first and second phases of digitalisation. Sterne argues in *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* that the history of the MP3 belongs to a general history of compression, and in the history of telephony—or what he regards as the ‘dream of verisimilitude’ (4-5). This dream dates back to the 1870s with the invention of the organ pipe (ibid. 35), and more importantly to the emergence of modern psychoacoustics in the early part of the twentieth century: ‘In the history of aural-electrical thought, the 1910s and 1920s marked the beginning of a shift from the middle ear as the site of inquiry toward the inner ear and the mind’ (ibid. 33). The significance of this to the history of the MP3 cannot be overstated as it mediated desired technological advancement towards psychoacoustical examination and auditory compression based on tests conducted on expert listeners between 1990 and 1991.

The MP3 as a product of psychoacoustical examination emerged as a result of a globalisation of media in the late 1980s and early 1990s after research conducted by many stakeholders in multiple institutions worldwide. Sterne writes, ‘In 1988 the International Organisation for Standardisation formed the Moving Picture Experts Groups [MPEG] to come up with a standard for digital video and audio’ (ibid. 23). In essence, MPEG was looking for a standard digital inscription, or language of 1s and 0s, which would allow all relevant digital products to work in unison. This was hugely important as the second phase of music’s digitalisation would have faltered if rival companies like Philips, Sony, Apple, and Microsoft initially used rival standards. Understandably with so many interested parties over so many continents, and with possibly billions of dollars at stake for global economic titans, political differences nearly destroyed MPEG’s efforts from the beginning. Though outside the remit of this research, it is worth noting that the MP3 emerged from three different protocols, or layers, conducted in 1992: the MP3 is a *layer 3* of MPEG-1 audio standard, and represents a scheme developed by the German Institute Fraunhofer IIS (Institute for Integrated Circuits—*Institut für Integrierte Schaltungen*), AT&T, Thomson, and France Télécom (ibid.). The tests conducted as part of these layers involved ‘expert listeners listening to audio which resulted in these experts representing, in code, an anticipated future listening public’ (ibid. 25). However, it is generally regarded that

the listening tests were conducted to ‘ensure neutrality among competing interests within MPEG’ (ibid.), which resulted in MPEG having been seen as settling for the MP3 format rather than it excelling in listening tests. Stephen Witt in his history of the MP3, even notes that within Fraunhofer IIS it is generally considered that the MP3 is an inferior standard in comparison to others developed as part of the MPEG format war (18-20). Nevertheless, given that the MP3 is a proprietary standard that brings in hundreds of millions of dollars each year to companies that hold the rights to it (Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* 26), there is no financial benefit in making public knowledge other forms for music reception. Therefore, what is left is the MP3 format, an inferior standard that has become the most common form in which recorded sound is available today, a dominant standard that is as much a creation of politics, policy, economics as well as technology and culture. In his examination of the commodification of popular music, David Suisman considers that the commercial success of early American forms of popular music ‘depended on selling people not necessarily what they wanted but rather what they would accept’ (52). In terms of the MP3 and selling consumers popular music in the second phase of digitalisation it is clear this same acceptance is still evident.

Acceptance and i Ubiquitous Listening

The acceptance of the MP3 as the dominant mode of music reception is not to be construed as having an entirely negative impact on the music industry, nor for that matter on the history of listening. David P. Rando suggests that:

Although there is something that hints at utopian plenty in music filesharing, the contemporary discourse surrounding this massive cultural phenomenon largely sets utopia aside in order to dwell on the supposedly more immediate and tangible matters of copyright, legality, economics, and policy. (321)

Rando’s argument indicates the significant potential and democratisation of sound afforded as a result of MP3’s convenience of compression and music sharing: ‘One potentially transformative way to think of filesharing is thus as a liberation of music’ (334). However, this ‘liberation of music’ enables practices of listening that are more concerned with gluttony rather than reflective moderation. Sterne maintains, ‘the MP3 encoder works so well because it guesses that [the] imagined auditor is an imperfect listener, in less-than-ideal conditions. It often guesses right’ (*MP3: The Meaning of a*

Format 2). In the second phase of digitalisation the act of listening, or even hearing music, is seen by the majority as a solo activity, with most music consumed via the industry dominant iPod or iPhone. Reynolds writes, ‘the iPod took off because it slotted right into the new-millennium Me generation ... the “i” at the start was put there for a reason: because this is my music, not our music’ (120). Within this *i listening* narrative, music is also seen as but one part of a world of choice, or even distraction: ‘listening is above all else about one’s position in the world of media, an attempt to negotiate it’ (Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* 90). Therefore, the acceptance of the MP3, with its suitability for an imperfect listener in imperfect conditions, is understandable. Arguably within the field of human factor ergonomics (HFE), the MP3 is a perfectly viable standard, particularly given that HFE defines itself in terms of studying and optimising the productivity and comfort of people as they interact with machines (ibid. 53). Hence, an MP3 facilitates hearing to optimise productivity and comfort in interaction; albeit with the marginalisation of facilitating reflective listening.

In terms of differentiating between listening and hearing, Paul Hegarty in *Noise/Music: A History* writes that ‘Hearing is the simple perception of sound, listening the reflective conscious hearing’ (197). Whereas Anahid Kassabian writes that as a consequence of the digital era an ‘ubiquitous listening’ practice of hearing music has emerged, which has in part removed the listener from listening, or hearing:

Those of us living in industrialized settings have developed, from the omnipresence of music in our daily lives, a mode of listening dissociated from specific generic characteristics of the music. In this mode we listen ‘alongside’ or simultaneous with other activities. It is one vicious example of the non-linearity of contemporary life. (15)

This form of ubiquitous listening needs little explaining as most people within the developed world see the practice of listening alongside other activities as accustomed. It should also be indicated this practice of ubiquitous listening did not begin as a consequence of the second phase of digitalisation, as throughout the history of listening to sound-reproduction technology it is certain listening alongside other activities took place. Nevertheless, the extent of *i listening* and *ubiquitous listening* that occurs in the second phase of digitalisation is unprecedented in the history of listening to sound-reproduction technology, and is almost certainly going to increase

as media and technological developments impact on lucrative developing markets throughout the developing world. Sarah Baker et al. point to implications for the maintaining of contemporary popular music archives, as the ‘Digital Deluge’ facilitates a lack of ambition generated from artists, collectors, and fans (15), which results in issues that can be ‘realised in the establishment, delineation, or preservation of (the idea of) a national identity’ (21). Therein, the dominance of ubiquitous listening as a way for people to engage with music in turn not only greatly impacts the way musicians create music, but also the way they, collectors and fans process these creations with possible long term implications for national music scenes and their remembrance.

As is alluded to in this study’s introduction, the impact of ubiquitous listening is elevated by the omnipresence of music in the second phase of digitalisation. Ben Ratliff considers:

We are listening in the time of the cloud. First there was a person making up a song, as ritual or warning or memorial. Then there was a person singing an old song that someone had made up. Then there was music in the church and the concert hall and bar and bordello; then the wax cylinder, gramophone, radio, cassette, CD player, downloadable digital file. And then there was the cloud. Now we can hear nearly everything almost wherever, almost wherever, often for free. (1)

Mazierska et al. in their assessment of the ‘time of the cloud’ label it the phase of ‘advanced convergent digitisation’ (6). In this time or phase, Andrew Fry suggests the impact on listening is irrefutably altered by algorithmic curation and the omnipresence of music: ‘Digital algorithms increasingly exert power over music listeners and therefore must be examined’ (286). To further assess the omnipresence of music’s impact on listening it is worth returning to Bartmanski and Woodward’s point that the second phase of digitalisation means unprecedented convenience, thus, turning music into a low hanging fruit. Along this line of perusal, it can be suggested that even with the unprecedented availability of other forms of art and media within the digital era, few if any forms are as readily available as music. To read a novel, short story, or poem can be done with digital technology, notably with an e-reader, but it still takes time and attention. To watch a film, television show, or even a play can also be done, but it again takes time, attention and also a digital device can alter the viewing experience. For that reason, in an era of revolutionary convenience, music is not just

a low hanging fruit, it is the lowest and most abundant hanging fruit. It is a fruit that can be consumed by you alone, at any time, in any place, in almost all conditions, almost for free, and not only that it is also limitless in flavour. With this in mind it is understandable that Timothy D. Taylor writes in *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology, and Culture* that digital technology is the most ‘fundamental change in the history of Western music since the invention of music notation in the ninth century’ (3). However, as a response to the second phase of music’s digitalisation, where ubiquitous listening is the dominant form of listening, or hearing, and where music is the lowest hanging of fruits, some listeners and musicians seek to challenge notions of perceived sound-reproduction technology’s progressive linearity and instead find solace in more antiquated forms of music listening and making.

The Return of the King Format

‘People are often paralysed by the range of choices when they’re presented to them on a silver platter with unlimited time to explore and process them. You can’t forget: everybody works better with fewer possibilities. You see it over and over again that good artists end up coming back to the same ideas they’ve always worked with.’

Brian Eno in Conversation with Max Dax /Electronic Beats Magazine/

A Tyranny of Choice

A familiar narrative in relation to the second phase of music’s digitalisation, and to a lesser extent with the first phase of music’s digitalisation, is that people are listening to less music. Within the first phase, this is often attributed to the loudness war, with people essentially being repelled by music as a result of poor industry choices in relation to sound mastering. The second phase has seen people ignore the low hanging plentiful fruit that music has become, walking away from what Barry Schwartz regards as the tyranny of limitless choice or the paradox of choice (2). Sax reflects on this tyranny of choice, describing a personal experience which warrants a response on his part:

when my brother bought me a subscription to *Rdio*, I frequently found myself opening the app, only to become paralysed by indecision. My options were infinite, literally every single album and song ever recorded ... The entire world of music was just a click away, but I couldn’t be bothered to do that. (x)

According to Sax, there is disengagement in relation to listening to music in the second phase of music's digitalisation, with an absence mitigating his reflective enjoyment. Subsequently, he responded to this absence by returning to experiencing recorded sound and music with the vinyl record (ibid.). The re-emergence of the vinyl record as a means of listening to music is a divisive topic within discourses relating to popular music. For many critics it is just a phase, a luddite or nostalgic reversion to digital music's dominance (Hann). Whereas for others, it is an auditory revolution which is seeing vinyl becoming the 'king format' for music listening, a tangible object emblematic of 'how popular music has become an object of memory and, in turn, a focus for contemporary renditions of history and cultural heritage' (Bennett, A. and Janssen 1). This research will largely avoid these juxtaposed narratives, but instead focus on a particular aspect of the 'revival', that being vinyl's emergence as a tool of authenticity and a response to the second phase of digitalisation. In addition, the examination of the re-emergence of the vinyl record facilitates the introduction of concepts on auditory reception and the use of noise's many creative virtues which are central to the examination of Irish popular music's response to the digital era.

Vinyl as an Event

The vinyl record is a glaringly antiquated piece of audio technology in relation to modes of reception in both phases of music's digitalisation. First, it is an expensive way of listening to music, particularly in comparison to the free file sharing utopianism of MP3. An average vinyl record costs €26 to €32, while a record player and accompanying amps and speakers will cost upwards of €250 for a mediocre system. In addition to the monetary shortcomings of the vinyl, there is also its limited nature as a format, both in its storage capacity, and its mobility. As indicated, the digital era has allowed for unprecedented access to music, an access the vinyl record cannot come close to emulating as a 12-inch LP plays on average 45 minutes over two sides. Nevertheless, an argument persists that it is because of its failings that vinyl sales are increasing. Bartmanski and Woodward argue that as a response to 'the ever-increasing ease' of music listening 'cultural meaninglessness was promptly revealed as the flipside of perfect convenience' (20). They continue: 'as a result, vinyl could emerge as not only the authentic and uniquely sounding format but also the only music carrier worth owning and collecting in the strict sense of the term' (ibid.). This sentiment is echoed by Andy Bennett and Ian Rogers who declare that vinyl in the digital era has

acquired ‘aesthetic discourses of authenticity and coolness due to their sound, feel, and packaging’ (31). Thereby, the vinyl record prompts cultural meaning, as it serves as an antidote to ubiquitous listening or passive hearing.

To play sound or music with a vinyl record a person must go choose from a library far more limited than its digital alternative, in a way choosing to challenge notions of the album being an antiquated concept in comparison to file sharing utopianism (Rando 338). Once chosen, they must physically engage with the record by removing it from the sleeve and placing it on the record player, then turn the record player on a side of choosing, watch as the record spins at the allotted speed, place the needle on the groove and then listen within an area limited by the record player’s immobility. In all, the process is demonstrably more complicated and time consuming than its digital alternative, but this in its way is where cultural meaning is found. It grounds the listening experience to a focused temporal spatial moment, thereupon creating an event of the listening experience. It also engages the listener within the event by coupling the listening experience with other sensory experiences with touch, sight and even smell playing roles within the event of listening. Slavoj Žižek writes that:

At its most radical, technology does not designate a complex network of machines and activities, but the attitude towards reality which we assume when we are engaged in such activities: technology is the way reality discloses itself to us in contemporary times. (31)

In relation to listening to music in the second phase of music’s digitalisation, technology designates an attitude towards reality as it demotes some sensory experiences from the event of listening. Žižek in his analysis of ‘event’ looks to Martin Heidegger’s concept of *Gestell* (*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* 20-21); Heidegger’s Plato sourced word ‘for the essence of technology [which] is usually translated into English as enframing’ (Žižek 32). Žižek considers that event as enframing realises ‘a shift in our relationship to reality’ (33), which technology mediates by altering attitudes towards said reality. In relation to listening to music in the second phase, this event can be interpreted as an enframing of our reality by a paradox of choice, and by demoting some sensory experiences from the event of listening. For this reason, choosing to listen to music on vinyl within the digital era, is an event in that it reframes a relationship to reality by grounding it with less choice

and engaging with other sensory activities. Significantly, this highlights the importance of choice in this enframing/reframing of listening, as to choose to listen to music on vinyl is a clear response by the listener to the digital era. Bartmanski and Woodward correctly note that ‘the digital reframes the analogue’ (103), and it does this by reframing it as an alternative event, one where a listener’s sense of reality is reverted to a bodily engaged present.

Hands

Before concluding an analysis on the re-emergence of the vinyl record as the king format, it is worth momentarily examining the importance of hands within the process of listening, and also how this correlates to vinyl’s cultural meaning as a response to the digital era. Psychoanalyst Darian Leader in *Hands: What We Do With Them—And Why* writes that:

Hand movements can be orchestrated and contrived, but perhaps they are ultimately less an accessory or instrument of speech than a part of speech itself. They form part of speaking—and crucially, of listening—as words take hold not only of our minds but our bodies as well. (99)

He further considers that ‘today we have a new demarcation. It is not between earthly and heavenly life, but between two lives lived on earth, a purely biological one and a real, lived, experiential one’ (11). As shown, when choosing to listen to a vinyl record as opposed to listening to music via digital technology, a listener is also actively choosing to be more physically interactive with the listening experience as they engage with more sensory activities. They choose to become more biologically/tactilely connected with the event of listening, reframing it away from a digitally lived, and experiential mode of listening, to a biological/tactile real, lived, and experiential one. Leader writes, ‘There is listening AND doodling, knitting AND talking, praying AND manipulating beads. The real question here is the AND’ (102). In relation to hearing or listening to music in the digital era, there is first hearing/listening AND an assortment of other actionable distractions; or alternatively there is the choice of hearing/listening AND holding a record sleeve; or reading the lyric’s sheet; or other ANDs accessible in the restricted area of hearing/listening. Therefore, there is the choice of hearing/listening AND the infinite other activities offered by the digital, enframing the event alongside the AND; or there is hearing/listening AND engaging

with music as a tactile object, reframing the event as accompanying the AND, while also furthering the prospect of attentive listening.

Bartmanski and Woodward observe that ‘we see it [the vinyl record] as [a] holistic renaissance of the concrete aesthetic object at a time when screen-based digitalisation of culture can be claimed to have reached critical mass and speed’ (166). As a consequence, this points to the ‘positive fetishism’ of the vinyl record (ibid. 168), and results in commodification as evident in the commercial success of the annual Record Store Day (‘About Us’) and topics covered in Amanda Petrusich’s *Do Not Sell At Any Price: The Wild, Obsessive Hunt for the World’s Rarest 78rpm Records*. Bartmanski and Woodward declare that a medium is a culturalised thing (36), which is significant because ‘as a physical medium, vinyl is always located somewhere, rather than just online, which increasingly feels like nowhere due to the omnipresent and dissipated networks of mobility’ (37). They further maintain, this ‘somewhere matters because it is culturally and concretely located’ (38). In summary, the vinyl record as a physical culturalised medium matters in the digital era in that it is located somewhere, and as a result it facilitates an engaged reframing of the experience of listening to sound and music away from ubiquitous listening. The re-emergence of the vinyl record in the digital era can thereby be considered a response to the digital era. As the chapter continues, it considers how popular musicians’ respond to the same era, highlighting the use of a sonic component often connected with the vinyl record. This sonic component is noise.

Noise as a Trigger of a Sonic Possible World

‘Music as sonic possible world produced an immersed reality and an ephemeral truth, as generative and passing as its sound, rather than as fixed as the stability of the score, the text. Plural, but indexical, its truth and reality are bound to the body, which at the same time ensures its plurality and sends it as a pluralising agency into other works and into the world to make itself count as one slice of its actuality imploding the pretence of an actual music.’

Salomé Voegelin /Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound/

‘In the late 1990s and through the turn of millennium, the apparent “embracing” of equipment flaws and lo-fidelity aesthetics of early sound recording began to (re)emerge in the sound of commercial music releases.’

Samantha Bennett /Modern Records, Maverick Methods: Technology and Process in Popular Music Record Production 1978-2000/

A Temporospatial Expanse of Sonic Fiction

Thus far, this chapter has outlined the two phases of music's digitalisation, considering that as a consequence of these phases an ubiquitous listening practice developed that warranted the re-emergence of the vinyl record as the king format, signalling it as a response to the digital era. The final section of the first chapter will focus on the response of the popular musician, and in particular their use of both media and environmental noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to construct temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction.

As indicated in the introduction, in this thesis the phrase temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction is used instead of the signifier 'song' or at times 'album'; the signifiers 'track' and 'release' are also used as they correlate with an album's commercial release and track listings. The justification for the use of the signifier temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction is that it facilitates a broader analysis of the layers of creative input by recording artists, and sound recordists in a way examining 'a song' does not. Barthes in 'The Grain of the Voice' acknowledges that critical language manages very badly as a semiotic system for interpreting music (179). This negation of adequate semiotic codes for interpreting music, Edward Said insists makes it imperative that musical analysis borrow from the 'many great advances in other branches of humanistic interpretation' (xi). Alexander C. Harden, in his essay 'A World of My Own', shares much of the intent of this study, as he suggests an adoption of an ecological approach to fulfil the failings of a semiotic system for interpreting music:

Within such an ecological framework, we can describe a music track as an environment in which elements afford to the listener ways of worldmaking or world deformation. Such information is often highly schematic in the case of recorded popular song. Typically, details are made explicit in the lyrics, though could also be reflected in the musical environment or aspects of production. (7)

As indicated, this thesis recontextualises a concept from the field of Sound Studies that interrogates sonic geography, thereby arriving at a definition for a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction that justifies its use over 'song', a signifying agent that fails to fully extend itself to what it seeks to represent. Indeed, within the confines of the digital era, song as a signifier is relatable to ubiquitous listening, or passive hearing, as it correlates to passive engagement or hearing. Whereas engagement with a

temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction facilitates listening, inviting a reflective consciousness to traverse the music, sound and aspects of production such as noise of a creative work.

Voegelin writes in, *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound*, that:

Listening we conjure up shapes from invisible sonic movements that live in the reality of the seen as another truth, that is not an untruth but the truth of that which has no reference and no memory of what is was elsewhere and at another time, but which is itself as sound that triggers my memory to create presently what it might be. (71)

To listen to music, as opposed to passively hearing music as in ubiquitous listening, a listener's reflective consciousness conjures an invisible sonic world, a world of truth on which they seek reference from memory, triggering a present and invisible sonic possible world. Umberto Eco's seminal examination of the role of the reader cites that 'every reception of a work of art is both an interpretation and a performance of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself' (49). Concurrently, much can be borrowed from this analysis in relation to interpretation and performance of music, with the paradox of transcendent engagement realised in triggering a performative role in traversing a recording as a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. Voegelin continues, 'Music as sonic possible world produced an immersed reality and an ephemeral truth, as generative and passing as its sound, rather than as fixed as the stability of the score, the text' (*Sonic Possible Worlds* 154). She further writes: 'To travel into the world of the work as into a sonic fiction means to travel into its temporospatial expanse, the effective geography of its materiality and come to understand the work and ourselves through inhabiting its invisible topography' (ibid. 82). Hence, in using the phrase temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction to relate to the given signifier of song, and in some cases album, there is a desire to present the significant tropes of immersion, interpretation, performance, inhabitation, and traversing as realised upon listening. As indicated, listening is a reflective conscious hearing, a desired end to an artist's creative process within a recording studio. To create a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction by sound reproduction, an artist's intent is self-evident: they desire a listener to immerse themselves within said temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction that is realised with music, sound, and aspects of production such as noise; and this interpretation and

performance realises its ephemeral truth while facilitating an inhabitation and traversal of its invisible topography.

Media and Environmental Noise: Topography of a Temporospatial Expanse of Sonic Fiction

This section of the study explores noise's virtue as a sonic component utilised by artists in a recording based creative process. Sterne purports that:

On the basis of their sonic character, sound becomes signs—they come to mean certain things. Technical notions of listening depend on the establishment of a code for what is heard but exist without affective metalanguage. A metalanguage of sound would consist of a nonspecialised set of terms that enable people to describe the details of audible experience in a purely abstract manner. (*The Audible Past* 94)

Thereupon, for a listener to immerse themselves within a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, traversing, inhabiting, interpreting and performing the sonic fiction into being, they must have signs to guide their way: a metalanguage of sound—and, as will become apparent, noise—that not only functions as a descriptive agent but facilitates the reflective conscious to listen. In her essay, 'A Noisy Brush with the Infinite: Noise in Enfolding-Unfolding Aesthetics', Laura U. Marks argues that 'Noise is the sea on which our experience bobs ... [it is] the index of the infinite' (104-107). In terms of defining noise's relation to a metalanguage of sound, its signifiable qualities within an artist's commercial releases, its presence is understood as a given. Thompson declares that 'Noise and sound become largely synonymous—it remains unclear what it is that makes noise "noise" and differentiates noise from sound' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 2). She further professes that an examination of noise must be repositioned away from given dichotomies such as music versus sound, sound versus noise, sound versus unwanted sound, analysis that has echoes of Italian futurist Luigi Russolo's 1913 *The Art of Noises: Destruction of Music by Futurist Machines*. In his manifesto, Russolo seeks the destruction of the 'Fundamental dichotomies on which musical culture was structured—music versus noise, human versus machine, the urban soundscape versus the rarefied atmosphere of the concert hall' (Suisman 245). Whereupon, Thompson's assessment on noise is pivotal to this research's alignment of creative agency to noise, purporting that 'There is much more to noise than unwanted sound, and to fail to recognise this is to fail to recognise the crucial role

noise plays in auditory culture and in material culture more generally. There is no music, no mediation, no *son* [sound] without noise' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 3). In terms of viewing noise as a sonic component, noise can be understood as a part of a metalanguage of sounds which facilitate travel into the world of a musical work as into a sonic fiction, acting as a sign through its temporospatial expanse, the effective geography of its materiality.

Within the digital era, noise's understood presence is no longer a given, with digital recording technology allowing for a silencing, or reduction of noise; in as much as noise can be silenced/eradicated. Krukowski is a musician who recognises and articulates noise's silencing within the digital era, as he examines the role of both media and environmental noise in crafting a recording in his two monographs *The New Analog: Listening and Reconnecting in a Digital World* and *Ways of Hearing*. Krukowski writes, 'Noise, to an electrical engineer, is whatever is not regarded as signal ... yet what I know well from working with sound and music is that *noise is as communitive as signal*' (*The New Analog* 11). In both books, Krukowski draws upon his experience as a recordist to outline the importance of noise as a communitive signal in analogue produced recordings. This entails paying particular attention to The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* and The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, with Krukowski outlining that in 'listening to canonical albums such as *Sgt. Pepper* and *Pet Sounds* they [the listener] are listening to the signal *framed and enriched by noise*' (ibid. 120). Krukowski's definition of the signalling qualities of noise shares much with Hilary Lapedis' analysis of the use of popular music meta-dietetically in cinema, as both consider an understood meta reading by a receptive audience (Lapedis 371-378). To define noise as a framing and enriching agent, it is important to consider the two formative categorisations of noise evident within analogue recording, and as a consequence a metalanguage of recorded sound. First, there is what Thompson defines as media/milieu noise, which is a clear recognisable signifier of analogue technology and all perceived antiquated modes of sound production and reception (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 43). The hiss, clicks, pops, and static best understood as emanating from devices such as a vinyl record, forms as much a part of the history of recorded sound as any sonic component. Stan Link in his essay, 'The Work of Reproduction in the Mechanical Aging of an Art: Listening to Noise', writes that, 'Noise was always there, but disregarded and dismissed as the illegitimate offspring of the event and its transcription' (37). Link also suggests that 'In many ways, noise is the grammar of

recording' (34). To augment this assessment, Krukowski suggests that media noise is so ingrained within the mythology of sound reproduction that it warrants particular linguistic referencing: 'Tape has a particular set of characteristics that influence the resulting curve, which audio engineers have labelled with wonderfully evocative names: wow and flutter, self-erasure, hysteresis, saturation' (*The New Analog* 133).

To reference media noise in the production of popular music in the digital era, Bennett writes:

Precursors and vintage systems manifest in today's recording industry in a number of ways. The digital appropriation of analogue systems is particularly prevalent in software plug-ins. For example, Universal Audio's new Omni-6 plug-in bundle contains no less than 53 processors modelled on vintage systems, such as the Fairchild Compressor, Lexicon 224, Ampex and Studer tape simulators, Moog synthesisers and Pultec EQs. 'Access the world's finest emulations of analogue classics' is the advertisement strap line. ('Endless Analogue')

Furthermore, Bennett also signals digital appropriation of analogue characteristics in the '2001 Line 6 "Echo Farm", a DAW [digital audio workstation] plug-in featuring multiple time-based processing parameters' (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 85). In her assessment of this product, she writes a 'control on the plug-in, labelled "wow and flutter", illuminates how once unwanted equipment flaws—in this instance, an undesirable effect caused by speed irregularities on analogue tape recorders—has, over time, become a desired effect in contemporary music production' (ibid.). This digital appropriation of media noise is common throughout the digital era, in particular in relation to digital era neo-folk artists like Bright Eyes, Fleet Foxes, Joanna Newsom and Micah P. Hinson. Significantly, noise is a common motif throughout these musicians' creative output, signalling the use of media noise's virtue in temporally positioning a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction outside of the parameters of the digital era; a point to be expanded on throughout later chapters.

Another significant way a recordist in the digital era appropriates media noise is the use of antiquated or vintage recording technology. Bennett considers that this approach to sound reproduction involves the use of 'technological anachronisms ... sound recording or music technology devices belonging to past eras or, indeed, alternate tech-processual settings' (ibid.) This use of technological anachronisms is strikingly evident in the creative output of Jack White and his record label Third Man

Records. For White, the use of analogue recording technology within the digital era facilitates his creative process in that it limits freedom: ‘With computers you can use three hundred and ten tracks if you want to, but it’s too much freedom’ (Wilkinson). To realise his desired creative confinement, White uses various antiquated means of sound production, as evident in his use of a refurbished 1947 Voice-o-Graph machine. This record booth is open for public use in White’s Third Man Records store in Nashville, Tennessee, and was used to record Neil Young’s *A Letter Home* (2014). In an interview, Young and White recall that the idea for *A Letter Home* came to Young when he heard a young musician record a track of his in the record booth (‘Neil Young Recalls Jimmy’s “Whip My Hair” Impression’ 00:01:41-02:17). In the same interview Young says that recording in the booth ‘sounds great, it’s fabulous. You get inside and you’re in a zone, you close the door and it’s like you’re gone back, way back’ (‘Neil Young and Jack White Demonstrate a Voice-O-Graph Machine’ 00:00:56-01:03); a point which again affirms noise’s virtues to temporally position recordings outside of the digital era. Bennett suggests, ‘The application of such a device to recording sessions is, therefore, loaded with implication: historical, cultural, technological, musical and sonic meanings are imbued into recordings with every application of the device and with it, a kind of sonic authentication’ (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 72). She further writes: ‘Additionally, in an increasingly digital recording landscape, analogue, vintage and technological precursors were applied as important sonic differentiators’ (ibid. 73). Thereby, the use of antiquated technology and the appropriation of their sounds with digital technology, indicate the creative importance of media noise.

The second categorisation of noise to be examined in the thesis is environmental noise, or what is often characterised as studio noise. In using the signifier environmental as opposed to studio noise, there is an important recognition that the origins of this categorisation of noise are not confined to a recording studio. In essence, environmental noises are sounds that are picked up by the microphone but are deemed outside of the original signal. Krukowski notes that ‘Noise is unavoidable in any live recording, because mics are like our ears—they hear everything. The signal they pick up is always surrounded by noise’ (*Ways of Hearing* 127). He further maintains that ‘Decisions in the analog studio were for the most part permanent; little could be undone, short of starting over, because there was no way to move backwards through the process. The sounds you made became your history’ (*The New Analog*

168). As a result, the mic as an ear records all environmental noise, whether that is a cough, sneeze, shout, or movement, thereafter, converting it to tape and history. However, Bennett suggests that in spite of digital technology ‘faults and flaws [have become] embedded into the production process ... In other words, “mistakes” can be intentional’ (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 82). Examples of these intentional ‘mistakes’, or use of environmental noise within the digital era, and its effectiveness in creating new sonic sensations, can be heard in Antony and the Johnsons’ Mercury Prize winning album *I Am a Bird Now* (2005). *I Am a Bird Now* is an album that looks to address the singer Anohni’s (formerly known as Antony Hegarty) desire to self-identify as a woman, with tracks like ‘My Lady Story’, ‘You Are My Sister’, and ‘For Today I Am a Boy’ lyrically illustrating Anohni’s struggles with self-identity:

One day I’ll grow up, I’ll be a beautiful woman,
 One day I’ll grow up, I’ll be a beautiful girl.
 One day I’ll grow up, I’ll be a beautiful woman,
 One day I’ll grow up, I’ll be a beautiful girl.
 But for today I am a child, for today I am a boy. (00:00:00-33)

In *I Am a Bird Now*, the implicit narrative of subverting and melting gender identities, what Gilad Padva notes as ‘poetic genderfuck’ (102), reaches its crescendo in the final track ‘Bird Gerhl’ which begins with environmental noise. The initial noise in ‘Bird Gerhl’ is the sound of studio movement, most probably Anohni moving a chair cushion as she begins to play the piano. To augment this noise, close-miking facilitates the recording of Anohni moistening her lips and whispering faintly ‘three and’ (00:00:00-07), before the singing component of the track begins with the lyrics:

I am a bird gerhl, I am a bird gerhl.
 I am a bird gerhl, I am a bird gerhl now.
 I’ve got my heart, here in my hands.
 I’ve got my heart, here in my hands now.
 I’ve been searching, for my wings.
 I’ve been searching, for my wings some time. (00:00:25-01:08)

In a way, this brings to a completion the poetic genderfuck narrative, thereby signalling the difficult but incontestable transformation of Antony to Anohni. Moreover, central to this signalling of transformation in the track is the environmental noise, as it frames and enriches the sentiment by suggesting closeness to Anohni’s

declaration of self. As will become apparent in later chapters, this creation of closeness is realised with the subversion of space and time within the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. This indicates to the listener that the track as an event originates from inside a real space of construct, and not outside as a product of digitalisation. Concurrently, environmental and media noise form a significant part of the history of sound reproduction in popular music. Hence, it must be recognised as a crucial sonic component in the metalanguage of sound that serves as a signalling agent in traversing the topography of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction.

Hauntological Metalanguage of Remembered *Punctums*

'One never inherits without coming to terms with [s'expliquer avec] some specter.'

Jacques Derrida /Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International/

'a photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).'

Roland Barthes /Camera Lucida/

Noise in the Digital Era

In the digital era noise is often understood as a prerequisite to the creation process. Thompson considers, 'In the digital era of ever-faster connectivity and communications, of high definition imagery and audio recording, it can sometimes seem if noise has been conquered: that it is no longer a problem for our contemporary technologies' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 2). Whereas Krukowski states 'In the digital audio studio, history is undoable' (*The New Analog* 168), further writing that 'Digital time is ahistorical. Its signal arrives without noise—neither the noise of one another nor of the past' (ibid. 191). In a final reflection Krukowski notes that 'In digital media, if you can point to something, you can usually eliminate it' (*Ways of Hearing* 129). It seems then that in the digital era, noise's conquering has resulted in the perfect sound forever that was promised in the first phase of digitalisation, a conquering further enhanced through the second phase of digitalisation when expert listeners apprehended noise as an unwanted sonic component and jettisoned it from recordings. Yet, this proves not to be the case: a further indication of an industry selling people not necessarily what they want but rather what they would accept. For as Thompson maintains, while it might not be noticeable, 'noise always persists' (*Beyond Unwanted*

Sound 2), and in its persistence as a significant sonic component within the metalanguage of sound, it serves as a signalling agent within the topography of a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. José Cláudio Siqueira Castanheira echoes this point in ‘The Matter of Numbers: Sound Technologies and Experience of Noise according to Analogue and Digital Modes’, as he writes ‘Noises were assumed to be a natural part of listening in analogue techniques of sound inscription and reproduction, despite the idea of a similarity between the original and the recording, claimed since Edison’s phonograph records’ (85). Nonetheless, in the digital era the ‘myth of transparency remains’ (ibid. 89), with noise relegated to ‘how not to do it’ mythologies of sound reproduction (Williams 163); a point to be expanded on in coming chapters.

Notwithstanding the desire to conquer, relegate, and silence, noise’s persistence is reducible to two factors. First, noise can never truly be conquered as it ‘is that which exists beyond our control’ (Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound* 22), or as Thompson suggests ‘it might sometimes seem as if noise is a thing of the past, having been banished to the archives by the ever-greater fidelity of sound reproduction. But noise still lurks in even the most perfect of recording ... noise can never be fully conquered’ (ibid. 42). Therefore, variants of noise will persist within even the most perfect digital recorded temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction: though not by choice, it nevertheless will remain unconquerable. The second factor in noise’s persistence within the digital era is where the focus of this research lies, that being choice. To elucidate, the choice to utilise both media and environmental noise as a sonic virtue to create or alter meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction as a response to the digital era; a response evident in the abovementioned music by White, Antony and the Johnsons and the Irish popular musicians to be discussed throughout the thesis.

A Hauntological Metalanguage of Remembered *Punctums*

Siqueira Castanheira claims that noise ‘should be there, impregnating, masking, even ruining, the enjoyment of a particular sound, but it certainly changes that sound and meaning’ (96). He further indicates that noise is ‘now part of the experience of an ancient sonority’ (97). For a recording artist looking to produce a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction via sound reproduction technology, choosing to use noise as a part of this ancient sonority is a significant factor. Yet in doing so, they must equally

draw upon and seek to master what is outlined in the introduction of this thesis as a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to purposefully navigate a listener through the topography of a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. To further this point, central to this study is an adoption of Jacques Derrida's theory of hauntology as outlined in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. In this work, Derrida reflects on the haunting inheritance of Marxism, with Terry Eagleton noting of it: 'what we have in this text, by and large, is a political discourse of an averagely-intelligent-layperson kind, and a philosophical rhetoric, or spectrality and the messianic, which is at once considerably more subtle and a good deal less convincing' (85). Notwithstanding Eagleton's criticism, and in specific his alignment with spectrality and the messianic, Derrida's hauntological examination of Marx is particularly pertinent to an examination of popular music and the digital era, or even to a broader classical music tradition as recognised by Edward Venn in 'Thomas Adès and the Spectres of Brahms': 'To identify spectres, to speak to them, is part of the critical enterprise of interpretation, for it is by understanding the way that spirit is made flesh that we can deconstruct its apparent ontology' (168). Hence, hauntology serves as a crucial critical theory to consider the identification of spectres and the hauntological metalanguage employed by Irish popular musicians to speak to them or with them.

To return again to the sense of cultural belatedness as evident in the Eels with their engine that no longer burns on wood, the group serve as emblematic of a popular music performer/group that are haunted by inheritance, as they desire to speak to or with spectres and (re)establish a unity with them. In relation to hauntology, Pierre Macherey, considers in 'Marx Dematerialized, or the Spirit of Derrida' that:

A ghost is precisely an intermediary 'apparition' between life and death, between being and non-being, between matter and spirit, whose separation it dissolves. And an inheritance is also that which the dead return to the living, and that which reestablishes a kind of unity. (19)

For Macherey, ghosts or spectres serve as a bridge to the past with hauntological inheritance realising the potential in cultural belatedness to (re)establish an unattainable unity. Warren Montag writes, 'Indeed, there is nothing any longer to be seen, only a voice to be heard, a tale that sounds and resounds after the teller is gone, an echo that leaps the temporal chasm that separates us' (73). Montag's pondering

suggests that any desire to (re)establish unity is achievable only in drawing influence from what voice there is to be heard as it echoes beyond the temporal chasm, yet accessible via recording technology's preservation qualities (Katz 98). The significance of an inheritance is of course not unique to the digital era, as is indicated in Greil Marcus' seminal *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'N' Roll Music* with its reference to the necessity for ancestral voices to 'inheritors' like Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan so that they could become 'drifters in a world where roots were life' (150). In the digital era, however, roots are in an abundance. A point affirmed by Mazierska et al. who write: 'Contemporary musicians, both young and old, also experience types of competition from which their predecessors were spared: dead musicians and virtual performers' (15). To elaborate on this assertion, a reuse and re-contextualisation of the image of music in the digital era being a low hanging fruit advances the point that an overabundance of that tree's roots can overwhelm, choking inheritors to silence. As will become apparent throughout this study, a significant concern of popular musicians in the digital era is getting their voice heard given the omnipresence of music, a concern particularly pertinent within Irish popular music and other small music scenes. Antonio Negri notes that 'A specter is the movement of an abstraction that is materialized and become powerful' (7). How then is one to become an inheritor when a powerful ancestor refuses to depart the stage? A line of analysis strikingly pertinent to the advent of 3D hologram concerts by deceased performers like Roy Orbison (Mazierska et al. 15) For this reason, popular music is haunted by its past in the digital era in a way unprecedented within its history, which warrants a response from those inheritors.

To assess and advance their position as inheritors who seek to find their place within a canon of popular music, musicians are drawn into what Derrida regards as a hauntological confrontation with the inherited spectres of the past: 'One never inherits without coming to terms with [*s'expliquer avec*] some specter' (21). To respond to these spectres, or 'the radical and necessary heterogeneity of an inheritance' (ibid. 6), popular musicians seek to partake in hauntological 'gesture[s] of fidelity' (ibid. 90), as they draw influence from inherited spectres and seek to find in their temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction a sonic component which they can utilise as a gesture of fidelity. Yet, as Derrida writes, this form of 'Servitude binds [itself] to appropriation' (90) and this servitude and appropriation can result in 'positive conjuration' which 'enliven[s] the new' (108). In terms of popular music's use of noise as a response to

the digital era, Derrida's theory facilitates this thesis's assertion that hauntological servitude is not driven by nostalgia—what Taylor considers as a 'technostalgia' (96-116), or what is frequently determined as 'analog nostalgia' (Schrey 34-36)—but is instead a positive conjuration of an inherited metalanguage of sounds/signs for the purpose of enlivening anew. Negri writes that 'immersed as we are in the world of specters' (9), to confront them 'the eye, the other senses, and the mind begin to detect delineations of new realities' (10). Thereupon, it is these new realities that popular musicians seek to progress, albeit new realities that gesture to their spectral servitude, or the positive serving of their past.

In terms of looking to hauntologically respond to the radical and necessary heterogeneity of an inheritance in the hope of enlivening the new, a popular musician must themselves traverse the topography of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction looking to find a sonic component to draw influence from. Derrida defines 'a spectral moment' as 'a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: "now," future present' (xx). For a popular musician, they as a listener must find this spectral moment in their listening, and specifically within the digital era, they must find that sound that triggers for them an enlivened new sound which they can utilise to draw future listeners into their own temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Voegelin notes 'On the basis of their sonic character, sounds become signs—they come to mean certain things. Pulled in by the pathetic trigger of sound the listener inhabits the work, not at its center, but centered, decentered, and recentered within it' (*Sonic Possible Worlds* 141). She further argues of this pathetic trigger, 'The pathetic trigger of sound entices us into the work, decentering us from a past into a current position and recentering us in a new current one' (82). In essence, with their desire to draw listeners into their work, musicians must find what pathetic trigger grabbed their attention in their own listening, decentering them from the haunted past while recentering them for the future. They need to find what Barthes regards as a *punctum*.

As In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes not only looks to theorise the nature and essence of the photographic image, but also looks to express his own mourning for his deceased mother; the latter part of which will be explored in the final chapter of this work. Barthes writes, 'I see photographs everywhere, like everyone else, nowadays; they come from the world to me, without my asking; they are only "images", their mode of appearance is heterogeneous' (16). Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is telling

similarity between Barthes' analysis of the photograph and Jacques Attali's well-trodden assertion on music:

Fetishized as a commodity, music is illustrative of the evolution of our entire society: deritualize a social form, repress an activity of the body, then see that it is stockpiled until it loses its meaning ... it has become a locus of repetition. (5)

In both instances, the ubiquitous nature of the object/thing/creation devalues its respective essence. Barthes considers that given the omnipresence of the photographic image in everyday life 'in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes' (53). For him, it is only when allowing the reflective consciousness to unearth in memory what he notes as a *punctum* within the photograph that the truth of it emerges: 'a photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)' (ibid. 27). Barthes further states of the *punctum* that it is 'something [that] has triggered me, has provoked a tiny shock' (ibid. 49), and:

The *punctum* should be revealed only after the fact, when the photograph is no longer in front of me and I think back on it. I may know better a photograph I remember than a photograph I am looking at, as if direct vision oriented its language wrongly, engaging it in an effort of description which will always miss its point on effect, the *punctum*. (53)

The eagerness in popular musicians to find a pathetic trigger, while listening to inherited commercial releases, is conspicuously similar to Barthes' *punctum*. To employ the term, as this thesis does, it can be deduced that popular musicians in the digital era pursue in their traversing the topography of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, a sign in the hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to not only guide their traversing but systematically prick, bruise, and is poignant in their construction of a future new order. Noise serves this purpose. Siqueira Castanheira writes, 'Noise becomes no longer the questioner of the old order but is instead inserted as a component of a new order. It functions on the same mode of the usual sounds, obeys the same rules' (92). While Thompson writes in 'Productive Parasites Thinking of Noise as Affect' that 'Noise interrupts, it demands a *reaction*' (17). Therefore, in terms of its function as a *punctum*, when constructing a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction in the digital era, noise's absence demands reaction. Its position in a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* is realised in its absence, as

Barthes maintains in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes. Thereby, noise's worth or virtue is only realised when it is not there, when ears are closed to it and it is deemed unwanted. Then as a *punctum* it pricks, bruises and becomes poignant to the popular musician as a listener and subsequently as a sonic component in their construction of their own temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Macherey writes, 'an inheritance is not transmitted automatically but is reappropriated' (19). As subsequent chapters in this study reveals, the reappropriation of both media and environmental noise by Irish popular musicians Damien Dempsey, Sinéad O'Connor and others illuminates their creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction as they draw upon noise's many virtues as a response to the digital era.

Conclusion

'Lets fuck it up boys, make some noise!'

Bright Eyes / 'Road to Joy' /

Mark Nunes argues, 'Noise is that which cannot be handled by the binary machine, reduced to a 0 or a 1' (3). Noise is then ungovernable, a renegade sonic component in an era of binary order. Whereas, Siqueira Castanheira writes, 'The digital desires the analogue and its proximity to the empirical world. Analogue sound, due to its close relationship with continuous time, remains unattainable and evanescent' (96). This chapter considers noise's creative primacy as a sonic component in the digital era, notwithstanding a primacy that persists in spite of it being deemed unwanted due to its ungovernability. The assessment began by considering the first phase of music's digitalisation, highlighting the industry narrative that the CD's arrival vanquished noise and promised perfect sound forever. Nevertheless, the CD's unprecedented success mediated an unattainable progressive narrative that was subverted by the loudness war. In a way loudness replaced noise as it demanded a reaction from a listener, only it had no place in a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* so a listener disregarded it as they sought to traverse the topography of an artist's temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction.

The first phase of music's digitalisation began an emerging disconnect between the consumer as a listener with popular music, whereas the second phase of music's digitalisation accelerated this detachment to attentive listening resulting in unprecedented challenges to recording artists and auditory practices. As much as a

result of politics, policy, and economics, in the second phase the MP3 became the dominant and accepted format for the reception of music, despite its understood inferiority. Moreover, its acceptance as an inferior way for the reception of music reinforced two significant regressive factors from the second phase of music's digitalisation. First, the emergence of an ubiquitous listening practice that resulted in music being heard, not listened to. Second, the reception of music became a paradox of choice, as digital technology resulted in music streaming sites which facilitated access to an unparalleled amount of music and turns it to the lowest hanging of fruits within the fruited abundance of digital media. To couple both the ubiquitous listening practice and access to an infinite digital library, the result is a listener disconnect and contemporary artistic silencing; what Borges knew as an unbearable disproportionate depression when facing the paradox of choice. However, this has proven to be challengeable, with the vinyl record (re)emerging as the king format for the reception of music, and crucially, the use by popular musicians and recordists of noise as a sonic component that would prick, bruise, trigger as a *punctum* a listener's access to a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction.

As revealed, the use of media and environmental noise by popular musicians in the digital era is shown to be a response to the era. This response is akin to vinyl's re-emergence as a king format, affording the listening process newly orchestrated actionable components that are drawn from inheritance. With vinyl, the reframing of listening as an alternative multi-sensory event is augmented with its acceptance as an inherited culturised medium. Noise's place as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, is equally an inherited culture. Thereby, as both media and environmental noise it can orchestrate actionable access to, and navigate, the topography of popular musicians' temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Noise's place within the history of the reception of recorded music is unquestionable: its hisses, coughs, movement, laughter, warbles, fret, clicks, static, pops, sneezes, shouts, and much more has enframed, augmented, solidified meaning, and much more again. Nonetheless, practices of sound and music production and reception in the digital era sought to remove or silence noise, in as much as the ungovernable can be silenced. Therefore, as popular musicians and recordists choose to utilise media and environmental noise in the digital era, they recognise it as a part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* that can facilitate their creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. To conclude, they respond in part to the

digital era with use of haunting noises. In the next chapter of this thesis, the Irish popular musician Damien Dempsey will be a point of focus. This examination considers Dempsey's artisan use of media and environmental noise as a response to the digital era, which fulfils industry representation of him as being the antithesis of digital era Celtic Tiger Ireland; or its hauntological gesturing responder.

CHAPTER TWO

Hear the Noisy Celtic Tiger Roar:

Damien Dempsey and an Artisan Use of Noise

*'From my room in Donaghmede,
 I'm 'bout to kick all your asses,
 Stick your pink champagne and fuck your backstage passes,
 A warrior comin' down the mountain at ya,
 A woodkern springin' from the trees to catch ya,
 I'm lickin' my wounds in the wilderness,
 Prayin' for the warmth of the sun's kiss.
 My time will come,
 Your race is run,
 The throne's rightly mine,
 You greedy swine.'*

Damien Dempsey /'Patience'/

Prelude: A Story of Difference

It's All Good: The Damien Dempsey Story is a documentary directed by filmmaker Dara McCluskey which was first broadcast as part of the *Arts Lives* series on RTÉ in February 2004. The film tracks the story of Irish singer-songwriter Damien Dempsey's career leading up to the release of his second studio album *Seize the Day* (2003). The documentary begins with a live performance by Dempsey at Molloy's Christchurch, Dublin, to coincide with the release of his first album *They Don't Teach This Shit In School* (2000). Dempsey's performance starts with him jokingly bemoaning the lack of audience at his hometown gig and indicating that two other contemporary Irish singer-songwriters, Mundy and Gemma Hayes, recently played sold-out shows at the venue: 'Mundy is from Offaly, Gemma Hayes is from Tipperary, and I'm from Dublin and can't even sell out a gig in my own town' (00:01:19-29). Consequently, from the outset of the 'Dempsey story', Dempsey is presented as undervalued by his own local audience and by implication by the Irish music scene. The documentary proceeds to examine Dempsey's childhood in Donaghmede, Dublin, with family testimony that affirms his outsider position, while equally signalling the positive serving of the past, with his bedroom wall adorning images/posters of Sinéad O'Connor, Christy Moore, Luke Kelly, Shane MacGowan, and Bob Marley. The opening minutes then narrate a story of a singer-songwriter who is different, one who has yet to find popularity but importantly gestures to those who musically came before him, performers whose

spectral traces guide and shape his emerging talent. The documentary also references Dempsey's working-class Dublin singing style, suggesting that his working-class values also accentuate his perceived difference.

As the documentary continues, it assesses Dempsey's adolescence and highlights his early success as a songwriter, showing his receipt of a certificate of merit award from the Yoplait Song Contest for his track 'Carboard City'. In an interview with his brothers Gary and Emmet Dempsey, Emmet notes how they brought the teenage Dempsey to *RTÉ* to record with a thirty-piece orchestra. According to Emmet he was completely blown away by his brother's talent, recounting that he looked to his brother Gary and went 'where the fuck did that come from!' (00:06:33-36). Dempsey's talent is further emphasised through interviews with Dave Murphy of the Ballyfermot College of Further Education, an institution at which Dempsey enrolled in a Higher National Diploma in Contemporary Music Performance after dropping out of secondary education. Murphy reflects that the school was so enamoured by Dempsey's talent that they decided to fund the release of his first CD, the *Contender EP*; as his material was 'so good so original' (ibid. 00:09:40-52). An interview with Irish music icon Christy Moore also reinforces Dempsey's adolescent talent, with Moore describing the first time he listened to Dempsey at a gig at the International Bar's songwriter's night: 'I heard the head there one night and was really taken by what he was doing' (ibid. 00:09:24-28). However, throughout *It's All Good: The Damien Dempsey Story* the signalling of Dempsey's talent is also an acknowledgment that his difference results in criticism, especially in relation to his singing style. Moore furthers this conjecture, reflecting that what struck him about Dempsey is the fact that 'he was singing in his own accent, it tickled me, the way he really put it out there, he wasn't trying to sound like a yank you know' (ibid. 00:10:00-08). Hence, in *It's All Good: The Damien Dempsey Story*, Dempsey is presented to an Irish viewership as an Irish talent like no other, a naturally gifted yet different performer whose talent is acquired by spectral servitude; what is outlined in this study's Introduction as a positive conjuration that enlivens anew. Subsequently, the documentary is indicative of industry critics and narrators' representations of Dempsey that solidified public perception of him as an authentic response to what was being critiqued as the manufactured overly produced music of the digital era.

Introduction: A Noisy Response

Aileen Dillane et al. write in ‘Against the Grain Counter-Hegemonic Representations of Pre and Post “Celtic-Tiger” Ireland in the “Protest” Songs of Damien Dempsey’ that ‘Born into a working-class background (his father was a panel-beater and his mother held a number of different jobs), Damien Dempsey grew up in the working-class Northside Dublin suburb of Donaghmede’ (460); they further acknowledge that:

His repertoire has consistently championed working-class values and spoken out on the issues that affect the vulnerable in society ... his life experiences and upbringing in Donaghmede have ultimately instilled in him a desire to question/protest against (through his artistic endeavour) what he considers to be an unequal social and political order. (ibid.)

Through industry- and self-representation, Dempsey’s career as an Irish popular musician is intrinsically aligned with his working-class roots and protesting values which in part guide his artistic endeavour. As a consequence, he has found consistent commercial success, critical recognition and a sustained loyal fan following.

This chapter examines Dempsey’s success, centring its acquirement as being achieved due in part to his response to the digital era. This initially entails considering how Irish music critics and industry narrators accentuate Dempsey’s perceived working-class difference while positioning him as a noisy response to the digitalisation of sound and music. The chapter then reveals Dempsey’s hostility towards digital era popular music, before considering his response to it with a skilled use of media and environmental noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to create or alter meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction (two concepts that are outlined in greater detail in this study’s introduction). This requires an examination of his musical output: *They Don’t Teach This Shit In School* (2000, re-released in 2005); *Seize the Day* (2003); *Shots* (2005); *Party On: Live at Vicar Street* (2006); *To Hell or Barbados* (2007); *The Rocky Road* (2008) and *Almighty Love* (2012). Central to this analysis is a focused exploration on specific recordings made at significant moments in Dempsey’s career. First, ‘Factories’, ‘Marching Season Siege’ from *Seize the Day*; followed by ‘Colony’ from *Shots*; ‘Serious’, ‘Teachers’, and ‘The City’ from *To Hell or Barbados*; ‘Saturday Finally Comes’ from *To Hell or Barbados: The Expanded Edition*; ‘The Rocky Road to Dublin’, ‘The Twang Man’, ‘Madam I’m a Darlin’ from *The Rocky Road to Dublin*;

and finally, ‘Chris and Stevie’ from *Almighty Love*. Moreover, implicit in an analysis of Dempsey as the primary creative practitioner in the construction of the abovementioned tracks is an understanding that his close working relationship with recordist John Reynolds facilitates and augments Dempsey’s creative process.

As indicated in this study’s introduction and the previous chapter, an analysis of Dempsey’s music and response to the digital era draws upon writings from Sound Studies; Irish literature; phonomusicology; Barthes’ concept of remembered *punctums*; and Derrida’s theoretical concept of hauntology. To utilise these theories to examine Dempsey’s response to the digital era, the chapter uncovers his use of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to temporally position his recordings as both inside and outside of a digital era soundscape and subsequently concurrent socio-political realities. An examination of Dempsey’s creative process must recognise that it is best to consider him as ‘an artisan rather than view him as an artist’ (ibid. 469). In recognising Dempsey as an artisan, the chapter’s analysis of his creative output reveal it mirrors industry and self-representation that foreground his difference. This difference is understood as being acquired in his spectral servitude, thereby enabling his response to the digital era and realising a successful sustained career. To begin, the chapter reflects on how Dempsey the man/musician is in part a creation of the Irish popular music industry, subsequently this creation becomes a paradigm for everything the music industry and Celtic Tiger Ireland was not in the late first phase of music’s digitalisation.

Our Damo: The Irish Popular Music Industry Responds

‘By their genes, by their essential bloodings, ye shall know a band. U2 were born into a scene that was a blank slate, and they had the bravado and instinctive insight to scrawl their own signature on the board. They found their own fulfilment by recognising that they weren’t tied by rigid expectations of what rock should or shouldn’t be. Beginning in a backwater, U2 would redefine Ireland’s often incoherent aspirations.’

Bill Graham /U2–The Early Years: Another Time, Another Place/

Dempsey, U2, and Industry Responses

McLaughlin and McLoone suggest that much of U2’s initial success was in no small part due to the support of an Irish music industry seeking the emergence of an Irish band that could, and indeed would, help foster a new understanding of Irish popular music and culture globally:

When looked at from the perspective of the local industry at the time, part of the success of U2 is a paradigm case of the skilful manipulation of the emergent national popular musical infrastructure. The band's success is evidently not reducible to this but it would have been unfeasible without it. (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 167)

In much the same way, the early success of Dempsey would also have been unfeasible without the support of an Irish music industry that sought to construct an authentic voice to juxtapose digitally produced music. In fact, to draw a comparison between the early career narration of both U2 and Dempsey by Irish popular music critics there are striking similarities. First, there is the implicit 'othering' of both U2 and Dempsey as different/authentic alternatives to the manufactured music of respected eras. McLaughlin and McLoone write that in relation to U2 this othering was in response to bands like Spandau Ballet and Duran Duran, who represent 'New Romantic and New Pop ... the musical corollary of [Margaret] Thatcher's Britain' (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 173). Critics equally present Dempsey as an alternative, responding in kind to what Dempsey himself notes as the 'bubblegum pop' of the early second phase of music's digitalisation.

Dempsey is often familiarised by being given the moniker Damo, a rough, working-class Dubliner who is an imperfect flipside to the omnipresent aesthetically perfect pop aesthetic of the digital era. Bartmanski and Woodward reflect that in vinyl, 'cultural meaninglessness was promptly revealed as the flipside of perfect convenience' (20), and that 'as a result, vinyl could emerge as not only the authentic and uniquely sounding format but also the only music carrier worth owning and collecting in the strict sense of the term' (ibid.). In relation to Dempsey, with his heavy-weight boxer's physique, he is equally presented as a different/authentic/imperfect physical embodiment that is counter to digital era aesthetics. Yet this is where his meaningfulness is promptly revealed, with Dempsey represented or constructed as an authentic other to digital era perfection. Consequently, Dempsey's music is equally construed by critics and industry narrators as a response to the practice of passive hearing with digital music, or what is outlined in the instruction as ubiquitous listening; thereby, further solidifying him as an Irish noisy alternative to digital perfection. Evidently, Dempsey's career certainly benefits in being presented as an Irish noisy response to digital era aesthetics, just as U2 have benefited from their juxtaposition to Thatcherite pop music.

***Hot Press* and the Making of Dempsey**

To expand on this point, central to both U2 and Dempsey's characterisation as a response to respective eras was, and still is to an extent, the work undertaken by various journalists at *Hot Press*; a magazine Áine Mangaoang et al. writes is 'Ireland's most enduring popular music magazine, *Hot Press*, was launched in 1977' (6). In relation to the early narration of U2, McLaughlin and McLoone claim that 'the magazine effectively canonised the young band early in its career. This discourse had a reciprocal effect, shaping the texture of the scene it was otherwise reporting' (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 166). Although *Hot Press*'s 'canonisation' of Dempsey was not as transparent as U2, which is close to popular music hagiography, there is a proportional narrative evident in the magazine's coverage of Dempsey's music and importantly the man himself. In an early article on Dempsey from February 2000, to coincide with the initial release of the album *They Don't Teach This Shit In School*, the magazine published 'Modern Day Troubadour', in which Adrienne Murphy writes: 'Like many true artists this musician from Donaghmede, northside Dublin, is humble and unassuming to the point of self-effacement. Beneath the humility, however, is a sure confidence born of raw talent and originality'. Whereas a review of the album from March of the same year purports:

Damien Dempsey is a soul singer in the truest sense of the word. OK so he's no Al Green, but the 23-year-old from Donaghmede is incapable of being anything other than honest and giving anything less than 100% every time he opens his mouth to sing. (Walshe)

In each instance what is emphasised is Donaghmede as a place of origin, positioning Dempsey to a readership almost certainly aware of the socio-economic background of Dublin that he was of a working class 'humble and honest' background. As a result of which, or perhaps indeed in spite of it to certain readers, Dempsey was able to emerge as a raw and original talent.

This narration of Dempsey is furthered in the magazine's review of *Seize the Day* which equally positions his 'arrival' on the Irish music scene as of great significance. Eamon Sweeney in his review of the album begins in overtly celebratory rhetoric:

It looks and sounds like all that ‘unsung hero’ business could be over, as Damien ‘Damo’ Dempsey has turned in a modern Irish classic. Subsequent to the economic boom or C***** Tiger [Celtic Tiger], musicianship in this country enjoyed its own little purple patch. But if after all these giddy years all we have is a bunch of Frames records (however good), a clutch of over-earnest clones and lots of abstract art underground noodling then it’s a pretty pathetic reflection on the entire notion of artistic endeavour in this country.

In an interview with Dempsey, Sweeney also refers to the musician as being ‘armed with positivity and the truth’ (‘The Celtic Warrior’), while he christens Dempsey the artist as ‘Our Damo’. Sweeney in this reflection solidifies a collective possession of Dempsey, affirming a narrative that Dempsey is Ireland’s own Celtic warrior armed with only positivity and truth which he uses to vanquish Celtic Tiger digital era clones and abstract art undergrounds (ibid.). As noted, much of this same rhetoric plays out in the documentary *It’s All Good: The Damien Dempsey Story*, with Murphy in an interview saying of Dempsey:

he was different, and he was different, from the Caseys [Paddy Casey] cause the Caseys and the Hansards [Glen Hansard] are still writing in what you would call a pop genre. You know, where as Damien was writing outside of that, and he’s in a folk element. So I would say what he has done is managed to get into his songs a twist between the standard ballad, and because he grew up with reggae and all of that, so his rhythms are more interesting and a little different. Yet he still retains the Irish ethnic sort of, you know, it’s Irish directly (sic). (00:10:36-11:06)

These representations of Dempsey would intensify his reception by an Irish public as a response to Celtic Tiger digital pop music and aesthetic, with the narration implicit in indicating he fulfils his response by an inherent and apparent goodness evident in his national and localised identity. In these narratives, his ‘Irishness’ positions him as encapsulating truth and positivity, yet equally narrates him as visceral when he faces the socio-political issues and artistic challenges evident in the late first and early second phase of music’s digitalisation.

Rob Strachan and Marion Leonard observe that a foregrounding of Irish identity by Irish recording artists most often result in greater national and international success. In their study, they point to the framing of a ‘naturalisation of “Irishness” and musicality’ (41) being a contributing factor to the global success of Irish recording

artists: ‘the overseas success of acts such as The Corrs, Van Morrison, and The Saw Doctors has led to a widespread understanding that Irish popular music is in some way stylistically different from the US and UK’ (ibid.). Bill Rolston furthers this argument as he writes, ‘the popularity of many Irish musicians is ... partly due to their ability to slot into a widespread definition of Irishness as mystical and spiritual’ (53); in addition Rolston considers that it is difficult (and arguably unwise in market terms) for Irish groups to ignore their origins (ibid.). Strachan and Leonard argue that even the ‘digital pop music clones so derided by some audiences, Westlife, Boyzone, B*Witched, and Ronan Keating, also incorporate Irish elements into their music’ (41). Therefore, it is apparent that industry representation of Dempsey the musician, and ‘Our Damo’ the man, by *Hot Press* and others navigate public perception of Dempsey’s ‘Irishness’ that serves to position him as a marketable asset not only within Ireland but globally.

The Cultural Lamb and the Celtic Tiger

To further pursue a critical and industry narrative of Irish identity and Irish popular music in the digital era it is productive to examine Smyth’s point that ‘in Ireland during the 1990s the cultural lamb lay down with the economic tiger, and this resulted in one of the most active—as well as one of the most managed—popular music scenes in the world’, what he declares as a ‘flagship industry for a new Ireland’ (*Noisy Island* 4). The position of Irish popular music as a ‘flagship industry’, and the framing of Irish identity and musicality, is prevalent throughout the digital era as is evident within a 2015 report, ‘The Socio-Economic Contribution of Music to the Irish Economy’, produced by Deloitte and commissioned by the Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO) on behalf of the Irish music industry. The report contains various governmental and industry led initiatives, such as the IMRO proposal to establish a Music Industry Taskforce (IMRO 26) and perceived short- and long-term opportunities for Ireland’s music industry. What is of interest in the report for the purpose of this research is the continuation of the clear industry driven narrative of the importance of the music industry as a flagship industry for a new Ireland, while also implying the inherent musical ability of Irish recording artists and the central role of music playing and listening on the island of Ireland. The report begins:

The Irish music industry forms a cornerstone of Ireland’s internationally renowned reputation for culture and creativity. Ireland’s rich musical heritage is a source of great

pride, and its current musical output across a range of genres continues to enhance cultural life at home and abroad. (9)

Subsequently, the report indicates an essentialist view of Irish musical engagement with statements like ‘Music beats in the heart of Ireland’ (13), and ‘Ireland has always seen itself as a musical nation. We have a rich heritage of traditional music and latterly have developed an enviable repertoire across a number of genres including rock and pop’ (ibid.). Alex Klein considers that much of the essentialist characterisation of Irish musicality has its foundations in colonial affirmations of ‘othering’ Irish cultural identity (181). Hence, the report affirms an industry narrative of Ireland’s musical engagement with problematic signifiers of Irish natural musicality. If indeed as Smyth suggests, the cultural lamb lay down with the economic tiger, then by all intents and purposes they have since become more than amicable bedfellows, in part forming an industry defined characterisation about Irish identity: namely that ‘Irishness’ equates to a natural musical authenticity which in industry terms results in branding opportunities and economic benefits.

In *Hot Press* and the Irish music industry’s representation of Dempsey, he becomes a sonic and personal antithesis for all that digital production aesthetic and Celtic Tiger socio-political realities. In this representation, Dempsey becomes the proverbial unique Irish cultural lamb that the narrative determines is needed to rail against the ‘economic tiger’, this in spite of him also laying down with said tiger. Smyth argues in *Music and Irish Identity: Celtic Tiger Blues* that the Dublin band The Script are a clear sonic reflection of the Celtic Tiger, and of what David McWilliams regards as the Irish ‘Expectocracy’ generation (52-67). Smyth considers that, ‘the sound of the Script is the sound of the Celtic Tiger—even when the band is singing about “bad things”’ (*Music and Irish Identity* 153). Smyth also argues that if The Script are the sound of the Celtic Tiger, then the spirit of the pop group Jedward is the soul of the Celtic Tiger (ibid. 157). If this is the case, then Dempsey is offered as an antithesis of both the Celtic Tiger sound and soul, yet significantly equal to both. The characterisation of Dempsey as a different/authentic embodiment of all that is good in Irish popular music, corresponds to an industry concurrently pursuing and championing an alignment of Irish identity and raw musical talent. It is evident then that if the Script are an aural representation of the Celtic Tiger roar, and the spirit of Jedward the soul behind said roar, thereby Dempsey is constructed as a Celtic warrior

whose noisy roar is the true, unique, authentic, Irish response. Hence, the Celtic Tiger music industry, with its digital clones and global ambitions, positions Dempsey as an industry response to the same industry, which in turn brings about a popularity that has been sustained by his own talent and indeed his own response to the digital era.

Dempsey and the Haunting of John McCormack's Wall

*'Well, I've not been honest, darling
No, I've not been straight at all
Well, I beg your pardon
The night we jumped McCormack's Wall
I was so happy just to be with you
I would have said anything at all
Now I could scream your name
Till you do the same
But I know you won't respond.'*
Glen Hansard / 'McCormack's Wall'

A Modern Tale of Irish Popular Music Mythology

Dempsey is considered emblematic of all the Celtic Tiger and digital era soundscape is not, so consequently his creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction draws influence from spectres outside of a contemporary soundscape. In many instances, he draws influence from an inherited mythology of Irish popular music with a desire to position himself alongside that mythology and at the same time forge his own modern tale of Irish popular music mythology.

At a live performance to promote the release of *Didn't He Ramble* (2015), Glen Hansard tells of the origin of his track 'McCormack's Wall', indicating its connection to Dempsey while illustrating Dempsey's reaction to an inherited mythology of Irish popular music. Hansard says that 'McCormack's Wall' was inspired by a night he and fellow singer-songwriter Lisa O'Neil drunkenly broke into the grounds of Count John McCormack's former home in Co. Kildare; 'Well, I've not been honest, darlin', No, I've not been straight at all, Well, I beg your pardon, the night we jumped McCormack's Wall' (00:00:00-15). After scaling the eponymous wall, Hansard, ever the skilled storyteller, claims that himself and O'Neil were toasting the long dead McCormack when they received a phone call from Dempsey who was demanding to know where they were. After informing him that they were enjoying a few drinks with the ghost of McCormack, Dempsey demanded they put him on speakerphone, at which point he proceeded to serenade the ghost of McCormack while Hansard and O'Neil

listened on. By most accounts of this spectral serenading, Hansard, well known for his ‘onstage yarns’ (O’Sullivan), is certainly playing loosely with the facts. Regardless, the image of the late night speakerphone serenade of the canonical McCormack by one of Ireland’s leading contemporary singers Dempsey while Hansard and O’Neil listen on is at first visually appealing, yet, also in many ways it reveals a great deal of the public perception of the performers involved.

First, there is Hansard and O’Neil, painted as two folkloric doomed lovers drunkenly traversing the ‘wilds’ of Kildare after leaving Whelan’s Pub in Dublin. This *ramblin’* narrative of Hansard is also reflective of the album’s title, *Didn’t He Ramble*, and is indicative of much of Hansard’s self-narration; what Smyth considers as Hansard’s authentic reactionism (*Music in Irish Cultural History* 170). Second, there is the *ramblin’* concluding in the grounds of McCormack’s former house, a site of remembrance for Irish music as it acts as a shrine to McCormack, a singer Ian Fox considers as among the greatest singers of the last hundred years (645). To juxtapose the story to an Irish mythological comparison, the jumping of McCormack’s wall can be seen as the two folkloric doomed lovers seeking solitude in another world populated by Irish music spectres; their actions a Derridean gesture of fidelity to hauntological influence. Finally, Dempsey’s place in the modern tale of Irish popular music mythology is understood as an affirmative one as he demands to address and serenade McCormack’s ghost, fulfilling further the pre-existing hauntological reverence. Dempsey in Hansard’s tale is even allotted a close relationship to McCormack, and consequently other spectres, given that his gesture of fidelity or serenade realises reflective conscious listening on all those present—or not present but haunting.

Hansard’s story of the origins of ‘McCormack’s Wall’ is meant as a comic ‘yarn’, included within his live repertoire as a way to frame his work and of course to entertain. However, a question must persist, would his modern tale of Irish popular music mythology relate to an audience if they were not already invested in the belief that Hansard, O’Neil, McCormack and Dempsey were not capable of undertaking the roles assigned to them? As noted, Dempsey’s depiction as a talented, working-class, and different musician is understood by Irish music fans who seek in him a response to the digital era, as he creates music that indicate his spectral servitude. By the summer of 2014, the time when Hansard wrote ‘McCormack’s Wall’, Dempsey through his work had established himself as an authoritative voice capable of responding to the digital era. For that reason Hansard’s Irish popular music

mythological tale functions as it relates to an audience something about Dempsey predetermined, namely that he responds to the present by singing to and with the spectral voices of his and Ireland's Irish popular mythological past.

Hauntology and Irish Popular Music

As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, much of the theoretical framework that underpins this work is based in part on Derrida's neologism hauntology. To align the theory to Dempsey's spectral servitude, or indeed to a broader understanding of Irish popular music, this study will now look to reiterate some specific findings. Moreover, to build upon what has been previously outlined, this chapter will introduce existing adaptations of hauntology for analysis of popular music with a specific focus on the previously outlined digital era manifestation of a hauntological structure of feeling.

Derrida remarks that socio/political ramifications of Marxism were still prevalent at the end of the twentieth century due to societal hauntological confrontation with the spectres of Europe's past in the form of Marxist ideologies and socialist reform: 'One never inherits without coming to terms with some specter' (21). In his analysis of the situation Derrida understands that a hauntological gesture of fidelity to a Marxist spectral inheritance was inevitable as socio-political structures were to enter a new millennium: a point perhaps now regarded as moot with the continual growth of neo-liberal power structures. Byung-Chul Han considers that central to these power structures are new technologies of power—notably online 'freedom', social media, digital consumerism, and more—which are portrayed as democratising and or liberating but seen by Han as equally tools utilised to facilitate an 'interiorization of modes of power' (26-28). Interestingly, as the prominence of new technologies of power has sustained growth throughout the aforementioned two phases of music's digitalisation and concurrent digital era, so too have new forms of hauntological gestures of fidelity grown with the re-emergence and re-appropriation of various ideologies, social movements, fashions, technologies, and of course musics: a point of examination that draws upon concepts relating to retro-culture revisionism that is evident in Reynolds' *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*; and Mark Fisher's *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Additionally, the former of these monographs is assessed by Michail Exarchos in his article, 'Sample Magic: (Conjuring) Phonographic Ghosts and Meta-Illusions in Contemporary Hip-Hop Production'. The resulting analysis

recontextualises Reynolds' belief that sample-based music creation is a 'mixture of time-travel and seance' (313), allowing a musician (or 'beat-maker') to become 'a magician in the eyes (ears) of their audiences' (Exarchos 33-34). Notwithstanding this recontextualising of Reynolds' hauntological assessment, Exarchos still offers an intriguing consideration on the essence of 'magic' in sample-based processes (ibid. 51), thereby fulfilling some of the analytical potential in adopting hauntology to assess aspects of popular music.

In further relation to popular music, as observed hauntology is particularly pertinent to examining the sense of cultural belatedness that is evident in groups like the Eels. This line of analysis does not negate an understanding that popular musicians have always looked to their past and relied on it for inspiration, with musicians anxiously looking over their shoulder as time's arrow drives them forward (Bloom *Anxiety of Influence*). Yet with digital technology, there is now untold access to spectral voices, thereupon the idea of a radical and necessary heterogeneity of an inheritance is problematised as technology dictates an inherent spectral servitude. For this reason, confrontation with spectres is no longer confined to an anxious look to the past, as popular music is now besieged by spectral voices conveniently accessible via digital technology. To reiterate a specific passage significant for an examination of popular music, Derrida considers that 'Servitude binds [itself] to appropriation' (90), and that this servitude and appropriation can result in positive conjuration which 'enliven[s] the new' (108). In relation to popular music, the servitude induced appreciation is indicative of the musical landscape since the first phase of music's digitalisation. Nevertheless, any positive conjuration and subsequent enlivening of the new is less apparent, albeit reserved for those whose spectral confrontation has resulted in utilising noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*.

As noted in this study's introduction, Hogarty's 2017 publication *Popular Music and Retro Culture in the Digital Era*, expands and focuses on much of what Reynolds and Fisher both argue as it equally employs Derrida's concept of hauntology to examine popular music and musical listenership amongst an ethnographic group of Irish music fans; a monograph Michael Waugh asserts is a pertinent and vital first academic overview of hauntology and popular music (148). Hogarty's monograph is similar to this thesis as she writes: 'My view is that we are in the age of retro culture that is occupied by the ghosts of popular music's past' (2). Hogarty also purports:

The increasing homogeneity of the creators [of popular music] leads to the homogeneity of the output. I argue that this lack of originality feeds into the *hauntological structure of feeling*—it breeds nostalgia for the more futuristic past when popular music was supposedly more youthful original, heteronomous, and forward looking (emphasis added). (3)

Although this point seems to relate more with an older listenership, those of whom have known musical listenership in a pre-digital era, Hogarty equally notes a similar hauntological tendency amongst younger listeners. She writes, ‘the young generation unit of retro fans developed a constructed sense of “authenticity”, which emerges from the hauntological feeling and the belief that the un-lived past was a better place’ (5). Although Hogarty raises some interesting and relevant points, Waugh argues that her research findings are problematic given an exclusivity on genre, with analytical criticism focused solely on ‘white heterosexual rock’ (148), and repeated ‘value judgments’ on her part such as ‘older music was more authentic [and] had more socio-political relevance’ (149). Despite these concerns, and problems raised in having an ethnographic cohort ‘exclusively white but quiet well mixed in terms of class and gender’ (Hogarty 6), Hogarty’s monograph begins necessary research into what she considers an inherent hauntological structure of feeling evident in Irish popular music (5).

As revealed thus far, Dempsey’s position as an authentic antidote to digital era sound and Celtic Tiger socio-political values is in part validated by an inherent hauntological reverence and concurrent positive conjuration. As will become apparent his hauntologically infused lyrics and sonic gestures of fidelity to spectral traces binds much of his work in a servitude to those self-same spectral influences. This in turn positions Dempsey as temporally aligned as outside of the ‘homogenised’ digital soundscape, yet equally inside with his lyrics engaging with socio-political issues prevalent of self-same era. Therefore, it can be deduced that Dempsey’s music responds in kind to a hauntological structure of feeling inherent in a listening public who are eager for something different than digital perfection and consequential ubiquitous listening patterns. As in Hansard’s modern tale of Irish popular music mythology, Dempsey’s worth as an artist/artisan lies in his difference which facilitates an ability to draw upon noise’s virtue to temporally position his music both outside and inside the digital era, thereby demanding attention of all those listening.

The Celtic Warrior and Bubblegum Pop

*'Bubblegum rock and Bubblegum roll,
Bubblegum punk and Bubblegum soul,
Bubblegum hip hop Bubblegum dance,
People walk around in a Bubblegum trance ...'*

Damien Dempsey / 'Teachers'

Spectral Teachers

This chapter so far has considered Dempsey's characterisation as a different/authentic antidote to Celtic Tiger and post-Celtic Tiger Ireland and the reception of this person by an audience permeated with a hauntological structure of feeling. Dempsey's own creative response echoes much of the inherent hauntological structure of feeling with his lyrics often expressing his disdain for what he regards as the 'bubblegum' popular music industry. Dempsey's lyrics also mediate himself as an antidote or response to this 'bubblegum' popular music industry. To view this through the prism of hauntology, Dempsey's music owes much to him positively serving specific spectres which is maintained through lyrical gestures of fidelity to inherited spectres. In no track is this more evident than in 'Teachers' from *To Hell or Barbados*:

Old Johnny Cash help me walk the line.
Old Bobby Marley how your soul does shine.
Old Woody Guthrie has a rebel heart.
Old Billie Holiday sings like a lark.
Nina Simone can make me feel so high,
Old Luke Kelly brings tears to my eyes.
Old Philo Lynott still breaking down walls,
I'm thanking you one and all. (00:00:27-50)

These lyrics clearly illustrate Dempsey's spectral servitude as he credits a significant proportion of his creative worth to the signified spectral teachers. In the release, Dempsey also indicates mistrust for some aspects of formal educational systems: 'We got teachers in school, some are wise and some were fools, but they're also on the stereo' (00:00:41-01:01). Unsurprisingly, in 'Teachers', Dempsey positions these spectral figures as superior to contemporary performers, as he highlights a perceived mass manufactured pop-music product which he sings is given precedent by the music industry and concurrent radio play. 'Teachers' is then a clear response by Dempsey to

the digital era soundscape, relaying a lyrical narrative applicable to an audience permeated with a hauntological structure of feeling:

Bubblegum rock and Bubblegum roll,
 Bubblegum punk and Bubblegum soul,
 Bubblegum hip hop Bubblegum dance,
 People walk around in a Bubblegum trance,
 Teachers on the air are getting less,
 It's all about the image and possessions and sex. (00:01:15-33)

In this passage, Dempsey's reference to people walking around in a trance is particularly astute, indicating Dempsey's recognition of ubiquitous listening. In a final reflection on 'Teachers' lyrics, Dempsey further sings that there is an alternative for him to listening to bubblegum music and living in a bubblegum trance and that is to play spectral teachers on his own stereo: 'I've got my stereo and I'm the DJ; And I decide what I play' (00:01:35-40). Thereby, these lyrics indicate the importance of sound reproduction in facilitating Dempsey's creative development.

In his study on the impact of technology on popular music, Katz maintains:

While there have always been a composer-performers-artists who interpret their own works—with recordings we can conceive of listeners-performers and listener-composers. Recording thus not only effects the practice of music, it shapes the very way in which we *think* about music: what it is, can, and should be. (47)

Whereas Montag's hauntological analysis reflects that there is nothing any longer to be seen, only a voice to be heard, a tale that sounds and resounds after the teller is gone, an echo that leaps the temporal chasm that separates us (73). With sound reproduction, the temporal chasm is breached for Dempsey and transforms him into a listener-performer which in time facilitates his transition to a listener-composer. To summarise, the central message of 'Teachers' is Dempsey's rejection of digital bubblegum pop, as his spectral servitude celebrates performers/teachers that are only accessible as an echo that leaps the temporal chasm. 'Teachers' is a track that responds to the digital era by clearly stating that haunting teachers are unequivocally better than contemporary creators of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction; thereupon affirming a predetermined narrative that serves an inherent hauntological structure of feeling.

A Celtic Warrior Emerges

Featured on the album *Shots*, ‘Patience’ is recognisable as a constant in Dempsey’s live repertoire, with its lyrics again indicating Dempsey’s aversion for digital bubblegum pop. However, in ‘Patience’ Dempsey crucially signals his music as a response to the digital era, portraying himself as a Celtic warrior fighting against the manufactured aspects of global music industry:

Well I’ve exchanged the spear and the sword,
For words and melody.
Oh what a felony.
How the record company pushes this McDonalds music.
An aural lobotomy,
For those who choose it.
Corporations pumping all this money into pop.
To keep the real singers far away from the top.
So folks are never told what these corporations do
Fucking up the planet, exploiting me and you. (00:01:08-33)

The lyrics again clearly indicate Dempsey’s disdain for digital manufactured ‘McDonald’s music’, sharing much of the same sentiment as ‘Teachers’. Although, the track also signals the creative worth of ‘real singers’; performers who he maintains are being silenced by industry pressure. In ‘Teachers’ it is understood ‘real’ equates to spectral influences in the form of deceased or ageing musicians, yet in ‘Patience’ real equally equates to both spectral and contemporary influences. For a listener who is aware of Dempsey’s music, the real singers he signals are an indication of his own influences which invariably fall within his own hauntological structure of feelings and concurrent contemporary musicians who Dempsey understands as being musically opposite to digital bubblegum pop.

In a *Hot Press* article ‘The Celtic Warrior’, Dempsey relates what are the musical tropes of real singers. Unsurprisingly, this begins with him naming a specific spectre who impacted his early musical development: ‘I think it was when I heard Philo’s [Phil Lynott] stuff, when Dublin was mourning him, that’s when I got a guitar’ (Sweeney). He further says that upon taking up the guitar ‘I took to it like a fish to water. I took a few lessons along the way but mostly I learnt everything myself’ (ibid.). Dempsey’s recollection affirms the talented but different narrative indicative of his

representation, while importantly pointing to spectral servitude to Lynott that warrants a gesture of fidelity and positive conjuration that enlivens his creative output. In the article, he also considers the importance of socio-political activism evident in his hauntological influences, which combines his conceptualisation of real singers along lines of political posturing:

I was into that. Philo did songs about children being neglected in South America and Africa and I adored Bob Marley, still do. Lennon and Christy Moore, Sinéad O'Connor in the eighties—all these things. Good protest songs. I admired people who took a stand and said what they weren't happy about in the world. I liked to be blunt, not to sugar coat things, and wear my heart on my sleeve. (ibid.)

In broadening his definition of real, Dempsey highlights its presence in Ireland's traditional music and ballad tradition, thereby affirming juxtaposed essentialist readings of cultural worth in Irish traditional and popular music: 'Bring music back. Good trad music. Make it more spiritual and linked to the earth. Mix in the Celtic with the Christian' ('Celtic Warrior'). Finally, in the interview Dempsey crucially locates himself and his music as real—an antithesis to digital bubblegum pop:

I think it's tough to write about these things ... [it] definitely can affect your commercial potential if you talk about all this. You're put in the political songwriter box. Also, with the boom people didn't really want to hear about that sort of thing. It's hard to write about Ireland and the things going on. We often sing in an Americanised and Anglicised way as well. You can't blame people for wanting to be universal. They see Ireland as a small and insular place which they want to get out of rather than get bogged down in what's going on. (ibid.)

Thereupon, Dempsey considers his music as counter to Celtic Tiger Ireland's 'boom times', also gesturing to his intent to draw influence from real singers while signalling his Irish identity and socio-political concerns in his music. In part, this affirms to those with a similar hauntological structure of feeling that he is a real singer, akin to spectral influences.

In a final reflection on the interview, Dempsey declares that real singers like him will spearhead a change in popular music:

There is a change in the air and music is mirroring that ... It's coming back to good singer songwriters. You see *Other Voices* on the shelves in megastores and in the top

ten. The pop thing is beginning to fizzle out a bit and good music is blossoming'.
(ibid.)

For Dempsey, 'good' or real singers are consequently defined as singer-songwriters like himself. He relays this sentiment with reference to *Other Voices: Songs From a Room*, an album that features singer-songwriters Hansard, Damien Rice, Lisa Hannigan, Paddy Casey, Roesy, Josh Ritter, Marie Doyle Kennedy and others who were recorded for the influential live album between 2002 and early 2003 in the Church of St James, Dingle in the south west of Ireland. The success of the album *Other Voices: Songs From a Room*, is presented by Dempsey as counter to digital bubblegum pop, further solidifying the assurance that real is somehow inherent in good singer-songwriters and not to be found in more technologically reliant or digitally enhanced pop music. This layers another signifying characteristic to Dempsey's notion of real, with an anti-technological myth also arising, itself a significant component of the hauntological structure of feeling. Therefore, for Dempsey the 'real singers far away from the top' are re-emerging thanks to their gestures of fidelity to influential real singers in the form of spectral, political, Irish, and anti-technological influence.

Dempsey's personal and lyrical response to the digital era is foregrounded throughout his creative and personal output, but in no release is it as clear as it is in 'Patience':

From my room in Donaghmede,
I'm 'bout to kick all your asses,
Stick your pink champagne and fuck your backstage passes,
A warrior comin' down the mountain at ya,
A woodkern springin' from the trees to catch ya,
I'm lickin' my wounds in the wilderness,
Prayin' for the warmth of the sun's kiss,
My time will come,
Your race is run,
The throne's rightly mine,
You greedy swine. (00:03:35-50)

In 'Patience', Dempsey's response to the digital era is an affirmation of the posturing Irish music critics and industry voices make of him as a different, and talented,

antithesis of the digital era and concurrent socio-political landscape in Ireland. As indicated in the lyrics ‘From my room in Donaghmede; I’m ‘bout to kick all your asses; Stick your pink champagne and fuck your backstage passes’, Dempsey presents himself as a Celtic warrior, who armed with his music will fight against the influence of digital bubblegum pop. Dillane et al. write:

Dempsey has produced songs and lyrics (in particular) which strive to create an alternative cultural text, and these acts of rebellion (no matter how small), which re-imagine people and places, serve to challenge the dominant discourse of the impact of a hegemonic neoliberal political ideology on Irish society. (461)

In essence, Dempsey’s lyrics are central to his artistic endeavours as he responds to digital bubblegum pop, and what he perceives as the digital era’s decadence and exclusivity. However, his alternative cultural texts are themselves self-aggrandising, posturing to his own fulfilment as he takes the throne as the Celtic Warrior. To create and fulfil this moniker, he presents himself as a real singer outside of the influence of the digital era, indicating to those with a hauntological structure of feeling that his music relates to change: ‘I’m lickin my wounds in the wilderness, prayin for the warmth of the sun’s kiss, my time will come, your race is run, the throne’s rightly mine’. This form of self-aggrandising fulfils what Allan Moore notes as identification “‘second person” authenticity, or *authenticity of experience*’ (220), an accordance Moore notes ‘occurs when a performance succeeds in conveying the impression to a listener that that listener’s experience of life is being validated, that the music is “telling it like it is” for them’ (ibid.) Thereby, Dempsey’s creation of the moniker Celtic Warrior affirms that he is a response to the digital era, validating the listeners’ experience of life as he is ready to strike a blow for what he understands as real singers. In his self-appraisal as a response he negotiates his creative worth by indicating his purported real talent as counter to industry manufactured popular music, albeit operating effectively in the same industry. Nevertheless, this self-aggrandising mediates to a listening public with a hauntological structure of feeling the importance of his alternative cultural texts, aligning him with spectral influences outside of the digital era.

The Sounds of the Raconteur of the Marginalised

‘I sing the song of the colony

*How many years and you're still not free
And your mother cries and you ask god why
Greed is the knife and the scars run deep
How many races with much reason to weep
And your children cry
And you ask god why ...'
Damien Dempsey /'Colony'/*

A Simple Colony of Sounds

The chapter thus far has revealed an Irish critical and industry representation of Dempsey as a different, talented response to digital era soundscape, highlighting his own lyrical response to the same digital era. This chapter section examines the sonic and vocal delivery components of his temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Bennett suggests it is important to assert that

technological application does not occur in a vacuum. Behind every choice and application of recording and production technology to a musical instrument lies a decision—a conscious choice on the part of the recordist to apply a particular sonic trope to a piece of music. These decisions are often complex and come loaded with historical, cultural and technological meanings. (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 74)

With this in mind, this thesis proposes that Dempsey as a recordist becomes an artisan, a creative practitioner whose complex hauntological response to the digital era is loaded with historical, cultural and technological meanings.

In “‘You’ll Never Kill Our Will to Be Free’: Damien Dempsey’s “Colony” as a Critique of Historical and Contemporary Colonialism’, Devereux et al. write that there is an affective simplicity to Dempsey’s music. This critical focus is primarily concerned with Dempsey’s ‘Colony’:

The structure of the song is quite straightforward. It might even be said to be simple, which is often an important characteristic of a song where the metaphorical and literal meaning of the words are of paramount importance. The unfolding narrative takes priority. (39)

To an extent this ‘simple’ and/or straightforward musical delivery is synonymous with Dempsey’s repertoire with priority given to politically infused lyrics. As evident in ‘Colony’, Dempsey’s lyrics often proportionately address political injustices, with

Dillane et al. affirming that he ‘never stopped writing or singing songs to counter inequality or injustice, championing a particular post-colonial inflected, cosmopolitan “Irishness” that places community, love and social engagement at its heart’ (456). Dempsey indirectly addresses these assertions in a characteristically personal letter to fans to coincide with his album *Soulsun* (2017). The letter affirms much of what has been discussed thus far on Dempsey’s hauntological reverence, opinions on which he shares with fans on his social media platforms and a crowdfunding page he used to raise funds for the completion of the album. The letter indicates that ‘I can tend to write very matter of fact songs’ (A Letter from Damo), but is quick to equally state:

I never have written topical songs really, about the latest newflash, it’s just not me. I write historical songs that I feel have lessons and learning in them for us today, and personal songs that people can hopefully relate to and draw some hope or strength from and hopefully feel less alone. (ibid.)

In the above-mentioned article by Devereux et al. they align Dempsey’s social-political lyrics and straightforward delivery with Martin Power’s assessment of Morrissey as a ‘raconteur of the marginalised’ (100); a comparison that subsequently reframes a critical reading of marginalisation given Morrissey’s right-wing political alignment. Despite this however, Dempsey’s position as a raconteur of the marginalised is salient, perhaps more so in terms of spiritually filling a void left vacant in light of Morrissey’s moral marginalisation. This aside noted, it is important to highlight Dempsey’s straightforward lyrical delivery, which is primarily utilised by him as a significant affective sonic tool to deliver what he construes as historic and personal lessons that affirm his position as a raconteur of the marginalised.

Building upon their reading of Dempsey’s affective straightforward vocal component to his temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, Devereux et al. consider that it coincides with another significant sonic characteristic utilised by Dempsey—the ability to sound Ireland. They argue, ‘significantly, the Irish uilleann pipes reiterate the melody from “you’ll never kill our will to be free [lyrics from ‘Colony’].” This iconic Irish instrument is often used to signify the nation in paintings, and it is frequently employed in film soundtracks to “sound” Ireland’ (43). The sounding of Ireland is of particular relevance in positioning Dempsey as a raconteur of the marginalised in Ireland, even offering a further convincing characteristic to his Celtic Warrior moniker. The foregrounding of Dempsey’s Donaghmede accent in his

straightforward vocal delivery unwittingly signals sound Ireland and is paramount to his success in gesticulating his working-class values, ‘realness’ and raconteur of the marginalised persona. To expand on this point, Dillane et al. consider Dempsey’s Irish vocal delivery by using Barthes’ seminal ‘The Grain of the Voice’, concluding that Dempsey’s raconteur of the marginalised persona is enhanced by the “grain of the [working class] voice” (Barthes, *Image, Music Text* 181); a ‘codified style, with particular techniques and local accents which are in the service of communication, representation and expression’ (Dillane et al. 456). Therewith, the coming together of his straightforward delivery, sound Ireland and the grain of his working-class voice are paramount to Dempsey’s creation of temporospatial expanses of his sonic fiction, augmenting a lyrical relaying of historic and personal lessons that cement his raconteur of the marginalised persona.

Two Irish Sounding Colonies

To draw upon what has been revealed in relation to sound Ireland and to establish an insight into Dempsey’s use of noise in creating temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction a comparative analysis of the two distinct studio produced versions of the release ‘Colony’ is useful.

The first studio version of ‘Colony’ is from Dempsey’s debut studio album *They Don’t Teach This Shit In School* and is close to eight minutes in length (7:58); the second version is shorter in length (7:08) and features on Dempsey’s third album *Shots*. In terms of differentiating between the two tracks the inclusion of the uilleann pipes and a flute as tools to sound Ireland on the second version is the most striking difference. The inclusion of the uilleann pipes and a flute replace ‘a solemn militaristic drumbeat’ from the first release (Devereux et al. 39); a sonic signifier of militancy which pertains to Dempsey’s then emerging Celtic Warrior persona. The lyrical content of ‘Colony’ looks to establish Dempsey the warrior as he rages against the colonising countries of Germany, France, England, Spain, Belgium and Portugal, a narrative that is accentuated by the militaristic drumbeat. This drumbeat, along with Dempsey’s flat lyrical delivery, gestures to revolt and brings to mind a military march being led by Dempsey as a Celtic Warrior. However, there is another important attribute that the military marching drumbeat brings to the track, an attribute it shares with the uilleann pipes and the flute, and that is it can sound Ireland within the confines of the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. To achieve this signifying trope, there

is an important sonic characteristic of the drumbeat—its noisiness. In terms of the recording of the original version of ‘Colony’, it is clear upon listening that an ineffective miking of the drum playing of Wayne Sheehy facilitates an awareness of studio noise to a listener which positions the recording process as different, or outside, in relation to digital era sound perfection. In defence of the production of Trevor Wyatt and Ingmar Kiang, it is in this ineffective miking that an important sonic component is realised. This sonic component is noise, which is subsequently utilised by Dempsey throughout the rest of his career as a response to digital era soundscape. Hence, in the first version of ‘Colony’ the militant or revolutionary narrative intent is propelled by the noisy militant drum, which draws a listener into the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction; this aligns noise as akin to other sonic components in Dempsey’s complex creative arsenal, such as his straightforward musical delivery, sound Ireland and the grain of his working-class voice.

Our Sweet Guide: Dempsey, Embalming and Spectral Servitude

“You do know the whole world”, Rutledge said, “and you have been my sweet guide”.

John McGahern /That They May Face the Rising Sun/

The Processing of Sound

Sterne writes that, ‘considered as a product, reproduced sound might appear mobile, decontextualized, disembodied. Considered as a technology, sound reproduction might appear mobile, dehumanized, and mechanical. But, considered as a process, sound reproduction has an irreducible humanity, sociality, and spatiality’ (*The Audible Past* 236). To view the complex reproduction of sound by Dempsey as a process, or a *processing*, this work will now look to foreground the skill in his use of noise, his processing of sound, as being central to the humanising, socialising, spatialising, and temporalising of his music. This signals a hauntologically motivated process that is paramount in furthering Dempsey as not so much an artist but an artisan.

The studio process, Sterne argues, has an obvious close cultural analogue alignment with photography. As noted in the previous chapter, the significance of Barthes’ *punctum* and the omnipresence of both music and the photographic image serve as paramount theoretical analogies in this study. Sterne suggests that as with photography: ‘Phonography marks both a socio-spatial network and a socio-temporal

network, where one time could potentially speak to (if not with) another’ (ibid. 308); a point pertinent to sound reproduction facilitation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Yet Sterne also highlights another process with close cultural association to the recording of sound and that is the embalming of a dead body. He considers, ‘The studio is an organising principle of sound reproduction. In many ways, embalming is an analogue of this studio process. Both transform the interiority of the thing (body, sound performance) in order that it might continue to perform a social function after the fact’ (ibid. 297). To view the process of sound reproduction as such, Sterne highlights the significance of reverential familiarity needed in both the transformation of the interiority of a body and sound performance in a recording studio: ‘Like the cosmetic touch up of corpses, even the most “realistic” approaches to sound recording took extensive steps to beautify the product for future ears’ (ibid.). Thereby, this highlights the importance of a skilled hand in applying the cosmetic sonic touches in Dempsey’s creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction—his straightforward musical delivery, sound Ireland, the grain of his working-class voice, and noise—and the significance of familiarity needed in the process or production of sounds.

That He May Face the Rising Sun

To expand on Sterne’s theory and to bring it in line with what has been revealed so far on Dempsey, the chapter now examines Dempsey’s skilled and reverential processing of noise in sound reproduction alongside a passage from John McGahern’s novel *That They May Face the Rising Sun* (2002). This affords a relatable and enriching comparative analogy to the skilled intimacy needed to apply noise as a cosmetic sonic component, equally foregrounding noise’s many virtues in realising new sonic sensations.

That They May Face the Rising Sun is about, if anything, two central outsider protagonists who look to find a place for themselves within a rural Irish community after moving there from London; a novel in which ‘the world’s richness is celebrated as much for its own sake as for any other reason’ (Hughes 147). Throughout the novel much of this is achieved with the development of a close bond between the outsiders Joe and Kate Rutledge and their neighbours, and in particular their close neighbours Jamesie and Mary. The encompassment of the Rutledges into the local community is fulfilled in the novel’s penultimate passages which see the death of Jamesie’s brother Johnny. Of particular interest in this scene, is the foregrounding of the drama in not

being able to find another neighbour Patrick Ryan, a prominent person in the community who is able to ready the body for public viewing at the wake.

‘We sent out far and wide and can find no trace of Patrick. Nobody appears to know where he’s gone’. [Jamesie]

‘Why is it so necessary to find Patrick?’ [Ruttledge]

‘He always lays the body out!’

Jamesie looked anxiously around. The house was full and though it was now well after midnight people were still coming to the house ... By custom, nothing could be offered until the corpse was laid out and viewed. (McGahern 270)

To this Joe Ruttledge, who is known throughout the novel as Ruttledge, responds that he will ‘lay Johnny out’ (ibid.) The offer is met with initial silence, and uncertainty on Jamesie’s part but Ruttledge offers assurances that he is able for the important process, or processing, especially as he is offered help by another neighbour Tom Kelly; albeit another ‘outsider’ as Kelly works as a hairdresser in Dublin and is just visiting his mother.

In the scene that follows, key for this research’s comparative analogy is the skilled reverential intimacy needed in the process by which Ruttledge and Kelly care for the body of Johnny. In considering the care, the research draws upon Sterne’s comparison with sound reproduction when necessary while foregrounding the anxiety in undertaking the transformation of the interiority and exteriority, and the irreducible humanity, sociality, spatiality and temporality within the process. With the inclusion of the character of Kelly, McGahern’s skill as a writer is evident in that the character gives voice to the anxiety of the processing of a deceased body and the reception of the process by a community while not compromising the actions of the primary protagonist Ruttledge. Kelly: ‘Mark you well my words ... everything we have done will be remarked upon. Everything we have done will be gone over’ (274). The anxiety of the process is coupled with a careful reverential intimacy emerging as Ruttledge and Kelly remove Johnny’s personal possessions, a wallet, betting slips, clothing and hearing aid, each in their way reveals more about the life of the man. Yet the real humanity of the process McGahern presents with the closing of the rectum with cotton wool, the transformation of the interiority, an act as ‘intimate and warm as the act of sex’ (ibid.). McGahern writes of the process:

The innate sacredness of each single life stood out more starkly in death than in the whole of its natural life. To see him naked was also to know what his character and clothes has disguised—the wonderful physical specimen he had been. (272-273)

Ruttledge takes further due care to preserve the humanity of the dead as he takes over from Kelly in the final process of applying dentures and cosmetically setting the dead man's face as realistic, a process that serves a social purpose as the mourners await. The social purpose is itself a product of a spatial one, as the body of Johnny is positioned alongside other objects in a way that allows mourners to undertake the social act of passing the body: 'a row of chairs was arranged around the walls of the room. A bedside table was draped with a white cloth and two candles were placed in brass candlesticks and lit' (275). The process also serves a temporal purpose as the humanity afforded to Johnny in death by Ruttledge and Kelly is evident to those who view him and who in turn take with them a temporal permanence. A permanent image of Johnny in death that is in part created by both men as they transform the interiority and exteriority of his dead body; echoes of the act are evident in the permanence of sound reproduction.

Upon the completion of the laying out of the body, Kelly is reluctant to finish the process and allow the mourners to enter, but again Ruttledge's centrality to the process is affirmed when he takes responsibility: "We will have our critics. We could be the talk of the country yet" Tom Kelly said. "I'll take the blame. You'll be in Dublin" (274). The apprehension it soon transpires is only partially justified with most of the mourners reflecting favourably on the work of both men. Importantly, the process is seen by Jamesie and Mary as more than adequate; "He's perfect. Patrick couldn't have done it a *whit* better", Jamesie said emotionally ... "everybody, everybody said that Johnny looked beautiful" (275-277). In all, the embalming of the body with such humanity affords Ruttledge greater communitive inclusion. Thereupon, it is through Ruttledge's gesture of fidelity to the dead, or the irreducible human, social, spatial, and temporal factors necessary to process the deceased, that McGahern shows an outsider becoming not only accepted within the rural Irish community of *That They May Face the Rising Sun* but significantly a cherished insider within it. For Ruttledge, the community is a whole world unknown to him at the start of the novel, but after the burial of Johnny and through a friendship with Jamesie it is

a world he knows a lot better; ““You do know the whole world”, Ruttledge said, “and you have been my sweet guide”” (295).

Sterne notes, ‘If the past is, indeed, audible, if sounds can haunt us, we are left to find their durability and their meaning in their exteriority’ (*The Audible Past* 333). To bring this in line with an understanding of the close alignment of embalming and sound reproduction, both are concerned with the durability and meaning of the exteriority of the past. Dempsey, as with Ruttledge, is aware of this and as a consequence his spectral servitude, there is a realisation what is outlined in the introduction of this thesis as a positive conjuration of the durability and meaning of the exteriority which enlivens his own creative process. To return again to Hansard’s Irish popular music fable about Dempsey’s serenade of McCormack, there are certain character traits evident in Dempsey as there is in Ruttledge. Dempsey in life will be an outsider in terms of his temporal spectral engagement with McCormack and all those spectral influences whose music infuse his creative process. Yet, Dempsey, as with Ruttledge, is unflinching in his desire to respond with dutiful reverence which in turn positions him as closer aligned to spectral influence than many of his peers. Dempsey, to an extent, is a sweet guide to the spectral influences that shape his creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Through his fidelity to the dead, or the irreducible human, social, spatial, and temporal factors necessary in sound production, he is able to position his music as both inside and outside of digital era sound production.

Dempsey the Artisan as a Sweet Guide

Dillane et al. write that Dempsey is not an artist in the true sense of the work, but more an artisan: ‘With his working-class background and strong sense of craftsmanship, when it comes to creating songs, it might be easy to call Dempsey an artisan rather than view him as an artist’ (469). Of the artisan they declare:

The artisan’s work is seen as more utilitarian, though he or she is also concerned with structure and form, with revealing the beauty of the grain. However, for the artisan, the function of a piece is of paramount importance. In this respect, Dempsey is arguably more an artisan, and craftsman, not because of his working-class roots but because of the work that his music does. (ibid.)

They conclude that to view Dempsey as an artisan is to see that the ‘artistic endeavours of contemporary singer-songwriters like Dempsey is about recognising the potential of music as a social intervention, as a political game changer, and not just as an individual artistic endeavour and expression’ (ibid.). An agreeable analysis, although one that neglects to recognise another primary function of Dempsey’s artisan music and that is its challenge to digital era sound perfection. Indeed, if the artisan concerns themselves with the ‘structure and form, with revealing the beauty of the grain’ then he or she if working within the parameters of the digital era must also recognise the given responsiveness in revealing the beauty of the grain.

As evident, in the digital era an artisan aesthetic emerged which foregrounds skilled tangibility and challenges temporal positioning of the artisan created object (Sax 1); a case in point being the re-emergence of the vinyl record as discussed in the previous chapter. In terms of Dempsey the artisan, this chapter highlights his characterisation as a response to the digital era, as supported by his spectral servitude. The characteristics of this artisan aesthetic as represented in his music is heard in his straightforward musical delivery, which allows the foregrounding of the lyrical messaging which in turn highlights his position as a raconteur of the marginalised. Moreover, Dempsey’s Irish sounds, or sound Ireland, are reducible to another sonic characteristic of his artisan aesthetic, with these sonic characteristics indicative of an artisan approach which further signals a gesture of fidelity to the dead, or the irreducible human, social, spatial, and temporal factors necessary in sound production. A final sonic characteristic remains to highlight, that being Dempsey’s use of media and environmental noise to temporally position his work both outside and inside of the digital era. In terms of being outside, noise positions his recorded work alongside spectral influences, while in terms of being inside, it serves as a response and/or challenge to the digital era and concurrent socio-political concerns. Hence, noise functions as an affective sonic component that Dempsey uses as he acts as a sweet guide to his spectral servitude.

Seizing the Day, Bringing the Noise

*‘Seize the day, hey, and look to Jah
Sha la
There’s work to do, Tooraloo
So don’t give in
Cause some day you’ll win
Seize the day, hey*

Sure you don't want no regrets when you look back ...'
 Damien Dempsey / 'Marching Season Siege/Seize the Day'/'

Seize the Day and the Conscience of the Celtic Tiger

With the commercial and critical success of *Seize the Day*, Dempsey was fast becoming a major authoritative voice in Irish popular music. If, as Smyth suggests, The Script are the sound of the Celtic Tiger, while the spirit of Jedward is its soul, then it could be argued that with the success of *Seize the Day* Dempsey was the era's conscience. The album serves as a breakthrough for Dempsey after the limited commercial success of *They Don't Teach This Shit In School*, and saw his debut on a major record label, Sony/BMG. The album also began a working relationship with recordist John Reynolds, a figure who would prove to be of great importance in the development of Dempsey's career and significantly in cementing Dempsey's sound.

Seize the Day is an album about Celtic Tiger Ireland. In this regard it temporally positions itself inside the concurrent digital era as its social, economic and political message. Dillane et al. write:

Dempsey has forged what we term 'a new Irish cosmopolitanism', which on one hand moves him beyond insular nationalist and regional, post-colonial Irish concerns, while on the other deeply and unashamedly acknowledges and situates Dempsey within his own local, working-class Irish experiences, thereby allowing his protestation to work at both a local and trans-local level. (456)

Seize the Day exemplifies this analysis as it challenges hegemonic notions of Irish societal betterment, redirecting reflective engagement to a widening social and economic divide which was exasperated at the time. In no track from the album is this more apparent than in 'Celtic Tiger', a necessary and often unwanted anthem of Celtic Tiger Ireland. Dillane et al. affirm this point, as they argue that Dempsey has produced 'songs and lyrics (in particular) which strive to create an alternative cultural text' (461). Significantly, in their analysis of 'Celtic Tiger', Dillane et al. highlight the hybrid rap and ballad lyrical delivery of Dempsey, identifying the track as being 'a contemporary urban folk song' (462). To look again at the temporal positioning of the track, the hybrid nature of the musical arrangement coupled with the subject matter further solidifies the release and subsequently the album as being inside the temporal timeframe of the digital era. However, the use of noise at various points of the track,

alongside broader historic social injustices addressed, point to the record as being equally outside of a digital era soundscape. In brief, with the use of his straightforward delivery, contemporary and historic subject matter, Irish and global sounds, and noise, Dempsey seeks to create an album both temporally inside and outside of the digital sonic soundscape.

To many, Dempsey is a noisy singer-songwriter, with the grain of his working-class Dublin voice sonically announcing itself as a noisy alternative to digital perfectionism (ibid. 456). This same analysis is pertinent to considering his straightforward guitar playing style which is often heavy with guitar fret and noisy imperfections. Simon Emmerson states:

Distortion, tape hiss, vinyl surface noise, low bit rates—all in their time were considered transitional to something ‘better’. But they are also ‘the grain of the system’, a signifier (a signature) of its idiosyncrasy and character, but also its ‘time stamp’ (its timbre). Such noise is identified with the limits of systems (both analogue and early digital). (84)

While Sterne writes, ‘The personality traits of the characters enter into the very sound of the apparatus’ (*The Audible Past* 152). Therefore, the noisy grain of Dempsey the artisan is mirrored in the ‘grain of the apparatus’ (ibid. 258) and the grained processing or time stamp of a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. This mirroring is evidently apparent in another track from *Seize the Day*, ‘Factories’, which lyrically focuses on the socio and economic pitfalls of Dempsey’s youth in Donaghmede:

Factories, Trains and Houses.
 Playground of my youth.
 The place that left me mute.
 I threw back my shoulders.
 Factories, Trains and Houses.
 The place that makes some strong,
 And hurries you along. (00:00:10-01:06)

In the confines of the album *Seize the Day*, Dempsey introduces an audience to the playground of his youth by first foregrounding environmental noise in the form of his own prelude, as he calls attention to the audience of his own reflective processing.

‘Factories’, as it appears as a track on the album, begins with out-of-tune guitar strumming and Dempsey questioning ‘What else? I’ll just try this on its own and see’,

before he proceeds to play a new track on the guitar before audibly running his fingers across the guitar neck creating noise (00:00:00-10). At this point he ‘begins’ what is to be construed as the track, albeit with a full ten seconds of environmental noise at the beginning. As understood, given the recording opportunities available to recording artists throughout the digital era, the inclusion of ten seconds of noise at the beginning of ‘Factories’ is not without purpose. The noise is a significant sonic affective contribution to not only the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction that is ‘Factories’, but to the album *Seize the Day* as a whole. The track preceding it is ‘It’s All Good’, which concludes with various affective Irish sounds such as the uilleann pipes, the flute, and even vocals by O’Connor. This Irish sounding, or sound Ireland, runs concurrent to Dempsey’s affirmative lyrics: ‘Love yourself today, ok, ok; Love yourself today, ok, ok ...’ (00:04:15-05:15). In the confines of the album, the ten seconds of noise that begin ‘Factories’ then serve as a way of bringing the listener out of affirmative sound Ireland, instead preparing them for the playground of Dempsey’s youth, a place importantly ‘mute’ to any Irish affirmations. Hegarty correctly writes that noise at its most functioning level demands attention (1), while to reuse Thompson’s point that noise interrupts, it demands a reaction. In terms of the ten seconds in ‘Factories’, noise’s virtue as a sonic component is that it garners attention, it brings a listener back to the socio-political pitfalls of Irish life, thereby it serves Dempsey’s role as a raconteur of the marginalised.

In its ability to garner attention, the ten seconds of noise has other functions. It temporally positions the process of recording as happening in real time to the work that precedes it. Sterne contends, if sound reproduction is to be considered a process, it has an irreducible humanity, sociality, and spatiality. He further writes that sound reproduction effectiveness precedes its characterisation as a ‘vestige of the body’ (*The Audible Past* 153). Hence, the ten seconds at the beginning of ‘Factories’, the noisy prelude, act as a vestige of Dempsey’s body processing the song in a ‘real’ studio environment which in turn humanises the process, socialises the sentiment, and spatialises the event. Finally, in temporally looking to locate the process of the song in a real lived organic time, the ten seconds draw upon spectral servitude and respond to a digitally created hauntological structure of feeling. Sterne writes, ‘sound recording stores time. In addition, this time is also something more, the retention of a certain sequence, isolation, and repeatability of moment—a fragmented conscious of time’ (ibid. 310). With this in mind, Dempsey’s use of noise is an important factor in his

ability to draw upon a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* for the purpose of processing the fragmented conscious of time. Consequently, in processing said fragmented conscious of time with such due diligence he is akin to McGahern's Ruttledge dressing out the body of a deceased neighbour, realising spectral servitude with a gesture of fidelity that aligns them both to communitive inclusion.

A Silence Preceding Noise

To maintain an examination of Dempsey the artisan, it is clear that his use of environmental noise in 'Factories' serves to reveal the processing of his creativity, as it reveals the beauty of the grain. As an artisan, Dempsey is aware of the affective functionality of noise as a sonic component, as he draws upon its ability to garner attention and elicit a response thus drawing attention to the socio-political message behind 'Factories'. In the track 'Marching Season Siege', also from *Seize the Day*, Dempsey again looks to the functionality of noise to foreground a political message. The message in this instance is related to the marching season in Northern Ireland, a highly volatile political action most often associated with the Unionist Orange Order and the annual Twelfth of July parade to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne (Taaffe 16). As the title suggests, in 'Marching Season Siege', Dempsey's view on those marching echoes the sentiment of Irish nationalist communities:

Marching down my street.
 Right past my own church.
 You beat your drums of hate,
 Until your hands burst,
 And the route you take through my neighbourhood.
 Is a well-planned route,
 Baying for some blood,
 Woh some blood. (00:00:32-01:12)

Dempsey's political reading of the contested marches is that they serve as a purposeful attempt to lay siege upon Northern Irish nationalist communities. To coincide with Dempsey's straightforward playing style, the lyrics in 'Marching Season Siege' equally deliver an uncomplicated analysis of the marching season. Yet, Dempsey augments and complements both these forthright elements with a complicated use of

media noise which runs for twelve seconds at the beginning of the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. The twelve seconds of noise initially can be heard as just media static, but upon closer listening, which facilitates the reflective consciousness to hear, the noise is revealed as a distorted rewinding of the song ‘Land of Hope and Glory’. Edward Elgar’s ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ is a piece of music that is not often associated with the marching season or the Orange Order, nonetheless since its premier in 1901 it has become a ‘fixture of British patriotism’ (Longdon). In terms of its functionality within the confines of ‘Marching Season Siege’, Elgar’s canonical piece sounds British, thereby it can sound Britain in much the same way as the uilleann pipes or flute serve the purpose to sound Ireland. In addition, ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ importantly is recognisable when played backwards as it is in ‘Marching Season Siege’, with the line ‘land of hope and glory, mother of the free’, and the elongation of ‘gloooory’, garnering a listener’s attentiveness even when audible in reverse.

On *Seize the Day*, the song preceding ‘Marching Season Siege’ is ‘Great Gaels of Ireland’ which celebrates the Irish and Scottish Gaels, ethnolinguistic groups associated with the Gaelic languages and pre-colonial invasion traditions: ‘Oh the great Gaels of Ireland; And the great Gaels of Scotland; They were kept down for so long; All they wanted was freedom’ (00:00:25-58). ‘Great Gaels of Ireland’ finishes with a short traditional Irish sounding piece featuring the uilleann pipes, a bodhrán, and a flute. To coincide with the traditional Irish sounding element, Dempsey sings, ‘*Na paisti* [children], be proud; *Na paisti*, be haughty; *Diomás* [disappointment]; *Diomás; Diomás; Diomás*’ (00:03:46-04:20). Therein, the inclusion of a noisy version of ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ not only has an affective function in relation to ‘Marching Season Siege’, but equally it relates to ‘Great Gaels of Ireland’. Dempsey draws hauntological influence from the Gaels, as he gestures to their music and language to exude pride yet disappointment, which in turn is noisily interrupted by British patriotism, and finally the intrusive ‘hate’ of the marching season. Thereby, noise functions as a pivotal sonic component within the two temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, which importantly relies upon attentive listening, a practice marginalised within the digital era and ubiquitous listening. To return to Hegarty, hearing is the simple perception of sound, listening the reflective conscious hearing, with him further arguing that:

Letting sounds be themselves' is still about the listener framing, locating, territorializing sounds, noise into sound, immanence into experience, absence of self into self-awarely absent self. What noise needs, and where noise is, however briefly, is a listening that is brought back to hearing through processes of rejection (as noise), confusion (through noise as change), excess (including of volume), wrongness or inappropriateness, failure (of noise, to be noise, to not be noise, to be music, not be sound, not be). Noise is where all listening goes when it has had enough. (199)

In other words, noise's virtue is that it functions as a way of drawing a listener who has had enough of passive hearing out of the pattern, thereafter, bringing their listening process to a reflective conscious. Sterne writes, 'Listening is directed, learned activity: it is a definite cultural practice' (*The Audible Past* 19). Hence, to draw upon a principle theory of Irish Studies, namely that Irish cultural identity is often understood as a reversion of British cultural identity (Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*), the noisy reversion of 'Land of Hope and Glory' can be understood as a way to sound Ireland; particularly given its position within the sequence just outlined. Therefore, Dempsey's use of noisy British patriotism, becomes noisy Irish nationalism, indicating that Dempsey is drawing on noise's effectiveness to generate new sonic sensations, awakening a reflective cultured conscious, within which noise is to be understood as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*.

To conclude an analysis of the use of noise in Dempsey's *Seize the Day*, there is a final noisy inclusion to the abovementioned album sequence. The track listing for the final two tracks on the album is 'Great Gaels of Ireland' and 'Marching Season Siege'. However, due to a hidden track the sequence can be viewed as 'Great Gaels of Ireland'; noisy Irish 'Land of Hope and Glory'; 'Marching Season Siege'; silence; noise; 'Seize the Day' and noise. To expand, upon the completion of 'Marching Season Siege' there follows twenty-two seconds of silence (00:03:21-43), which is interrupted by Dempsey who is heard inhaling, sniffing twice and coughing to clear his throat, which is captured through close vocal miking (00:03:43-47). Thereafter is the beginning of a hidden track not noted as being on the album, but which is understood to be called 'Seize the Day' given the lyrics and affirmative Irish sounding message:

Seize the day, hey, and look to Jah, sha la.
There's work to do, *tooraloo*.

So, don't give in,
 'Cos some day you'll win.
 Ohh, ohh, ohh, ohh,
 Seize the day, hey.
 Sure you don't want no regrets when you look back.
 Seize the day, hey,
 Sure at least you'll know, you gave this life a crack. (00:04:01-05:24)

In a final use of noise, the album finishes with another nose sniff and a short out-of-loop solo drum sequence (00:07:48-53), both of which act almost as a noisy punctuation mark for the track and the album. In all, the use of noise in the final track utilises a long-understood principle within sound reproduction, namely that close-miking affords a sense of intimacy with the listener (Potter 124). Hence, the use of environmental noise at the end of the twenty-two seconds of silence offers the listener intimacy, an insight into the process, before delivering an Irish sounding affirmative message; sounded in this instance within the lyrics 'tooraloo' and 'Sure you don't want no regrets'. To conclude the examination of the use of noise in *Seize the Day*, the final two noisy uses are themselves drawing upon and responding to much of the sentiment within the album. The album is a testament to Dempsey's raconteur of the marginalised persona, as it addresses throughout both historical and contemporary socio-political issues, and in particular those prevalent in Ireland. In its way then the intimacy afforded with the close-miked noise draws the listener to Dempsey for a final moment so that he can deliver a positive and motivational epilogue; a noisy epilogue followed by a noisy punctuation, both of which draw in part from a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* within a reflective Irish conscience.

Shots and a Seriously Noisy Nation

*'Serious, I'm afraid
 There's a devil in the shade
 Serious, I am scared
 There's a devil in my head.'*
 Damien Dempsey / 'Serious' /

Serious Shots

Upon the critical and commercial success of *Seize the Day*, Dempsey solidified his prominence in Irish popular music with the release of *Shots* (2005) and *To Hell or*

Barbados (2007). Upon its release, *Shots* gave Dempsey his first Irish chart-topping album, while further establishing his artisan raconteur of the marginalised persona. In comparison to other releases, noise features sparingly on *Shots*, suggesting that Dempsey and recordist Reynolds were not as reliant on noise and concurrently a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*. When used, however, its effectiveness or virtue is apparent as in ‘Not On Your Own Tonight’, when Dempsey sings/speaks a final ‘tonight’ at the end of the track which sequences into the conclusion with an out-of-tune noisy slowdown (00:03:48-50). Moreover, in ‘Colony’, environmental noise is evident with Dempsey angrily spitting out his noisy delivery, particularly within the lines: ‘But if you’ve any kind of mind; You’ll see that all human kind; Are the children of this earth; And your hate for them will chew you up and spit you out!’ (00:04:27-36). This passage can be construed as a noisy vocal delivery and uncomplicated song structure, which facilitates the unfolding narrative to take priority. In both instances the use of environmental noise is similar to those already discussed thus far, in each instance temporality positioning the track as inside the digital era and socio-political sentiment, while drawing upon outside sonic spectral servitude; in its way this authenticates Dempsey’s sentiment as a discursive Irish trope of great persuasive power (Stoke 7). Thereby, although noise is less prominent on *Shots*, it nonetheless serves Dempsey’s creative process, further consolidating a burgeoning Dempsey sound and aligning it with his artisan raconteur of the marginalised persona.

To Hell or Barbados is Dempsey’s fourth studio album, released in June 2007 with an extended version released in November of the same year. The album derives its name from *To Hell or Barbados: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ireland* by Sean O’Callaghan, a bestselling if controversial book that examines the plight of over 50,000 Irish men, women and children who were transported to Barbados and Virginia from Ireland between 1652 and 1659. In relation to Dempsey’s career trajectory up till that point, the title is an unsurprising choice, reflective of the historical and contemporary socio-political issues a listener might expect Dempsey to address. Sonically, the album equally corresponds with much of what is understood as the Dempsey sound, with straightforward delivery, sound Ireland, and the foregrounding of the grain of his working-class voice. In *To Hell or Barbados*, the use of noise for the most part follows an established pattern, with Dempsey drawing upon noise’s virtue in realising new sonic sensations. Initially environmental noise is evident with an audible hic-up and studio movement heard on the opening track ‘Maasai’

(00:03:52-58), and further instances of studio noise can be found on ‘Kilburn Stroll’ (00:05:03-11), ‘How Strange’ (00:00:00-04), and ‘I Don’t Care’ (00:02:52-59). However, on three tracks from the album, and a fourth from the expanded version, Dempsey’s use of noise takes on virtues not yet examined, albeit virtues still derived as a response to the digital era and drawing upon a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*.

‘Serious’ is a track about drug use and the pressures exerted by drug dealers and society on impressionable inner-city youth. The lyrics mostly reflect an imagined dialogue between a drug dealer and a reluctant user who is close to succumbing to the dealer’s pressure due to family and societal issues:

Go on, why don’t you try it out?
 I don’t know, my head’s filled with doubt.
 Ah, go on, a little bit won’t hurt,
 When you feel the whack of it, you’ll see it’s well worth it.
 Go on, give it a blast, in ten seconds flat you’ll feel fantastic.
 Your head will be like rubber, your body like elastic,
 You’ll be in God’s arms with your thoughts all derelict. (00:00:19-44)

As the track progresses the pressure manifests in the reluctant drug user foregrounding his mental health issues:

I have been feelin’ really low lately.
 Feel the whole fuckin’ world is against me and they hate me,
 Think I’ll head home, I don’t like this room.
 There’s a bad smell of piss and the ceiling’s peeling. (00:01:36-48)

The socio-political message of ‘Serious’ affirms Dempsey’s artisan raconteur of the marginalised persona, portraying a grim reality that little in the way of support is accessible to inner-city youth with mental health and drug related issues. In relation to Dempsey’s artisan aesthetic, the function of the track is of paramount importance and is in part realised from the track’s beginning. ‘Serious’ begins with media noise, which is given as a signifier for the mental pressure the young man is under. This is heard in the opening five seconds, which features two distinct noisy components. First, a low frequency warbling sound. Second, a low static piercing sound. Together these media noises function to indicate noise’s virtue in being unwanted, a sonic representation of the mental health issues and pressures evident in the track’s protagonist. Furthermore,

the noise persists faintly at intervals throughout the rest of the track, merging into a higher pitched warbling as the lyrical tension and anger mounts:

Ah, man, you're wimping out on me here.
 I thought you were a hard man with no fuckin' fear.
 I am, man, I fuckin' am,
 You saw me stickin' out that O'Connor kid.
 I fuckin' hopped off of him.
 Ah, rowin' is different, man, you know what I mean.
 Any fuckin' sap can row, that's all Babóog.
 You'll see what I mean when you take a hit. (00:02:54-03:17)

Thompson in her assessment of noise purports of 'the conservative politics of silence and the transgressive poetics of noise' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 4). With this in mind, Dempsey's use of noise can be construed as aligning with the transgressive poetics of noise, responding in turn to a conservative politics of silence in relation to mental health and drug use.

A Health Service Executive (HSE) report entitled *Mental Health in Ireland: Awareness and Attitudes* from 2007, the same year as *To Hell or Barbados* was released, foregrounds a key finding that 'Alcoholism, depression and suicide were identified as the three most important mental health problems by Irish adults. Drug dependence and stress are also deemed to be significant issues' (22). Noise then in functioning as unwanted in the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction that is 'Serious' is another instance of Dempsey acting as an artisan raconteur of the marginalised; given as he aligns sonic and Irish social taboos while also drawing upon noise's virtue to function as a transgressive counter to societal silence. Thompson writes of 'noise music's poetics of transgression, which emerges from (unwanted) noise's associations with sonic and social taboo/ (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 6). Crucially, 'Serious' also signals Dempsey's spectral servitude, as it echoes much of the sentiment from his release 'Ghosts of Overdoses'. In this track from *Seize the Day*, Dempsey sings, 'the ghosts of overdoses; replaces the ghosts of tuberculosis' (00:01:53-02:04), a sentiment that associates drug use with Irish and colonial historical failures to address poverty. Therefore, Dempsey as an artisan raconteur of the marginalised responds to Irish socio-political failures to address mental health issues, resulting depression and drug dependence as he draws influence from the ghosts of Ireland's past socio-political

failings. In ‘Serious’, Dempsey’s response is a use of noise that can be construed as a transgressive Irish noise, an unwanted reminder of social taboos, and generational failures to address them.

Teachers in the City

Dempsey’s ‘Teachers’ and ‘The City’ do not sit comfortably within an understanding of his straightforward music style which foregrounds narrative structure, as both tracks draws musical influence from reggae and dance music respectively. ‘Teachers’, as already discussed, is a track that foregrounds specific musicians who influenced or taught him, while raging against digital bubblegum pop. Unsurprisingly, in showing reverence for his musical influences and in disparaging the music industry, Dempsey uses noise affectively to affirm his message. The use of noise in ‘Teachers’ is evident when Dempsey sings, ‘Bubblegum rock and Bubblegum roll; Bubblegum punk and Bubblegum soul’, at which point can be heard a distant vocal shouting ‘got it!’ (00:01:16-21). To return to Voegelin, ‘To travel into the world of the work as into a sonic fiction means to travel into its temporospatial expanse, the effective geography of its materiality and come to understand the work and ourselves through inhabiting its invisible topography’ (*Sonic Possible Worlds* 82). With this in mind, the ‘got it’ from ‘Teachers’, with its vocal source clearly heard as outside of the understood topography, can be construed as a noisy intrusion into the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. Nevertheless, for it to function as noise it draws a listener into the self-same sonic fiction, thereby facilitating the foregrounding of the narrative message. In this way, the noise serves much of the same purpose as Dempsey’s straightforward music style in the majority of his creative output. In addition, ‘Teachers’ begins with another vocal that can be interpreted by a listener as outside the understood confines of the track, a vocal that draws influence from sonic components that infuse the invisible topography. The vocal is that of an uncredited male reggae singer, whose voice is stretched in delivering an intentionally inaudible vocal that is repeated twice in the opening seventeen seconds. The inaudibility of the voice again functions as a noisy way of garnering attention, drawing a listener into the track. In a hauntological reading, the opening seventeen seconds can be understood as Dempsey utilising an uncredited and inaudible voice as reflective of the marginalization of spectral voices in digital bubblegum pop. Ultimately, both instances of noise in ‘Teachers’ function to reel a listener into the invisible topography, as they reflect upon hauntological

voices from the perceived outside of the confines of the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction.

‘The City’ starts with another noisy vocal that draws a listener into the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, beginning with an intentionally inaudible male vocal saying ‘aarraa’. These four seconds of noise are also augmented by echo effect functioning to fabricate space, a common production technique used since the 1900s (Doyle, P. 48). In relation to the track that precedes it, the noise is a break from the colonial historiography of the album’s title track ‘To Hell or Barbados’ and accompanying straightforward guitar finish. The four seconds of noise subsequently announces a new sonic direction with ‘The City’ having a distinctly Afro-dance sound. In addition, the noisy ‘aarraa’ can be decoded as ‘ara’, an Irish colloquial often associated with inner city North Dublin and frequently used at the start of a sentence to express a relaxed nature or a term of endearment: ‘Ara musha you poor craythur, you’ll be grand!’ (McLysaght). Hence, the noisy interlude between ‘To Hell or Barbados’ and ‘The City’ can be construed as Dempsey ushering his listener into a new temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, after which he will sing of his complicated love for the city of Dublin: ‘Concrete you have raised me, concrete you enslave me ... A mother, cradle me tonight, your dark streets are my pride and joy’ (00:00:18-01:22). Throughout ‘The City’, lyrically Dublin becomes a feminine form serving as muse/mother figure to inspire canonical (male) artists who found inspiration while walking ‘her’ streets: ‘Joyce, and Behan, and Yeats, and Kavanagh room this town like two legged cameras, the body of work they left is incredible, literature and poetry so seminal’ (00:03:00-10). Dempsey’s lyrical reflection on Dublin is at specific points augmented by a whispering sensual vocal delivery, particularly when he sings: ‘still I love the bones of her, still I am transfixed by her, I am her offspring, I am part of her history, I am her family’ (00:03:12-26). This sensual reflection on the female Dublin, is furthered at specific points when there is heard a deep female breathing or panting. Unsurprisingly, the effectiveness of the noisy breathing is negated with the Oedipal nature of the intent. In spite of this, ‘The City’ is a further indicator of Dempsey’s use of noise to sound Ireland, and of his use of noise’s virtue as an affective sonic component to draw a listener into a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction.

Expanded Noise

A final and explicit use of environmental noise can be heard on *To Hell or Barbados: The Expanded Edition*. The expanded edition features a second disc which offers fans bonus or un-released recordings from Dempsey's career; these include Dempsey's version of Bobby Sands' poem 'Rhythm of Time', the west of Ireland ballad '*Taobh Leis An Muir*', and a '4am pub lock-in rendition of the pop standard "Fly Me To The Moon"' (The Hot Press Newsdesk [2007]). In essence, the bonus material offers fans access to Dempsey's creative process, aiming to enhance the listening experience and personalising the sound reproduction process. Sterne writes that:

If media do ... extend our senses, they do so as crystallised versions and elaborations of people's prior practices—or techniques—of using their senses. So, although, *technique* and *technology* are terms that clearly bleed into one another, the distinction is crucial for the history of sound. (*The Audible Past* 92)

Therefore, the bonus tracks in *To Hell or Barbados: The Expanded Edition*, personalises the listening experience by extending the listener's senses with personalised/crystallised versions and elaborations of people's prior practices, or sound reproduction techniques.

Unsurprisingly, the use of noise as an artisan technique to expand the listener's senses is evident as the expanded version features an unreleased outtake from *Seize the Day*. 'Saturday Finally Comes' begins with environmental noise in the form of a studio interaction between Dempsey and the album's recordist Reynolds. The interaction amounts to Dempsey making a mistake in delivering the opening line, singing 'On the garage' instead of 'In the garage', which triggers him to stop the song with a load 'fuuuk ya!' At which point, Reynolds is heard distantly, yet clearly audible, shouting 'In the garage! In the fucking garage!', with Dempsey laughing and saying, 'Shut up, I know!'. Reynolds then goes 'Ok', and a door can be heard closing before the noisy interlude is finished with Dempsey starting to play again (00:00:00-27). To assess its functionality, noise in the sequence certainly functions in much of the same way as some other sequences examined thus far, as it draws a listener into the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, *processing* the process of sound reproduction as being inside and outside of the digital era, and even functioning to sound Ireland with Dempsey's Dublin accent. Yet it equally functions as a personalising technique as it gives noisy voice to Dempsey, Reynolds and importantly the recording process. Sterne writes, 'Technique connotes practice, virtuosity, and the possibility of failure

and accident, as in a musician's technique with a musical instrument. It is a learned skill, a set of repeatable activities within a limited number of framed contexts' (*The Audible Past* 92). Hence, the use of noise in the sequence functions itself as a technique which illuminates the practice, virtuosity, and the possibility of failure and accident in techniques used in sound reproduction. Antoine Hennion maintains that the role of the producer (recordist) and the act of sound reproduction is often viewed as being removed from an apparent 'real world'—often seen as practicing “one's” alchemy in the underground vaults of a dark castle' (408). An assessment Bennett shares as she notes that 'terms such as “wizardry”, “alchemy” and “trickery” are ascribed to recording techniques and the goings-on in a recording studio; these are broad, non-technical terms evoking mystery, conjury and implying the intervention of inexplicable forces on the recording process' (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 83). Thereby, noise's virtue in 'Saturday Finally Comes', is that it is a personalising technique that refutes the envisioned conjury of sound reproduction, affording bonus access to Dempsey, Reynolds and their noisy exchange that functions as part of their creative process.

Dempsey's Tradition of Being a Noisy Tribune of the World

'At the moment I consider him a musician that's walking the thin line between the tribe and world, you know! I'd like to see him just leave the tribe and become a tribune of the world, of the working class in the world.'

Eoghan Harris /It's All Good: The Damien Dempsey Story/

The Noise of Tradition

The Rocky Road to Dublin is presented as a very personal album for Dempsey, with the liner notes featuring photos of his childhood and adolescence along with descriptions of each of the traditional folk songs covered on the album. An example being this note for the album's title track 'The Rocky Road to Dublin':

I got this song from the singing of my uncle Freddie mostly at house parties around the Cabra area and pubs in Clare and Galway. At these house parties I've heard my mother and father, both brothers, uncles, aunties and grandparents sing their favourite songs unaccompanied. (Dempsey Notes)

The album title is itself a hauntological reference given that it is a canonical track in Irish music with an association with Ronnie Drew and The Dubliners. Unsurprisingly, the

album foregrounds his positive serving to specific spectres throughout with the acknowledgments thanking canonical figures from Irish traditional and folk music such as Pecker Dunne, Joe Heaney, Margaret Barry, Frank Harte, the Clancy Brothers, and Seamus Ennis (ibid.), with a heightened sense of servitude towards Drew, Luke Kelly and The Dubliners. Yet Dempsey's uncle Freddie's hauntological influence is equally recognised which echoes the hauntological recognition which is given to his uncle Collie on the track 'It's All Good' from the live album *Live at the Olympia*: 'This is for my uncle Collie, I'll love ya forever, we'll all love ya forever Collie' (00:08:54-58). Predictably, given the personal nature and spectral servitude behind the recording of Dempsey's *The Rocky Road to Dublin*, the album features a number of noisy instances. The first of these is at the end of 'The Rocky Road to Dublin', where the voice of Barney McKenna of the Dubliners, who features on the album, is heard saying 'that was cleaner' (00:03:49-51). A similar use of environmental noise is found at the end of 'Kelly From Killan'/'The Teetotaler', where a chair movement is followed by a short dialog:

Barney McKenna: 'That's ok boys',

Other player [Possibly John Sheahan]: Cough [clearing throat]

McKenna: 'you give the drone you see with the the ... [plays banjo]'

Other player: 'nice, nice, nice, warm sound isn't it?' (00:05:23-39)

Fundamentally, both these instances validate the album's sentiment with approval from seasoned traditional folk performers. The exchange was recorded in an Irish Pub in Lanzarote, Charlies' Bar, and also features another icon of traditional Irish music in Sharon Shannon on button accordion (Curtis 113). In another instance of the use of environmental noise on the album, a noisy clink of a glass is heard on 'The Twang Man' (00:00:07-09). This noise, coupled with Dempsey's slurred vocals, functions to position the performance in a pub session environment. Thereby, indicating the album's intent to signal the importance of the Irish pub session to national and international interpretations of Irish traditional music (Kaul 23). The use of noise alongside Irish traditional instruments and players like John Sheahan, McKenna and Shannon, further emphasises the importance of the use of noise to sound Ireland in Dempsey's personalising technique of sound reproduction.

In a final use of noise, the album finishes with 'Madam I'm a Darlin'', a track Dempsey indicates he got from the 'brilliant Frank Harte', again alluding to the hauntological construct of the album. Of the track he writes, 'The tune in the end just

came from the 3 of us [Dempsey, Sheahan, and McKenna] messing around in Doolin ... its sort of dreamy and gives us a feel of the west of Ireland' (Dempsey Notes). In looking to complement the dreamy feel of the west of Ireland, and the January he spent in Doolin swimming and arranging the music for the album, *The Rocky Road to Dublin* concludes with eleven seconds of noise in the form of waves and seabird calls. Furthermore, the use of sea noises to conclude the album can be construed as a homage to Dempsey's childhood vacations to the coastal counties of Clare and Galway, where his passion for Irish traditional music was fostered. The use of noise in *The Rocky Road to Dublin* is Dempsey's clearest acknowledgement of his Irish spectral servitude, with noise utilised on the album as a positive conjuration that enlivens Dempsey anew. As with the bonus material from *To Hell or Barbados: The Expanded Version*, Dempsey's use of noise is also a personalising technique which he uses to break down preconceptions of the processing of sound reproduction. Consequently, in *The Rocky Road to Dublin* he utilises noise as a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to draw listeners long ingrained with a hauntological structure of feeling out of their ubiquitous listening pattern and into his temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction.

The Noise of Chris and Stevie

In contrast to much of his work, the last album to be examined *Almighty Love* is a rather noiseless affair. Eoghan Harris, in *It's All Good: The Damien Dempsey Story*, says of Dempsey that 'At the moment I consider him a musician that's walking the thin line between the tribe and world, you know! I'd like to see him just leave the tribe and become a tribune of the world, of the working class in the world' (00:18:47-19:01). In a way, *Almighty Love* can be considered as Dempsey's attempt at becoming a tribune of the world, a raconteur of the entire world's marginalised. Nonetheless, as he looks to fulfil the lofty ambition Dempsey negates an important sonic element within his construction of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, that being a sustained use of noise. Hegarty purports that, 'Noise has a history. Noise occurs not in isolation, but in a differential relation to society, to sound, and to music' (*Noise/Music* 5). Echoing the definition of a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction in this research's instruction, Voegelin writes that noise bestows music with a memory, and that 'without that memory pool music does not have the thickness or depth from which to build a present relevance' (*Sonic Possible Worlds* 75). Dempsey's

use of noise often draws upon a specific memory pool of noises that has an Irish history, and in kind has a differential relation to Irish society, sounds, and music. Hence, as he looks to become a tribune of the world, Dempsey's *Almighty Love* fails in its ambition as it did not have a relevant noisy memory pool from which to build a present relevance. Nevertheless, the album is not without noisy moments with one use of noise in particular striking in its ambition to address mental health issues and suicide in Ireland.

'Chris and Stevie' is about two friends of Dempsey who committed suicide with the song lamenting their loss and societal failures to address mental health issues:

My buddy Stevie, I loved him well.
 We had some laugh, he was sound as a bell,
 Our little lives, they ran parallel.
 He played with fire and got burnt as hell ...
 My buddy Chris, he was quiet, but tough,
 And to his face, you wouldn't call him a puff.
 We'd done the boxing, had many's the scrap.
 To this young warrior, I'll tip my cap ...
 Well, Chris and Stevie, I miss you both,
 Two more people cut down from a rope.
 It breaks my heart that you went so far,
 To all young people, be proud of who you are. (00:00:05-03:05)

As indicated in the lyrics, the personal connection to both Chris and Stevie is paramount to the track's impact. Dempsey's sorrow and shock at their suicide and his own loss is evident throughout, which allows his affirmative message of suicide awareness to ring true. To construct an adequate sonic component to enhance the deeply personal lyrics, Dempsey again looks to noise with the use of a child's voice. This is evident at the middle point of the track when a child is heard softly crying, which is followed by low inaudible street sounds and conversations (00:03:23-3:39). Throughout this sequence, the lyrics further reflects on Dempsey's personal loss: 'I'm missing you today, I'm missing you today, today' (00:03:42-58). In an interview on *The Tommy Tiernan Show*, during which Dempsey performed a powerful acapella version of 'Chris and Stevie', Dempsey spoke of the importance of crying and acknowledged the last time he cried was just a few days previous after trying to help a friend's brother battle drug addiction (@RTEOne). The noisy tears in 'Chris and

Stevie' equally indicates, or sounds, the importance of crying in addressing mental health issues, with the indifferent street and conversational noises that augment the crying reflective of a societal reluctance to listen to the necessary tears of those suffering. For this reason, the noise in the track has a history, occurring not in isolation, but as indicated in a differential relation to society, sound, and music. In some ways, the use of noise in 'Chris and Stevie' is among the most affective and powerful in Dempsey's work, functioning as a way of drawing a listener into the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction so that they may hear the necessary noise of suicide awareness. To view the noise from a hauntological perspective, the noise is that of the unheard suicide victims in Ireland, spectres like Chris and Stevie who suffered drug addiction, sexual discrimination, and other societal failings, thereby were unable to find pride in themselves. As noted, the album *Almighty Love* often fails in its ambitious attempt to have Dempsey leave the tribe and become a tribune of the working class in the world. However, in 'Chris and Stevie' there is an instance when Dempsey's use of noise is able to draw upon a specific memory pool of spectral noises that have an Irish history, and indeed a global history, and in kind has a differential relation to society, sounds and music.

Conclusion

*'We sing, sing all our cares away.
 We'll live, to fight another day.
 We sing, sing all our cares away.
 We'll live, to love another day,
 We grow strong, from it all.
 We grow strong, or we fall.
 We grow strong, from it all.
 We grow strong, or we fall.
 We grow strong.'*

Damien Dempsey /'Sing All Our Cares Away'/

This chapter observes that Irish popular singer-songwriter Dempsey is presented by music critics and industry narrators to a listening public as a response to the digital era. This is a stance he reiterates in his music, positioning himself as the Celtic Warrior railing against digital bubblegum pop. In this placement, Dempsey is also able to emerge as a conscious voice against the socio-political injustices that run concurrent to the digital era, and historical injustices whose spectres still haunt. He is a noisy artisan, whose grained delivery stresses his raconteur of the marginalised persona,

which allows a sustained fan base inherent of a hauntological structure of feeling to sing their cares away and grow strong.

Strachan suggests that ‘Cultural practitioners accumulate a store of knowledge in order to be fluent in the skills, conventions and histories relating to the cultural practices in which they are engaged. These knowledges are then put into action in the creative practice’ (110). With this in mind, Dempsey’s success as an Irish cultural practitioner, a noisy Irish artisan, comes from his ability to accumulate stories, music, and importantly noises that allow him to be fluent in the skills, conventions and histories relating and relatable to the people of Ireland. Dempsey is an artisan rich with a store of knowledge accumulated by spectral servitude which, as indicated in this study’s introduction, results in positive conjuration that enlivens his creative process anew. As a consequence, he is well versed in dispensing noise’s creative virtues to draw listeners out of a digital era’s ubiquitous listening pattern, and into his temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. These virtues include noise’s ability as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to temporally locate Dempsey’s music both inside and outside of the digital era. In Dempsey’s work, another virtue is that noise functions to indicate the process by which Dempsey’s artisan creation is constructed, personalising a process for a listener who encompasses a hauntological structure of feeling. Finally, and perhaps most significantly to Dempsey’s raconteur of the marginalised persona, noise’s virtue is that it serves Dempsey to sound Ireland, or in the instance of ‘Marching Season Siege’, not British. In being Irish, noise augments Dempsey’s lyrical narrative deference to spectral servitude and helps fuel his impertinence for Irish socio-political failings. To remove noise from Dempsey’s music, a silencing impact occurs that blunts his overall creative worth; a Dempsey without noise, is a silent artist, not a noisy artisan.

In a final reflection on the use of noise by Dempsey as a response to the digital era, Thompson argues that ‘Noise, as that which lies a dangerous “outside” to musical orders, has the capacity to blow minds and shock bodies; it is imagined as transgressive, subversive, anti-capitalist, anti-bourgeois, anti-convention, anti-skill and anti-establishment’ (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 177). Noise in Dempsey’s recordings signal many of these anti-characteristics, thereupon functioning in locating Dempsey as a dangerous outsider. Dempsey as a skilled cultural practitioner, has found in noise the spectral traces of those who influence his own work, and as an artisan constructs from a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*

temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction that are capable of blowing minds and shocking bodies. The next chapter looks to an artist whose spectral servitude focuses not specifically on the radical and necessary heterogeneity of an inheritance, but also on her own self-inheritance, which results in her being a radical and necessary *noisy woman*: that artist is Sinéad O'Connor.

CHAPTER THREE

Our Noisy Woman: Sinéad O'Connor and the Feminisation of Noise

*'Our singer's name is Josefine. No one who has heard her knows the power of her song.
There is no one who is not enraptured by her song ...'*

Franz Kafka / 'Josefine, the Singer, or The Mouse People'

'the most dangerous women are themselves noises in the system. They refuse the rule of representation and fail to match up the constructions of femininity that have been made for them.'

Marie Thompson / 'Gossips, Sirens, Hi-Fi Wives: Feminising the Threat of Noise'

Prelude: Sinéad, The Singer, and the Irish People

Franz Kafka's short story 'Josefine, the Singer, or the Mouse People' has a primary protagonist in a titular mouse Josefine, a character who shares some interesting traits with Irish popular musician Sinéad O'Connor. The story briefly chronicles the life of Kafka's 'Mouse People', servile hard-working characters whose few brief moments of happiness and freedom are brought by their singer Josefine: 'Our singer's name is Josefine. No one who has heard her knows the power of her song. There is no one who is not enraptured by her song, which is all the more remarkable as our people are not overly music loving' (264). In this short parable, Kafka presents to the reader an image of a singer who is at first portrayed as of great importance to her community, yet equally represented as troublesome and unwanted. Josefine seems to be the mouse people's singer by virtue of a sympathetic reaction to her own perception of herself as a singer: 'the people look after Josefine after the manner of a father looking after a child that stretches out its hand—peremptorily or beseechingly—to him' (270). For Josefine, however, it is she who offers protection to her people, 'she believes that it is she who protects the people. When we are in dire political or economic straits, it is her that allegedly rescues us' (271). If she is not listened to, the fable's narrator says, Josefine 'will be angry, stamp her feet, swear in a most unmaidenlike way, yes, even bite' (269). Undeterred by this, she is still for the mouse people 'our singer', and in her feeble whistling, her noisy responses to society's hardship, the mouse people find an unnameable virtue in her voice: 'some of our lost childhood is contained in it, something of lost joy never to be found again, but also something of the bustle of our daily lives, of their small, baffling, and nevertheless undeniable and ineradicable

cheerfulness' (275). On reflection, Kafka's Josefine offers an enriching parable to reflect on Ireland's O'Connor and her fraught relationship to her Irish identity.

O'Connor, like Josefine, has throughout her three-decade long career often been presented as a figure to be protected. Alongside this protection there is however a distrust of her personage and her political convictions. Tony Purvis writes that, 'O'Connor is often seen as a hysterical figure who is sporadic and inconsistent with her views. She is therefore depicted as unstable and incapable of uttering the truth and should not be trusted' (160). Elizabeth Cullingford shares this assessment, maintaining that O'Connor 'has been written off as unstable, self-destructive, egotistical, manipulative and spoiled' (256). In spite of these considerations, O'Connor views her role as an artist as enabling her to be a protector of the people (Nolan, *Five Irish Women* 50-52), and like Josefine, she has been known to angrily defend her beliefs. Nevertheless, there is one striking difference between O'Connor and Josefine—other than the fact that one is a human and the other a mouse—and that is that Josefine's disputed vocal ability does not correlate to O'Connor's most celebrated musical attribute. O'Connor is arguably Irish popular music's greatest vocal talent, and it is in her skill as a vocalist that she best captivates a listening public, and in particular an Irish one. In 'Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice', Emer Nolan considers that O'Connor's voice registers a collective remembered violence, 'in the relationship between mother and child, man and woman, the artist and the music industry, the individual and the institutional Church' (56). Nolan in her essay uses Cathy Caruth's seminal work on trauma and memory (*Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*), to assess O'Connor's vocal ability:

In Caruth's terms, O'Connor's singing testifies to the inescapability of the belated impact of trauma, in its persistent witness to the voice that 'cries out from the wound'. The modulations of her voice between purity and anger do not conform to any predictable pattern. Its 'stridency' is never far removed from its lyric or spiritual qualities. Even in its soaring mode, the voice has a 'catch' or flaw in its purity which comes not from any sense of muscular effort or strain, but from a refusal of the emancipatory seductions that a clearly struck high note, with its shine and finish, seems to offer. (ibid.)

Therefore, if Josefine is for the mouse people 'our singer' as a consequence of her voice's ability to bring forth remembrance of the trauma of their lost childhood,

O'Connor can be considered for some Irish people 'our singer', due in part to them finding in her voice some of the trauma of their lost childhoods. Nolan maintains, 'it is as if her voice finds the traumatic moments in the songs that she sings' (ibid.), thereupon, in finding and giving these moments a noisy voice O'Connor becomes for the Irish people a necessary, if not altogether wanted, noisy woman.

Introduction: Our Noisy Woman

This chapter examines the response of Irish popular musician O'Connor to the digital era, considering her use of both media and environmental noise through both phases of music's digitalisation. As shown in the previous chapter, a performer like Dempsey developed as a musician throughout the first and second phase of music's digitalisation, which entailed a degree of reflective hauntology in his engagement with pre-digital music. O'Connor represents an artist whose career not only began in a pre-digital soundscape but reached its commercial peak with the multi-platinum sales achieved with her second album *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got* (1990). Accordingly, O'Connor is a musician whose hauntological response to the digital era is informed by a reflective consciousness different to that of Dempsey and others, whose response is a pre-determined reflective hauntological othering of themselves as artists in opposition to an inherited canon of popular music. While O'Connor equally hauntologically responds to this canon, she nonetheless also responds to her former self as a commercially successful artist and idealistic woman long represented to the public as a talented if troublesome noise. Significantly, as O'Connor develops as an artist through the digital era, and post-digital era, it is her hauntological response to her former self as an unwanted noisy woman, that, in part, determines her use of noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to create temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction (two terms outlined in this study's introduction).

This chapter begins by establishing O'Connor's place in a canon of Irish popular music, outlining a comprehensive literature review that presents O'Connor as a talented, but troublesome performer—what this chapter outlines as a noisy woman. Alongside the literature review, Simone de Beauvoir's critical reflection on the difficulty women face in attaining creative fulfilment (742-751), will augment analysis of O'Connor's portrayal as a noisy woman. The use of de Beauvoir's assessment will also underpin analysis of O'Connor's noisy dual voices, which are revealed as crucial

in signalling the spectral servitude, or the positive serving of specific spectres, that directs her hauntological response. To visualise a representation of O'Connor as a noisy woman, the chapter then reflects upon O'Connor's most recognisable self, the shaven headed young woman from the video for 'Nothing Compares 2 U' (1990); a reflection that enables an examination of O'Connor's spectral servitude and her use of noisy visuals as a response. The chapter then reveals O'Connor's response to this iconic and haunting image in the track and accompanying video for 'Take Me To Church' (2014), before building upon this use of noise as a visual form to appraise other instances in her career when O'Connor challenges perception of her former self.

As the chapter progresses, it considers O'Connor's use of noise to create recordings that serve as noisy challenges to the digital era, her former self, and Irish society and history. This begins with a look at the demo release for 'Milestones' (2018), a release that is outside the remit of this thesis but, nonetheless, vividly illustrates an aspect of spectral servitude counter to the positive connotations outlined in this study's introduction, that being the tyranny of spectral servitude. The research next reveals O'Connor's use of both media and environmental noise's many virtues in creating and altering meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. This involves examining O'Connor's complicated reversion of narrative by use of noise in 'V.I.P.' from *How About I Be Me (and You Be You?)* (2012). This is followed by an assessment of *Theology* (2007) and *Throw Down Your Arms* (2005), as the thesis reveals a developing complexity in O'Connor's creative use of noise. Finally, the chapter concludes by reviewing albums from both phases of music's digitalisation, *Universal Mother* (1994) and *I'm Not Bossy, I'm the Boss* (2014). Thereby, further establishing O'Connor's development as a creative artist, highlighting that in her use of noise as a sonic component she not only responds to the digital era but increasingly to her former noisy self. Ultimately, the chapter reveals that throughout the digital era, O'Connor in responding to her own spectral servitude repurposed her noisy woman moniker to in turn respond to the creative challenges of the digital era.

A Noisy Woman Emerges

'An enigmatic Irish genius, she is riddled and blessed by the contradictions of her appearance and style, her life and the life of her own people.'

Dermott Hayes /Sinéad O'Connor: So Different/

Pre-Digital Era O'Connor

Thompson in 'Gossips, Sirens, Hi-Fi Wives: Feminising the Threat of Noise' asserts that, 'the most dangerous women according to patriarchal narratives are those characters who are themselves noises within the system; they are disruptive, transitional bodies that cannot be constituted in relation to normative dualisms' (311). From the outset of her career, O'Connor was defined as an unwanted noise in Irish popular music and public life. McLaughlin and McLoone state that throughout her career 'the core aspect of the wider press construction of the O'Connor persona has been her apparent "craziness", mental instability and volatility' (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 233). In part, much of this press construction was established at the outset of her career, when a representation of O'Connor emerged that foregrounded narratives emphasising her perceived troublesome and vulnerable nature. In few works are these character traits so implicit as in two early career unsanctioned biographies: *Sinéad O'Connor: So Different* (1991) by Dermott Hayes, and *Sinéad: Her Life and Music* (1991) by Jimmy Guterman. In both these biographies, O'Connor is signified in the first-person pronoun Sinéad, a common trope of biographical works, a way of making the foreign familiar (Taşdelen 143). As a consequence of this unsanctioned familiarity, criticism of O'Connor is in turn problematic with Hayes writing that O'Connor 'is a study in contradictions—Madonna and whore; innocent and knowing; a mother and child' (6), and has a 'compulsive desire to be in the limelight' (7). Whereas Guterman in his reflection on O'Connor's fraught relationship with her mother relegates any of O'Connor's insight, arguing: 'Sinéad, her interviewers, and her fans are fond of romanticizing her upbringing into one that recalls Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, but such mythmaking on the part of others suggests that none of them remember what it was like being thirteen' (19). In all, both biographies suggest that O'Connor has these troublesome and vulnerable characteristics, familiarising these traits for wider press distribution of O'Connor's noisy persona.

Mark J. Prendergast's often forgotten history of Irish popular music, *The Isle of Noises: Rock and Roll's Roots in Ireland*, positions O'Connor as a talented expressive adolescent, but in debt to the creative worth of her male counterparts:

With a voice as pure as the driven snow, nineteen-year-old Sinead O'Connor was launched on the world in 1986 when U2's The Edge released his soundtrack album

Captive ... Possibly the youngest personality to come out of Irish rock, O'Connor started as a professional at the astonishingly tender age of fourteen. (252)

Prendergast's work was written when O'Connor's career was in its infancy, with the album *The Lion and the Cobra* (1987) the only noteworthy solo work available for reference. Nonetheless, the lack of attention given to the album and O'Connor is telling. In all there is less than a page of analysis solely devoted to O'Connor in this near three-hundred-page monograph, juxtaposed to a prominent position afforded her on the book's cover. This indicates the significance afforded to O'Connor as an icon or image in Irish popular music, without affording her creative worth adequate critical analysis. Equally, Tony Clayton-Lea and Richard Taylor's *Irish Rock: Where it's Coming From, Where it's At, Where it's Going* again fails to accurately represent O'Connor's work and her lofty position in Irish popular music at the beginning of the first phase of music's digitalisation. Unsurprisingly, when O'Connor features, she is presented as 'precocious and very talented' (ibid. 117). This noisy image of O'Connor is consistent, with her 'precociousness' allied with her 'outspoken' political views:

her fans care not one wit for her frequent U-turns, emotive outbursts, and general 'rent-a-quote' activities ... her rise to the top was inevitable and inexorable, and her emotionally stark and painful music looks set to endure. She is without doubt one of the most intriguing artists that Ireland has ever produced. (ibid. 76)

In a later passage, Clayton-Lea and Taylor also note that 'While her public announcements on various topics (Ireland, abortion, religion) have both irritated and concerned her critics and fans, the music on her two acclaimed albums have been received with largely widespread fervour' (117). Thereby, in the texts concerning O'Connor's early career there is a consistency of rhetoric which ultimately defines how O'Connor was and to an extent is viewed. Hence, O'Connor's creative worth and personality is constituted along dual narratives of a talented artist but a troublesome vulnerable noise.

A Noisy Woman's Irish Identity

Cullingford proclaims that throughout her career O'Connor constructs a coherent if slightly broad-brush 'postcolonial theoretical trajectory from Catholic Church through imperialism to child abuse' (248), historicising her antipathy to the Church as she insists on the intersection between religious and political colonisation. Anna M. Dore

writes that part of her success as a musician ‘also lies in the conflicting and provocative symbolisms that she incorporates in her songs’ (753), much of which reflect upon this theoretical trajectory, while challenging the Church’s influence. Cullingford also indicates that O’Connor’s interpretation of Irish history is mediated with formulaic binaries of inherent Irish goodness in opposition to British imperial invasive suppression (248), with the Church later fulfilling this suppressive role. Evidently, O’Connor considers that the alignment of Church and State has had greater long-term traumatic consequences: ‘Frankly I wish England had never left Ireland, I think we would have been a lot better off. We were going to be colonised by someone, as it happened the coloniser who took over was the Church ... that was disastrous’ (*The Irish Rock Story: A Tale of Two Cities* 00:04:15-28). Although there is some truth to this reading of Irish history, it nevertheless suggests an inherent Irish weakness while also simplifying cultural trauma. As a consequence, an Irish public perception of O’Connor must negotiate her broad-brushed assessment of Irish society which is often ill-informed or exaggerated. Hence, to many Irish people, her socio-political and historic bombast informs their reception of her as a troublesome noisy woman, thereby signalling her own Irish identity with her perceived noisy nature.

The reception of O’Connor as a troublesome noise was particularly evident at the outset of her career, when public challenges to the alignment of Church and State were marginal, or marginalised. This was strikingly evident with O’Connor’s most controversial early condemnation of the Church, her *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) rendition of Bob Marley’s ‘War’ which concluded with her infamously proclaiming ‘fight the real enemy!’ after ripping up a picture of Pope John Paul II (1992). McLaughlin and McLoone consider that this act of popular music protest was not only O’Connor’s way of challenging the Church’s influence but also ‘the notion that political protest is an essentially male preserve’ (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 246), nonetheless it irrefutably labelled her to many viewers as a troublesome noisy woman (ibid. 247). However, since the publication of the Ryan Report (20 May 2009) and widespread public knowledge of child sexual abuse in Irish society, a growing proportion of Irish people have reassessed O’Connor’s actions (Jones). As a consequence, many of these people recognise her music and actions as satisfying ‘Attali’s notion of *music-as-prophecy*’ (McLaughlin and McLoone, *Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 246); a point of analysis that equally corresponds with Attali’s belief that musicians are ‘dangerous, disturbing, and subversive; for this reason it is

impossible to separate their history from that of repression and surveillance' (Attali 10). Nevertheless, for many Irish people O'Connor's prophetic attack on the Church and State hardened their interpretation of her as a troublesome unwanted noise. For that reason, O'Connor's Irish identity is intrinsically aligned with this noisy persona, although its repurposing by others subsequently positioned O'Connor as a necessary noisy woman for the noisy island of Ireland.

A Noisy Woman for a Noisy Island

Sean Campbell and Gerry Smyth suggest that O'Connor encompasses an 'aggressive and angst-laden antidote to the established array of Irish female imagery' (112), a point Nolan affirms: 'The visual presentation of O'Connor was bleached of stereotypical suggestions of Irishness' ('Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice' 57). This visual representation, alongside her outspoken political rhetoric, arguably further announced to some people her troublesome nature. In spite of her perception as a noisy woman, Nolan observes that 'Feminists in Ireland have paid scant attention to her career' (ibid. 64). To determine why this is the case, Nolan maintains that O'Connor 'is most progressive when she is loud, angry and irate; most regressive when she is too indulgent of her "soft" side or of nationalism and religion' (ibid. 65). In her suggestion, Nolan acknowledges a crucial concern, and even misinterpretation of O'Connor's Irish identity, that it is too indulgent of her soft nationalism and soft religiosity; a point of consideration that marginalises her repeated attacks at Irish structures of governance. Regardless, due to her soft nationalism and soft religiosity, O'Connor's noisy persona was recontextualised by some feminists in Ireland to signal O'Connor as subservient to her Irish identity and religious devotion. McLaughlin and McLoone write that 'O'Connor's work has been centrally concerned with Irish history and politics' (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 235), arguing that few other Irish popular performers' creative output is so concerned with the 'Irish condition' (ibid. 240). Thus, O'Connor's public representation as a troublesome noisy persona is realigned by conflicting groups in Ireland, with people construing her as regressive or progressive in line with their personal convictions, thereby assuring contrasting views on her creative reflection on the Irish condition.

However, crucially O'Connor's Irish identity and her creative reflection on the Irish condition can be construed as a fluid recontextualising of her noisy persona in what Prendergast considers *The Isle of Noises*. Along this line of perusal, O'Connor's

place in Irish popular music and her noisy persona can be construed as negotiable and necessary. Smyth also maintains this alignment of Irish popular music with noisiness in his description of Ireland as a *Noisy Island*, a place that he considers is ‘full of noises, and it behoves the Irish critical community to begin listening to them, and not only to the noises that are sweet, but also the ones we are routinely encouraged to believe are not’ (*Noisy Island* 7). Accordingly, O’Connor’s negotiable noisy persona becomes a necessary factor in her assessment of Ireland as a noisy Island; albeit a modern Ireland that runs concurrent to the digital era. Smyth and Campbell write:

The obvious myth-making potential of such controversies, the singer’s attack on the church—in tandem with her revelations on child abuse, abortion and her parent’s divorce—served to illustrate aspects of Irish society often rendered invisible in official accounts of the nation. Such issues, which formed centre-stage debates in late twentieth-century Ireland, were in many ways crystallized in the persona of Sinéad. (115)

In this assessment, O’Connor when noisy is epitome of a new Ireland that emerged in the 1990s, or the outset of the digital era, a time when the ‘cultural lamb lay down with the economic tiger’ (Smyth, *Noisy Island* 4). To view O’Connor through this lens as emblematic of a modern Irish, her noisy persona is again recontextualised, suggesting that O’Connor as a noisy woman is a leading figure in Irish culture of the late twentieth century. Thompson writes that ‘like noise, “she” [woman] has been constructed in terms of unreason, disorder, non-meaning and excess. She has been met with fear and degradation; she has been the perversion of reason, morally bankrupt and the abject defilement of the sacred and the pure’ (‘Gossips, Sirens, Hi-Fi Wives: Feminising the Threat of Noise’ 299). To construe O’Connor in line with this assessment, her perceived troublesome noisy nature suggests a fear and degradation in assessing her noisiness. In fact, given O’Connor’s negotiable noisy persona, her imparted noisiness reveals as much about those imparting as it does O’Connor. Nevertheless, O’Connor’s negotiable and necessary noisy persona persists throughout her career, albeit when required signalling her as a woman who is an abject defilement of the sacred and the pure. In spite of this, the fluidity of her noisy persona also requires O’Connor’s own recontextualisation, as she hauntologically responds to her spectral servitude in her creative assessment of her noisy persona and the Irish condition on the noisy Island of Ireland.

Creating the Noise of Others

'O'Connor sounds very relaxed, and ultimately humbled by the ancient material. She resists the temptation to use her vocal tics and affectations; for the most part, she sings the words with a straightforward clarity and reverence.'

Mark Richardson /Review: Sean-Nós Nua/

Expressing a Noisy Tradition

In line with her noisy persona, O'Connor's assessment of the Irish condition is often construed as failing to realise her worth as a creative artist, with her music interpreted as highlighting her expressive nature. This misinterpretation of O'Connor's lack of creativity permeates her career, this in spite of the majority of her artistic output being in line with de Beauvoir's definition of creativeness. In her assessment, de Beauvoir considers the difficulty for women to become creators, when they must struggle against patriarchy to become human beings (750). In this struggle, de Beauvoir believes a female artist often become expressive, a woman who she writes: *'plays at working, but she does not work; believing in the magic virtues of passivity, she confuses conjurations and acts, symbolic gestures and effective behaviour'* (743). However, de Beauvoir maintains women like George Elliot (Mary Ann Evans), Virginia Woolf, Jane Austin and the Brontë sisters became creators as *'insurgents who have indicated this unjust society'* (746); a point of conjecture this thesis suggests relates to the majority of O'Connor's music.

However, there are instances in her career when a purported expressive passivity is interpretable, such as on her hauntologically infused covers album *Sean-Nós Nua*; an album that consists of Irish traditional (and folk) songs and features canonical Irish traditional musicians in Steve Wickham, Sharon Shannon and Dónal Lunny who also produced the album (Harper and Hodgett 329). Nolan writes that *'O'Connor's interest in covering other artists' songs and her embrace of an Irish traditional repertoire evidently did little to enhance the appreciation of her work either among Irish feminist critics or academic commentators on Irish popular music'* (*'Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice'* 64). To contextualise this point, Nolan adapts de Beauvoir's differentiating between expressive and creative women: *'Only the latter seemed to offer women the possibility of overcoming their entrapment in femininity—the latter being defined as "other" to a normal masculine identity'* (ibid.). Therefore, O'Connor's purported expressive passivity is assured, as *Sean-Nós Nua's*

cover versions of traditional Irish music is interpreted as O'Connor forsaking her role as an insurgent indicating an unjust society in her self-penned temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction.

McLaughlin and McLoone write that critical analysis of O'Connor often interprets her as 'the stereotype of the "fiery Irish woman"' (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 246). Accordingly, her perceived lack of creativity in her expressive interpretation of Irish traditional music corresponds with Irish feminist critics and academic commentator's understanding of O'Connor as an unwanted noise. This interpretation of O'Connor as a fiery Irish woman suggests that women in Irish traditional music are expressive rather than creative practitioners, and/or suggests their entrapment in femininity. This is a point of criticism on women's place in Irish traditional music pertinent to the fraternity of Irish traditional music (O'Shea 56), but one that fails to recognise the creative worth in popular music's long-established tradition of the 'mimic' (Hebdige 13). Notwithstanding this point, in relation to *Sean-Nós Nua*, Nolan still considers that O'Connor's

adoption of the role of traditional Irish female singer may have seemed to confirm what some would have described as her predilection for presenting herself as an allegorical representation of the suffering nation. For various reasons, second-wave Irish feminism has proven particularly hostile to the identification of femininity with Irishness in nationalist discourse—and indeed to Irish nationalism itself in any form. ('Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice' 64)

In interpreting O'Connor as seeking to assume the mantle of the suffering nation, there is a negation of the creative value O'Connor and other female practitioners realise in interpreting Irish traditional music. Nonetheless, the critique further solidifies O'Connor's position as a troublesome performer; an Irish fiery woman passively making too much noise.

Collaborative Noise

Throughout her career, O'Connor has frequently collaborated with performers as diverse as Christy Moore on 'Middle of the Island' (1989), with U2 on 'I'm Not Your Baby' (1997), and Massive Attack on 'Special Cases' (2003), further suggesting expressive passivity and a failure on her part to become a creative insurgent. An early career collaboration with Karen Finley on 'Jump in the River' (1988), is outside the chronological remit of this thesis, yet critical analysis by Lucy O'Brien in *She Bop:*

The Definitive History of Women in Popular Music offers an illuminating insight into O'Connor's representation as an expressive passive artist. O'Brien indicates that 'Jump in the River' commences with Finley's 'distended, cathartic shrieking' (129), which O'Brien credits uses Finley's vocal noise to make 'Jump in the River' 'a forthright female anti-pop track' (ibid.). O'Brien writes that although Finley is best known as a visual artist, musically she is 'unforgiving, creating it ['Jump in the River'] for "a political reason" ... Finley appreciates that music is cheap and therefore more accessible to a mass audience' (ibid.). In this assessment, O'Connor's creativeness is not only marginalised, but is seen as nothing more than an expressive access point to popular music's cheapness and mass appeal, with Finley the true creative insurgent who realises the potential of O'Connor's expressive passivity. In addition, O'Brien's assessment all but decrees that O'Connor is creatively muted, a noiseless expressive popstar alongside true creators. Concurrently, this delineation of O'Connor permeates much critical analysis of her collaborations, as it fails to credit her creative input in these multi-individual creations of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction.

To return to a feminist evaluation of O'Connor, her creative collaborations with male performers further correlates to the representation of O'Connor as a troublesome noise. In accepting this representation there is not only a failure to recognise collaborative creativity, but O'Connor's affirmative choice to work with artists regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or musical style. O'Brien writes that 'Underlying the chaos of O'Connor's views is a refusal to be assimilated that speaks volumes' (325) purporting that 'O'Connor throughout her career has often seen herself as a "communicator" rather than an "entertainer"' (ibid.). Therefore, in choosing to collaborate with various creative artists, O'Connor not only refuses to assimilate to expectations, but also seeks alternative creative insurgent means to communicate her indignation at an unjust society; for this, and other reasons, she is a true creator. Anita Brady in her scrutiny of O'Connor's 2013 public disagreement with Miley Cyrus acknowledges that encounter facilitated an important 'debate around questions of "right" and "wrong" ways to be a feminist' (242). Whereas O'Brien further reflects, 'It seems appropriate that one of her [O'Connor] heroines is the "good soldier", Joan of Arc' (32), an icon in her refusal to assimilate, albeit, an 'uncomfortable fit as an icon of female solidarity or democratic rights' (Caster). O'Connor's desire to communicate creative insurgent indignation at unjust systems, alongside her steadfast refusal to assimilate to existing representations of her, realises her importance as an

icon of Irish popular music. McLaughlin and McLoone write ‘In this sense, she [O’Connor] fulfils one of the primary duties of a pop star—not to be dull’ (‘Hybridity and National Musics: The Case of Irish Rock Music’ 192). In defiance of criticism that situates her as troublesome, naïve, fiery, submissive, expressive, passive, and an unwanted noise, O’Connor responds by reassigning her noisy persona to reflect her true creative insurgent self. Ultimately, she owns her noisy persona, and in her creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction she responds to existing representations with noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*.

A Noisy Woman with a Haunting Noisy Voice

‘... she has the “nyaa” all the way.’
John O’Flynn /*The Irishness of Irish Music*/

An Irish Noisy Nyaa

McLaughlin and McLoone in their assessment of O’Connor’s celebrated vocal talent, write that ‘Part of the singer’s renowned vocal range, is that it can “jump from a whisper to a holler” and is often described as comprising a style akin to “wailing” and redolent of “keening”’ (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 245). Nolan also aligns O’Connor’s voice with the practice of lamenting or keening (‘Sinéad O’Connor: The Story of a Voice’ 56), drawing from John Waters’ nationalist essay ‘Sinéad the Keener’. Nolan maintains the association with keening enhances the representation of O’Connor’s soft nationalism, a point of analysis that correlates with Dempsey’s ability to sound Ireland, thereby suggesting that O’Connor’s voice sounds Ireland to an Irish public.

O’Flynn’s ambitious work *The Irishness of Irish Music*, sets out to ‘uncover specific ways in which Irishness might be heard in Irish Music’ (146). In his research, O’Flynn interviews people attending various music concerts in Ireland, uncovering that for many the primary expressive characterisation of Irish music is that it is ‘lively’ or ‘haunting’ (150). If this is the case it begs the question, who are the Irish artists deemed as sounding lively and haunted? And importantly who or what is doing the haunting? O’Flynn recounts that during his ethnographic research an ‘Irish singer who would not usually be labelled as traditional, but was yet regarded as Irish-sounding is Sinéad O’Connor’ (157). In an encounter outside Hughes’s Pub in Dublin, O’Flynn

interviews Marie who says of O'Connor, 'I think she does sound Irish ... I don't know why but she does. I know she sings all sorts of things but I still think she sounds Irish. There's something about her' (ibid.). While an interview with Mick, who was attending a 'Best of Irish' concert in Dublin, went as follows:

J [John O'Flynn]: How about Sinéad O'Connor, would she sound Irish to your ear?

Mick: Yeah, she'd be very close to the Irish sound ... It's just, I don't know, it's the flavour in Sinéad O'Connor's voice, I mean like in Dolores Keane's. There's a ... you can tell there's a whole Irish buzz but with Bono you can't get that all, like'. (158)

Of interest here is the comparison with Keane, a performer best known for her singing of material from a traditional repertoire and whose west of Ireland Galway accent acts as a clear marker of Irishness (ibid. 156). In an interview with Fionnuala, Deirdre, Maire and Betty in Limerick, O'Flynn's questions result in an insightful reading of Keane's voice:

J: If you were comparing Mary Black with Dolores Keane, who sounds more Irish and why?

All: Dolores Keane.

Fionnuala: You can't take her accent away ...

Betty: You can't take it from her.

Deirdre: She can be up singing the liveliest jazz and she has the 'nyaa' all the way. (154)

It is apparent then that the '*nyaa*' in Keane's voice, and its obvious reference to vocal aspects of keening and *sean-nós* singing, signals a lively and haunting voice in Irish music. O'Flynn further indicates, that for his interviewees a pronounced rural accent was a clear signifier of sound Ireland. As uncovered in relation to the grain of his working-class voice, Dempsey's Northside Dublin accent equally signals for many sound Ireland. In O'Connor, nevertheless, there is no distinct accent evident in her voice or singing style, other than perhaps a middle-class, Glenageary Dublin accent. Crucially, O'Connor then sounds Ireland, not because of her accent, but despite it.

Nuala O'Connor writes that O'Connor's 'vocal influence, particularly the emphasis on the solo voice [is] Irish pre-pop ... [and] is frequently mistaken for the "real thing". An Irish traditional song' (131.) Thereby, N. O'Connor's assessment further correlates to a reading of O'Connor's 'real' Irish voice, with her accepting its Irish qualities in spite of musical repertoire or accent. To draw on these considerations,

it can be suggested that O'Connor's vocal range is then possessive of both signifiers of an Irish voice, being lively and haunting, or what can be deduced as an Irish *nyaa*. Reflecting on his interview with the interviewee Mick, O'Flynn writes:

He also identifies one inherent musical element that partially explains the music's general feel, namely, that of *vocal grain*. It is noteworthy that Sinéad O'Connor was the only rock performer who was consistently deemed to be Irish-sounding, not in any specific way, but more in the general sense of 'Irish soul' (emphasis added). (158)

To return to Barthes' 'The Grain of the Voice' it is worth reflecting anew on the grain:

The 'grain' is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs. If I perceive the 'grain' in a piece of music and accord this 'grain' a theoretical value (the emergence of the text in the work), I inevitably set up new scheme of evaluation which will be certainly individual. (188)

The grain is concurrently the true essence or sentiment of the artist as signalled in the voice (page and performance), or even a reflection of their soul. Thereupon, for some Irish listeners it appears that the true essence of O'Connor as a creative artist is her ability to sound Ireland, with her voice received as lively and haunted—an Irish *nyaa* for a noisy Irish woman.

Noisy Punk Freedoms and True Voice

O'Connor's vocal range does not reflect one influence or musical tradition but is haunted by two meaningfully juxtaposed traditions, with the tension between both evident in her predominant noisy vocal catch or flaw. The first of these vocal ranges is her Irish *nyaa*, while the second is her noisy punk shrieks. McLaughlin and McLoone write of O'Connor that her

highly distinctive and technically versatile voice is comprised of an interesting mix of 'punk' freedoms and traditional inflections ... these two vocal modes may also be interpreted as articulating the key contradictions in her identity: the tension between assertion and vulnerability'. (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 245)

O'Connor's voice possesses two vocal modes, or grains, that can subsequently draw attentive appreciation from a wider range of listeners. Notwithstanding her not-Irish-sounding accent, with her Irish *nyaa*, she has a vocal ability to sound Ireland. Whereas in her noisy punk 'freedoms', her vocal's sound the anger necessary to sing of historic

and contemporary injustices on the Island of Ireland. Moreover, Nolan considers that anger has the peculiar effect of opening up her voice, stimulating a new sonic range in which different shades of emotion unfurl like bands of colour (*Five Irish Women* 54). The duality of O'Connor's two distinct, and often opposing voices, or noisy grains, stimulates reflection on her true voice or the true O'Connor. This true voice, Barthes considers the true grain, the body in the voice as it sings; a "grain" that is the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue' ('The Grain of the Voice' 182).

To consider this inquiry, three significant questions posed by Barthes in 'The Grain of the Voice' are relevant: 'am I hearing voices within the voice? But isn't the truth of the voice to be hallucinated? Isn't the entire space of the voice an infinite one?' (184). To answer these questions in relation to O'Connor, hauntological analysis facilitates viewing O'Connor's vocal duality and noisy grains as a coming together of various and often resistant spectral servitudes. As noted in the Introduction, Derrida acknowledges that one never inherits without coming to terms with some spectre. In examining the 'voices within the voice' in O'Connor's music it is certain that her two resistant voices or noisy grains are themselves a manifestation of her coming to terms with some spectre(s). While to assess any hallucinating qualities, it can be determined that the truth of her voice is revealed as a form of positive conjuration in this tension which enlivens her anew. Therefore, O'Connor's true voice or her vocal grain is the manifestation of her spectral servitude, the tension evident in her voice when her dual voices come to terms with these spectres. In the infinite entire space of O'Connor's voice, her true grain, her true essence, or the materiality of her mother tongue, is only revealed in this moment and given voice in her predominant noisy vocal catch or flaw.

The Haunting 'She'

To ascertain the primacy of O'Connor's spectral servitude, reflection upon two utterances by O'Connor from two distinct periods in her career reveals a pronounced haunting 'she'. In a 1988 interview, O'Connor says:

I change as soon as I get on stage into a completely different person. I've no control over it, I just change. I just stand there with a glare in my eyes ... I don't know what it is. It's just I think I could get up and sing-scream! I get really nervous before I go on but when I go on 'she' comes along. 'She' thinks she's the queen or something. 'She' looks at me and thinks she's very important. I know I'm a completely different

person when I'm on stage—I'm stronger, much more powerful. I'm tall, I'm beautiful, I'm strong ... but it's all the same person, exactly the same person. (Hayes 38)

In August 2018 O'Connor, under the persona Magda Davitt, released a demo of the track 'Milestones' which further indicates a fraught haunted relationship with 'she':

I crawled through the forest of Tennessee,
 All on my hands and knees.
 Not seeing the wood for the trees,
 Till I got to Los Angeles.
 First thing that I learned at the juncture,
 Evil is not my true nature,
 So, even though you drove me to terror,
 I don't have to be that her.
 I don't have to be that she,
 This is where I get to be me.
 This is where you don't get to make me,
 This is where you don't get to create me. (00:00:42-01:41)

What is striking in both these examples, which were uttered/produced thirty years apart, is O'Connor's hauntological referencing to a 'she' persona who is seemingly beyond her control. In the interview, O'Connor's haunting 'she' is independent but nonetheless an asset to her; a form of strength awakened in her upon her singing (in Derridean rhetoric a form of positive conjuration which enlivens anew). Whereas thirty years later in 'Milestones' there is a different form of hauntological referencing with a 'she' that instead represents O'Connor's former self. Or to be more precise, a 'she' understood by O'Connor as a troublesome unwanted noise. This noisy 'she', O'Connor no longer wants to be or serve, instead she looks to realise a new 'real' self: 'I don't have to be that her, I don't have to be that she, This is where I get to be me'.

Appropriately acquiring 'classic status' (Scott and Hawkins 119), Sheila Whiteley's *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity*, is long regarded an important monograph on popular music, female marginalisation, and misrepresentation. In her monograph, Whiteley considers that:

Sinead O'Connor's songs were ... grounded in personal experience. Having being brought up in an abusive household where singing provided an expressive outlet for personal pain, her debut *The Lion and the Cobra* resonated with folk authenticity—a

restrained and intimate vocal delivery emphasised by a repeated use of the first person 'I' contrasting with a more declamatory nasal delivery to effect a tension between the public and the private of social commentary. (172)

Whiteley contends that O'Connor's first-person narration is used to familiarise listeners with a former 'she' who suffered the horrors of an abusive childhood. McLaughlin and McLoone write that Whiteley's work includes 'only a couple of references to O'Connor' with no examination of her complex Irish identity, nor an engagement with the Irish themes of her gender politics (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 234). As a consequence, Whiteley marginalises any nationalistic reflection by O'Connor on her former self, redirecting focus towards concepts of 'folk authenticity'. Campbell and Smyth's examination of *I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got* (1990) considers an 'autobiographical note that has played such an important part in Sinéad's subsequent career' (114). 'Milestones' is then a further example of an artist whose creative output postulates on various self-inherited 'shes'. In hauntological terms, O'Connor's first person's narrative reflection indicates an artist who signals to the radical and necessary heterogeneity of an inheritance [or self-inheritance]. In O'Connor's insistence that 'I don't have to be that her, I don't have to be that she', there is a hauntological confrontation with her former self, a 'she' whose characteristics are defined by a thirty-year career with much controversy and criticism. Therefore, to return again to Barthes' musings of hearing voices within the voice, alongside her Irish *nyaa* and punk freedom there is in O'Connor's voice a multitude of spectral traces, enough to fill the infinite space a voice like O'Connor's possesses. For O'Connor however, the most radical and necessary voice within her voice is that of 'she', a spectral manifestation of O'Connor's former self. Crucially, in confronting her former noisy 'she', O'Connor again negotiates resistant spectral servitudes revealing anew her true self. This true self is consequently ceaseless in its confrontation, serving her radical and necessary heterogeneity of self-inheritance. O'Connor's true self, which is given voice in her predominant noisy vocal catch or flaw, is thereby continually realised, and renegotiated by her repeated confrontation with a noisy 'she'.

To conclude an assessment of 'Milestones', O'Connor's decision to release the track as a demo as opposed to a more polished release evidences a clearly aligned artisan processing akin to that discussed in relation to Dempsey. The demo as a form

is by definition an incomplete recording, a noisy antithesis to a complete recording, which accentuates imperfections such as media and environmental noise. Brian Jones refers to this in relation to PJ Harvey's *4-Track Demos* as a demo's ability to evoke a 'lo-fi sense of expressive immediacy' (348). O'Connor's demo release of 'Milestones' achieves this expressive immediacy by including noisy imperfections, as evident when O'Connor sings that, 'I've had less rights as a woman, then the dog is my eternal form' (00:01:51-02:01), with her voice noisily opening up in anger as she delivers the line: 'And it remains the same, yes it remains the same. Let's start with the name. You can shove it where you keep all your pain' (00:02:03-22). To continue this assessment, it is worth indicating that noise in 'Milestones' shares signalling tropes with Barthes' reading of Panzera, a performer he argues was great 'between the wars' ('The Grain of the Voice' 185). Barthes maintains that Panzera's music was 'already marginal, mandarin, that is was able to bear traces of significance, to escape the tyranny of meaning' (ibid.). Ergo, in the marginal and immediate form of the demo we have an invitation to bear noisy traces of significance, and an attempt to escape the tyranny of meaning, order, and perfection. In 'Milestones' there is clear evidence of O'Connor's noisy vocal confrontations emphasised by the marginality of form, with her noisy intimate whispering revealing a hauntological confrontation with a 'she' O'Connor no longer wants to be, her response to the radical and necessary heterogeneity of self-inheritance. To conclude, the affirmative 'she' O'Connor spoke of in her interview in 1988 is not the same 'she' that haunts her in 'Milestones' in 2018. Just the opposite in fact, the later 'she' is a noisy haunting presence who O'Connor continually confronts, realising, and renegotiating her true self anew.

The Haunting 'She' in Visual Form

*I don't wanna be that girl no more,
 I don't wanna cry no more,
 I don't wanna die no more,
 So cut me down from this here tree,
 Cut the rope from off of me,
 Sit me on the floor,
 I'm the only one I should adore.'*
 Sinéad O'Connor / 'Take Me To Church' /

A Noisy Tear

Artistically, O'Connor is still best known for her cover of Prince's 'Nothing Compares 2 U' and accompanying iconic music video directed by John Maybury (1990). The video assures O'Connor's place in popular music lore, with her reflective confrontational gaze, black clothing, and iconic shaved head. So engrained within popular lore is the video and image of O'Connor it was later mimicked controversially in the video for Miley Cyrus' 2013 hit 'Wrecking Ball', with Brady declaring: 'The link between the clips is clear: both feature close-ups of their respective performers singing directly into the camera, their faces framed by tightly cropped hair, and the emotional weight of each song's lyrics underlined by the singer's tears' (429). In relation to a hauntological decoding, the video serves as a clear marker of O'Connor's position in popular music lore, and Cyrus's spectral servitude. Nolan reflects on 'Nothing Compares 2 U': 'Its famous accompanying video depends for its dramatic effect on the shadings of grief and sorrow that pass over O'Connor's face as she sings; towards the end of the song, as her eyes meet the camera directly for the first time, she begins to cry' ('Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice' 58). The video's impact then is a result of the viewer accepting O'Connor's grief and sorrow. This is signalled to them with her gaze that, in part, implicates them in her sorrow, thereafter recontextualising grief and sorrow away from marginalisation and repositioning it as centred and confrontational. Nolan's interpretation of O'Connor's shaven head considers that it is reflective of the brutality raged upon oppressed communities (*Five Irish Women* 57), which suggests that O'Connor's gaze implements those viewing as tentative spectators to history's brutality (ibid.). The video's seminal moment, and its most iconic and mythologising, is when O'Connor's sings:

All the flowers that you planted mama,
 In the back yard.
 All died when you went away.
 I know that living with you baby was sometimes hard,
 But I'm willing to give it another try,
 Cause nothing compares,
 Nothing compares to you. (00:03:21-58)

With the lines 'I know that living with you baby was sometimes hard, But I'm willing to give it another try', tears appear in her eyes before they roll down her cheeks, all

the while she gazes almost continually at camera. Alongside the tears seemingly implicating a viewer's spectatorship in history's brutality, there is also a subversive intent in the use of tears, as they can signal to some viewers untrustworthy female emotiveness, further implicating their spectatorship in arbitrating this distortion. Thereby, as with noise, her tears were unwanted, a noisy confrontational means utilised creatively by O'Connor and other actors to challenge the unwantedness of emotive reflection on grief, sorrow, and victimhood. They are in visual form noise utilised by a noisy woman.

Take Her to Church

The use of unwanted noise in a visual sense by O'Connor is not unique to the tears in 'Nothing Compares 2 U', with the scribbled writing on her left hand on both covers for *The Lion and the Cobra* (Garner), her facial tattoos, and even her wearing of masculine allied attire as Mother Bernadette Marie, all readable as unwanted noise. O'Connor's confrontational 'she' in the video for 'Nothing Compares 2 U' has to an extent haunted her subsequent career with remnants of her evident in the album cover design for *Throw Down Your Arms*. It uses a photo of O'Connor taken on the day of her First Holy Communion; an image Nolan argues 'represents a disturbing image of Irish Catholic identity' ('Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice' 62). Furthermore, the Irish only release of *How About I Be Me (and You Be You)?* uses as its cover image Neil Condron's *Upon Small Shoulders*, a painting of a 'barefoot, cherub-faced little girl wearing a white smock and perched on a rusty scaffold in an apparently derelict or abandoned building. An Irish tricolour is draped above and beneath her' (Nolan, *Five Irish Women* 72). Nolan purports that the original intention of the painting was to critique the Irish government's reaction to the Irish property bubble (2007), and the resulting financial and social burden for Irish people (ibid.); although given that O'Connor once owned the original painting and the fronted vulnerability of the child, there is equally a personal alignment or haunting to be construed in its use. This indicates an understanding on O'Connor's part that the album cover image is an important myth moderating agent given it is 'replete with visual signs and symbols, some deliberate, others the product of cultural, political and commercial dynamics' (McCormack and Swan 46).

O'Connor's most transparent response to the haunting confrontational 'she' from 'Nothing Compares 2 U', is evident in the music video for her track 'Take Me

To Church'. The video begins with two faces of O'Connor that gaze confrontationally at camera and by implication the viewer. The first of these is the actual O'Connor of the time of recording in 2013, albeit she is wearing a wig as a satirical reflection of expectations of femininity. Whereas the second is a haunting O'Connor taken from the 'Nothing Compares 2 U' music video which is projected over/onto O'Connor's present form. In addition to this reappropriation of the haunting confrontational 'she', the framing of the sequence is equally reminiscent of Maybury's framing throughout the video for 'Nothing Compares 2 U', with a darkened background that accentuates both O'Connor's emotiveness in a performative style reminiscent of Samuel Beckett's *Not I* (McCarthy 455-469). Concurrently, throughout the opening sequence of the video, the viewer is given the present O'Connor responding to her former self by singing:

I don't wanna love the way I loved before
 I don't wanna love that way no more,
 What have I been writing love songs for?
 I don't want to write them any more,
 I don't wanna sing from where I sang before,
 I don't wanna sing that way no more,
 What've I've been singing love songs for?
 I don't wanna sing them anymore,
 I don't wanna be that girl no more,
 I don't wanna cry no more,
 I don't wanna die no more.
 So cut me down from this here tree,
 Cut the rope from off of me,
 Sit me on the floor,
 I'm the only one I should adore. (00:00:05-40)

In hauntological rhetoric, the sequence can be construed as a hauntological gesture of fidelity, or O'Connor's way of coming to terms with the radical and necessary heterogeneity of her self-inheritance. While the dual confrontational gazing O'Connors can be interpreted as implicating those viewing in accepting her career characterisation as troublesome noise, thereafter, challenging them to come to terms with this spectre and re-evaluate her anew.

Along these lines of perusal, O'Connor's hauntological response is thereby not to a musical inheritance within the broader sense, or to a broader definition of 'she' as discussed in relation to 'Milestones', but is one primarily concerned with a singular self-inheritance, that being her own former confrontational 'she' from 'Nothing Compares 2 U'. To assess 'Take Me To Church' as such, O'Connor's gesture of fidelity is a positive conjuration of internal spectral influences which enliven her own self and external acceptance anew. To sing that 'I don't want to write them anymore, I don't wanna sing from where I sang before, I don't wanna sing that way no more', O'Connor gestures to her former self, referencing the creative process by which the former self wrote love songs and sung them in a unique way. In addition, as is made evident in the duality of O'Connor in the video and the lyrics 'I don't wanna be that girl no more, I don't wanna cry no more', the present O'Connor responds to her noisy tears from 'Nothing Compare 2 U' and all that her tears represent. The opening sequence to 'Take Me To Church' is O'Connor's way to assert that she no longer wishes to be known for the unwanted noisy tears that were shed in 'Nothing Compares 2 U'; they are a noisy spectral influence she wishes to gesture to, only then through positive conjuration can their memory/influence be cast away.

In the final moment of O'Connor's dual visual representation in the opening sequence, the present O'Connor casts away the former 'she' by singing 'I'm the only one I should adore', thereafter revealing her singular self. However in a new attempt at self-representation, this new singular self has a long red wig, an abundance of make-up and a short tight-fitting dark skirt; or an altogether new visual persona by O'Connor that draws upon misogynistic signifiers of conventional female beauty in popular music performers (Railton and Watson 52). In fact, this new persona, this new 'she', is a satirical ruse by O'Connor as she echoes her sentiment of self-adoration in the lyrics:

I'm gonna sing songs of loving and forgiving,
 Songs of eating and of drinking,
 Songs of living, songs of calling in the night,
 Cause songs are like a bolt of light,
 And love's the only love you should invite.
 Songs of long and spiteful fails,
 Songs that don't let you sit still,
 Songs that mend your broken bones,

And that don't leave you alone.
 So get me down from this here tree,
 Take the rope from off of me,
 Sit me on the floor,
 I'm the only one I should adore! (00:01:18-56)

O'Connor, in the passage, then presents the creative artist she wishes to be represented as after casting away her former noisy self. Throughout this sequence O'Connor is also wearing the aforementioned wig only to cast it aside upon repeating the line 'I'm the only one I should adore!'. This also affirms her newfound self-adoration as being hers alone and that she is not concerned with music industry ideals of femininity and/or beauty. 'Take Me To Church' is a track name itself readable as a hauntological response to O'Connor's actionable past engagement with soft religiosity, and in its accompanying video, O'Connor casts herself anew as an affirming creative talent who gestures to her former self and also industry expectations. To conclude, O'Connor's iconic use of an unwanted tear, a visual noisy response to personal and societal horrors, are near three decades later, an unwanted visual of an unwanted noisy 'she'. Thereby, O'Connor is a noisy woman engaging with a noisy tear to emerge anew as a creative artist.

A Noisy Woman's Mastery of Environmental and Media Noise

*'Glory be to the Father,
 And to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
 As it was in the beginning,
 Is now and ever shall be,
 World without end.
 Oh yeah! [laughter].'
 Sinéad O'Connor /'V.I.P.'/'*

A Haunting Preacher

O'Connor's use of noise in a visual form serves as an analytical entrance point to her creative use of noise's many virtues as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to create temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. 'V.I.P.' (2012) is such a track, through which O'Connor questions the contemporary reading of 'very important people' and 'shallow' celebrity culture. The primary message of 'V.I.P.' is clear:

Wasn't it in history,
 The artists always spoke their people's needs,
 Now we're gorged upon what devils feed,
 In the shallow form of *MTV*.
 Telling the youth to worship futile dreams,
 And along for bling and for material things. (00:01:20-02:08)

O'Connor then indicates that real worth is not found in consumerist celebrity culture but in divine worship and devotion to a deity:

The one the true and the most conquering king,
 Who looks around at everything,
 And sees exactly what we've been.
 His is the face that never was nor will be kissed. (00:02:58-03:21)

To a large extent, 'V.I.P.' delivers a conventional narrative about spiritual fulfilment and the pitfalls of capitalist consumerism and celebrity culture; a narrative similar to Dempsey's 'Patience'. The vocal delivery by O'Connor is also sombre, with little of her noisy grains or voices within voices signalling her spectral servitude. In all, the core message and delivery are expected of O'Connor, particularly in wake of her adoption of the moniker Mother Bernadette Marie.

However, this is just part of the narrative in O'Connor's sonic fiction, with a second narrative realised by noise's ability to generate new sonic sensations which O'Connor draws upon to subtly subvert the primary message. Before looking to this secondary message, a variant of noise is conspicuous at the track's outset. This noise is in use to foreground the primary and secondary narratives, with sixteen seconds of an African American preacher's biblical reading from the Old Testament and concurrent response from a congregation heard:

[Preacher:] Someone say, 'Boldness',
 [Congregation:] Boldness!
 [Preacher:] The Bible says in Proverbs 28 verse 1 'The righteous shall be bold like a lion'. Bold like a lion. Bold like a lion. The righteous shall be bold like a lion.
 (00:00:00-16)

It is clear the initial intent of the passage is to garner attention, as it realises noise's virtue to demand attention and bring a listener into the temporospatial expanse of sonic

fiction. Having said that, the opening sixteen seconds of ‘V.I.P.’ is equally complex with a layering of noise, the first of which is the uncredited preacher and his congregation. Frank Thomas writes that: ‘African American preaching style ... was the mighty tool of Martin Luther King Jr. and his fellow leaders of the civil rights movement used to reshape America into a more just nation’ (Thomas). O’Connor’s use of an African American preacher can correspondingly be interpreted in socio-political terms as haunting the narrative intent with a powerful tool of the civil rights movement. Derrida defines ‘a spectral moment’ as ‘a moment that no longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: “now,” future present)’ (xx). Thereupon, the preacher’s inclusion is a demanding and performative noise which draws upon noise’s virtue to create a spectral moment. A second and accompanying use of noise is evident with the audio static of the original recording of the preacher and congregation. In this use, media noise functions in again seeking to draw the listener into the track, while also temporally removing the preacher and his congregation outside of the present. This further enhances the spectral moment, but also given the recited proverb, the media noise functions as a temporal bridge between the Old Testament sentiment and the present. Bennett argues that recording artists use recording technology and techniques ‘as a technological “bridge”, between both historical eras of sound recording and production technology’ (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 63). In effect, this same recording strategy is employed in this instance, bridging two eras and sentiments. A final noise is also heard just after the sixteen seconds when the voice of the preacher is replaced by that of O’Connor, who harmonises her words with the congregation in response to the preacher. As she delivers her response with the first line, ‘What is a real V.I.P.?’ O’Connor noisily inhales and moistens her lips which is captured by close miking (00:00:18-19). Although slight, this noise again has a function which is to take the listener away from the spectral moment and redirect their attention to O’Connor’s response to the preacher’s performative reading of Old Testament sentiment. Therefore, in the opening sequence noise functions as a constructive sonic element in O’Connor’s temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, augmenting and framing the primary message of the track.

A multi-layering of noise in ‘V.I.P.’ is not confined to its beginning, as the track’s end sequence also has a complex multi-layering of noise. This end sequence begins when O’Connor completes the main component of the track with the line ‘A

face that never was nor will be kissed, Will show you what a real V.I.P. is' (00:05:13-30) at which time she whispers a passage comprised of Biblical text from Jeremiah 8:8 and Isaiah 29:14 and self-penned sentiment:

How can you say we are wise,
 And we possess the instruction of the Lord?
 Certainly for nothing your pains are laboured,
 For nothing your righteous are written.
 The wise will be put to shame. See?
 They reject the word of the Lord,
 So their wisdom amounts to nothing.
 They dress the wounds of my poor people,
 As though they are nothing,
 Saying, 'Peace peace' when there is no peace.
 Saying, 'All is well' when nothing is well. (00:05-31-6:05)

The notability of religious text to enhance the primary message in 'V.I.P.' is that it draws upon the track's initial spectral moment with the preacher. The whispering voice of O'Connor acts in turn as a counter to the more conventional sung component of the track, as it seemingly positions the passage's religious sentiment as a prayer. Moreover, O'Connor's whisper can itself be deciphered as noise, as it demands attentive listening, highlighting the media upon which the whisper is spoken to, the close miking which redistributes the whisper as audible.

The Dual Virtues of Silence

'V.I.P.' continues and concludes with a secondary narrative that clashes with the original message of religious devotion. This begins with a faint studio noise, what sounds like feet on a wooden floor, followed by four seconds of silence and a second prayer by O'Connor as she whispers the 'Gloria Patri':

Glory be to the Father,
 And to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
 As it was in the beginning,
 It is now and ever shall be,
 world without end. (00:06:06-36)

Thereafter, O'Connor's recital finishes not with a conventional 'Amen' but instead a spontaneous 'Oh, yeah!' after which laughter is heard. The laughter is initially that of a man, most certainly the track's recordist Reynolds, followed in turn by O'Connor laughing. Crucially, her laughter is not meant for the microphone, or to the listener, but instead is directed to the recording space and to Reynolds. On reflection, the sequence gestures to Reynolds' favoured working environment and production space, one that is 'simple', 'communitive' and affords intimacy between the working parties ('John Reynolds (Sinéad O'Connor, Damien Dempsey) talks Melodyne' 00:03:00-05). To examine the sequence from the faint sound of environmental noise with the movement in the studio, to the four seconds of silence, through the prayer and on to the laughter it is clear that the sequence does not conclude or augment the primary narrative of the song with its Old Testament rhetoric and spectral affirmation of African American preaching. Instead, the sequence is itself a response to the primary narrative, and to O'Connor's former self and her soft religiosity, an O'Connor long mediated to the public as a troublesome noisy woman.

To further explore the sequence, the importance of silence must be considered, what the anonymous research noise studies group GegenSichKollektiv refers to as spectral silence: an 'aesthetic tool that subjugates the opportunity to reflect on the reality of each sound in this context' (203). On silence, John Cage famously concluded in his visit to an anechoic chamber that it can only truly exist in death:

Going into the chamber, I expected to hear no sound at all, because it was a room made as silent as possible. But in that room I heard two sounds. And I was so surprised that I went to the engineer in charge ... and said, There's something wrong, there're two sounds in that room, and he said describe them, and I did, one was high and one was low, and he said, the high one was my nervous system ... and the low one was my blood circulating. So I realized that ... I was making music unintentionally continuously. (Sim 256)

Cage later theorised that 'Until I die there will be sounds. And they will continue after my death. One need not fear the future of music' (Cage 161). Cage's critical interpretation of silence saw its performative aesthetic fruition with '4'33', a work Thompson notes, 'famously exemplifies the impossibility of absolute silence by foregrounding the background noise that accompanies every silence' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 75). Hence, the four seconds of silence in 'V.I.P.' can be elucidated

as a spectral silence, a prompt to the listener to listen outside of the foregrounded structure of the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. Thereby, redirecting their listening to background noises within the sonic fiction and within their own sphere of listening.

Another way to view the four seconds of silence in ‘V.I.P.’ is that it draws upon the already mentioned conservative politics of silence and the transgressive poetics of noise. Thompson writes that historically:

Black music was heard as meaningless and chaotic noise because it used a musical form alien to the ears of the oppressors ... noise garners ideological value as a means of politic of resistance. As is often imagined to be the case with children, noise is disobedience to silence’s obedience: it is the sound of protest, rebellion and uprising. (ibid. 28)

To reflect upon the common representation of O’Connor as a troublesome, untrustworthy, and anti-authoritative noisy ‘she’, her response to the four seconds of silence with a whispered rendition of the ‘Gloria Patri’ followed by a sarcastic ‘Oh yeah’ signals also a response to this noisy ‘she’. For this reason, her response utilises the aesthetic qualities of spectral silence, with its ability to prompt listening away from foregrounded sounds towards background sounds, and also the conservative politics associated with it. GegenSichKollektiv considers that:

one could think that silence is the most generic and subjective expression, the most uncreative and available. Because of this the very ‘sound’ of silence could critique or dismantle the logic of commodity as no value can be attributed to it. (201)

In relation to the four seconds of silence, with its dual spectral and conservative virtues, it can be seen as acting as a way to prompt the listener to listen anew to the track, this in part is due to a belief that the track may be complete and/or just coming to a new juncture. Second, the dual silence is also in use as an ‘affective force that can create new sonic sensations’ (Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound* 150) in that it reframes the subsequent sequence as it critiques and dismantles the primary narrative. Hence, the four seconds of silence can be interpreted as a full-stop, a question mark, or even both. Link writes that noise is the grammar of music, thereby silence can be construed as itself a further component or *punctum* within a hauntological metalanguage of recorded sound; or, in line with Cage’s interpretation of

sound/noise/music, it can be understood as a way to organise sound to generate new sonic sensations (Cage 7).

The Glory of Noisy Laughter

After the four seconds of silence, the final sequence of ‘V.I.P.’ continues with O’Connor’s whispering to the listener via close miking the eminent doxology ‘Gloria Patri’ or the ‘Glory Be to the Father’. Upon initial listening, this sequence’s position directly after the spectral and conservative silence is of interest in that the listener is immediately prompted by the silence to attention, as it draws them into the track again and even anew. The sequence’s familiarity is notable in that once the listener is attentive, receptive again to traverse the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, they are then brought further into the track by a doxology that will be known to most listeners. The familiarity of the passage as it juxtaposes with the given image of the person whispering carries additional significance as many listeners would be aware of O’Connor’s own fraught relationship with Christianity. In essence, the track’s conclusion with ‘Gloria Patri’, with its sarcastic and jovial ‘oh yeah’, completely transforms all meaning in the sequence. Whereas the noisy laughter of O’Connor and Reynolds at the track’s conclusion, further augments the meaning of the sequence in a number of creative ways. First, the ‘oh yeah’ and laughter adds a secondary narrative to ‘V.I.P.’, a narrative that is both counter to and complementary to the track’s primary message which is established with a spectral moment at the track’s beginning. The secondary narrative draws upon this spectral moment and the subsequent message of devotion to a higher spiritual power, playfully suggesting that any devotion should be removed from the constraints of organised Christian teachings. Second, Reynolds laughter brings the listener away from traversing the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, relocating their point of focus to a ‘real’ studio space and inherent processing of sound. Alan Williams in his assessment of sound and music production, considers the practiced use of emerging alternative spaces of production. These spaces, Williams’ suggests, are inspired in part by Daniel Lanois:

Though far from the first producer to work in converted domestic space, Lanois’ highly publicized articulation of his approach as a philosophy has entered the realm of myth; his name frequently invoked as an icon of creative recording practice, his mythology emulated by thousands of musicians, producers, engineers—replacing a rejected mythology with another mythology *about* rejecting mythology. (164)

One producer/recordist who seeks to emulate Lanois' mythology is Reynolds, as evident in his use of simple, and communitive real spaces of production. Therefore, the 'oh yeah' and laughter at the end of 'V.I.P.' can be decoded as O'Connor and Reynolds utilising noise to reject the noiselessness of digital technology and digital era mythologies of sonic perfection. However, this is just part of the creative use, with the 'oh yeah' and laughter also functioning as a hauntological response by O'Connor and Reynolds to their former selves and their complicated relationship. The 'oh yeah' and laughter is evidence of O'Connor confronting her previous self, a touching response to a personal and professional relationship which has proven to be a lasting and weighty one for O'Connor. To act as a recordist on *How About I Be Me (and You Be You)?*, Reynolds resumed a role he last undertook on the track 'Emma's Song' from *Faith and Courage* (2000); a track he co-produced with Brian Eno. Hence the significance of O'Connor and her former husband Reynolds resuming a working relationship in a simple and communitive space of production is heard in their shared laughter. It is a noisy moment of personal and professional merriment which O'Connor and Reynolds creatively use to bring the listener away from the artifice.

From the environmental noise of the studio movement, through the four seconds of spectral and conservative silence, to the 'oh yeah' and laughter, the concluding sequence of 'V.I.P.' is a telling example of noise's virtue in altering meaning in the creation of what is defined in this thesis' introduction as a temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Voegelin in *Sonic Possible Worlds* reflects upon the work of sound artist Shonberg: 'The dark pool of things bestows his music with a memory that thickens its present and makes it current ... without that memory pool music does not have the thickness or depth from which to build a present relevance' (129). In 'V.I.P.' noise is in use as a memory pool by O'Connor and Reynolds, drawing upon the listener's knowledge of O'Connor's previous selves, her long established history and engagement with religious devotion and/or challenges to authoritative religious institutions and even her personal and professional relationship with Reynolds. Without this noisy memory pool, the secondary message of the track could not be realised. To draw a conclusion about the use of noise by O'Connor in 'V.I.P.' it is worth again returning to O'Connor's noisy use of tears in 'Nothing Compares 2 U' and her hauntological response to this noise in 'Take Me To Church'. In both initial uses of noise and subsequent hauntological response, there is evidence of a creative artist who understands that those viewing will receive an intended

message or metalanguage present. Those who look to O'Connor's tears and subsequent casting away of this former self, have a memory of who O'Connor is and was. O'Connor then uses these memories to thicken the present and make it current. The use of media and environmental noise in 'V.I.P.', together with noise as spectral and conservative silence, achieves this as it realises noise's virtue as a temporality altering agent. To conclude, 'V.I.P.' sees O'Connor creatively use a listener's expected memory of her former selves, a hauntological metalanguage of noise specific to her alone, to thicken its present and make it current. Noise's virtue is that it acts as a memory pool a noisy woman employs to realise a listener's memory of her noisiness.

The Developing Noisiness of a Noisy Woman

'It's the only album I'm taking in the coffin with me ... hopefully it will get me off the other dreadful stuff I ever did.'

Sinéad O'Connor /Sinéad O'Connor (The A-Side) Mastertapes Series/

Noisy Theology

O'Connor's use of noise is in part an extension of her skill as a creative practitioner in a recording studio, which is counter to what Sara Cohen regards as a general assumption that scene making, production, and creativity are 'comprising [of] male activities and styles' (17). O'Connor's skill as a recordist was established at the outset of her career, when at just nineteen and heavily pregnant, she replaced the veteran recordist Kevin Mooney on her debut album *The Lion and the Cobra* (1987); a decision that her then record company was so against they all but wrote the album off before its release. Throughout her career it is no surprise that O'Connor's role in the recording studio was never going to be a solely performative or expressive one, with a consistent recognition on her part of the mythologies that shape the way musicians, and recordists approach their work. This constitutes an awareness of production criteria, or myths of sound production, through which successes and failures are measured (Williams 158). In no album is O'Connor's studio mythologising as astute as on *Theology* (2007), an album that was released in a double album format with disc one entitled the 'Dublin Sessions' and disc two entitled the 'London Sessions'. In a unique approach to the album form, the two discs feature almost exactly the same track listing, the only difference being that the 'London Session' features an extra track, a cover of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's 'I Don't Know How to Love Him'.

The other significant difference between the two sessions is related to the production, with the ‘Dublin Sessions’ produced acoustically by Steve Cooney, while the ‘London Sessions’ was produced by RonTom and is more polished in terms of digital production. The initial premise for the album was that O’Connor looked to record an acoustic-only album which resulted in the ‘Dublin Sessions’. However, this plan was altered when O’Connor worked with RonTom in London and then decided to release both sessions on one album. In an interview with John Wilson for BBC’s *Mastertapes Series* O’Connor notes that *Theology* was at that point her most important album: ‘It’s the only album I’m taking in the coffin with me ... hopefully it will get me off the other dreadful stuff I ever did’ (00:01:52-02:00). The album is for O’Connor an Old Testament record, a homage not only to God but also to who she regards as ‘Sky rippers’, musicians she heard in her childhood such as Curtis Mayfield-whose ‘We People Who Are Darker Than Blue’ O’Connor covers on the album. O’Connor says of these influences, ‘I hope I am in the tradition of sky rippers, people who can unzip the sky and see beyond the bullshit’ (ibid. 00:22:38-45). There are particular features of *Theology* which relate to the use of noise’s virtues in constructing and/or altering meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. The first of these is that unsurprisingly given the acoustic nature of the ‘Dublin Sessions’, the session is significantly noisy in character, with guitar fret, whispering fractured vocals and studio noises all evident; uses of environmental noise that work again as a way to position the album as processing in a real space. In addition to this, the session concludes with a psalm ‘Hosanna Filio David’, which is signalled by media noise as being separate to the other tracks in the session. This indicates a further creative use of noise’s virtues, as it alters a temporal listening experience. The second feature of note in the ‘Dublin Sessions’ is that it was recorded in Windmill Lane Studios, a studio synonymous with Irish music and in particular U2 and their ending of the exile narrative in Irish popular music (McLaughlin and McLoone, *Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 148). The importance of the space, and the perceived ownership of the space by U2, is recognised by O’Connor with her knowledge of Irish popular music’s systems of hierarchy. For this reason, her use of Windmill Lane can be construed as a challenge to what Bennet purports as a ‘type of workplace canon’ (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 13). Furthermore, the choice of recording space relates to the use of noise in temporally positioning the recording process inside a studio, as those listening and engaging with the album by reading the sleeve notes, are equally brought inside

Windmill Lane upon listening. This redirects their point of focus away from the temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction to a present studio of great significance to Irish popular music.

A third point to make on the ‘Dublin Sessions’ is the omission of the track ‘I Don’t Know How to Love Him’, which, as noted, features on the ‘London Sessions’. O’Connor acknowledges that the inclusion of the track on the ‘London Sessions’, and its subsequent release as the album’s first UK single release, was not her choice; ‘Sometimes you make a record and your record company put pressure on you to slip a song on and that was one of those instances’ (Wilson, ‘Sinéad O’Connor (The A-Side)’ 00:03:53-59), indeed O’Connor further suggests that in all the track ‘doesn’t fit’ with the rest of the old Testament sentiment of the record (ibid. 00:08:38-40). In this regard, the ‘Dublin Sessions’ can be viewed as the preferable of those recorded, which suggests the preferable use of noise by O’Connor as a creative sonic component. Furthermore, to locate these noises within an Irish context there is evident a nationalist sentiment with noise’s ability to sound Ireland equally factoring into the importance of the ‘Dublin Sessions’. Accordingly, if *Theology* is the record O’Connor wants to bring into the grave with her, then in doing so she brings with her the Old Testament sentiment of the album alongside the Dublin noise of Windmill Lane.

A Noisy Throwing Down of Arms

Coming on the back of the release of *Collaborations* in June 2005, *Throw Down Your Arms* was released in October of the same year. The album’s release in part echoes much of the expressive characteristic of *Sean-Nós Nua*, *Collaborations*, and *She Who Dwells in the Secret Place of the Most High Shall Abide Under the Shadow of the Almighty*, as it marginalises O’Connor’s creative output, aligning her with other artists and/or framing her creativity in a live performative setting. O’Connor notes that *Throw Down Your Arms* is a Rastafarian album that is a steppingstone in a spiritual journey towards the creation of *Theology* (Wilson, ‘Sinéad O’Connor (The A-Side)’ 00:08:05-22). *Throw Down Your Arms* is O’Connor’s noisiest album. The use of noise in *Throw Down Your Arms* primarily consists of environmental noise in the form of studio count-ins at the start of tracks; notably in ‘Door Peep’ (00:00:00-03); ‘Vampire’ (00:00:00-02); and ‘Throw Down Your Arms’ (00:00:00-01). In addition, ‘He Prayed’ begins with a lone male Caribbean vocal heard shouting out ‘away’ indicating to other performers the track’s beginning (00:00:00-2). This use of noise closely allies to Hugh

Barker and Yuval Taylor's reading of the usage of noise by popular musicians: 'Years of music being judged on the grounds of authenticity have taught producers how to use basic production tricks to accentuate authenticity—by using traditional sounding effects and acoustics, and by allowing rough edges to show' (331). Baker and Taylor call this '*MTV Unplugged* aesthetic of authenticity' (ibid.), and in many ways there is much to take from their analysis particularly in relation to environmental noise that chiefly is used to indicate the process of creativity. Noise in these tracks is used to reposition their construct or processing inside a real space of recording—in the case of *Throw Down Your Arms* in Tuff Gong Studios and Anchor Studios in Kingston, Jamaica. In terms of engaging with noise as a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, a concept examined in detail in this study's introduction, the use of noise can be construed as largely unimaginative, pertaining more to popular music in general and even the tradition of noise usage in reggae music rather than any self-inheritance

The use of environmental noise in *Throw Down Your Arms* is not solely in use at the start of tracks, as 'Downpresser Man' concludes with a lot of guitar fret which leads to a breakdown of the song followed by studio movement (00:00:05:01-07). This use of environmental noise again acts in much the same way as that at the beginning of a track, with equal signifiers of process in use. To assess this use of noise, it can be construed as an exclamation mark at the end of a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. Whereas, in hauntological terms it draws from a long held tradition in popular music to conclude a track with environmental noise in form of studio movement or commentary; one need only think of Ringo Starr's 'I've got blisters on my fingers!' which concludes 'Helter Skelter' (The Beatles 00:00:04:25-29). In summary, any use of noise's virtue to construct or alter meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction in *Throw Down Your Arms* is chiefly creatively employed on a fundamental level. In part this reflects O'Connor's expressive/creative juxtaposing at this period in her career.

The functionality of noise in *Throw Down Your Arms* is complemented by two tracks which warrant closer analysis, specifically due to political messaging and facilitating questions of attentive listenership. The first of these is 'Jay Nuh Dead', which has a layered use of media noise in the form of static which runs for almost the track's entirety, offering the only sonic accompaniment to O'Connor's vocal. This use of media noise can thereby be heard as framing the delivery of the vocals, signalling

that O'Connor's voice is being transmitted via a static radio signal therein outside of digital perfectionism (00:00:00-03:11). This use of noise is augmented with first a short environmental noise (studio movement) audible as O'Connor's vocals end (00:00:03:06-07), before the track continues with two seconds of spectral and conservative silence. Finally, this silence is followed by noise in the form of an utterance by the then US President George W. Bush saying 'I talk to my dad', repeated three times and accentuated with use of media noise and echo effects (00:00:03:13-17). Importantly, this use of noise shares much in common with the use of samples and/or data, a common practice in popular music particularly in hip hop (Williams, J. 20-46). Nonetheless, in assessing this sample as being a component of 'Jay Nuh Dead' and the album as a whole, the use of Bush's line 'I talk to my dad' recontextualises Bush's utterance, and his neo-liberal politics, as a noisy opposition to the original track's message that spotlights racial subjugation.

To clarify this line of perusal, the association of 'Jah Nuh Dead' with reggae icon Burning Spear has an inherent message of subjugation: 'They tried to fool the black population, by telling them that Jah Jah dead' (00:00:00-17). In opposition to this, Bush's line 'I talk to my dad', was first uttered in Bush's insistence that he sought advice from his father George H. Bush in matters relating to America's involvement in the Iraq war. Concurrently, the use of Bush's line signals to a listener his purported militaristic nature, and by proxy of his position as US President signals a military opposition to the civil rights movement. 'Jah Nuh Dead' is also a track that celebrates Jah or Ras Tafari in the Rastafarian religions, thereby Bush's fatherly devotion can be construed as counter to a Rastafarian belief in Jah as being God or the father of their faith. This semi-religious signalling is further enhanced with the line 'I talk to my dad' repeated as a trinity at the tracks closing. In a final reflection, to listen to Bush's utterance with its military signifying connotations, the media noise that accompanies O'Connor's vocal delivery takes on new meaning. Thereupon, the noise is recontextualised as sounding militant or signalling resistance, as it signifies that O'Connor's vocals are delivered over a transmitter radio. For this reason, the two seconds of spectral and conservative silence that follows sonically delineates a line of conflict to Bush's noisy political rhetoric of neo-liberal politics and militarisation. Therefore, this frames the reception of the rest of the album and O'Connor's expressive delivery along similar conflict lines, as she creatively uses the radical

politics of noise and silence to create a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction to respond to the politics of the time.

The track 'War' as it appears on *Throw Down Your Arms*, is loaded with significance to a listener even before they engage with it, its very nature and hauntological signification invite attentive listening. Accordingly, it is a considerable noisy track, although there is no actual media or environmental noise evident. The noise that haunts 'War' is instead realised by the listener if they are aware of O'Connor's actions on the 3 October 1992, the night she appeared on *SNL* and tore up a picture of Pope John Paul II. Nolan in her analysis of *Throw Down Your Arms* highlights the incongruous nature of a young Irish woman singing reggae songs most often associated with male Jamaican artists such as Bob Marley or Burning Spear. Nolan writes:

The apparent incongruity of the project is emphasized by the cover art for the album, which features a photograph of O'Connor as a young girl wearing her Holy Communion dress, displayed inside a Celtic border decorated in the Rastafarian colours of red, green and gold. For anyone familiar with O'Connor's biography, this doe-eyed child looking shyly at the camera, her fingertips pressed together in a gauche attempt at a prayerful pose, represents a disturbing image of Irish Catholic identity. O'Connor had already associated child abuse with black historical experience when she sang a version of Marley's 'War', substituting the words 'child abuse' for 'racism' in several of the lines, just before she ripped up the picture of the Pope. She reprises 'War' on the final track on *Throw Down Your Arms*. ('Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice' 62)

To view the album cover, an action that a listener would certainly have done with the album's circulation as a product of the first phase of music's digitalisation, a listener would have seen the image of Irish Catholic identity and the track listing with 'War' as the last track and been brought back to O'Connor's *SNL* performance. As already discussed, O'Connor's actions throughout her career have positioned her as a noisy woman, with McLaughlin and McLoone correctly writing that O'Connor's *SNL* appearance being her most 'controversial' or noisiest (*Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 246). In terms of O'Connor's career 'War' will remain her noisiest track, despite the lack of media or environmental noise present on its version on *Throw Down Your Arms*. Importantly, the lack of noise evident is itself a creative decision, given that noise demands attention. In terms of 'War', the listener is expected to be already

attentively traversing the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, so noise is seen as an unnecessary signal that would distract a listener from the unheard noises and actions haunting the track. In her analysis of *Throw Down Your Arms*, Nolan draws comparison between O'Connor's sentiment and the Jacobite political ideology of the 'aisling' poems of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ('Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice' 64). Nolan argues:

Such songs [aisling poems] were often about a dream or vision of a sorrowful woman who tells the male poet of how she has been wronged and abandoned. It could be argued that in her reggae persona, O'Connor combines versions of both roles in the aisling. She is a beautiful woman whose voice can dramatize loss and yearning, but she avoids the passivity associated with the traditional allegory by bringing a strong sense of her militant anger and her notorious 'outspokenness' to 'Marcus Garvey', 'War' or 'Downpressor Man'. Liberated from the melancholy undertow of so much Irish traditional music, she explores a new kind of rebellious feeling. Throughout the album, the voice takes an obvious delight in its discovery of solidarity. (ibid.)

Thereby, as with 'aisling' poetry, in 'War' the significance of what is being said is unsaid. As a result, in 'War' O'Connor utilises her noisy vocals, her outspoken noisy militant persona, and her creative understanding of the use (or non-use) of noise's many virtues to construct and/or alter meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Finally, to assess the use of noise as a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, 'War's haunting by noise is akin to a footnote, as it redirects the listener to other information pertaining to O'Connor's former self and her noisy appearance on *SNL*.

The Two Phases of Noise by a Noisy Woman

*I have chosen,
I have chosen.
To become the love I'm longing.
Love was never something beyond me,
Underneath me or above me ...'*
Sinéad O'Connor /'Streetcars'/

Noisy Mother

To conclude this chapter it only remains to examine O'Connor's use of noise during the two phases of music's digitalisation, namely from the first phase of music's

digitalisation with *Universal Mother* (1994) and from the late second phase with *I'm Not Bossy, I'm the Boss* (2014).

Universal Mother, even some twenty years after its release, is still O'Connor's most striking and fronted attack on societal structures. Nolan notes that despite its title it is an album 'about the necessity of *separating* from the mother and also about the notion of sisterhood—not primarily in the sense of feminist solidarity, but of sibling relationships, including males as well as females' ('Sinéad O'Connor: The Story of a Voice' 59). *Universal Mother* begins with 'Germaine', a track that consists of a monologue by leading second-wave feminist Germaine Greer. Nolan reflects that the political message of the opening track 'has tremendous significance; it seems that the configuration and shared ordeals of her [O'Connor] family of origin have had a permanent effect on her sense of political and national community as well' (ibid.). In terms of this research's analysis, 'Germaine' not only immediately foregrounds the primary message of the album but aligns O'Connor with Greer, a noisy figure herself. The opening track then announces O'Connor's intent to continue her own noisy persona, unapologetically declaring an initial noisy statement. Further of interest is the decision to give Greer's thirty-eight second monologue its own track listing. As a release of the first phase of music's digitalisation, the album would have been purchased by most in CD form, allowing those listening to the album to skip 'Germaine' should they choose. This affords the listener an opportunity to not listen, which relocates control and marginalises the intent of having Greer's message begin the album. This same treatment was afforded the track 'Am I a Human?', which is again a short twenty-four second passage sung by O'Connor and Reynolds' young son Jack. In the confines of the album, 'Am I a Human?' could have featured as a closing sequence for 'My Darling Child', yet its inclusion as a separate track allows/invites the track's removal from a person's listening experience if chosen. In terms of the sonic characteristic of the track, given it was written and performed by a child it is unsurprisingly noisy in nature with Jack's vocal imperfections augmented by environmental and media noise. 'Am I a Human?' can be construed as a noisy interlude in the album, although, given its nature as a separate track its role as noise varies to others discussed so far. If noise's inclusion is primarily concerned with positioning a listener inside/outside of the song, in allowing the listener the opportunity to forego listening to noise the virtue and creative potential of noise is negated. If noise demands attention, noise's virtue in 'Am I a Human?' and

‘Germaine’ is redirected back to the listener thereafter blunting any potential in the creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction.

The use of noise on another track from *Universal Mother*, ‘Famine’, is immediate, as the opening sequence begins with a dog howling (00:00:00-06). The intent of including the dog howl relates to its ability to demand attention, whereas in the confines of the opening sequence it is almost immediately paired with a short classical stringed piece, credited to the Irish Chamber Orchestra. The sequence further foregrounds this noisy intent, as the dog howl leads into the scratching of a record which as a form of media noise announces the track’s hip-hop nature. In turn, O’Connor precedes to rap about the Irish famine and its long-term impact on the Irish people who O’Connor refers to as the ‘most child-like trusting people in the Universe’ (00:02:54-57). As suggested, the noisy opening sequence draws upon noise’s virtue to demand a listener’s attention or reaction and gives O’Connor’s message more credence. The use of media noise persists throughout the track, which reinforces the hip-hop sound. However, as this hip-hop sound comes to a completion when O’Connor’s rapping finishes, a complex and perhaps misjudged use of noise begins with a political speech by John Hume:

We stand on the brink of a great achievement. In this Ireland there is no solution to be found to our disagreements by shooting each other. There is no real invader here, we are all Irish in all our different kinds of ways. We must not, now or ever in the future show anything to each other except tolerance, forbearance and neighbourly love. (00:03:41-4:11)

During the sequence of Hume’s speech, a dog howl is again heard over Hume saying ‘we are all Irish in all our different kinds of ways’ (00:03:57-4:01). This is followed by a further dog howl at the end of the speech, before an uncredited African American preacher says ‘Because of our tradition everyone here, knows who he is and what God expects him to do’ (00:04:15-29). Throughout the two speeches, musical accompaniment is maintained which shows the soliloquies as being part of the same temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction of ‘Famine’ and not a standalone track like ‘Germaine’ or ‘Am I a Human?’.

Thereby, to examine the use of noise in ‘Famine’ there is one particularly striking element, that being its fragmented and even misguided purpose. In 1994, the significance of Hume’s noble oratory was not lost on those listening, particularly those

from the island of Ireland. For this reason, it is difficult to ascertain what purpose Hume's speech serves in 'Famine'. In terms of political narrative 'Famine' is explicit in its anti-British, or anti-colonial sentiment, as it indicates throughout the destruction British rule had on Ireland and highlights its 'permanent psychological damage' (O'Connor, 'Famine' 00:01:37-40). Implicit in this rhetoric, Irish identity is framed as a damaged construct, a juvenile other as a result of British colonisation: 'I see the Irish as a race like a child that got itself bashed in the face' (ibid. 00:03:02-07). To then bookend this message with a use of noise in the form of a speech by Hume, the intent is jarring as the monologue chosen addresses the political divide in Northern Ireland by stating 'There is no real invader here, we are all Irish in all our different kinds of ways' while also calling for 'tolerance, forbearance and neighbourly love'. What is conspicuous then is a fractured political narrative with O'Connor and Hume seemingly at odds in their message on the permanency of British colonial traumas inflicted on Ireland and the response warranted. It is equally difficult to ascertain an intent in the fractured use of noise in 'Famine' without interpreting it as a critique of Hume, although given Hume's message and political/cultural significance this would render such actions as unlikely. Nevertheless, Hume's speech as a noisy sonic element within 'Famine' lacks much of the creative significance attributed to other uses of noise in this study. This is further evident in the re-emergence of a dog howling positioned alongside or over Hume's speech after its early positioning alongside/over classical strings, which can be construed as an alignment of Hume with 'classical' music or even authoritative sonic traditions. Finally, in the track's conclusion with the preacher's short declaration, 'Because of our tradition everyone here, knows who he is and what God expects him to do', there is a suggestion that tradition should dictate actions; a further message counter to Hume's desire to renegotiate understanding of tradition in Northern Ireland. To view the sequence critically the creative use of noise in the form of Hume's speech, the dog barking and the preacher is too fragmented thereby fails to deliver any coherent narrative to enhance the track's narrative. To speculate upon the fragmented nature, the multi-person production of *Universal Mother* is a possible factor, with O'Connor, Reynolds, Tim Simenon, and Phil Coulter each acting as recordists which in turn illuminate questions of primary actor and creative force.

Ultimately, the use of noise in 'Famine' is indicative of its uses in *Universal Mother*, that being a considerably more marginalised sonic component in comparison

to O'Connor's later creative uses discussed in this thesis. To ascertain the significance of this, the self-reflective hauntological lens utilised by O'Connor as a creative force later in her career becomes a point of focus. Thereupon, O'Connor's creatively marginalised use of noise in the first phase of music's digitalisation can be seen as signalling that O'Connor's spectral servitude was in line with much of her peers at the time, as she drew from a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* which was infused with sonic mythologies of popular, traditional and classical music practices. Although, as is apparent in O'Connor's use of noise in the second phase of music's digitalisation, she would later draw from a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* that was supplemented with sonic mythologies that were forced as a response to her own creative output and also the representation of her as a noisy woman. To follow this line of perusal, this chapter concludes by analysing the use of noise by O'Connor on 'Streetcars' from *I'm Not Bossy, I'm the Boss* (2014).

Noisy Boss

O'Connor recounts that the name *I'm Not Bossy, I'm the Boss* came from the 'Ban Bossy' campaign, a campaign envisioned by an American technology executive and activist Sheryl Sandberg and her organisation Leanin.org that sought, among other things, to prohibit the use of the word bossy to signify assertive women. Keith Negus declares that a confessional nature has been central to O'Connor's creativity, writing that the 'fidelity of Sinéad O'Connor's music to her own experience has always been apparent' (180); whereas, Anna Dyc suggests that O'Connor uses her lyrics as 'a struggle for emotional autonomy in a world where emotion has become systematised and artificial' (41). In 'Streetcars', the final track on *I'm Not Bossy, I'm the Boss*, O'Connor seeks to reframe her struggle for emotional autonomy and subsequent confessional narration alongside Tennessee Williams' Blanche DuBois from *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Fred Ribkoff and Paul Tyndall maintain that T. Williams' DuBois is a woman driven to 'madness' by being haunted by a traumatic experience and an unattainability to address the trauma within a culture of denial (325). Consequently, given what has been uncovered so far about O'Connor's representation as a noisy woman an alignment between the two illustrates intent on O'Connor's part to challenge representation of her as 'bossy', or even noisy.

The confessional nature of O'Connor's lyrics is evident throughout 'Streetcars':

I have chosen, I have chosen.
 To become the love I'm longing.
 Love was never something beyond me,
 Underneath me or above me.
 And I will, I must and so I will.
 Dwell beneath the desert still.
 For there's no safety to be acquired,
 Riding streetcars named desire. (00:00:19-01:35)

In the lyrics, the first-person pronoun is ever-present, which invites an interpretation that 'Streetcars' is *about* O'Connor, affording an intimacy to the artist often desired by a listener (Coulter 268); particularly a listener with an already established hauntological structure of feeling. On further reflection, the acquirement of safety, whether that be safety over a struggle for emotional autonomy or physical safety, is central to the lyrics with O'Connor's first-person narrative reiterating on three instances 'For there's no safety to be acquired, riding streetcars named Desire'. In these lyrics there is a clear alignment with T. Williams' tragic DuBois, a woman who sought to escape a traumatic haunting by riding a streetcar named Desire to the French Quarter of New Orleans to stay with her sister Stella and her brutish husband Stanley; a stay that tragically results in DuBois being raped by Stanley and taken away to a psychiatric hospital (Williams, T., *A Streetcar Named Desire*). In 'Streetcars', O'Connor expresses a fear that she too will end up in a similar situation to DuBois, succumbing to her own haunting by trauma and subsequent safety implications. Indeed, if the song is about O'Connor, as a listener is to assume, it is one of her most personal struggles for emotional autonomy and reflections on her mortality:

If I were dying, if I were dying.
 What would I want, what would I want with me?
 If I were dying, if I were dying.
 Who would I want, who would I want to see? (00:01:37-02:12)

Furthermore, equally implicit, or even implicated in O'Connor's reflection is her former husband Reynolds:

When I was married, when I was married,
 I'd ask my husband to lay his body over me.
 And to tell me, and to tell me,

Just how safe he'd keep me. (00:02:54-28)

These lyrics can be construed as connecting the track's recordist Reynolds with O'Connor's struggle to escape her past while acquiring safety in an unknowable future. As a consequence, 'Streetcars' is about O'Connor being haunted by her former self, or various internal and externally defined noisy selves, and a desire to avoid the traumatic consequences of servitude to that haunting.

To create a sonic component which augments O'Connor's lyrics and facilitates her reflection on her hauntological engagement with her former and future self, O'Connor again returns in part to noise's many virtues to create sonic sensations. What noise evident in 'Streetcars' can be heard as a consequence of close miking that heightens an emotiveness in her often out-of-tune vocal delivery. This is apparent in the opening vocals, where an inhale and dampening of lips is followed by a noisy emotive vocal delivery that persists almost throughout. Concurrently, when O'Connor switches octaves from her trademark whisper to scream she indicates resistant spectral servitudes, thereafter, revealing her true grain in this moment with her predominant noisy vocal catch or flaw. Nolan purports that O'Connor in 'Streetcars' 'emphasises particular words that convey disappointment but resolve (especially in the first line, where she draws out the word "will" twice, while briefly but firmly stresses the word "must")' (*Five Irish Women* 75). Moreover, at a particular point when she sings 'I'd ask my husband to lay his body over me, and to tell me, and to tell me, just how safe he would keep me', O'Connor's vocals drift out-of-tune with her noisy grained vocal catch or flaw evident; in turn this reflects the very present haunting of her former husband Reynolds.

According to Marshall, digital sound production software of vocal correction such as Auto-Tune operate like a 'rock polisher', with a performers vocals looped through software 'wherein rough edges are removed, and a certain grain, and sheen of the voice are made to come through' (181). To arrange O'Connor's vocals, Reynolds used vocal pitch correction software Melodyne, yet says that 'Most of the work I do is in the organic area, I do mix organic music with electronic music, but it comes from microphones rather than plug-ins' ('John Reynolds (Sinéad O'Connor, Damien Dempsey) talks Melodyne' 00:01:26-41). The organic approach is certainly evident in 'Streetcars', where O'Connor's vocals are allowed to drift out-of-tune in points which facilitates the tension between resistant spectral servitudes to reveal her true grain in

this moment with her predominant noisy vocal catch or flaw. In a telling insight into his production style, which is applicable to O'Connor and Dempsey, Reynolds says that 'I've worked with engineers where I've asked them to listen rather than look, do things to the ear, ok you can look that it is out-of-tune but you can have a listen and if it sounds right, let's leave it' (00:04:55-05:11). He further reflects that:

Being completely in-tune is not that important ... generally you know the most important thing about a vocal performance to me when I am reacting emotionally to something is great phrasing, great tone, that's what makes a great singer to me ... Tuning is not as important as those elements. (00:52:34-52)

Crucially in 'Streetcars' the vocals, which were co-engineered by recordist Graham Bolger, were heard rather than seen, with tuning not as important as O'Connor's noisy imperfect phrasing and tone. In a final reflection on Melodyne and use of voice correction technology, Reynolds echoes a point referenced by Krukowski in the first chapter of this thesis, that with digital technology once you can point to something you can move or remove it. In line with this analysis, Reynolds suggests that with digital technology he can 'nudge things into tune', which he explains transform the voice from a vocal to an 'instrument' (00:05:54-7:22). This point Nicola Dibben assesses by stating that 'contemporary popular music recording techniques such as reverb, delays, filters and overdubbing help [to] "stage" voices' (319). In 'Streetcars' there is then a rejection of the nudge, of the digital, by Reynolds, Bolger, and of course O'Connor whose close proximity in the recording studio facilitates a clear communication process as established earlier in the chapter. Hence, to look to construct a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction that reflects upon O'Connor's haunting by former selves and a desire to avoid the traumatic consequences of servitude to that haunting, the recordists reject the digital in favour of staging the tension between resistant spectral servitudes to reveal her true grain in this moment with her predominant noisy vocal catch or flaw.

In a final and telling use of noise in 'Streetcars', the track concludes after O'Connor whispers the final line 'riding streetcars named Desire' with a bell subsequently ringing three times at intervals of five seconds before the track's end (00:04:10-20). In a noteworthy reflection upon a former self, the ringing of the bell is strikingly similar to that used in Christy Moore and O'Connor's 'Middle of the Island', a track that features on Moore's 1989 release *Voyage*. In his chapter 'No Country for

Young Women: Celtic Music, Dissent and the Female Body’, Smyth writes that the bell in ‘Middle of the Island’ acts as the third ‘voice’, and is comprised of two clearly discernible sounds, ‘one a deeper and more resonant “gong”, the second a brighter ringing note’ (*Music in Irish Cultural History* 136). In ‘Streetcars’, the bells are equally comprised of these two discernible sounds, with the only notable difference being that the bells ring throughout ‘Middle of the Island’ at five second intervals up until three rings at the end of the vocals, while in ‘Streetcars’ they ring solely at the conclusion. Smyth argues that the ringing at five second intervals ‘has a programmatic function in as much as it is intended to evoke a sound (a “passing bell”) which has been associated with death since medieval times’ (ibid.). ‘Middle of the Island’ is about the death of Anne Lovett, a fifteen year old girl who in 1984 died beneath a shrine to the Virgin Mary in Granard, County Longford, giving birth alone and unaided to a baby whose conception she tried to hide; a tragedy acknowledged as an important moment in modern Irish history with long lasting ramifications for societal questions over the role of the Church and State and women’s body autonomy (ibid. 125). In a further reflection on ‘Middle of the Island’ Smyth writes, ‘the song is about *death*, therefore the musicians produce sounds which *signify* death to a listener who will be more or less familiar with its sonic conventions’ (ibid. 136). To draw upon this analysis to examine the bells in ‘Streetcars’ the same signification is implicit with death equally manifest within the narrative. Concurrently, the bells become a noisy signifier for O’Connor’s fear of death which she laments throughout the track. However, they equally undertake a further dual signification with the bells ringing out the permanency of O’Connor’s haunting by her former self and serve as a chilling unwanted reminder of Lovett and all her death represents. The bells can be taken as two voices alongside the voice of DuBois, each of which represent for O’Connor a haunting unwanted reference to her and her nation’s past. They are noises, unwanted yet owned in ‘Streetcars’, as O’Connor seeks to navigate a pathway into a future free from traumatic haunting.

To return again to *Universal Mother* and the use of noise in ‘Germaine’, ‘Am I a Human?’, and ‘Famine’ it is clear that as O’Connor’s career progressed throughout the two phases of music’s digitalisation, she became more versed at using noise’s many virtues in creating and altering meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. As further evident in the use of noise in *Throw Down Your Arms, Theology*, on ‘V.I.P.’ from *How About I Be Me (and You Be You)?*, and even on the demo release

of ‘Milestones’, O’Connor’s confrontation with spectral servitude, or her positive serving to specific internal and external spectres, enlivens her anew, revealing to her noise’s creative virtues. Thereafter, these confrontations facilitate the tension between resistant spectral servitudes to reveal her true grain in this moment with her predominant noisy vocal catch or flaw. In summary, noise’s virtue in creating new sonic sensations is an increasingly significant part of O’Connor’s creative process; via its ability to demand attention, to subvert meaning, to offer intimacy, to shock, and even carry the voices of her and her nations haunting past, noise serve Ireland’s noisy woman to create further noisy temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction.

Conclusion

“She” [woman] is to be kept in silence, her noise abated and repressed, since her tongue is a disruption. Thus noise is not simply sound that is deemed unwanted. Noise is first that which disrupts inducing a change in relations. Noise is feared, or labelled dangerous and unwanted because it is a transitional and transformative force.’

Marie Thompson / ‘Gossips, Sirens, Hi-Fi Wives: Feminising the Threat of Noise’/

Thompson decrees that noise is ‘an attention-seeking nuisance’ (‘Music for Cyborgs’ 209), an accusation uttered repeatedly in reference to O’Connor throughout her career. As with Kafka’s Josefine, O’Connor is often deemed an unwanted troublesome noise, an untrustworthy figure to pity, but not to listen to. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, O’Connor’s characterisation as an unwanted noise reflects in part a desire to silence or marginalise her attacks on structures of power; abating and repressing her noisy tongue as a disruption (Thompson, ‘Gossips, Sirens, Hi-Fi Wives: Feminising the Threat of Noise’ 305). In spite of this, or even as a consequence of it, O’Connor’s creative impact on Irish popular music is to be understood as an essential disruption necessary for the change in relations that proceed her noisy tongue.

O’Connor through the two phases of music’s digitalisation has developed a use of media and environmental noise to create and alter meaning in her recordings. The research group GegenSichKollektiv purports of noise’s close alliance with the ‘anti-self’ (194), an alliance that O’Connor has become increasingly aware of as she draws upon noise’s transitional and transformative force. From the outset of her career, O’Connor has been portrayed as a troublesome yet talented figure. As her career progressed, this representation was solidified and enhanced with her outspoken nature interpreted as noise by media outlets, biographical accounts, and academic

publications. To augment her perceived noisiness, a misinterpretation of her creativity obscured reception of her artistic worth as being primarily expressive passivity. This image of her as a noisy expressive ‘she’ subsequently haunted her career, with O’Connor’s worth as a creative insurgent and her necessary disruptive socio-political retorts mediated with this noisy ‘she’ in mind.

However, in her use of noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, O’Connor has not only found a way to respond to the digital era but also a way to respond to and own her noisy persona. This response is given more credence as it equally facilitates the tension between resistant spectral servitudes to reveal her true grain in this moment with her predominant noisy vocal catch or flaw, thereby given her ownership an adequate noisy inflection. As with Dempsey, O’Connor’s response to the changing modes of reception and production in the digital era sees her use noise’s many virtues in creating and altering meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. These virtues include noise’s ability to signify the recording process, to position her recordings both inside and outside the digital era, to signal socio-political injustices, and crucially to demand attention. In her response, noise is also closely aligned with her ‘anti-self’, as she gestures to her self-inheritance with noise as part of her own hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*. O’Connor in using noise defines herself anew as a noisy woman, a person to be feared, or labelled dangerous and unwanted because she is a transitional and transformative force.

O’Connor’s music is emblematic of noise’s creative, transitional, and transformative virtues. In the next chapter, the same virtues will be examined in relation to artists whose creative focus is not solely on a haunting past, but who seek to bring Irish popular music forward into a noisy future; a *futuromania* that draws influence from a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* whose construct Ireland’s noisy woman was instrumental in establishing and transitioning.

CHAPTER FOUR

Even Better Than the Real Thing: The Future of Noise in Irish Popular Music

*'You're honey child to a swarm of bees.
 Gonna blow right through you like a breeze.
 Give me one last dance.
 We'll slide down the surface of things.
 You're the real thing.
 Yeah the real thing.
 You're the real thing.
 Even better than the real thing.'*
 U2 /'Even Better Than the Real Thing'/

Prelude: Noisy Bogmen

Throughout 2003, some of Ireland's most celebrated popular musicians of the time such as Dempsey, Glen Hansard, and Lisa Hannigan appeared on the popular Irish national radio programme *The Ray D'Arcy Show* to record primarily acoustic cover versions of well-known international pop anthems to raise funds for the Irish National Children's Hospital in Tallaght. The resulting recordings became the popular album *Even Better Than the Real Thing Vol. 1*, which raised over €170,000 for the hospital and spawned three other commercially successful charity albums in its wake. The second album, *Even Better Than the Real Thing Vol. 2* (2004), also raised funds for the National Children's Hospital and again featured Irish popular recording artists covering international pop anthems. The third album, *Even Better Than the Real Thing Vol. 3* (2005), was in support of a UNICEF tsunami relief fund and is a double album featuring Irish artists covering U2 tracks—an obvious progression for the *Even Better* series given the U2 anthem 'Even Better Than the Real Thing'. Finally, the fourth album *Even Better Than the Disco Thing* (2008) raised funds for the National Children's Hospital in Barretstown; an album distinct in the series in that the tracks were not recorded live on the radio or in similar acoustic settings but were studio recordings covering classic disco tracks.

The commercial success of the *Even Better* album series is chiefly reducible to three factors, first the obvious talent of the performers involved, both the Irish cover artists, and the artists being covered. Second, the inclusivity of a charity drive and the understanding that in purchasing an album, or engaging in a live performance, a

consumer positions themselves alongside others, including the artists involved, in contributing to the betterment of society (Louise Davis 1213). And finally, the implicit message that the acoustic covers by mostly Irish recording artists of pop music standards are better than the original, or indeed more real than the real thing. Upon listening to the albums this third point is of course subjective, although performers like Roesy with his cover of Blu Cantrell's 'Breathe', and Dempsey's version of The Darkness's 'I Believe In A Thing Called Love' in their part do particular service to the album's premise. This aside, there are instances upon which the *Even Better* series' premise and challenge to 'realness' is questionable, and in no case is this more evident than with a noisy cover by a little-known Irish group called The Bogmen.

Self-styled throughout their career as 'Ireland's worst band' (Doyle, T.), by the time they appeared on *Even Better Vol. 2*, The Bogmen developed somewhat of a cult following. This following was established with their late 1980's release *Great Rock Classics: Super EP*, a performance on *The Terry Wogan Show* from the same period, and a bootleg VHS *The Bogmen in Paddy Coles Pub Castleblayney*. In fact, much of their fame has been enhanced due to the uploading of their performances on *YouTube*, what Reynolds notes as an 'ever-proliferating labyrinth of collective recollection' (56). Concurrently, by 2004 their notoriety was recognised not as a result of their musical ability, but their lack of it. This was orchestrated by The Bogmen presenting themselves as not too particularly concerned with how to play their instruments (The Bogmen Notes), instead delivering cover versions of tracks like Bruce Springsteen's 'Born in the USA' and Bill Haley's 'Rock Around the Clock' with their own 'tuneless charisma' (ibid.). Jesse Prinz, in 'The Aesthetics of Punk Rock' writes of irreverence being a core aspect of punk's aesthetic (585), a point of analysis that equally fits The Bogmen's 'tuneless charisma' aesthetic (The Bogmen Notes).

The Bogmen's noisy contribution to *Even Better Vol. 2*, is a version of Outcast's 'Hey Ya!'—itself a much-loved anthem of the digital era with *Rolling Stone* regarding it as the fourth best track of the Aughts. For this reason, The Bogmen's 'Hey Ya!' is a striking challenge to the *Even Better* series' alignment of 'realness' with Irish popular music. After all, implicit in the album's message is that by stripping an international popular music staple of its often digitally enhanced sonic characteristics, an Irish performer can create something better than the real. Given the charity nature of the record and the recordings most often being performed live for a listening audience as part of a light-hearted morning radio show, the album's premise is a point

of conjecture. Nonetheless, it still functions affectively as it highlights an audiences' inherent understanding of the alignment of global/popular/digital/artificial versus Irish/popular/acoustic/real. As already discussed in the second chapter, much of these juxtapositions are also relatable to the purported commercial potential of Irish musicality. In terms of The Bogmen's version of 'Hey Ya!', the juxtaposition of global artifice and Irish realness is significantly sharp, being but a noisy remembrance of the original.

The Bogmen's 'Hey Ya!' begins by signalling sound Ireland with the pronounced Irish rural accent of the band's leader Tommy Woods who shouts 'right away we go boys' (00:00:00-06). The band then precedes to deliver a tuneless version that reaches a crescendo with all the members shouting 'Hey, hey, ya, ya, ...' before breaking into laughter with the other members telling Woods, 'stop, stop Tommy ... they'll want us back again ... you're getting too good at it!' (00:01:55-02:00). The Bogmen were by their own admission somewhat of a novelty band, indicating that 'Yep, we're not good but we're good craic' (Pedronimus), and it is somewhat of this near punk infused irreverence that justifies their inclusion as the last track on the album. The track that proceeds The Bogmen on *Even Better Vol. 2* is Declan O'Rourke's cover of Jamelia's 'See it in a Boy's Eyes', a track that is accompanied by eight minutes and two seconds of silence. As a consequence, The Bogmen's emergence after a lengthy silence is a purposefully noisy one, drawing a listener into a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction one more time to deliver a noisy interlude to the album's challenge to a listener's conceptualisation of realness and Irish popular music.

The Bogmen and their version of 'Hey Ya!' is a rather odd footnote within Irish popular music, albeit an exemplifier of noise's virtue as satire. They represent to a listener a significant and relatable popular signifier for Smyth's well-worn adage on Irish popular music's reducibility to tropes of 'Paddy sad' and 'Paddy mad' (*Music in Irish Cultural History* 2-3). In their way, The Bogmen are emblematic of an industry response to the digital era of sound production and reception, with their position at the end of *Even Better Vol. 2* serving as a noisy satirical reminder that realness in Irish popular music often draws upon mythologies of sonic representation counter to 'real' mythologies of sonic perfection. Moreover, their punk-infused irreverence exemplifies a disregard for established mythologies and a desire for a new noisy future. They are

the desired noisy madness, to the unwanted perfect real. Therein lies their virtue; they are realer than the real thing.

Introduction: A Noisy Island's Future

'Noise is that which produces the future; it brings about new relations and connections.'
Marie Thompson /Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism/

The final chapter of this research examines in broader detail Irish popular music's response to the digital era, considering responses that are grounded in noise's many virtues in counter-mythologies of sound production and reception. Central to this undertaking is an understanding that the artists under consideration utilise noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, a theory clearly outlined in this study's introduction, to propel Irish music into a noisy future. This line of consideration thereby challenges noise's alignment with nostalgia, technostalgia, or even cultural belatedness; recontextualising noise as a harbinger for the future.

The chapter begins by interrogating inherent mythologies of sound production in popular music, before examining further Barthes' *punctum*, considering how he developed the theory while mourning his deceased mother and seeking a frenzied construction of the future. Next, the chapter utilises findings from throughout this thesis that relate to noise's creative virtues and couple them with two specific approaches from the field of Sound Studies, namely acoustemology and psycho-sociology. The use of these theories is crucial to recontextualise noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* that evolves as a response to the digital era. In this line of consideration, noise is a decisive sonic component used by Irish performers in their desire to bring Irish popular music into a noisy future. Upon establishing the critical theories, the thesis focuses on specific releases by Irish popular musicians that are emblematic of this frenzied construction of the future. Moreover, these tracks under consideration do not represent an entire industry's response to the digital era, but those that exemplify noisy virtues of counter-mythologies in sound production and reception that not only seek to challenge established tropes of digitally enhanced mythologies of sonic perfection, but equally established tropes of Irish popular music.

The close reading of Irish popular musicians who, in part, use noise to propel them into a noisy future begins with Irish hip-hop groups Republic of Loose, Messiah

J & The Expert, and the alternative rock band Fight Like Apes. In each instance, these groups use the shocking status of noise to challenge established tropes of Irish popular music. Next, the chapter focuses on releases by singer-songwriters Cathy Davey, Mundy (Edmond Enright) and Gemma Hayes that use media and environmental noise to construct recordings which challenge notions of creative spatial comfort and/or ownership. The chapter then reviews music by David Kitt and Fionn Regan, two musicians and recordists who are juxtaposed in terms of their music construct and style, but nonetheless utilise the liberating qualities of noise. Finally, the chapter investigates Mic Christopher's posthumously released debut album *Skylarkin'* (2002), an album that serves as a hauntological gesture of fidelity to the deceased Christopher, but also a means to bring him into a newly formed future. In *Skylarkin'*, noise's fluidity as a signifier functions affectively as it denotes Christopher's posthumous release as 'real', thereby, positions the album as an inside and outside response to digital era sound production and reception.

Much of this chapter's analysis reflects upon noise's virtue in temporally challenging notions of inside/outside, responding when necessary to Stephen Kennedy's *Future Sounds: The Temporality of Noise*: 'There is no direct acknowledgement of noise, sound or listening as being able to facilitate a clearing that does not require recourse to notions of the inside or outside' (9). In all, the chapter serves as a final reflection on Irish popular music's response to the digital era, and the production of newly formed noisy mythologies of sound production to serve an eager receptive listener of the future. Kennedy argues that 'Noise is an uncompressed array of potential and opportunity—a positive mode of Being' (12), while Thompson notes 'Noise is that which produces the future; it brings about new relations and connections' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 176). Therefore, in an era in which the creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction is most often construed as being digitally enhanced by weapons of mass deception, some Irish artists use noise as a positive mode of Being for a future listener encompassing a digitally created hauntological structure of feeling and a desire for real.

Weapons of Mass Deception and Record Production

*'As soon as someone dies, frenzied construction of the future (shifting furniture, etc.):
futuromania.'*

Roland Barthes /Mourning Diaries/

How Not to Do it

Williams in his examination of the production of sound and music considers the use of ‘weapons of mass deception’:

Recording musicians inherit a complex web of associated mythologies, whether in their bedrooms hunkered over a software programme with graphic representation of a piece of recording equipment they have encountered only as a mythological icon, or comfortably ensconced in a world-famous facility, absorbing the atmosphere of the location where canonical recordings were created. (157)

He further writes that ‘Mythologies shape the way musicians, producers, and engineers approach their work and, just as importantly, they have established the criteria by which success and failure are measured’ (ibid. 158). During the period under examination in this thesis, artists most often create in collaboration with others, notably recordists, and significantly the spectral traces of various complex webs of associated mythologies. Williams writes that ‘If [Walter] Benjamin’s “aura” [‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’] disappeared with mass manufacturing, the obscuring of recording practice served to impart a different, mystical aura to these commodities—the “magic of the recorded performance”’ (159). While Mazierska et al. purport that ‘Another factor in “de-aurization” of music can be linked to the popular musicians losing their “romantic glow” through exposing the apparatus of music production’ (18). However, with an inherent hauntological structure of feeling driving a listener’s desired ‘aura’, artists seek counter-mythologies to established digital ones in terms of sound production: ‘Alternative mythologies emerge wherein method is constructed as an antidote to previously established, poisonous practice, where “how to do it”, is determined by “how not to do it”’ (William 163). Bennett in her assessment also signals this dichotomy as ““perfection–imperfection” binary narratives in sound production’ (82). Thereupon, it is within the imperfect or ‘how not to do it’ narrative a number of Irish recording artists position themselves as they seek out alternative mythologies of sound production as a form of ‘strategic demystification’ (Sterne, *The Audible Past* 210).

In his analysis of ‘how not to do it’ counter mythologies of sound reproduction, Williams is dismissive of the practices as ‘received nostalgia’ (161), as he draws reference from Taylor’s previously discussed ‘technostalgia’. Williams argues, ‘By the end of the century, many musicians began to feel constricted by the practices that

had emerged and codified around multitrack recording processes, and looked to the past for inspiration' (168). In Williams' analysis, this 'constriction' is a product of received nostalgia, yet, as uncovered in this thesis, this line of reflection fails to recognise a hauntological structure of feeling by both the creative artist and/or receptive listener. To reiterate Sterne, 'If the past is, indeed, audible, if sounds can haunt us, we are left to find their durability and their meaning in their exteriority' (*The Audible Past* 333); he further suggests that 'Recording is a form of exteriority: it does not preserve a pre-existing sonic event as it happens so much as it creates and organises sonic events for the possibility of preservation and repetition' (ibid. 332). To return again to Irish popular music, the practice of 'how not to do it' counter mythologies of sound production can be considered a knowing desire to utilise the potential exteriority of the temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Herein lies the significance of the affective use of noise's many virtues by an artist, with the practice of 'how not to do it' counter mythologies facilitating the use of noise as a positive mode of Being (Heidegger, *Being and Time*). Kennedy considers that 'noise can be understood as an inclusive and comprehensive means of grasping the complex nature of the contemporary time period' (9). Thereby, noise is not a product of received nostalgia, it is that which produces the future, as it challenges digitally produced recordings within the contemporary time period by revealing the exteriority of the recording process, in turn challenging temporal notions of inside/outside of contemporary listenership.

A Futuromania of Irish Popular Music

Barthes' *Camera Lucida* serves as not just an examination of the heterogeneous nature of the photographic image but also a reflection on his mourning for his deceased mother. Indeed, much of Barthes' theoretical analysis of photography was revealed to him by reflecting on a photograph of his mother as a young child. The photograph, which Barthes titled the Winter Garden Photograph, was crucial in his mourning process, allowing him to know his mother again through it: 'the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, *the impossible science of the unique being*' (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 71). In essence, something within this image pricked, bruised, was poignant or served as a *punctum* for Barthes (ibid. 27), allowing his reflective consciousness to reveal his mother as he knew her. As Barthes notes, 'the *punctum* should be revealed only after the fact, when the photograph is no

longer in front of me and I think back on it ... Ultimately—or at the limit—in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes’ (ibid. 53). For Barthes then a *punctum* is best realised on not just attentive viewing—or indeed attentive listening as counter to passive hearing or *i ubiquitous listening* as it is outlined in the Introduction—but also on future reflective contemplation. Thus, it reveals to Barthes the impossible science of the unique being that was his mother only after haunted, even tortured attentiveness and reflection.

The death of his mother was devastating for Barthes, prompting him to keep a mourning diary of short reflections written on ‘slips of paper’ from the time of his mother’s death on the 25 October 1976 to near the time of his own death as a result of a car accident in February 1980 (Léger ix). According to Michael Wood, in ‘Mourning Diary’, Barthes seeks to express in words his debilitating mourning process: ‘He is thinking and feeling, watching himself do it, and trying to register in words the immediate movements of his consciousness’ (xii). In a significant entry, dated the 29 December 1978, Barthes recalls how a *punctum* was revealed to him in the Winter Garden Photograph:

Having received yesterday the photo I’ve had reproduced of *maman* as a little girl in the Winter Garden of Chennevières, I try to keep it in front of me, on my work table. But it’s too much—intolerable—too painful. This image enters into conflict with all the ignoble little combats of my life. The image is really a measure, a judge (I understand now how a photo can be sanctified, how it can guide—it’s not the identity that is recalled; rather, within that identity, a rare expression, a ‘virtue’). (*Mourning Diary* 220)

If in turn we are to understand a *punctum* to be a virtue revealed to Barthes through intolerable reflection, it is evident that it encompasses what is outlined in the introduction of this thesis as a spectral servitude that results in a positive conjuration that enlivens a new. Moreover, it reveals within the immediate movements of Barthes’ consciousness not solely his mourning, but in time a haunted virtue which forms in him the impossible science of the unique being that was his mother and his own path into a future without her. In an entry dated 27 October 1976, two days after his mother’s death, Barthes eloquently writes ‘As soon as someone dies, frenzied construction of the future (shifting furniture, etc.): futuromania’ (ibid. 6). In death, a

frenzied construction of a future begins, albeit a futuromania that draws virtue from the spectral traces that are dutifully mourned.

To return to this work's reflection on Irish popular music's use of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, a term outlined in greater detail in this research's introduction, it is certain that upon the emergence of the digital era, a frenzied construction of the future began. A futuromania that was constructed upon an attentive and reflective consciousness that finds virtue in a metalanguage of spectral influences. In essence, to look to construct a future soundscape, the Irish popular music artists discussed in this chapter seek to respond to digital era practices of sound production and reception by utilising noise's many virtues to propel Irish popular music into a noisy future.

Acoustemology and Psycho-Sociological Approaches to Noise's Virtues

To examine further noise's ability to produce the future, to serve a futuromania of noise, the chapter now considers two critical theories from the field of Sound Studies, namely acoustemology and psycho-sociology. Acoustemology 'means an exploration of sonic sensibilities, specifically of ways in which sound is central in making sense, to knowing, to experiential truth' (Feld, *Sense of Place* 97). Devised as a concept by Stephen Feld, acoustemology is in part 'a union of acoustics and epistemology, to investigate the primacy of sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world' ('Sound Worlds' 184). Furthermore, acoustemology can be utilised to 'investigate sounding and listening as a knowing-in-action: a knowing-with and knowing-through the audible' (Feld, 'Acoustemology' 12). To utilise an acoustemology approach in examining the virtues of noise and their use as a response to the digital era by Irish popular recording artists, it is initially apparent the significance in the knowing and exploring of sonic sensibilities afforded in use of noise. The creative artists examined in this thesis have in their desire to construct marketable recordings sought to make sense of the digital era by utilising their own listening to hauntological influences as a knowing-in-action; hence, knowing-with and knowing-through uncovered remembered *punctums* of audible. To return again to Sterne, he notes that 'The personality traits of the characters enter into the very sound of the apparatus' (*The Audible Past* 152), as he suggests: 'The sound of the medium in effect indexed its social and material existence—the machine could stand in metonymically for the medium. Wishing away the noise of the machine then suggests wishing away the noise

of society' (ibid. 259). Hence, to use an acoustemology approach it can be deduced that as creative artists undertake a knowing-in-action they are, of course, knowing also the noise of the machine, and indeed the noise of the uncovered society; what can equally be regarded as that society's developed sonic mythologies. Consequently, as they seek to construct temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction by knowing-with and knowing-through remembered *punctums* they reuse and recontextualise the uncovered society. Thereupon, in their frenzied construction of future temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, their futuromania desire to progress, they invaluablely bring with them noise and its many virtues.

Jean-François Augoyard in *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*, writes 'From the psycho-sociological point of view, the environment can be considered a reservoir of sound possibilities, an instrumentarium used to give substance and shape to human relationship and the everyday' (8). Equally, Kennedy argues that noise is 'always- never- being- able- to pin it down' (9), while to repeat Nunes, noise is that which 'cannot be handled by the binary machine, reduced to a 0 or a 1' (3). If the environment then can be considered a reservoir of sound possibilities, noise is surely a sonic component in the instrumentarium with the greatest fluidity when used to give substance and shape to human relationship and the everyday. As already established and foregrounded by Thompson in her repositioning of noise as being beyond unwanted, noise's most significant virtue is its ability to act as a floating signifier. This virtue, of course, equates to further virtues in the construction of future temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. As outlined in the introduction, Voegelin declares that her theory of sonic possible worlds 'urges us to think of culture as invisible agency, as the simultaneous and unseen mobility of sound: actions and engagement rather than artifacts, outcomes, and visible relationships' (46). Hence, noise's virtue as a floating signifier is not only a significant sonic component within an instrumentarium of sound possibilities; it is equally an invisible agency both inside and outside of contemporary society.

To recapitulate Strachan, he considers that cultural practitioners accumulate a store of knowledge in order to be fluent in the skills, conventions and histories relating to the cultural practices in which they are engaged. This knowledge is subsequently put into action in the creative practice. Strachan further argues that, 'the results of experimentation or sonic innovations in an eventual musical work make little sense if they bear no relationship to tradition' (118). Consequently, to view noise's virtue as a

floating signifier along the dual lines of sonic and cultural signification, its importance to cultural practitioners is assured. Noise in being both sound and culture is in use within a store of knowledge of conventions, histories, traditions, and mythologies before being put into action in the creative process. In being put into action in a futuromania, noise then can fulfil its various creative virtues.

Previous chapters revealed that the use of noise by Dempsey and O'Connor serves various purposes in the construction of respective temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. These vary from the use of noise as a way to sound Ireland; as a means of temporally positioning work outside of digital era soundscape and inside a hauntological inhabited pre-digital one; as a sonic component to draw attentive listening therein facilitating the delivery of a socio-political messaging; a challenge to perceptions of established identity constructs in particular to inherited narratives; a means to indicate the processing of sound reproduction hence providing sourcefulness to digital constructs sourcelessness, and ultimately personalising the receptive process by drawing a listener into a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. The virtues of noise shown thus far clearly underscore Thompson's assertion that 'Noise is not the antithesis, but a key component, of music' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 150). As this chapter continues an analysis of Irish popular music's use of noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, it will now look to outline further virtues which serve a futuromania of noise that challenges the digital era.

Noise's Virtue to Challenge Sound Ireland

*'Lovely noise (lovely noise)
Lovely noise, that makes you love me ...'
Fight Like Apes / 'Tie Me Up With Jackets'/*

A Republic of Noise

According to Jenny Huston, Republic of Loose were 'funky, soulful, dirty—a mix of pop, rock, r'n'b, even hip-hop ... a sound that is so different to anything else in Ireland' (152). Throughout their career, which ran from 2001 to 2014, it was their desire to stand-out and be different that defined them. In fact, their name Republic of Loose even signals this desire to be different: 'The name was always fitting for the band as a way of acknowledging their difference from other Dublin bands of the time' (ibid. 154). The band's frontperson Mik Pyro (Michael Tierney), recounts that Republic of

Loose sought ‘to define ourselves as not that’ (ibid.), a reference to an established Dublin popular music scene and sound that was centralised around Whelan’s Bar: ‘the idea of the band was always to use different kinds of references and the Whelan’s bands were all kind of using more traditional references’ (ibid.). Concurrently, the band, and in particular Pyro, garnered a reputation for being difficult to work with, drawing upon their difference to create an often outsider projection. On their musical style, Pyro reflects:

I was scared to use any of that information in the music. I was always into blues and into soul and hip-hop but trying to apply that to the music we were doing rather than just listening to it. I thought, ‘You can’t do that, that’s their music, that’s over there’. It was when I broke through that fear barrier of trying to apply the sound of the music that I actually looked into rock musicianship that we’d inherited,—that’s when it started getting kind of interesting musically. (ibid. 153)

Along with use of ‘their’ music, Republic of Loose also draws from a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, using both media and environmental noise throughout their albums; an example being the deep inhaling signifying the smoking of a drug on the misogynistic ‘Girl I’m Going to Fuck You Up’ from their 2004 album *This is the Tomb of the Juice* (00:00:00-16). Yet in no track is their use of noise, and indeed their different and difficult nature, more explicit than on ‘Fuck Everybody’ from the same album, a track that serves as a noisy challenge to established tropes of Irish music.

‘Fuck Everybody’ is less a musical work and more an exercise in the use of environmental noise within the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction that is the album. The track begins with coughing and deep slow inhaling before a clearly intoxicated Pyro champions his own attainments with lines such as ‘I am so fucking pure, out there in the stratosphere, I’m non-stop’ (00:00:00-27). The inebriated self-praise is interrupted however by a female voice—an uncredited individual given there were no female members in the group—who challenges Pyro and his bandmates: ‘Republic of Loose? ... You’re a bunch of pathetic losers, you want to be American ... you’re from Terenure [residential suburb of Dublin] and you’re from Dublin so why don’t you act like [that], sing!’ (00:00:28-55). As the drunken exchange continues, Pyro’s anger grows as he challenges the woman by asking should he sing in an ‘Irish way’ to suit expectations: ‘it’s the same old bullshit people from dead

empires say ... why don't you stay true to your own culture and shit' (00:01:00-12). This is followed by Pyro questioning why he is unable to use 'their' music, which the woman notes as 'black' music, until he finishes by cursing everybody by shouting the aforementioned title of the track (00:02:00-10). To examine the two minutes and ten seconds of the inebriated exchange, and the decision to include it as track eleven on the album, the desire to be viewed as different is as explicit as the rhetoric while equally stressing Pyro's difficult nature; an often desired trope for male performers (McLaughlin and McLoone, *Rock and Popular Music in Ireland* 246). The entirety of the track can be construed as a noisy assertion of difference, with environmental noise utilised as a way of drawing a listener into the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction facilitating the delivery of the desired message. In addition, noise functions in aligning itself with difference, with the 'shocking status of noise' (Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound* 140). Noise is then used affectively alongside Pyro's drunken rhetoric to position the band as outsiders from the established Irish music scene, while also interrogating established tropes of Irish popular music, functioning as a way to align sound Ireland with future sonic signifiers. Hence, noise's virtue in this instance lies in its ability to accentuate difference, to sound a new Ireland, facilitating a futuromania of noise possibilities for Irish popular music.

Lovely Noise Out of Nothing

Similar to Republic of Loose, Messiah J & The Expert and Fight Like Apes are two Irish bands that emerged during the second phase of music's digitalisation, who in their respective ways seek to define themselves as different to industry understandings of Irish music or sound Ireland. Equally, both bands use noise's creative virtues to accentuate their difference. Messiah J & The Expert are a hip-hop duo from Dublin who have released a series of critically acclaimed albums since their inception in 2002, and who in The Expert (Cian Calvin) have a recordist who has a background in sound engineering (Huston 136). The use of media noise within their recording process is a common feature, such as the high-pitched piercing sound evident throughout much of 'Place Your Bets' (00:00:00-04:02), from the album *Now This I Have to Hear* (2006) and their consistent use of sampling in keeping with an aesthetic feature common in Irish 'hip hop's encoded expressions of KoS [knowledge of self]' (Rollefson 234). Strachan considers that the 'reuse and recontextualisation of the remnants of past sonic culture through digital technologies thereby simultaneously highlight their status as

materials of memory and the materiality of the remembrance process in a virtually saturated world' (148). This affirms the creative potential, or indeed virtues, of media noise and sampling in the digital era in constructing temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction that are themselves a response to the same digital culture.

To elaborate on Messiah J & The Expert's use of media noise as a material of memory and of remembrance, it can be deduced that they employ newly emerging digital cultures of sound production, that themselves respond to 'how to do it' mythologies. The use of media noise and 'how not to do it' mythologies are so ingrained within Messiah J & The Expert's repertoire that they make lyrical reference to it in one of their most celebrated releases 'Something Outa Nothing', a track that outlines their creative process:

Give me my space, a piece of paper and some teabags;
That's when you make something outa nothing;
When my DJ does some routine out of static and feedback;
That's when you make something outa nothing. (00:03:10-22)

With their process of making something out of nothing, Messiah J & The Expert foreground the importance of media noise, static and feedback, in their creative process, as they reuse and recontextualise digitally accessible materials of memory and of remembrance to challenge established mythologies of sound production. Hence, Messiah J & The Expert's use of media noise is a further indicator of noise's virtue to sound difference, a way to challenge established tropes of Irish popular music and notions of sound Ireland, thereby facilitating a frenzied construction, or futuromania, of a newly formed noisy future for Irish popular music.

For Fight Like Apes, another Dublin band that Huston refers to as 'hard-working, intelligent, cheeky, mischievous, lovely brats' (86), media and environmental noise are paramount in their creative process as is evident throughout their album *Fight Like Apes and the Mystery of the Golden Medallion* (2008). Fight Like Apes creative output is a result of their front person MayKay (Mary-Kate Geraghty) and bandmate Pockets (Jamie Fox), who both collaborated together in previous bands before launching Fight Like Apes. According to both MayKay and Pockets, their time in previous bands was limited due to creative differences: 'We would try to add some distortion or some samples and stuff but that was regarded as too left field' (ibid. 88). Indeed, a defining sonic component for Fight Like Apes is the

‘left field’ use of noisy distortion and samples, or their reuse and recontextualising of digitally accessible materials of memory. *Fight Like Apes and the Mystery of the Golden Medallion* is one album in particular that features noise throughout, including on ‘Digifucker’ where noisy distortion is manipulated into the sound of a drill at the end of the track (00:03:16-23); the use of audio static throughout ‘Lend me your Face’ (00:00:00-01:49); and the reuse and recontextualisation of George Putnam’s anti-pornography speech from *Perversion for Profit* (1965) on ‘Snore Bore Whore’(00:02:35-54). To return again to Strachan, he notes that ‘the overabundance of actual historical media and content in the internet’s endless digital archive elicits new relationships with the past’ (147). As clearly evident in *Fight Like Apes*’ reuse and recontextualising of Putnam’s speech, which is readable as noise to a liberal listenership, the band’s relationship with the past is centrally concerned with their creation of a futuromania of new creative possibilities as they seek to mine what Reynolds considers a ‘buried utopianism’ (81). Thereby, for *Fight Like Apes*, media noise and samples again serve as virtues in facilitating these new and different relationships with the past while driving for a new noisy future.

In an interesting noisy inclusion to *Fight Like Apes and the Mystery of the Golden Medallion*, track number eight ‘Megameanie’ starts with a noisy drumstick count in. This is followed by MayKay shouting ‘Megameanie’ rapidly for four seconds accompanied by drums, before environmental noise is heard as someone grasps drumsticks quickly together. In all, ‘Megameanie’ is just eight seconds. Nonetheless, the track exemplifies a playful use of noise that correlates with *Fight Like Apes* being construed as ‘lovely brats’, thereby also signalling noise’s virtue in playful irreverence. Finally, a further use of noise can be found at the end of ‘Tie Me Up With Jackets’, where distortion is drawn out for twenty seconds at the end of the track (00:02:10-30). In a fitting nod to their music, and indeed their use of noise, the chorus of the track goes:

Lovely noise (lovely noise),
 Lovely noise that makes you love me.
 Lovely noise (lovely noise),
 Lovely noise that makes you love me.
 Lovely noise (lovely noise),
 Lovely noise that makes you love me. (00:00:53-01:06)

Tony Clayton-Lea remarks that Fight Like Apes are a divisive band in terms of public and critical reception and that they are either ‘a) The most exciting rock act in recent memory, or b) the worst example of gimmickry to have paraded on stage in years’ (78). Either way, much like noise they demand attention whether in frenzied appreciation or flippant aversion. Adam Harper’s assessment of ‘internet music’ recounts that it can be ‘considered to be music made by and for digitally fried brains, and it in turn fries the brains of its listeners’ (87). Thereafter suggesting, that the purported music’s ‘maximalist, kitsch or uncanny ... techniques could just as well be described as engaging constructively with changing forms of human expression’ (96). For this reason, Fight Like Apes with their lovely noise, their temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, signal new directions in Irish popular music with an album that may fry the brain of the listener but still crucially engages constructively with changing forms of human expression. Consequently, they stimulate reflection on understood notions of sound Ireland. In addition, Fight Like Apes, like Republic of Loose, and Messiah J & The Expert, still utilise a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* in their quest for this frenzied construction of a future. In each group what is evident is noise’s virtue to highlight difference, which in turn propels the groups outside of contemporary digital culture and inside an emerging futuromania.

Noise as an Ill-bred *Punctum* and Spatial Ownership

*I’ll never rule you out,
I’ll never rule you out,
I’ll never rule you out ...’
Cathey Davey /‘Mr Kill’/*

Old Man Noise

To assess the career of Irish singer-songwriter Cathy Davey, it can be suggested that few artists exemplify the frenzied construction of a future industry more, with much of her development as an artist coming from her renegotiation of ‘how to do it’ and ‘how not to do it’ mythologies of sound production. Davey’s early career was, in terms of industry narrative, an ideal one as she was signed to a major deal with EMI Ireland and afforded an opportunity to work with successful recordists like former Coldplay recordist Ken Nelson, and Ben Hillier, who had previously worked with Blur, Elbow and Depeche Mode. Notwithstanding this, for Davey the process of recording with

established recordists and being ensconced in world-famous recording facilities left her feeling anxious, reflecting that ‘the power of what you are making is too much—so much that I couldn’t live up to it’ (Huston 56). In addition to her creative concern, Davey’s experience required her to work within the distinctively male domain of the recording studio (Wolfe, ‘A Studio of One’s Own: Music Production, Technology and Gender’). In assessing this male domain, Bennett purports that the male dominance of ‘how to do it’ mythologies is so entrenched that ‘at the turn of the 2010s, women comprised less than 5 per cent of commercial music recordists’ (7). Unsurprisingly, Davey notes that to voice her creative input during the recording of her debut album *Something Ilk* (2004) she was invariably quietened with misogynistic quips such as ‘You’re being a little unreasonable. That scarf looks fabulous on you!’ (Huston 56). For Davey then the experience heightened her creative anxiety while affirming to her the inherent misogyny of the music industry:

I really wasn’t anything to talk about at that stage. The only thing that was happening was that I had a whole load of good demos that were then rerecorded uncomfortably and I had a big machine behind me and was blonde and I had tits. So they could present me in such a way. (ibid. 57)

For Davey then, the ‘how to do it’ mythology of sound production was an uncomfortable exercise in the creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, affirming established misogynistic mythologies of sound production and female creativity. Along this line of perusal, Bennett considers that in her effort not to produce a record using the industry standard tools or workplaces, Davey and similar minded musicians are situated as ‘outliers’ (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 62); thereby labelling Davey’s liberation from uncomfortable ‘how to do it’ mythologies of sound production.

Despite the discomfort experienced by Davey in the making of *Something Ilk*, the album was well received critically and commercially. Although Davey is open in her unhappiness with the album, admitting to despising playing the tracks from *Something Ilk* live (Meagher). One track in particular illustrates much of the creative worth of Davey and the discomfort of the recording process and that is ‘Old Man Rain’, a pop-rock number which serves as an early indication of Davey’s playful ‘easy humour’ (Huston 52). Notably, ‘Old Man Rain’ is punctuated with environmental noise that foregrounds an audibly evident uncomfortable spatial awareness. The

uncomfortable noise occurs towards the end of the track with Davey humming into a microphone, only to be interrupted by environmental noise in the form of studio movement which brings her vocals to a conclusion (00:02:12-18). On reflection, the noise interrupts Davey's creativity as it concludes the recording outside of her control. This can be construed as a commandeering of Davey's space of creativity, with noise in this instance not in use by Davey as a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctum*. Similarly, the track 'Hammerhead' finishes unexpectedly with a missed guitar chord giving way to media noise (00:04:22-30), while on 'Save Button' the music is also interrupted with environmental noise, further silencing creative output in favour of spatial discomfort (00:03:40-45). In essence, noise on *Something Ilk* signifies a silencing of Davey, an appropriation of her noise or *punctums*, with primacy given to the recording space and 'how to do it' mythologies of sound production.

Given the discomfort Davey experienced in recording *Something Ilk* she subsequently desired a frenzied construction of the future in 'how not to do it' mythologies of sound production. Davey as an outlier, recorded her next two albums at a home studio and produced both herself, reflecting on the experience:

I find it very difficult to record music in front of other people ... when you're bringing songs to the table for the first time, I'm nervous about being judged. I could record at home with Pro Tools and I found that liberating. (Meagher)

The liberation can be construed as Davey acquiring her own creative voice with a spatial ownership afforded by new modes of digital sound production. However, instilled within her newly affirmed approach to sound production is the use of media and environmental noise by Davey to voice her new spatial comfort. This is evident on a number of instances throughout both albums Davey produced, *Tales of Silversleeve* (2007), and *The Nameless* (2010), but on no track is its intent as forthright as on 'Mr Kill' from *Tales of Silversleeve*. As illustrated thus far, media and environmental noise are most often positioned at the beginning or end of a track, serving different purposes depending on the intent of the artist. Yet in 'Mr Kill', Davey decides to use noise towards the middle, thereby indicating her confidence in her production space and her spatial comfortableness. The noise heard in 'Mr Kill' echoes those evident on 'Old Man Rain', 'Hammerhead', and 'Save Button', as Davey's singing is interrupted by noise (media noise), which requires her to momentarily stop and say 'K' [ok] (environmental noise), before self-assuredly continuing (00:02:52-

56). This illustrates a comfortableness in her working space and appeases her uncomfortable silencing by a predominantly male space of ‘how to do it’ mythology of sound production. Fittingly, before her interruption on ‘Mr Kill’ Davey sings the line ‘I’ll never rule you out’ four times (00:02:36-52), which poetically signals noise’s continued use in her creative process; a point further illustrated in noise’s presence on twelve of the twenty-three tracks from both of her self-produced albums. To return again to Barthes’ *punctum*, he notes that ‘the *punctum* shows no preference for morality or good taste: the *punctum* can be ill-bred’ (*Camera Lucida* 43). In the case of Davey, after the appropriation of her noise or *punctum* on ‘Old Man Rain’, Davey found in noise an ill-bred *punctum*, a signifier of her uncomfortable spatial creative silencing. Yet, as Kennedy notes ‘Noise is a fluid set of always forming, re-forming in-forming practices and events that are complex, fuzzy, connected and multitemporal, moving seamlessly between and among subjects and objects’ (3). Thus, noise’s fluidity and its floating signification allows Davey to take ownership of her ill-bred *punctum* in her creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, affording her a sonic signifier of her spatial comfort. This indicates noise’s virtue to affirm spatial ownership further enabling the construct of a futuromania outside of contemporary listenership and inside a fluid and floating temporal expanse.

Noisy Singer-Songwriters

Further examples of noise’s virtue to affirm spatial comfort can be heard throughout Irish popular music, with singer-songwriters like Paddy Casey, Damien Rice, Declan O’Rourke, Spook of the Thirteenth Lock, and Adrian Crowley. Yet, in terms of echoing much of Davey’s desire for spatial ownership few are as forthright as singer-songwriters Mundy and Gemma Hayes. As with Davey, Mundy’s early career started by signing for a major record label in Epic Records, resulting in commercial success with his debut album *Jelly Legs* (1996); much of the success coming from the hit ‘To You I Bestow’ which featured on the soundtrack of Baz Luhrmann’s film adaptation *Romeo + Juliet*. The longevity of Mundy’s creative relationship with Epic was short-lived, producing just a single album as respective parties had conflicting visions for Mundy’s music. As a response to the end of his working relationship with Epic, Mundy’s second album *24 Star Hotel* (2002) was released on his own label Camcor Records, with the production by Tommy D. (Tom Asher Danvers) and Andrew Philpott supervised by Mundy. Like Davey, Mundy uses environmental noise in his

second album to affirm his spatial ownership, as evident on the first track ‘Rainbow’ when an audible or even augmented sniff can be heard (00:00:00-02). Interestingly, this noise is not dissimilar to Jeff Buckley’s noisy breath at the beginning of his cover of ‘Hallelujah’ (00:00:00-02), given that both the breath and sniff demands attention and invites intimacy before the delivery of the musical component of the track. In addition to this use, the noise is the first sound heard on Mundy’s own label which in turn affirms his spatial ownership. Consequently, *24 Star Hotel* further signalled Mundy as an emerging talent, with the singer-songwriter using the increased royalties for the album to produce two further releases on Camcor Records, the platinum-selling *Raining Down Arrows* (2004) and *Live & Confusion* (2006). The noise on ‘Rainbow’ thereby signals the beginning of Camcor Records, and with it the beginning of Mundy’s future as a successful self-driven creative singer-songwriter.

Hayes’ debut album *Night on my Side* (2004) was released by the then independent label Source Records and was produced by Hayes alongside Dave Fridmann and Dave Odlum. As with Davey and Mundy, the album uses noise to signal Hayes’ spatial ownership as it positions her as the primary actor within the space of production. This can be heard in the opening track ‘Day One’ which begins with loud media noise in the form of audio static, before environmental noise is used with studio movement as someone is heard walking across a wooden floor. The person is then heard sitting on a cushioned squeaky chair (00:00:00-05). Following this, the sound of someone turning on an electronic device is heard before a faint male voice says ‘We are rolling’ which warrants Hayes to begin playing (00:00:05-10). In its entirety, the ten seconds of noise can be construed as centring Hayes as the primary actor within the space of recording, gesturing to a listener her spatial ownership.

Moreover, the album also features one of the most complex, and noisy releases created by an Irish popular musician. ‘I Wanna Stay’, is a track heavy with media noise in audio static, reoccurring noise not dissimilar to an electric guitar’s out-of-tune static, two seconds of silence, and environmental noise in the form of a child laughing and playing (00:00:00-06:58). Unsurprisingly, the rest of the album is also a distinctly noisy affair, with forms of media and environmental noise evident throughout. In a reversal of Davey and Mundy’s career trajectory, Hayes’ second album *The Roads Don’t Love You* (2005) was released with significantly less noise than her first, due in part certainly to her recording the album in Los Angeles with US recordist Joey Waronker; indicating a movement towards ‘how to do it’ mythological spaces in the

creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Regardless of this, as with Mundy noise still signals her future, indicating to a listener the debut of a singer-songwriter who would go on to obtain critical and commercial success. Therefore, in the aforementioned tracks by Davey, Mundy and Hayes, there are examples of singer-songwriters who seek to indicate their spatial comfortableness and ownership by use of noise; thus, with noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, or ill-bred *punctums*, these musicians signal their comfort in owning their future.

David Kitt, Fionn Regan and the Liberation of Noise

*'So step outside in the morning light,
And feel the breeze,
And hold her tight.
So step outside in the morning light,
And feel the breeze,
And hold her tight,
So step outside in the morning light.'*

David Kitt / 'Step Outside In The Morning Light' /

Noisy Environment

As Irish popular music proceeds to a noisy future, there is another noisy virtue in use to propel it forward, that is noise's virtue as a way to sound sonic liberation. To look to define this virtue the abovementioned juxtaposition of 'how to do it' versus 'how not to do it' mythologies of sound production invariably play a part, as do Strachan's theory on the establishment of new forms of authenticity (2-16). This consideration of sound production's liberating virtues entails examining both digital and antiquated analogue modes of production by David Kitt and Fionn Regan; two Irish popular musicians with varying approaches to sound production, but who both use noise's liberating qualities to sustain a desired future.

Dubliner Kitt has enjoyed a sustained career as a musician and recordist since the release of his debut EP *Small Moments* (2000) Reflecting on his early practice of music making, Kitt says that it was for him an exercise in passion rather than a means to a successful career: 'Music was always something that I did all the time. It was just a habit, like an addiction, something that you just have to do to survive' (Swan 76). Furthermore, he notes that 'It wasn't until I recorded my first EP *Small Moments* (I had recorded about seven before I actually released one!), that I began to think that

this is really good stuff and that maybe I could do it full time' (ibid. 76). The image Kitt relays of his formative years of music making is one that encompasses much of what is understood as 'how not to do it' mythologies of sound reproduction, positioning Kitt in a newly afforded role as technological advanced practitioner in the reuse and recontextualising of digitally accessible materials of memory and of remembrance. With the practice, Kitt encases himself in his room making music on what was then newly emerging software or plug-ins such as Pro Tools, ProLogic and Celemony' Melodyne on his home computer or laptop digital audio workstation (DAW) (Marshall 183). Geoff Harkness writes, 'the success of Pro Tools is attributable to musicians and audio enthusiasts of all stripes, but the software has gained particular currency for those working out of home studios' (88). Bennett also recounts, 'By the 1990s, the ubiquity of cheaper sound recording equipment resulted in many home studio recordings competing with those of the professional industry for sales, chart places and industry accolades, including Grammy awards' (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 56). A point she clarifies by stating, 'until the turn of the millennium, DAW-recorded hit records were still in the minority when compared to those recorded to analogue or digital tape' (ibid. 67). It can thereby be established that during his formative years developing a recordist skillset outside of established mythologies of sound production, these mythologies reverted, with DAW-recordings emerging as the dominant means of sound production. Thereby, changing 'how not to do' into a 'how to do it' practice of sound production. As Strachan writes, the most commercially successful end of the current popular music market is 'now dominated by a relatively small number of hybrid songwriting/production teams who have utilised the flexibility and interoperability of the DAW within their creative process' (13). Kitt's desire for DAW mastery saw him undertake postgraduate studies at Trinity College Dublin in music technology: 'I studied music technology and that helped me get into what I'm doing now' (Swan 77). Kitt's dedication has been duly rewarded with him enjoying a fanbase and career success due in some part to his technical skillset, as Swam argues 'Kitt's recordings have all been applauded for their technical accomplishments while still retaining the intimate feeling of his music' (ibid. 75). For this reason, Kitt's position is counter to many of the Irish popular musicians discussed thus far, with an exception being Davey, in that his response to the digital era of sound production and reception encompasses a mastery of digital technologies in his desire to construct his own futuromania.

Regardless of the digital component to Kitt's mastery of music production with a DAW, his creation of music is still often a noisy affair. His mastery can even be construed as a mastery of noise, in as much as noise can be mastered. Swan writes that Kitt's 'debut *Small Moments* had been recorded in his bedroom, but the *Big Romance* [first album released in 2001] benefits from being recorded in a "proper studio", thereby allowing David to better illustrate the electronic side of his music' (75). Notwithstanding Swan's reading of a 'proper studio'—yet also recognising its affirmation of 'how not to do it' versus 'how to do it' mythologies—the spatial repositioning in Kitt's creative production did little in the way of negating his use of noise, with an exception to be examined in due course. Kitt's *Small Moments* features the use of both media and environmental noise that is in keeping with his desire to master the creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction via his DAW. In no instance is this more ostensible than in the track 'Step Outside In The Morning Light', which features a unique use of noise unheard of in Irish popular music, and a use of noise relatable to the definition of environmental noise as opposed to studio noise. The track, as the title suggests, is reflective of Kitt's desire to step away from his creative space and venture into the summer sunshine with his partner:

To the sky,
 And the sky,
 Clears my head.
 So step outside in the morning light,
 And feel the breeze,
 And hold her tight,
 So step outside in the morning light,
 And feel the breeze,
 And hold her tight. (00:02:40-03:00)

To look to sonically represent the liberation of stepping into the morning light, Kitt concludes the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction with an initial use of media noise in the form of a warbling noise before a lengthy passage of environmental noise (00:04:52-06:12). This begins with the sound of someone, who the listener is to assume is Kitt, opening and closing a door accompanied by the sound of keys, followed by a car door opening, birds singing, and traffic noises—all of which signifies Kitt driving somewhere. Throughout all of this use of environmental and media noise,

music can be heard in conjunction. However, the final sequence of environmental noise has no musical accompaniment, thereby illustrating the liberation of Kitt as he is heard walking and saying ‘how ya doing’ to a passerby (00:06:00-12). The use of the environmental noise in this final sequence correlates to Voegelin’s assessment that noise can be construed as sounding akin to a verb (*Listening to Noise and Silence* 14). The sequence in all lasts for one minute and twenty-seven seconds, and clearly serves to narrate Kitt initially leaving his home, before driving to a park and going for a walk in the morning light. In the sequence, noise *actions* his liberation from his space of creative production, albeit a desired chosen space, with even the good-natured greeting to a fellow walker indicating the intended benefits of his walk. From a production standpoint the sequence seems to be recorded on Kitt’s phone, which indicates an intent on his part to capture the noisy sequence before bringing noise back to his bedroom, his space of production, and reusing and recontextualising it on his DAW.

Kitt later re-recorded ‘Step Outside In The Morning Light’ for the album *Big Romance*, producing the work in what Swan notes as a ‘proper studio, only in this instance he did not use either media or environmental noise; although he uses noise in other instances on the album such as ‘Private Dance’ which begins with environmental noise in the form of car traffic (00:00:00-16). Thereby, this indicates that noise still serves other functions within Kitt’s creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, although not with such liberating intent. In addition, Kitt’s mastery as a recordist has seen him undertake the role for other creative talents such as on Jape’s *The Monkeys in the Zoo have More Fun Than Me*, an album which features various uses of noise on six of the eight tracks including on its biggest hit ‘Floating’ which ends in environmental noise (00:04:11-14). Kitt declares, it was only during the recording of *Small Moments* that he realised his own creative talent, which shows the liberation afforded to him by his DAW, arousing in him a possible future as a musician. Hence, in looking to sonically signify another form of liberation from his liberating space of digitally assured creativity, Kitt used noise to sound liberation, and as his career progresses into his desired future, noise continues to function as a virtue in his creative process.

Noisy Analogist

In almost binary opposition to Kitt, Wicklow folk-rock singer Regan comfortably sits within a genre of music making where noise has been long mythologised in affirming

temporospatial qualities in the creation of sonic fictions. This noisy correlation manifests in folk-rock stalwarts like Bob Dylan, Fleet Foxes, Neil Young and Jack White, all of whom use both media and environmental noise in their creation of temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction in the digital era. As noted in the first chapter, in the case of Young and White this results in their use of antiquated recording technology like a Voice-O-Graph Machine. Krukowski writes in *Ways of Hearing*, that ‘the analog media we use to reproduce sound—records and tapes—reflect this variable sense of time. A time that’s elastic’ (6). A point Bennett refines, assessing that using antiquated recording technology enriches recordings with a ‘past-era sonic familiarity’ (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 58). Unsurprisingly, Regan’s work in looking to utilise this elasticity uses noise to realise this past-era sonic familiarity. However, this is not the case on what was supposed to be his second album, as the recordings were never released due to a creative dispute between Regan and his then record label, Lost Highway Records. Regan refers to the lost album as *The Red Tapes*, given the label ‘put red tape around it’ and refuse to release it (Barton), an instance in his career with understandable consequences for Regan’s future relationship with record labels and production techniques.

Regan’s third album *The Shadow Of An Empire* (2010) was recorded in a makeshift recording studio in an old biscuit factory in Wicklow, with the result that media and environmental noise features on the title track ‘The Shadow Of An Empire’ which begins with environmental noise as Regan can be heard moving and handling a piano (00:00:00-02). On further albums *100 Acres of Sycamore* (2011) and *The Bunkhouse Vol. 1: Anchor Black Tattoo* (2012), Regan’s use of noise developed in a pattern akin to that of Young and White with an adoption of antiquated recording technology. Williams argues this use of antiquated modes of production make Regan an analogist: ‘With magnetic tape at the centre of this universe, “rockist” musical tastes correlate to “analogist” studio narratives’ (170). While Bennett argues that this ‘overall analogue aesthetic, [is] entirely indicative of analogue recording and “performance capture” techniques’ (*Modern Records, Maverick Methods* 71); concurrently facilitating the capturing of environmental noise alongside other aspects of the performance. The analogist aesthetic on *The Bunkhouse Vol. 1* is particularly evident with the album recorded using just a four-track tape recorder and a single microphone. Consequently, throughout the entire album, which is a particularly short affair at under thirty minutes, media noise is ever-present in the form of audio surface

noise. To return again to Mark's point that noise is the sea on which our experience bobs, it is the index of the infinite, it can thus be understood that Regan's analogist aesthetic facilitates the temporal positioning of his work as both inside and outside of the contemporary digital soundscape. In addition, environmental noise also features on 'Gouldings' (00:03:10-13), and 'Moving to Berlin' with movement of furniture in the studio (00:00:00-03). Reflecting on the album, Regan notes:

You can call it folk, but I feel in a lot of ways it's like an Irish punk album, in that it's pure, it's stripped down, it goes against the status quo and it was made with just what I have at my disposal. Recording in this way also allowed me to work very quickly, I was documenting as I was writing, so these songs feel very fresh to me, straight out of the ground, which is a really great feeling. (The Hot Press Newsdesk [2012])

In his challenge to the perceived reception of his folk-rock aesthetic and seeking to narrate a punk-infused sentiment to the album, Regan projects the anti-establishment thus liberating qualities of punk as akin to the use of noise. Moreover, the punk analogist approach to the recording is well received by fans with one noting in a review of the album that: 'The lack of musical accompaniment actually seems to liberate Regan and play to his strengths not least his formidable guitar playing and a growing penchant for storytelling on a grand scale' (Red on Black). It can be deduced that this appreciation is clear evidence of representing Hogarty's hauntological structure of feeling. Nonetheless, to view the album's punk analogist aesthetic as being a liberation, the review is of note given Regan's career and his desire to distance his creativity from record labels, red tape and 'how to do it' mythologies of sound production.

As noted, although a near binary of Kitt in terms of the recording process, Regan nevertheless shares much of the same liberating experiences in terms of using noise. His career trajectory was forever altered by his experience of working with a major record label, resulting in a career quest for liberating spaces of production to construct temporospatial expanses of sonic fictions. As with Kitt, Regan became a master of these new spaces of production thus affording himself a liberation from established 'how to do it' career mythologies. To return again to Barthes, upon recovery from the creative ruin of the *The Red Tapes*, Regan began a frenzied construction of the future, only finding this futuromania in the antiquated recording technology of the past. Similarly, Kitt upon recognising his own creative ability dually

constructed a future for himself, only in his instance a futuromania found in mastery of his DAW. Either way both artists found in their respective career paths that using media and environmental noise results in creative liberation; a futuromania in part realised by noises virtue in liberation.

***Skylarkin'* and Noise's Affordance of Virtue in Death**

*'Cause my songs don't know that I exist
And though I give them life it is
A friendship that will never grow
My songs are friends I'll never know
Skylarking, isn't this a way that we can go
Skylarking, cause you know we never will grow old.'*
Mic Christopher /'Skylarkin'/

Tragic Noise

The canonical Romantic era poet Percy Shelley's 'To a Skylark' eloquently notes of the common Eurasian skylark: 'Higher still and higher, From the earth thou *springest* . . . And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever sings' (463); illustrating the beauty made evident in sight and sound that has served as a muse to poets, painters, and scribes for centuries. Whereas Gerard Manley Hopkins found in a skylark imprisoned in a 'dull cage' an image to contemplate the soul's detainment within human flesh: 'Man's spirit will be flesh-bound, when found at best, But uncumberèd: meadow-down is not distressed, For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones risen' (132). To reflect on these poetic images of the skylark, both serve as a reflective vestige to view the tragic early death of the former The Mary Janes front person Christopher who died at just thirty-two. In Christopher's posthumous release *Skylarkin'*, death can be seen as casting a constant shadow in its creation, with most of the album written by Christopher while he recovered from a near fatal road traffic accident in Dublin in early 2000—an accident that was followed by Christopher's tragic early death in November 2001 due to a fall while on tour with The Waterboys, a tour he undertook while recording the album. *Skylarkin'* was subsequently released posthumously with the intervention of recordist Karl Odlum of Christopher's old band The Mary Janes and David Odlum of The Frames. To release the album, the Odlum brothers elicited support and collaborative input from a host of Irish popular musicians, like Christopher's former housemate Glen Hansard, Rónán Ó Snodaigh of Kíla, Colm Mac Con Iomaire, Lisa Hannigan and Gemma Hayes. In addition, despite the posthumous

nature of the release, Christopher's input is evident in most of the creative decisions as those involved in the release worked closely with Christopher's own notes for his desired vision of the album. Therefore, in spite of death, Christopher's spectral influence is a guiding creative presence.

Upon its release, *Skylarkin* enjoyed early critical and commercial success, with the album, and in particular its opening track 'Hey Day', capturing for many Irish musicians and fans a specific period in Irish popular music. Conor Lyons, of The Bonny Men, says that the track 'represents Irish musicians and kinda nearly buskers at a certain time in the music scene in Dublin ... it represents a time in music for that generation' (Devaney, 00:03:012-34). Subsequently, the success of 'Hey Day' is a factor in *Skylarkin*'s position as a canonical album in Irish popular music, with it voted by the readers of *Hot Press* as the fourteenth greatest Irish album of all time. For this reason, the success positions Christopher's life and early death within Irish popular music's mythological narrative as being emblematic of the tragic lost talent (John K), a trope that has of course served the posthumous career of artists like Phil Lynott, Jim Morrison, Amy Winehouse, Brian Jones and more (Soules). The posthumous veneration of Christopher has also seen the release of a feature length documentary, *Heyday: The Mic Christopher Story* (2019). The filmmaker Níall Carver reflects on the documentary that 'There's a possibility, with certain people who achieve a level of fame and then pass on, that time will pass them by and further generations won't get to experience and share the music they made' (McGoran). Concurrently, this indicates that despite his tragic early death, or perhaps even in some part due to it, Christopher's position within the mythological narrative of Irish popular music sustains some near twenty years later. The tagline for *Heyday: The Mic Christopher Story* declares 'It's about life, love and second chances' (00:02:56-03:25), thereupon highlighting the success and longevity afforded with a second chance after death.

Noisy Death

To assess Christopher's tragic story, it can be relayed that those involved within the posthumous production of *Skylarkin* undertook gestures of fidelity to Christopher's creative desires, an act of spectral servitude that, as outlined in the Introduction, results in positive conjurations that enlivens anew. The lyrics for Christopher's track 'That's What Good Friends Do' foreshadow these gestures as being understood along lines of established friendships that sought life together, so dually afforded fidelity in death:

Bones to the left of me.
 Bones to the right.
 Well I can't decide what to take from this flight ...
 Cause we bin [we've been] out here looking for life,
 We bin [we've been] out here looking for life.
 While you're sitting idly by,
 Cause that's what good friends do ... for you. (00:00:18-01:26)

As presented thus far, noise's virtue as a floating signifier can afford gestures of fidelity to hauntological influence. This is the case with *Skylarkin'*, with noise in its dual role as sound and culture used to reposition death out of the past and inside a frenzied construction of a future with Christopher in it. Thompson indicates that 'The idea of "crossing the line" has been central to descriptions of noise as an artistic resource' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 136); in view of this, the use of both media and environmental noise in *Skylarkin'* can be understood as an attempt to cross the ultimate line between life and death. Sterne claims that 'People are used to treating things that they hear but cannot see, smell, touch, or taste as "present" and, therefore, it would make sense that the first sense of a kind of intimate, distant, immediately would be accomplished aurally' (*The Audible Past* 153). In this regard, noise as sound and culture can be understood as a vestige of the body, which in turn temporally suggests an exteriority presence in Christopher's creation of the temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction that is *Skylarkin'*.

Noise in *Skylarkin'* is present in a number of instances such as on the aforesaid 'That's What Good Friends Do' with its use of guitar fret (00:00:00-04); and on 'The Loneliest Man In Town' which begins with environmental noise with studio movement, noise that is augmented with media noise that can be construed as Christopher's original media noise laden production on audio tape being manipulated by digital production technology (00:00:00-02). This effect proves to be so effective that it is echoed at the track's conclusion, affirming Christopher's temporal presencing (00:03:09-10). By the same token, this use of noise's virtue to signal Christopher's presence is also heard on 'I've Got Your Back' (00:00:00-02), and 'Wide Eye and Lying', with the use particularly effective on the latter as close miking of Christopher's breathing purposefully temporally positions him as present given the intimacy understood in a person's breathing (00:00:00-19); as equally evident in Mundy and Buckley's above-mentioned tracks. A further effective use of media and

environmental noise is noticeable on ‘What A Curious Notion’, with studio movement meshing with a complex layering of backing vocals by Hannigan and Hayes, strings by Mac Con Iomaire, and percussion by Ó Snodaigh (00:01:36-04:36). Whereas, on ‘Daydreamin’ noise is explicitly signalled momentarily with a faint car alarm going off (00:01:08-12). Nevertheless, the most complex use of noise can be found on the title track ‘Skylarkin’ which begins with an array of layered and assenting media noises. These noises can be elucidated as following: first, audio static; second, what sounds like a child’s raised voice manipulated and reused to sound almost bird like (yet not a lark but a gull); third, a near inaudible child or adolescent voice saying ‘let’s have ya’ three times in succession; and finally, a fast breath by Christopher at the beginning of his vocals: ‘You learned a lot when you were out there, About this foolish game ...’ (00:00:00-26). Initially, the exact intent of the use of both media and environmental noise in ‘Skylarkin’ echoes much of the signifying fluidity discovered thus far; yet significantly only revealed upon attentive listening. For that matter, as in its nature noise in the sequence demands attention, it nonetheless circumvents any definitive virtue in creating or altering meaning in a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. To postulate on this line of perusal, it can be assessed that the faint noises, and in particular that demanding ‘let’s have ya’, are fluid in interpretation. Thereupon, they may allude to death drawing Christopher in, or life even drawing him out for that matter. They may also reflect upon Christopher’s career, suggesting encouragement to those involved in their respective spectral servitude and positive conjuration, or even indicate to an attentive listener the emerging temporal presence of the deceased Christopher (or indeed all of the above and possibly more). Importantly, this uncertainty is a virtue afforded in noise as both sound and culture, for its fluidity to signify not only demands attention but also reflective engagement. To return to Barthes’ *punctum*, it is now established that its true virtue is only revealed to a reflective consciousness upon attentive engagement and removal: ‘it is best to look away or close your eyes [and ears]’. Thus, in ‘Skylarkin’ noise’s virtue is not immediately apparent, as it reveals itself to be whatever virtue a listener’s reflective consciousness deduces. Christopher sings in ‘Skylarkin’ that:

So let us never let our friendship,
Treat us like fools.
Let us never ever wonder,

What our friendship could do.
 Cause my songs don't know that I exist,
 And though I give them life it is.
 A friendship that will never grow.
 My songs are friends I'll never know. (00:0:01:35-02:22)

In the creation of his temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction, Christopher gave life to a possibility of future life, which was subsequently taken by his friends allowing for future growth afforded with spectral servitude and positive conjuration which enliven his work anew. Noise in use as a gesture of fidelity gave life to Christopher's 'songs', his friends he would never know, but which would grow to a futuromania of new life as remembered *punctums* of sound and culture. In a final reflection on noise's virtue as a floating signifier of sound and culture it can be understood that in its repositioning of death out of the past and inside of a futuromania, noise will continue to bring Christopher with it. Noise is that which produces the future, renewing life in spite of death and the eternal noisy struggle between both.

Conclusion

'noise is in essence a violent form of resistance.'

Stephen Kennedy /Future Sounds: The Temporality of Noise/

Kennedy in his assessment of the temporality of noise claims, 'Noise to date, as both phenomenon and analogical device has mostly, but not solely, been regarded as auditory, disagreeable and uncomfortable' (12). However, he further reflects that in the future 'it can be discussed in terms of power and domination as efforts are deployed to either utilise it or bring it under control' (ibid.). In relation to Irish popular music's response to the digital era, the artists discussed in this chapter certainly recognise the disagreeable nature of noise while also utilising its power or virtues in their frenzied construction of the future. In assessing this Irish popular music futuromania, noise's sole alignment with the past is refuted, recontextualising noise as not a product of received nostalgia, but that which produces the future. Along these lines of analysis, noise is still revealed to artists as a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, only in their use it evolves as a response to digital weapons of mass deception. Thereupon, noise becomes a positive mode of Being for a future listener

encompassing a digitally created hauntological structure of feeling and a desire for real.

To return to the *Even Better* series, the coupling of realness and Irish popular music factors in the album series' commercial success. This is due in part to the digitally created hauntological structure of feeling and a desire to receive Irish popular music as real, or at least realer than the real thing. Concurrently, this desire for real enhances further noise's virtues in creating temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction as recordists explore 'how not to do it' mythologies of sound production, as opposed to 'how to do it' mythologies. In seeking this real, artists also recontextualise noise while negotiating dual mythologies of production. In this process, noise is utilised as a sonic component in the instrumentarium of both sound and culture, a store of knowledge, conventions, histories, traditions, and mythologies that is being put into action in the creative process. Consequently, as artists like Fight Like Apes, Republic of Loose, Messiah J & The Expert, Davey, Mundy, Hayes, Kitt, Regan and Christopher seek to construct or alter meaning in temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction by knowing-with and knowing-through remembered *punctums* they reuse and recontextualise the uncovered instrumentarium of both sound and culture.

In being put into action in a futuromania, noise then can become a virtue to sound Ireland(s); a virtue in temporally positioning work outside of a digital era soundscape and inside a hauntological inhabited pre-digital one; a virtue in demanding attentive listening therein facilitating the delivery of a socio-political messaging; a virtue in challenging established identity constructs in particular to inherited narratives; a virtue in indicating the processing of sound reproduction hence providing sourcefulness to digital constructs sourcelessness; a virtue in augmenting difference; a virtue in playfulness; a virtue in affording spatial comfortableness and ownership; a virtue in liberation; a virtue in challenging reception of death; a virtue in fluidity signification; and ultimately a virtue in personalising the receptive process by drawing a listener into a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction. In essence, noise as sound and culture creates future sound and culture. Kennedy purports that 'noise is in essence a violent form of resistance' (6), whereas Thompson considers noise as that which produces the future. To conclude, noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* is a desired real that evolves as a violent form of resistance to the digital era, thereby, producing a realer future, or an Irish popular music futuromania even better than the real thing.

CONCLUSION

'Night by poetic justice belongs to the connoisseur in noises.'

Nan Shepherd / 'On Noises in the Night' /

Noise's Belonging

The concluding stages of the research for this thesis ran concurrent with the COVID-19 crisis and the devastating consequences of the pandemic. Alongside the horrors of fatalities throughout the world, the pandemic confines hundreds of millions to their home as social distancing has become the new normal. The consequences of the pandemic are certain to be a priority focus for all branches of research for years to come, and the Humanities is no exception, with the social sciences in particular set to examine the social and cultural consequences of what is being understood as 'The Year of the Mask'. An initial image of social distancing and communitive spirit that dominates the coverage of the pandemic is that of communities throughout the world, although in particular in Italy, using their home balconies or windows to express themselves collectively with music. In fact, images of individuals and communities singing from their balconies, and their actions being shared via social media alongside national and international news agencies, have consequently become an emblematic focus for human resilience (Kearney). Although the social and cultural significance of these acts of singing are being purported as representing the best of humanity, this is importantly only achieved in appropriation of a social action long understood as being an unwanted social disturbance. These humanity affirming acts of singing in a pre-pandemic, or for that matter post-pandemic setting, are most often considered an intrusive noise. Mike Goldsmith in *Discord: The Story of Noise*, indicates that both the World Health Organization and the European Union funded European Noise Directive point to neighbour noise being a contributing factor to public health (243-246); with unwanted singing or music from a neighbour's balcony or home recognisable as being an unwanted sonic component that results in communitive discord.

Thompson acknowledges that 'Neighbour noise can be "out of space" spatially, in that it invades "my" home; and temporally, in that it occurs for too much time or at the wrong time' (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 20); however in the same

assessment, Thompson also reflects upon a case study on a Welsh town called Toxteth, where the transgression of the auditory boundary is interpreted as a social benefit. In the study, Thompson points to individuals living in terraced housing, particularly those living alone, who welcome neighbour noise as it sonically signifies for them that they are part of a community (ibid. 112). Thompson theorises this as ‘noise as belonging’, a point of analysis particularly pertinent to the uncertain dark hours of the COVID-19 pandemic. In another point of interest relatable to the pandemic, research indicates that despite social distancing and the confinement of many to their home that the practice of music streaming is going down. This research, which again looks in particular at Italy, points to a 23% drop in ‘top 200 streams on March 17th compared to Tuesday March 3rd [2020]’ (Kopf). Although preliminary in terms of analysis, these findings initially suggest that engagement with music via Spotify or other streaming sites does not afford individuals with the escapism, or even affirmation of humanity, necessary in difficult times. Evidently, it can be construed that neighbour noise serves that function, as it transgresses the auditory boundary between homes; noise, what is usually out of space and time, becomes the sound of belonging. Nan Shepherd purports, ‘Night, that sets the puny world on its true perspective with regard to the illimitable universe, shatters the illusion of modernity and reveals us to ourselves in our primeval agelessness’ (132). She further reflects that ‘Night by poetic justice belongs to the connoisseur in noises’ (ibid.). Hence, in the dark troubling hours of turbulent times, noise by poetic justice can signal communitive belonging.

Haunting Noises

The thesis has examined the response of Irish popular musicians and recordists to changing modes of reception and production in the digital era. It reveals the response to be in part the use of noise as a sonic component in a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* to create temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. Voegelin writes:

Sounds are like ghosts. They slink around the visual object, moving in on it from all directions, forming its contours and content in a formless breeze. The spectre of sound unsettles the idea of visual stability and involves us as listener’s in the production of an invisible world. (*Listening to Noise and Silence* 12)

In terms of this study, it can be deduced that the creative potential of both media and environmental noise echo this assessment. To listen is to consciously engage with a popular musicians' music, thus realising the potential of a temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction in affording attentiveness. Concurrently, during this listening, noise acts as a spectre, traversing around the visualised temporospatial expanse, moving in on it from all directions, forming the contours and content in a formless breeze. The listener is then a producer of this sonic fiction, with noise as part of a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums* facilitating this act of production; albeit the production is negotiable depending on what virtues are found in listening. Siqueira Castanheira writes that noise 'generates modifications in structuring codes. Noise would be a construction outside meaning but, at the same time, it would be the presence of all meanings, bringing new information and order within itself' (89). Thereby, noise's greatest creative virtue is that its fluidity can assign meaning, fabricate an existence outside of meaning, or for that matter be meaningless. For that reason, Thompson argues:

noise betrays the binary; it is unfaithful to dualist thinking, perturbing neat categorization and distinctions. It is not 'either/or' but 'both-and', traversing distinctions between the natural and unnatural, analogue and digital, exceptional and quotidian, loud and quiet, audible and inaudible, intentional and unintentional, positive and negative. (*Beyond Unwanted Sound* 8)

Noise is then, by necessity, ungovernable. Notwithstanding this ungovernability, a popular musician or recordist in their desire to assign governance to it, to afford it a place in a hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, consequently realises its significant variable creative virtues. Thereby, noise in its ungovernability evokes reaction, concurrently drawing a listener into a musician's temporospatial expanse of sonic fiction, so that they may traverse the invisible topography and equally attribute meaning to the meaningless.

Goldsmith writes that 'It seems safe to say that, as a tool and a component of music, noise has a future of ever more precise application and general usefulness' (268). While Voegelin comments that 'listening is not a receptive mode but a method of exploration, a mode of "walking" through the soundscape/the sound work' (*Listening to Noise and Silence* 4). In terms of the Irish popular musicians discussed in this research, it is certain that Dempsey, O'Connor, and others respond to the

changing modes of reception and production in the digital era by using the haunting noises of Irish popular music to ascertain a future for Irish popular music. In both media and environmental noise, these musicians and recordists uncover a hauntological metalanguage that pricks, bruises and is poignant to them; thereafter, they extricate a *punctum* to utilise as a sonic component as they face the creative challenges realised with the changing modes of reception and production in the digital era. Upon its extraction and alignment with other sonic components in a newly realised hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, noise becomes an effective creative resource to ascertain an attentive listen. This point of consideration is particularly pertinent to those with a *hauntological structure of feeling*, individuals who look to realign an attentive conscious reception away from an ubiquitous listening pattern that is facilitated by the desired noiseless creative releases of 'how to do it' modes of digital production. Furthermore, to reflect on their specific hauntological metalanguage of remembered *punctums*, the creative practitioner undertakes an act of spectral servitude with the radical and necessary heterogeneity of a (self-)inheritance, which indicates an act of positive conjuration which enlivens anew. Hence, the Irish popular musicians and recordists examined in this thesis, realise this newly enlivened future in a frenzied construction or *futuromania*, concurrently creatively using noise's many virtues to realise an attentive reception of their music as they walk the listener through the topography of their temporospatial expanses of sonic fiction. The dark hours of Irish popular music's digital era by poetic justice thus belongs to the connoisseur in haunting noises.

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