A Musical 'Picture-Postcard Image' of Ireland: Michael W. Balfe's 'Killarney'

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When Francis O'Neill presented *Music of Ireland*, his famous collection of 1,850 airs, jigs, hornpipes, reels, and other Irish tunes to friends and acquaintances, not everyone was enthusiastic about his selection. He was, for example, criticized for including five melodies written by the composer Michael William Balfe, including the song 'Killarney'.[1] O'Neill later commented on this criticism in his book *Irish Folk Music*:

> The fact that Balfe was a native-born Irishman did not save me from the petulant criticism of some of my best friends for being so deficient in musical discernment. Balfe's music, they contended, was not Irish at all, even if he was.[2]

A few pages earlier, O'Neill had described his critics' reservations in more detail, referring to the cleric and music collector Richard Henebry[3]:

> Modern Irish music, including the world-wide favourite 'Killarney', according to our reverend author [Henebry], is Irish in name only, and breathes not the true spirit of

[1] Francis O'Neill, *Music of Ireland: Eighteen Hundred and Fifty Melodies: Airs, Jigs, Reels, Hornpipes, Long Dances, Marches etc.* (Chicago: Lyon & Healy, 1903), 87.

[2] Francis O'Neill, *Irish Folk Music: a Fascinating Hobby* (Chicago: The Regan Printing House, 1910), 80.

[3] Richard Henebry, *Irish Music. Being an Examination of the Matter of Scales, Modes, and Keys, with Practical Instructions and Examples for Players* (Dublin: An Cló-Ċumann, 1903). For further discussion on Henebry see: Joseph Ryan, *Nationalism and Music in Ireland* (PhD dissertation, National University of Ireland, 1991), 132–3.

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> the Irish school, traces of which are to be found still surviving among the peasantry, uncontaminated by modern influences.[4]

There was a reason why O'Neill referred to Balfe's song in order to clarify the background to the discussions surrounding his choice of pieces:[5] 'Killarney' was very well-known and extremely popular in the English-speaking world at the beginning of the twentieth century. Consequently, O'Neill was in a quandary: if he included the melody in his collection, he risked being criticized by those whose understanding of Irish music was based exclusively on tunes that were (supposedly) created anonymously by the people and handed down orally. If he left it out, all those who regarded melodies like 'Killarney' as 'Irish' simply because of the composer's Irish origin and would therefore miss it in a compendium of Irish music would be disappointed. In order not to upset readers, and probably also in view of the fact that his collection explicitly aimed to be as complete as possible, O'Neill decided in the end to include 'Killarney' in his book.[6]

An example from contemporary popular music shows that O'Neill was not entirely wrong in his assessment that Balfe's 'Killarney' was indeed often perceived as genuinely 'Irish'. The song 'Abie sings an Irish song' was written by the Jewish American songwriter Irving Berlin in 1913 for a revue.[7] The song is based on an amusing story, albeit a not unproblematic one from today's perspective because of its use of Jewish stereotypes.[8] A Jewish businessman named Abraham (Abie) has opened a men's clothing store in an area of New York that is predominantly inhabited by people of Irish descent. In the beginning, business is extremely bad – the Irish have reservations about a retailer who does not possess any ancestors from the Emerald Isle. Then Abie, a resourceful businessman, has a brilliant idea: he quickly learns all the available Irish

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[4] O'Neill, *Irish Folk Music*, 80.

[5] These discussions are explored in: Derek B. Scott, 'Irish Nationalism, British Imperialism and the Role of Popular Music', in Pauline Fairclough (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Music and Politics. Essays in Memory of Neil Edmunds* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 231–48: 234–5.

[6] See his explanation in O'Neill, *Irish Folk Music*, 54–5.

[7] For context, see: Charles Hamm, *Songs from the Melting Pot. The Formative Years, 1907–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 209; a brief summary of the song's content can be found on pages 42–3. That songs with a connection to Ireland have had a long tradition in the United States is shown in William H. A. Williams, *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream': The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800–1920* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), on Balfe's song 47–8.

[8] This kind of stereotypical depiction of ethnic groups in popular culture was already criticized and protested against at that time, see M. Alison Kibler, *Censoring Racial Ridicule: Irish, Jewish, and African American Struggles Over Race and Representation, 1890-1930* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015).

melodies and begins to sing them in his shop. Before long, business is booming. And when doubts arise about his Irishness, Abie only sings his Irish songs all the more demonstratively, among them 'Killarney', which is not only mentioned in the second verse, but even quoted textually and musically in the chorus with the opening line from its first stanza 'By Killarney's lakes and dells'.[9]

This episode is instructive in two ways. On the one hand, the perceived connection between song genres and Irishness becomes apparent, as it had emerged in the nineteenth century,[10] and continues to attract academic interest.[11] Since the early-nineteenth-century collections by Thomas Moore[12] and others, the more or less traditional melodies with their (newly written, English) lyrics formed an essential component of what was regarded as 'typically Irish' in self-descriptions and, above all, in attributions by others. On the other hand, Berlin seems to have chosen 'Killarney' specifically as a prime example of Irishness. This raises the question of which concepts of Irishness formed the basis for the different evaluations of 'Killarney' by O'Neill's critics on the one hand and Irving Berlin on the other.

In this article I will contextualize the song in the discourses surrounding Irishness, first by compiling information on its history. I will then focus on the composition itself, as the discrepancy in interpretation (is it Irish or not?) is already inscribed in its lyrics and music. However, there is something else to take into consideration: the success of 'Killarney' and the question of its evaluation as Irish or not cannot be explained without reference to images of typical Irish landscapes and the visual associations usually evoked in listeners by the song and what the song was about, a particular location in Ireland. These associations might have been due to personal experiences, such as

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[9] The song is published in Irving Berlin, *Early Songs*, vol. 3, ed. Charles Hamm (Madison: A-R Editions, 1994), 55–8 (song no. 155). 'Fells' is given instead of 'dells' in the original version (see below).

[10] The designation of Ireland as a 'land of song' can be found, for example, in George Petrie, *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland*, vol. 1 (Dublin: University Press, 1855), xii.

[11] Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital. Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770–1970* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1998), 51–2; Jonathan White, *The Symphonies of Charles Villiers Stanford: Constructing a National Identity?* (PhD dissertation, University of Oxford, 2014), 77–8.

[12] For example, Moore's importance for the spread of Irish melodies is emphasized by Axel Klein, '"All her lovely companions are faded and gone". How "The Last Rose of Summer" Became Europe's Favourite Irish Melody', in Sarah McCleave and Brian G. Caraher (eds.), *Thomas Moore and Romantic Inspiration: Poetry, Music and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 128–45: 130. See also Leith Davis, 'In Moore's Wake: Irish Music in Ireland after the Irish Melodies', in *Music, Postcolonialism, and Gender. The Construction of Irish National Identity, 1724–1874* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 164–85.

journeys to Ireland, or to (travel) reports and pictorial representations that were widespread far beyond Irish shores.

If one then asks what exactly listeners or even musicians themselves might have visually associated with this song, a print medium that has hitherto received little attention in musicology comes into the frame: the picture postcard.[13] It was experiencing a golden age at the same time as O'Neill was discussing including 'Killarney' in his collection of Irish melodies with his friends and Berlin was taking up the theme of Irishness with his song about Abie.[14] Indeed, a considerable number of postcards from the early twentieth century show references to Balfe's song. These postcards, which are examined in the second part of this article that centres on the song's reception, provide examples of how lyrics, music and both real and idealizing imaginary landscapes could interact in popular songs and how this interaction, in the case of 'Killarney', made a drawing-room song of the Victorian era appear 'typically Irish' even to many Irish people.

1) Michael W. Balfe and his song 'Killarney'

Michael William Balfe is one of those composers who were very famous and celebrated during their lifetime, but soon fell into obscurity after their death, so that today he is known only to specialists.[15] Born in Dublin in 1808, he went to London after

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[13] That analysing picture postcards can be helpful when researching the visual associations of music for listeners of past times is stressed by Dietrich Helms, 'Muss i denn zum Städtele naus. Visualisations of a song at the beginning of the 20th century', in Arne Bense et al. (eds.), *Musik im Spektrum technologischer Entwicklungen und Neuer Medien: Festschrift für Bernd Enders*, Beiträge zur Medienästhetik der Musik, 15 (Osnabrück: epOs-Verlag, 2015), 239-61. For research perspectives on musical picture postcards in general, see Dietrich Helms, Jan Lehmann, and Christoph Müller-Oberhäuser (eds.), *Musik per Post. Bildpostkarten und das visuelle Wissen von der Musik* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2024).

[14] For the history of the picture postcard, see Richard Carline, *Pictures in the Post. The Story of the Picture Postcard and Its Place in the History of Popular Art* (Bedford: Gordon Fraser Gallery, 1959); Martin Willoughby, *A History of Postcards. A Pictorial Record from the Turn of the Century to the Present Day* (London: Studio Editions, 1992). An extensive bibliography on the picture postcard can be found on the homepage of the Archive Historical Picture Postcards – Osnabrück University, https://bildpostkarten.uni-osnabrueck.de/?page_id=2887&lang=en (status: March 2021, last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[15] Even so, several important books on Balfe have been published during the last 30 years, most notably George Biddlecombe, *English Opera from 1834 to 1864 with Particular Reference to the Works of Michael Balfe* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), William Tyldesley, *Michael William Balfe: His Life and His English Operas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), and Basil Walsh, *Michael William Balfe: a Unique Victorian*

his father's death in 1823 in order to continue his musical education and earn money. From London he travelled to the European continent in 1825 where he began a successful career as an opera singer in France and Italy—with the support of Gioacchino Rossini and in partnership with Maria Malibran, among others.[16] His first works for musical theatre also date from this period.[17] Composing finally became his main occupation when he returned to England in 1835. Over the next 35 years until his death in 1870, he wrote more than 20 operas, making him one of the most prolific and important English-speaking opera composers of his generation. His greatest successes were the operas *The Siege of Rochelle* (1835), *The Maid of Artois* (1836), *The Bohemian Girl* (1843) and *The Rose of Castille* (1857). Today, however, only *The Bohemian Girl* is still known – not least because some of its numbers, especially 'I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls', have been sung by opera stars such as Joan Sutherland, Jessye Norman and Elīna Garanča. Sometimes it was even adapted by pop stars, as Enya's recording from 1991 shows.

Balfe also achieved great success as a composer of songs and ballads, which to date has received comparatively little scholarly attention.[18] This success is not surprising when one takes into account the close connection that existed between this genre and English opera: as is well known, many airs and ballads in operas were intended from the outset to be treated also as separate, individual popular songs. Conversely, many promising ballads were integrated into operas, even if they only fitted the plot to a very

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Composer (Dublin: Irish Acad., 2008). The fact that this academic interest has barely altered Balfe's niche existence in musical life is commented on by Axel Klein, 'Balfe's Anniversary: No Role for Irish Sentiment?', *Sound Post*, 18/3 (2020), 5–6.

[16] Tyldesley, *Balfe*, 16-7.

[17] For information about Balfe's time in Italy, see Basil Walsh, 'Balfe in Italy', *Opera Quarterly*, 18/4 (2002), 484–502.

[18] Although the necessity of research on his songs is mentioned in various publications (see, for example, Tyldesley, *Balfe*, 2–3), a study specifically dedicated to Balfe's song-writing oeuvre has yet to be written. His songs are, of course, regularly mentioned in publications about the general history of nineteenth-century drawing-room music, for example in Nicholas Temperley, 'Ballroom and Drawing-Room Music', in his edited volume, *The Romantic Age 1800–1914*. The Blackwell History of Music in Britain, 5 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 109–134: 126; Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois. Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 18–22; and Maren Bagge, *Favourite Songs. Populäre englische Musikkultur im langen 19. Jahrhundert*. Studien und Materialien zur Musikwissenschaft, 116 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2022), 162.

limited extent.[19] The best known of these songs, airs and ballads[20] by Balfe include 'Come into the garden Maud', 'Then you'll remember me' (from *The Bohemian Girl*)[21] and 'Killarney'. The latter was composed in 1862, at a time when—according to his biographer William Tyldesley—Balfe's star was already waning in musical theatre.[22]

There is no reliable information on the exact circumstances of the song's creation, only an anecdote passed down by Harold Simpson in his book *A Century of Ballads*, published at the beginning of the twentieth century:

> With regard to 'Killarney,' A. H. Behrend, Balfe's grandson, told me the following story, which is well worth repeating. It appears that Boucicault wanted a song for his play and brought the words of Killarney to Balfe. Mrs Balfe took them upstairs to her husband, who straightway sat down to the piano. Hardly had she left the room when her husband called her back, saying excitedly, 'I have done the song; it is great. Tell Boucicault to come and hear it!' But Mrs Balfe, who, like John Gilpin's wife, 'had a frugal mind,' pointed out that if it were known how quickly he had composed the song he would never get anything for it. And so, after some discussion, she returned to Boucicault and said, 'Balfe has an idea! If you call tomorrow or the next day he will have the song ready for you.' Whether her strategy resulted to Balfe's financial advantage is not recorded, but it may be presumed that it did.[23]

This anecdote had a lasting effect: that the composition of the famous melody only took a few minutes was still being reported in newspapers at the beginning of the twentieth century as a record-breaking feat.[24] However, it is questionable whether this or anything similar actually happened. Beyond all the myth-making, it is certain that 'Killarney' was a commissioned work for which Balfe probably received a fee—of £100

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[19] See the anecdote about Balfe's ballad 'In this old chair my father sat' which was interpolated so surprisingly into his opera *The Maid of Honour* that even the singer complained (Tyldesley, *Balfe*, 150).

[20] There is a 'Babylonian confusion' about these terms that is further aggravated by the fact that Balfe and his publishers did not differentiate between them either. See Tyldesley, *Balfe*, 31.

[21] Heyward John St Leger, *Reminiscences of Balfe, Interspersed with Many Interesting and Humorous Anecdotes* (London: Andrew Nimmo, [1871]), 44. 'Then you'll remember me', for instance, had already gone through 26 editions at the time of St Leger's publication.

[22] Tyldesley, *Balfe*, 186.

[23] Harold Simpson, *A Century of Ballads, 1810–1910. Their Composers and Singers, With Some Introductory Chapters on 'Old Ballads and Ballad Makers'* (London: Mills & Boon, [1910]), 110–1.

[24] See, for example, Anon., 'By the Way. Hustled Tunes', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 76/13,585 (15 October 1926), 2 (quoted from *Daily Telegraph*); Anon., 'The Lighter Side. Quick Inspirations', *Nottingham Evening Post* 16,409 (3 February 1931), 4.

according to *The Home News*.[25] In other respects the anecdote is definitely wrong: the song's lyrics were not written by Dion Boucicault, as stated by Simpson, but by another Irish actor and playwright, Edmund Falconer, with whom Balfe had already worked on the operas *The Rose of Castille* and *Satanella*.[26] At that time, Falconer was the director of the Lyceum Theatre in London and was looking for an interlude that could be placed between his successful play *Peep O'Day*[27]—which was also set in Ireland—and a farce entitled *I Couldn't Help It* during evening performances.

It was probably no coincidence that Falconer asked Balfe to set the 'Killarney' lyrics to music. The town in County Kerry had been a popular holiday destination since the beginning of English tourism to Ireland in the eighteenth century; visitor numbers were boosted by the wars in continental Europe and tourism was soon systematically promoted by Irish landowners.[28] The fascination with Killarney had to do with special features of the landscape: on the one hand, it offered a lake district with a mild climate that allowed lush vegetation to flourish, on the other, a rugged, craggy mountainous world rose up on the western side of the lakes. These contrasts were interpreted early on by travel writers as an ideal combination of the beautiful, picturesque and sublime.[29] It was not only in travelogues that this region was depicted effusively and in detail.[30] From the eighteenth century onwards, a large number of paintings and engravings of the main sights were also produced, so texts and pictures combined to spread the image of an ideal Irish landscape, even an Irish miracle of nature, throughout Europe.

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[25] Anon., 'Theatrical Gossip', *The Home News*, 16/481 (26 April 1862), 514. However, whether this information is correct is questionable because the normal fee for a song like this was significantly lower even for a headliner such as Balfe, namely £15 per song (cf. Tyldesley, *Balfe*, 168-9).

[26] For both operas Falconer wrote the songs' lyrics (see Tyldesley, *Balfe*, 170f).

[27] Edmund Falconer, *Peep O'Day or: Savourneen Dheelish. An Irish Romantic Drama in Four Acts* (New York: De Witt, n.d.).

[28] For information about the history of tourism in Ireland, see William H. A. Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism. The First Century, 1750–1850* (London: Anthem Press, 2010).

[29] In his book Williams particularly emphasizes the concepts of the picturesque and sublime (ibid., 69). That the Irish landscape and its reception by English painters played a significant role in the development of the notion of the picturesque is underlined by Finola O'Kane, *Ireland and the Picturesque. Design, Landscape Painting and Tourism 1700–1840* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

[30] See, for example, the frequent use of the three terms (beautiful, picturesque, sublime) in the description by J. C. Curwen, *Observations on the State of Ireland. Principally Directed to Its Agriculture and Rural Population in a Series of Letters Written on a Tour Through That Country*, vol. 1 (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1818), 394–425.

In 1861 interest in Killarney received an additional boost when Queen Victoria came to see the natural beauties of the area, a visit that was widely reported in England.[31] Accounts in the newspapers and illustrations in magazines even fuelled an interest in the location among those who were unable to travel to Ireland themselves.[32] This enthusiasm for Killarney was also reflected in music: music journals mention compositions that refer to the site—at least in their titles.[33] With Julius Benedict's *The Lily of Killarney*, which was an immediate success at its London premiere in February 1862, Killarney and the surrounding countryside even became the setting for an opera.[34] In view of this popularity, it can be assumed that Falconer, a resourceful entrepreneur, wanted to draw on this with his poem and the interlude.

Given that the primary goal for Falconer and Balfe was public and commercial success, the lyrics and music were not very original or inventive. The first two stanzas of the song—almost like an advertising brochure—list the features of the landscape, its lakes, green islands and picturesque bays:

> By Killarney's lakes and fells
> Emerald isles and winding bays.
> Mountain paths, and woodland dells
> Memory ever fondly strays.
> Bounteous nature loves all lands,
> Beauty wanders everywhere,
> Footprints leaves on many strands
> But her home is surely there.

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[31] For the Queen's visit to Ireland, see Richard J. Kelly, 'Queen Victoria's 1861 Visit to Ireland and the Burgeoning of Irish Nationalism', *Studies in Victorian Culture* 9 (2011), 3–26.

[32] See, for example, six illustrations concerning the Queen's visit to Ireland in *The Illustrated London News*, 39/1101 (7 September 1861); see also the illustration 'Her Majesty's Visit to Killarney – Disembarkation of the Royal Party at the Old Weir Bridge' in *Illustrated Times*, 13/337 (14 September 1861), 172.

[33] See an advertisement for the composition 'The Echo of Killarney' by Brinley Richards in *Musical Review and World*, 13/1 (4 January 1862), 5. The composition included the melody "Meeting of the Waters" by Thomas Moore (see also a short review in *The Musical World* 39/49 (7 December 1861), 772).

[34] Benedict's opera was based on the very successful play *The Colleen Bawn* by Dion Boucicault. This play was based on the story of a real-life crime that took place in Limerick at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Boucicault had already moved the plot to Killarney, but, presumably influenced by the Queen's visit, this reference was strengthened by an adaption of the title (see Robert Whelan, 'The Colleen Bawn and Tourism in Killarney', *History Ireland* 2019, 16–19). It should also be noted that *The Lily of Killarney* was not the first opera set around Killarney: an opera entitled *Kate Kearney, or The Lakes of Killarney* from 1836, composed by William Collier, is mentioned by Axel Klein, 'Stage-Irish, or the National in Irish Opera, 1780–1925', *The Opera Quarterly*, 21/1 (2005), 27–67: 39.

Angels fold their wings and rest,
In that Eden of the West,—
Beauty's home Killarney,
Heav'n's reflex Killarney.

No place else can charm the eye
With such bright and varied tints,
Every rock that you pass by
Verdure broiders or besprints
Virgin there the green grass grows
Every morn Spring's natal day
Bright hued berries daff the snows
Smiling Winter's frown away.

Angels often pausing there
Doubt if Eden were more fair
Beauty's home Killarney,
Heav'n's reflex Killarney.[35]

Falconer's survey encompasses not only the natural beauty, but also the cultural heritage: in stanza three, the ruins of the medieval monasteries of Innisfallen and Muckross near Killarney are mentioned.[36] The concluding fourth stanza—apart from describing again the colour spectrum of the natural surroundings—is dedicated to a special acoustic phenomenon, the echo at Eagle's Nest, a rock face on the edge of the upper lake which was famous throughout Europe at that time:

Music there for Echo dwells,
Makes each sound a Harmony,
Many voic'd the chorus swells
Till it faints in ecstasy.[37]

[35] Quoted from Michael W. Balfe, 'Killarney'. Song. Words by E. Falconer (London: F. Pitman Hart & Co.: 1129, n. d.), 4.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

Cannons and bugles were used to turn the echo into a special attraction for tourists on boat tours.[38] According to a note in the German music magazine *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, it was indeed very impressive. In a description similar to Falconer's it states: 'This famous rock is inhabited by an astonishing echo. When a bugle or a shepherd's horn sounds, echoes, like a hundred instruments, answer the call.'[39] All in all, the song evokes the familiar image of a paradise on earth garnished with ruins that hint at a long history. It is a paradise where—as the refrain emphasizes—even passing angels like to linger because they feel so immediately at home.

Irish musical features are less obvious in Balfe's 'Killarney', but they are, nevertheless, recognizable.[40] This has less to do with the simplicity of its form, which is not unusual for nineteenth-century drawing-room songs (the song consists of three parts of 8 bars [A-B-C] with an introduction and a short postlude), or its harmony (largely based on the main functions and the related keys, decorated with a few secondary dominants; see also the common change to the relative minor key at the beginning of the B section).[41] It can be assumed that Balfe wanted to allude to the simplicity and naturalness of Irish airs and ballads, as they were known, for instance, from Thomas Moore's collection. Balfe was, of course, familiar with this repertoire. Four years earlier (1858), he had even been commissioned by the publisher Novello to provide these songs with a new piano accompaniment which, according to the preface, was supposed to be more authentic (meaning more 'Irish') than that of the first edition.[42]

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[38] Williams, *Irish Tourism*, 138–41. Williams even assumes that the acoustic experience, the specific soundscape, was an essential part of the fascination of Killarney.

[39] Anon., 'Nipptisch. Berühmte Echos', *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 8/49 (Dec 1850), 475: 'Dieser berühmte Felsen ist von einem staunenswerthen Echo bewohnt. Tönt ein Wald- oder Hirtenhorn, so antworten Echos, gleich hundert Instrumenten, dem Rufe.' English translation by the author.

[40] See, for example, Michael W. Balfe, 'Killarney' (London: F. Pitman Hart & Co., n.d. (*c*1904)). This print is also available online via the Petrucci Music Library, at the following link: https://s9.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/9/91/IMSLP561982-PMLP303987-37074127c410f7a097e1358c1ced7f61.pdf (last accessed: 25 August 2024). A good recording (in A major) by Sally Silver and Richard Bonynge can be found on the album *Michael William Balfe: Songs and Ballads Rediscovered*, Guild (2011), GMCD 7359, Track 11: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abEhU-CoFK0 (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[41] On the typical formulas of drawing-room ballads/songs see Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois*, 134-68; see also Temperley, 'Music', esp. 121–134.

[42] *Moore's Irish Melodies with New Symphonies and Accompaniments for the Pianoforte by M. W. Balfe* (London: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1858).

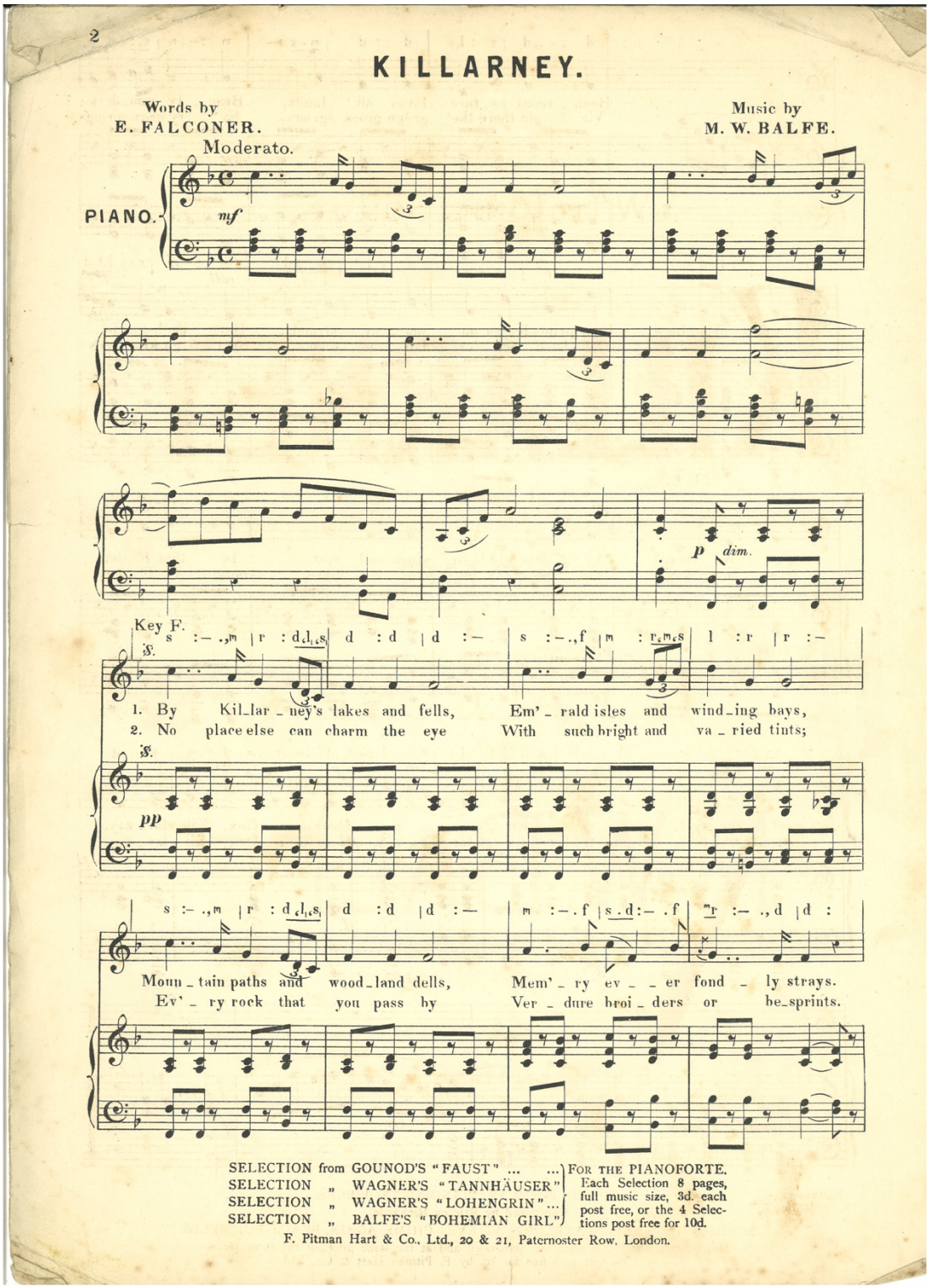
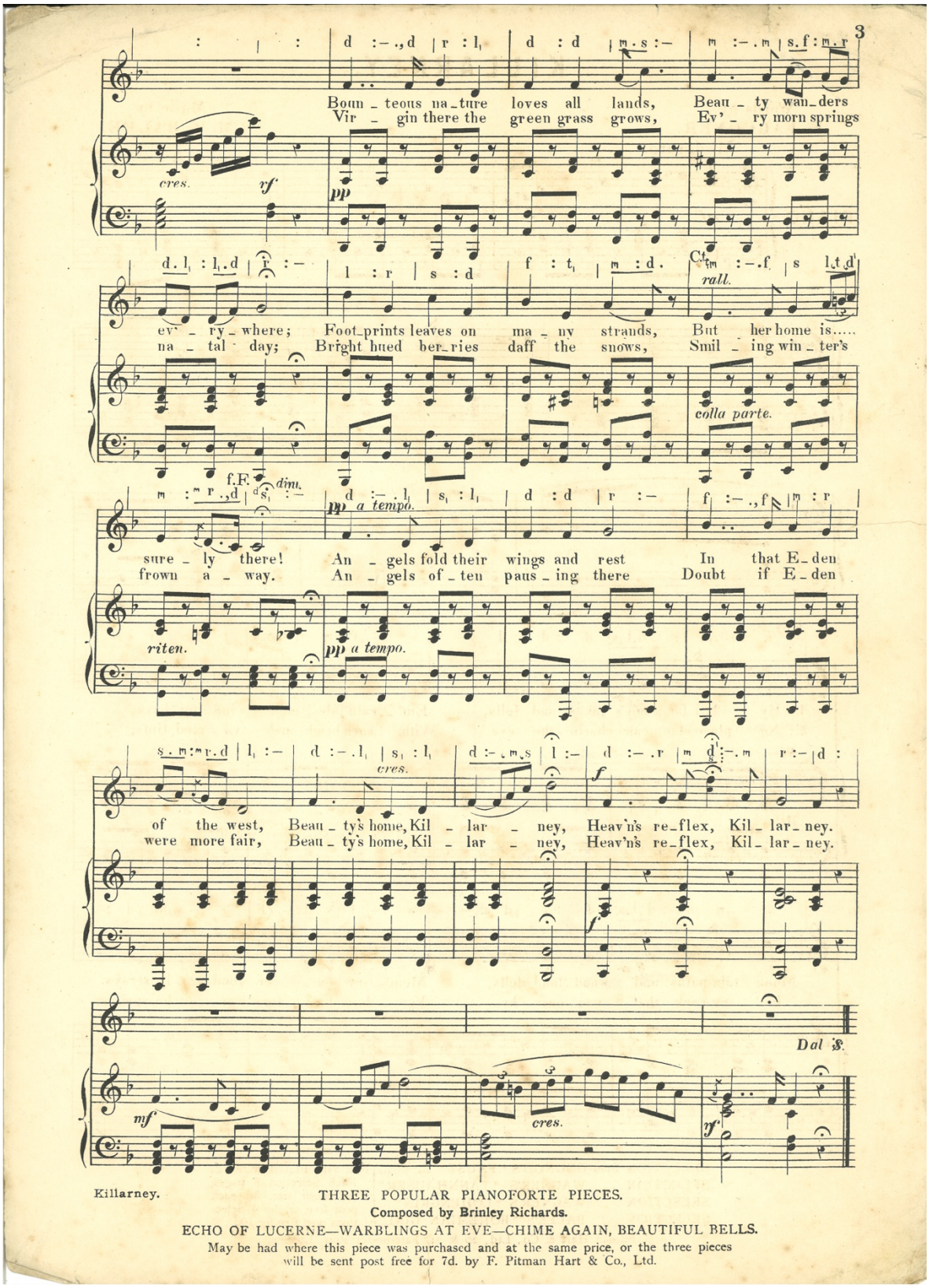


Illustration 1: Michael W. Balfe, 'Killarney' (London: F. Pitman Hart & Co. Ltd.) [from author's own collection].


3
Boun_teous na_ture loves all lands, Beau_ty wan_ders
Vir_gin there the green grass grows, Ev'_ry morn springs
cres.
rf
pp
ev'_ry_where; Foot_prints leaves on ma_ny strands, But her home is.....
na_tal day; Bright hued ber_ries daff the snows, Smil_ing win_ter's
rall.
colla parte.
f.F.
dim.
pp a tempo.
sure_ly there! An_gels fold their wings and rest In that E_den
frown a_way. An_gels of_ten paus_ing there Doubt if E_den
riten.
pp a tempo.
of the west, Beau_ty's home, Kil_lar_ney, Heav'n's re_flex, Kil_lar_ney.
were more fair, Beau_ty's home, Kil_lar_ney, Heav'n's re_flex, Kil_lar_ney.
cres.
f
Dal 𝄋.
mf
cres.
ff
Killarney.
THREE POPULAR PIANOFORTE PIECES.
Composed by Brinley Richards.
ECHO OF LUCERNE—WARBLINGS AT EVE—CHIME AGAIN, BEAUTIFUL BELLS.
May be had where this piece was purchased and at the same price, or the three pieces
will be sent post free for 7d. by F. Pitman Hart & Co., Ltd.

On a melodic level the references to Irish music are easier to recognize: in the first eight-bar section of the song (bars 10–17), it is noticeable that—as is typical of Irish songs—the seventh note of the scale is avoided in the melody (in the present edition the song is in F major [see Illustration 1], and the leading-note E is only heard in the melody in bars 24–26 at the end of the B section because of the modulation to C major). As a result, the melody gets a hexatonic or (because the other [descending] leading note B-flat is also missing in several phrases) occasionally pentatonic flavour. This is already recognizable in the introduction when the sparkling notes of the right hand in bar 7 present the pentatonic scale (F major pentatonic) in its purest form. In addition, the typical ornamentations of traditional Irish music are at least hinted at with a few grace notes and written-out triplets. Repetitions of notes at the end of phrases in the A section (often repetitions of the key note, such as at bar 11) might also serve to convey local colour as this repetition is typical of many Irish tunes, even though the notes repeated at the end of the phrases (as in Irish jigs in 6/8 time) are mostly quavers and less often crotchets as in 'Killarney'. Of course, these features are not exclusively characteristic of Irish melodies, but taken together they might explain why the melody of 'Killarney' could end up being praised as 'simple and thoroughly Irish'.[43]

In addition to lyrics and music, however, a third element played an important role in the creation of 'Killarney' and its labelling as 'Irish': the visual or visual-imaginative. A close connection to the visual was already inherent in the context of the song's creation and its first performance. Originally, in Falconer's interlude, the song was intended to accompany the presentation of a multi-part Killarney panorama painted by landscape and stage painter William Telbin.[44] This panorama had already been designed some time earlier in response to the Queen's visit[45] and had been on display in the Lyceum Theatre since the end of 1861 in connection with a performance of *Little Red Riding Hood*.[46] Initially, six images of Killarney were presented: 'The Lower Lake from

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[43] See the advertisement in *The Musical World*, 41/6 (7 February 1863), 82, where the description as 'Irish' was quoted from the *Liverpool Journal*.

[44] That this was not a completely new idea, however, and that panoramas of the beauties of Killarney had already existed before is shown by an announcement in Anon., 'Dramatic Entertainment', *The Dramatic and Musical Review*, 340 (16 May 1850), 154.

[45] An inscription on a surviving design of the panorama on which the royal family is also depicted confirms that the Queen's visit indeed was the catalyst. See William Telbin, 'Dunday Bay [*sic*], from a Diorama of Killarney', https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O762504/dunday-bay-from-a-diorama-diorama-telbin-william/ (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[46] Whelan, *The Colleen Bawn*, 18f. The story handed down by the Brothers Grimm was considerably altered for the performance, so that not much remained of the original fairy tale. In Falconer's version Little Red Riding Hood becomes a young woman who flees from a Baron Reginald de Wolf through the

Castle Lough', 'Kenmare Cottage in Glena Bay', 'Dundag Bay in the Middle Lake', 'The Old Weir Bridge', 'The Eagle's Nest' and 'Muckross Abbey by Moonlight'.[47] For performances of the interlude, a seventh was added, entitled 'The Fairies' Haunts and Isles around from Innisfallen' , which served as the setting for a ballet. As advertised in *The Tablet* and elsewhere, the result was '[a] new musical, pictorial, poetical, and ballet interlude entitled Killarney'.[48] The stanzas of Balfe's song served to accompany the changes from one image of the panorama to another. The song was, therefore, performed from behind the scenes by the singer Anna Whitty.[49] This shows that text, music and image were conceived as a fusion of arts. This intermediality was definitely intended by Falconer and Balfe and—taking into account the tradition of performances like that—probably also by Telbin, although his panorama had already existed for several months.

The text, with its detailed descriptions of nature, and the music, with what some might describe as an 'Irish flavour', were presumably enough to stimulate the imagination and conjure up the Killarney landscape, which was regarded as the 'Irish ideal'. However, visual representations such as the panorama will have had an additional stimulating and activating effect on ideas of this kind that were already present in the audience's minds through personal experiences of travelling or from second-hand reports. When the further history of the song's reception becomes the focus in the second part of this article, in addition to paintings, engravings and illustrations in magazines, picture postcards will receive special prominence for two reasons. On the one hand, it can be assumed that they depicted ideas of Killarney that were widespread among potential recipients, otherwise they would not have been commercially successful; on the other hand, they functioned as visual amplifiers of already existing perceptions and are likely to have played a decisive role in shaping users' ideas of that famous place in the west of Ireland.

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country and also to Ireland, Telbin's panorama forming the stage set for the scenes taking place there (see *The Era* (22 December 1861), 10).

[47] Anon., 'Easter Amusements. Theatres. Lyceum', *The Morning Post*, 27,564 (22 April 1862), 2.

[48] See the announcement of the performance in *The Tablet*, 23/1150 (26 April 1862), 269. For the history of panoramas and the music heard in these performance contexts, see Anno Mungen, *'Bilder-Musik'. Panoramas, Tableaux vivants and Lichtbilder als multimediale Darstellungsformen in Theater- und Musikaufführungen vom 19. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Filmstudien, 45, 2 vols. (Remscheid: Gardez! Verlag, 2006).

[49] See Anon., 'Easter Amusements. Theatres. Lyceum', *The Morning Post*, 27,564 (22 April 1862), 2.

2) The reception of 'Killarney': its success and its depiction on postcards

A total of 47 different editions of Balfe's 'Killarney' can be found in the online catalogue of the British Library in London alone.[50] This suggests that the song was in demand, and a commercial success—although possibly not immediately after its premiere, because the majority of the editions date from around the turn of the century. There is further evidence for the song's delayed success: the reaction of the press after its premiere as part of the Killarney interlude on 21 April 1862 was rather restrained. The *Morning Post* critic described the song as 'very expressive and pleasing', but also as 'a little too long' and 'not one of the most original of the renowned musician's compositions'.[51] Additionally, Heyward John St Leger does not list 'Killarney' among the composer's favourite songs in his 1871 publication of anecdotes about Balfe's life.[52]

However, this initially reserved reception did not stand in the way of its later popularity. There are references to performances of the song throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in British and American newspapers and music journals as reflected in the British Newspaper Archive and the Retrospective Index to Music Periodicals (RIPM). By the end of 1862, a first print was available,[53] and after the song had first been performed mainly as part of the Killarney panorama in various places in England,[54] it was soon included in concert programmes, especially by female singers, as a definite hit. By the end of the century the song was universally known and described as an 'old favourite' in the *Leeds Times* in 1889[55] and as 'everpopular' two years later in the *Ballymena Observer*.[56] It was played by street musicians[57] and could also be heard in

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[50] A first search was conducted in 2022, that is before the cyber-attack on the British Library, with a result of 51 editions. As there is still just an interim version of the main catalogue available and the original result could not be verified anymore, the search was repeated in July 2025 with the result mentioned in the text.

[51] Anon., 'Easter Amusements. Theatres. Lyceum', *The Morning Post*, 27,564 (22 April 1862), 2.

[52] St Leger, *Reminiscences*, 44.

[53] See, for example, the advertisement in *The Illustrated London News*, 41/1176 (29 November 1862), 578.

[54] The panorama was presented to audiences in Liverpool (see the announcement on the front page of *Liverpool Daily Post*, 8/2,445 (13 April 1863), 5) and Birmingham (see Anon., 'Whitsun Festivities', *Birmingham Daily Gazette,* 2/272 (26 May 1863), 3), amongst other places. The first presentation in Ireland of *Peep O'Day* and the *Lakes of Killarney* took place in 1863. See the announcement in *Dublin Daily Express*, 3/927 (17 August 1863), 1.

[55] Anon., 'Latest Local News', *Leeds Times*, 57/2910 (19 January 1889), 8.

[56] Anon., 'Ballymena Elocution Class. Grand Concert and Elocutionary Entertainment', *Ballymena Observer*, 35/1893 (6 November 1891), 1.

[57] The song was described in the *Belfast News-Lette*r in 1877 as a 'street organ's favourite' (Anon., 'Mr. Pyatt's Ballad Concert', *Belfast News-Letter*, 140/19,279 (11 May 1877), 5).

more formal settings, including performances by the Hallé Orchestra and the popular promenade concerts at London's Queen's Hall.[58] The popularity of the song is striking. It was a favourite not only in England and Ireland, but also in the United States, where it was often presented in concerts organized by Irish emigrant associations.[59] Famous singers (often of Irish descent), such as the soprano Alice Nielsen and the tenor John McCormack, included 'Killarney' in their programmes for concert tours around the United States.[60] This certainly also contributed to the song's fame.

There is further evidence of the song's great popularity. First, numerous arrangements of Balfe's melody were available for a wide variety of instruments. Versions for choirs[61] could be found as well as arrangements for ukulele and voice.[62] Quite a few of the vocal editions also feature tonic sol-fa notation (see Illustration 1), which might indicate that the song was popular and sung in wider circles. It was so popular, in fact, that the violinist Alfred Pochon, a member of several well-known string quartets, included it in one of his *Favourite Encore Albums* for quartet in 1930.[63] Secondly, there were several early recordings of the song before the First World War. The Internet Archive lists twelve different recordings from the period before 1914: nine by male singers, one by a female singer, one by a (male) vocal quartet and an instrumental version by a quartet consisting of violin, cello, flute and harp.[64] Finally, quotations and allusions in other popular songs point to the familiarity of Balfe's melody. Surveying songs from the United States is particularly interesting**:** in addition to 'Abie sings an Irish song' by Irving Berlin mentioned above, several other songs made more or less direct reference to Falconer's lyrics and/or Balfe's music. In 'I love the name of Killarney'

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[58] 'Killarney' was, for example, included in a programme by the Hallé Orchestra at a concert in Blackpool (Anon., 'Season Entertainments', *Blackpool Gazette & Herald*, 1,512 (1 October 1880), 8). That 'Killarney' (as a popular gap filler) was also on the programme at the Proms (in a transcription for cornet) is mentioned in Lawrence Poston, 'Henry Wood, the "Proms", and National Identity in Music', *Victorian Studies*, 47/3 (2005), 397–426: 406.

[59] See, for example, Anon., 'Nielsen Sings with Gaelic Society', *The Musical Courier*, 64/15 (10 April 1912), 49.

[60] See, for example, 'C.E.N.', 'Chicago Hears McCormack on St. Patrick's Day', *Musical America*, 15/21 (30 March 1912), 31, which contains a short report on a concert by McCormack for St. Patrick's Day, at which 'Killarney' was an encore.

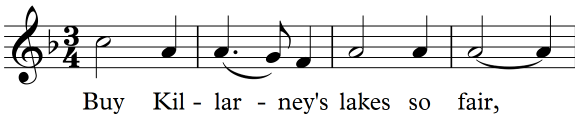
[61] A performance by a male choir is mentioned in Florence M. Barhyte, 'Novelties Appeal to Cleveland Folk', *Musical America*, 41/23 (28 March 1925), 22.

[62] Advertisement in *The Crescendo*, 17/11 (May 1925), 21.

[63] See the advertisement in *The Musical Observer*, 29/6 (1 June 1930), 2.

[64] The search (via https://archive.org/details/audio) was conducted in August 2024. There were two different recordings by John McCormack.

(1919) by Frank Gillen and George Fairman the beginning of Balfe's melody is quoted right at the start.[65] In 'There's a wee bit of Blarney in Killarney' (1915) the lyrics of the first stanza refer to the 'lakes and dells of Killarney'.[66] Somewhat more hidden is the allusion in 'Why did they sell Killarney?' written by John and Harry Dillon in 1899.[67] The background to this was that the large lakeside property, Muckross Estate, was to be auctioned off at the time. This triggered fierce public debate as to whether this 'selling off' of parts of the wonderful natural landscape should not be prevented by the state.[68] The Dillons seem to have been reminded of Balfe's song when composing it, as the melody at the beginning bears a similarity to Balfe's (Example 1).



Example 1: John Dillon, 'Why did they sell Killarney?' (1899), beginning of the vocal part (note the intentional spelling of 'buy').

As the scenery surrounding Killarney had become an iconic image of an idealized Irish landscape by the mid-nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the song and pictorial representations of the scenery were repeatedly brought together in the course

[65] Frank Gillen and George Fairman, 'I Love the Name of Killarney'. Words by Howard Tunison (New York: Geo. Fairman, 1919), http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/lilly/devincent/LL-SDV-149027 (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[66] Milton Ager, 'There's a Wee Bit of Blarney in Killarney'. Lyric by Arthur J. Jackson and L. Wolfe Gilbert (New York: Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1915), http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/lilly/devincent/LL-SDV-150014 (last accessed: 25 August 2024). The reference is limited to the text, while the melody seems more reminiscent of the song 'My Irish Molly O', written by Jean Schwartz in 1905.

[67] John Dillon, 'Why Did They Sell Killarney'. Words by Harry Dillon (Cortland: Dillon Bros., 1899), http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/lilly/starr/LL-SSM-2-138-0359 (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[68] See, for example, the anonymous commentary 'The Nation and National Scenery', *Sheffield Independent*, 39/13,910 (12 June 1899), 4. The question of the extent to which the state should intervene in that matter was finally even raised in Parliament in London (Anon., 'Imperial Parliament. The Future of Killarney', *Morning Post*, 39,642 (24 June 1899), 2).

of its reception. This was the case, for example, with printed sheet music, some of which comes with a title page adorned with a corresponding landscape depiction.[69]

Another particularly important object that reveals intermedial connections of this kind is the picture postcard. As in other countries the picture postcard developed as a mass medium in Ireland from the late 1890s onwards.[70] It enabled short messages with business or private content to be transmitted inexpensively not only via handwritten text, but also via the images on the front. Because of this brevity, there is good reason for picture postcards to be sometimes compared with the modern text message or e-mail.[71] The images could be utilized by the sender to illustrate the content of the text, but they were also used by companies for advertising or by political parties for propaganda purposes.[72] As picture postcards were designed to be distributed as widely as possible, they are often not very resourceful in terms of their pictorial design. However, this is precisely what makes them an interesting object for research into clichés and visual stereotypes, as they allow conclusions to be drawn about the ideas and values prevalent at a particular time.[73]

This can also be applied to perceptions and evaluations of music, because a small but significant number of postcards from around 1900 show references to music.[74] The

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[69] One example is a print by the American publisher John J. Daly from 1867, which shows a highly idealized depiction (with lush vegetation and steep mountain slopes) of the lake plateau on the title page. According to the information given, it is the view from the road from Kenmare that is depicted (Michael W. Balfe, 'Killarney' (New York: John J. Daly, 1867), http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/lilly/starr/LL-SSM-2-136-0025 (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[70] On the history of the picture postcard in Ireland: Ann Wilson, *The Picture Postcard. A New Window into Edwardian Ireland*. Reimagining Ireland (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2021), 103; Ann Wilson, 'Constructions of Irishness in a Collection of Early Twentieth-Century Picture Postcards', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 39/1 (2015), 92–117; Ann Wilson, 'Image Wars. The Edwardian Picture Postcard and the Construction of Irish Identity in the Early 1900s', *Media History* 24 (2018), 320–34.

[71] For the history and significance of the postcard as a medium of communication, see Anett Holzheid, *Das Medium Postkarte. Eine sprachwissenschaftliche und mediengeschichtliche Studie*. Philologische Studien und Quellen, 231 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2011); Esther Milne, 'Postcards', in Peter Adey et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (London: Routledge, 2014), 306–15.

[72] With regard to Ireland see the chapter on the role of postcards in discussions about Irish identity in Wilson, *The Picture Postcard*, 103-43.

[73] Dietrich Helms, 'Das visuelle Wissen von der Musik. Bildpostkarten als Quelle (Musik-)historischer Forschung', in Dietrich Helms et al. (eds.), *Musik per Post. Bildpostkarten und das visuelle Wissen von der Musik* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2024), 13-24: 23-4.

[74] See the database of the collection of historical picture postcards at Osnabrück University which contains a wide range of cards on musical topics: https://bildpostkarten.uni-osnabrueck.de/?page_id=2471&lang=en (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

largest collection of music-related cards in Germany, Sabine Giesbrecht's collection in the Archive Historical Picture Postcards at Osnabrück University, contains portraits of composers alongside advertising cards from music publishers and postcards from music and choral festivals. But it was songs above all that made it onto postcards because of their brevity and concision, albeit limited to incipits or refrains. There was little difference in this respect between Ireland and Germany or France, as can be seen from the numerous song postcards like *Wearing of the Green*[75] or *My Irish Molly O*[76] which are still regularly offered on eBay today.

In view of the political situation under British rule at that time and the strong symbolic significance of traditional Irish music as a national heritage, numerous surviving postcards (mainly from the United States) for St Patrick's Day present well-known Irish melodies such as the aforementioned *Wearing of the Green* in conjunction with national symbols such as the shamrock and the Irish harp.[77] Therefore, they indicate that music-related postcards could also be associated with a political statement. This does not only apply to song postcards, of course. Other music-related cards could also display propagandistic tendencies, for example those recommending that traditional dances such as the jig and reel should be practised rather than (foreign) fashionable ones.[78]

Of special interest in connection with 'Killarney' are, first of all, postcards that refer in a general way to the town and its picturesque surroundings—in other words, postcards from and about Killarney itself, where a large variety was on offer to the growing numbers of tourists. Many of them painted a picture of Irish life that was not only idealized but often extremely clichéd, a fact that nationally-minded Irish commentators were quick to point out and criticize.[79] However, images of the landscape around Killarney can also be found on other types of cards, for example greeting cards for birthdays[80] or St Patrick's Day.[81] So these motifs were not exclusively marketed for

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[75] For example: Historical Picture Postcards – Osnabrück University (in the following referred to as Osnabrück Archive), os_ub_0027026, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027026-1.

[76] See, for example, Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027032, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027032-6.

[77] See Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027022, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027022-1.

[78] Among others, see Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027020, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027020-1.

[79] See Anon., 'Sinn Fein Notes', *Kerryman*, 3/114 (13 October 1906), 5; Wilson, *The Picture Postcard*, 129.

[80] Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026986, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026986-8.

[81] See, for example, Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027038, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027038-6.

tourism and seem also to have been available in other places.[82] This indicates once again that a fascination with Killarney and its symbolic significance extended far beyond County Kerry and Ireland.

Illustration 2: Picture Postcard 'Killarney. Em'rald isles and winding bays', Raphael Tuck & Sons, OILETTE Panoramic Card No. 6638, around 1908 (Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027008).

As to how specific references to Falconer's and Balfe's song were incorporated into these postcards, three ways of doing so can be found.[83] First, on some postcards there are short quotations from the lyrics alongside a photo of Killarney's natural beauty or a painted scene. This applies, for example, to a panoramic postcard by the English publisher Raphael Tuck & Sons, which can be dated to around 1908 [Illustration 2].[84] It is the title of the postcard that is decisive: it reads 'Killarney. Em'rald isles and winding bays', clearly quoting from Falconer's text. Other postcards carry entire stanzas or at least several lines from a stanza. This is typical of postcard series in which the entire song or at least large parts of it were presented in partitioned sections or in stanzas on three or four postcards. Such series were published, for example, by Bamforth & Co., a publishing house specializing in song postcards. Bamforth produced at least two series

[82] This is underlined by the fact that none of the cards included in the Osnabrück Archive was sent from Killarney.

[83] The Killarney postcards mentioned on the following pages were collected by the author since 2020, when he started his work at the University of Osnabrück in a project focusing on musical picture postcards. In 2022/24, these postcards were donated to the Osnabrück Archive, the largest in Germany, so that they could be digitized and made available online.

[84] Date according to https://tuckdbpostcards.org/items/116216 (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

on Falconer and Balfe's 'Killarney'.[85] In both cases the series consists of three postcards presenting the first three stanzas of the song one after the other [Illustration 3].

Illustration 3: Song Postcard 'Killarney (1) / By Killarney's lakes and fells […]', Bamforth & Co., Series No. 4660-1, around 1910 (© Bamforth & Co.).

[85] Cards of the first series (published around 1910) can be found here: Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027010 (http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027010-6) to os_ub_0027013, cards of the second one (published around 1914) ibid, os_ub_0027014 (http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027014-6) to os_ub_0027019. Date according to Anthony Byatt, *Picture Postcards and Their Publishers. An Illustrated Account Identifying Britain's Major Postcard Publishers 1894 to 1939 and the Great Variety of Cards They Issued* (Malvern: Golden Age Postcard Books, 1978), 38.

While these postcards only refer to the lyrics, and not to the music, there are, as well, a remarkable number of cards on which quotations from the melody or even the complete song are given as sheet music. Sometimes they are given even with piano accompaniment—once again in combination with depictions of the landscape. For example, the last eight bars of the song (the C section) are printed on a series of birthday cards labelled with various congratulatory messages and featuring slightly different images of the lake scenery [see Illustration 4].[86] Other postcards only feature the opening bars.[87]

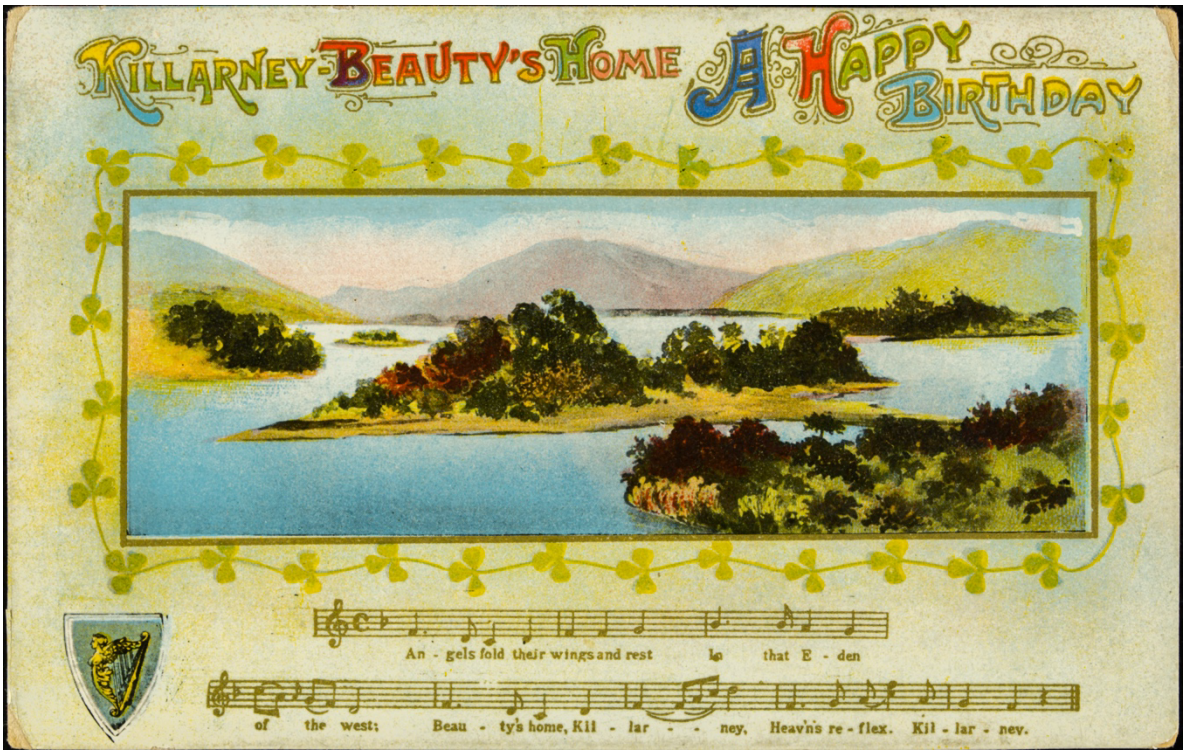

Illustration 4: Picture Postcard 'Killarney—Beauty's Home—A Happy Birthday', Birn Brothers, Series No. B 506, stamped 1914 (Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026984).

A few postcards provide the entire song, such as the undated card below [Illustration 5], which only omits the prelude and postlude, presumably for reasons of space.[88] Since

[86] See also Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026983, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026983-3.

[87] Among others, see Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026989, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026989-0.

[88] See also Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026987, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026987-3.

in this case a complete piano accompaniment is included, the song can be played on the instrument immediately at sight, literally from the postcard, without any further sheet music being needed. It is remarkable in that the melody is flawless and the accompaniment can actually be played—which was not necessarily always the case.[89]

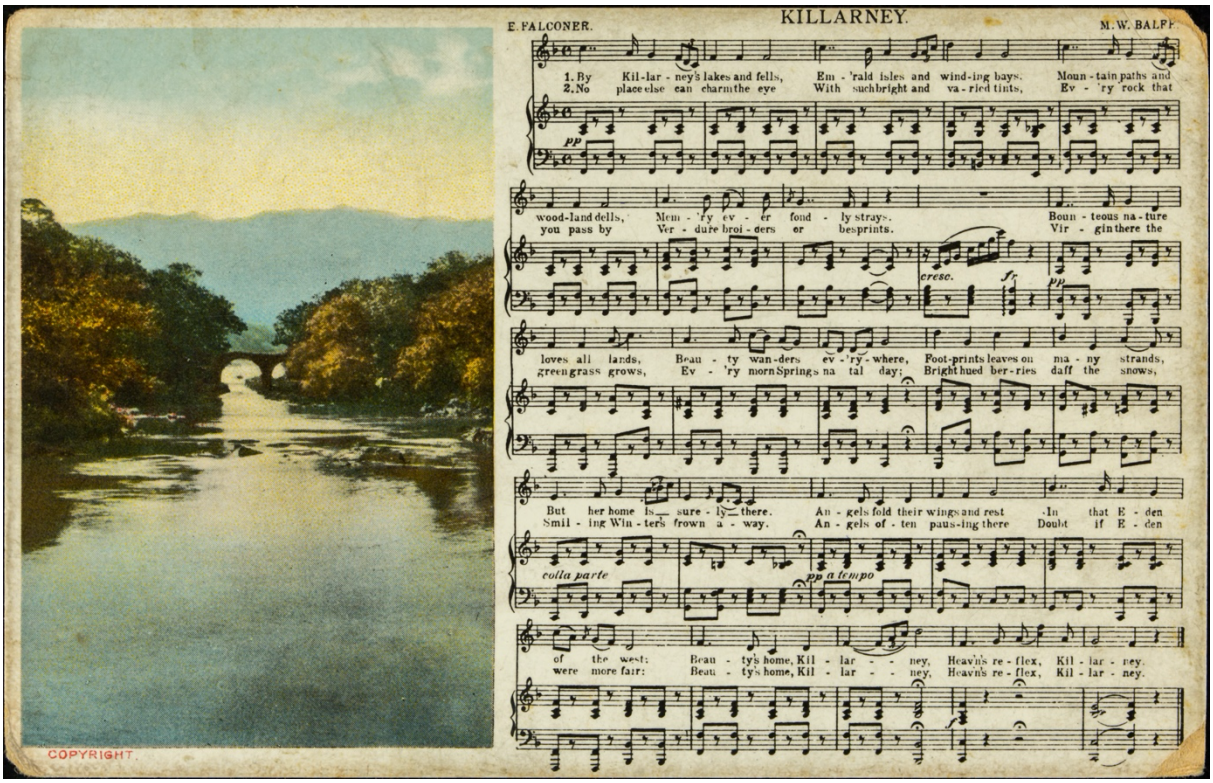

Illustration 5: Picture Postcard 'Killarney—By Killarney's lakes and fells […]', publisher unknown, date unknown (Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026988).

Finally, sound or record postcards, namely postcards that could be played on a gramophone or record player, represent a special feature in the combination of song and landscape depiction.[90] Sound postcards were available from the beginning of the twentieth century for all kinds of popular songs. At least one sound postcard of Balfe's

[89] The (largely) two-part arrangement included on the postcard 'Old Weir Bridge, Killarney' (1910) [os_ub_0026989 (http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026989-0), for example, appears to have been poorly transcribed, with incorrect accidentals, bar-lines that seem to have been placed quite arbitrarily, and a number of questionable pitch-readings.

[90] For the history of this type of postcard, see https://www.lotz-verlag.de/Online-Disco-Phonocards.html (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

'Killarney' is known. It was produced around 1930 by Tuck & Sons as part of a series of four postcards curiously devoted to well-known English songs.[91] The postcard shows a landscape,[92] which, in this case, was quite obviously chosen at random.[93]

If one looks for common features in the design of 'Killarney' postcards, one finds they always display a real (photo) or stylized (picture, drawing) depiction of the landscape. As is still common in today's postcards, certain views or standard motifs are repeated. For example, a 'Meeting of the Waters' motif showing the Old Weir Bridge near Killarney where the three central lakes of the Lake District are connected, seems to have been particularly popular.[94] Occasionally, people are depicted, usually in one of two contexts: the depiction either hints at the tourist aspect, for example showing a young couple in a rowing boat on the lake[95] or a group of walkers having a picnic in the countryside[96] or, alternatively, illustrates the modest life of the local community, as on another card by Tuck & Sons which shows a wood gatherer and two children possibly playing against the backdrop of a wintry Ross Castle—a visual realization of two lines from the second stanza of 'Killarney'. It should not be overlooked that very stereotypical images are sometimes used in these contexts. This applies, for example, to a postcard published by Bamforth & Co. which shows a bare-footed girl gathering berries and reproduces a photograph that was obviously taken in a studio in front of a painted canvas.[97] The stereotyping is even clearer in a series issued by the German card publisher Eismann. It shows Irish country life as apparently imagined far away from Ireland: in 'By Killarney's lakes and dells [*sic*]', 'Paddy' and his colleen appear to lead a simple but happy life in a cottage presumably built by their own hand and naturally overgrown with lush greenery [Illustration 6]. Finally, the angels mentioned in the lyrics of the song were another particularly popular motif among postcard producers. Various cards—such as those in the two Bamforth series—show a curious mixture of landscape images and female figures dressed in white, the 'angels' [Illustration 3].[98] The line

[91] A list of these postcards can be found at https://www.lotz-verlag.de/Tuck-Phonocards.htm (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[92] See https://tuckdbpostcards.org/items/126022 (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[93] See https://www.lotz-verlag.de/Online-Disco-Tuck.html (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[94] See, for example, Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026993, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026993-5; os_ub_0026989, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026989-0. See also Illustrations 3 and 5.

[95] Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027002, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027002-2.

[96] Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027000, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027000-2.

[97] Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027007, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027007-7.

[98] See also Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027016, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027016-6.

'Angels fold their wings and rest' can also be found on numerous postcards as a quotation from the melody or text.[99]

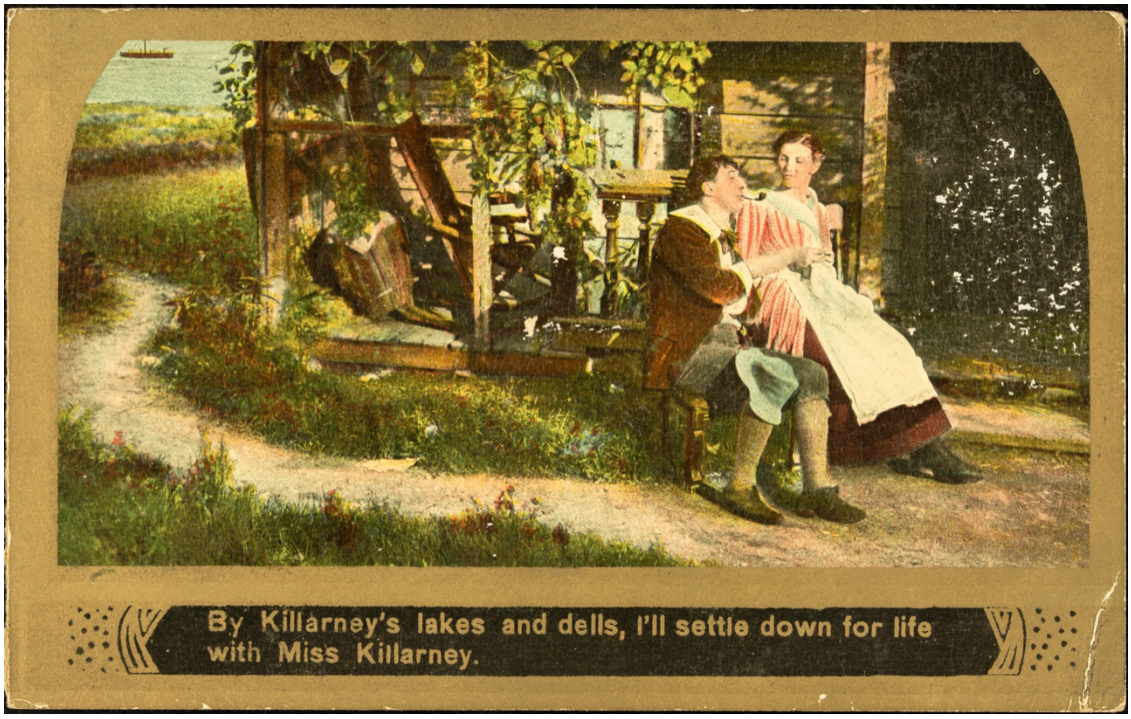

Illustration 6: Picture Postcard 'By Killarney's lakes and dells […]', Theodor Eismann, Illustrated Song Series No. 1318, date unknown (Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027039).

It can be seen that there is a range of references to both the place and the song 'Killarney' on postcards. Normally, the cards offer a combination of text and image and sometimes also include sheet music. The fact that several companies printed cards with references to Balfe's song and that examples of many of these are still available on platforms such as eBay shows that they were published in large numbers and presumably were very much in demand. How the postcards were actually received is, however, unclear, as is often the case with this medium. Whether the senders and recipients knew or remembered the melody printed on the postcard, whether they attached any meaning to Balfe's song or just wanted to send a colourful or pleasing picture, cannot be said with certainty, as what was written on the cards rarely contains any such information. Only two of the 43 postcards in the Osnabrück collection (as of August 2024) that refer to 'Killarney' show any signs that the motif was deliberately

[99] Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026994, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026994-0.

chosen. The sender of a postcard forwarded from Southend-on-Sea in southeastern England in 1909 wrote 'Good old Ireland! Home Rule for Ever' on it.[100] On another card, probably sent to a young woman in Hartford, Connecticut, the sender asks the recipient: 'How often does your memory stray back to your dear old home. Do you intend to come back to pay "Beauty's Home" a visit[?]'.[101] This inscription is particularly interesting because 'beauty's home' is a direct quotation from Falconer's lyrics. That means the sender of the card knew the song and expected that the recipient would realize what he was alluding to. With regard to the extent to which these postcards, their motifs, and the fact that people bought and used them, serve as indicators of the popularity of 'Killarney', it may be assumed that at least some of the senders and recipients will have reacted to the song and its presentation on the card. The same can apply to some of the collectors.[102] Maybe they reacted to the illustrated musical notes, though probably more to the text in combination with the images of the idealized Irish landscape of Killarney.

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No less a writer than James Joyce mentions 'Killarney' twice in his work: in the short story 'A Mother' from *Dubliners* (1914) and also in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916).[103] In 'A Mother', 'Killarney' is an item on the concert programme of an imagined nationalist organization during the Gaelic Revival[104]—Joyce seems to have loosely based his account on a real concert in which he himself participated as a singer.[105] At that time, Joyce could assume that a good portion of his readership knew the song. Later editors of the text seem to have been less certain about this. Terence Brown, for example, adds a footnote to the relevant passage stating that 'Killarney' was a 'popular song of great

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[100] Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0026987, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0026987-3.

[101] Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0027003, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0027003-7.

[102] Many cards are unstamped, unaddressed or completely unused, so it can be concluded that they were bought for collecting. On collecting postcards see Bjarne Rogan, 'Stamps and Postcards – Science or Play?', *Ethnologia Europaea* 31 (2001), 37–54 and Felix Axster, 'Die Welt sammeln. Strategisches Potenzial der Sportsemantik um 1900', in Felix Axster et al. (eds.), *Mediensport. Strategien der Grenzziehung*. Mediologie 19 (Paderborn: Fink, 2009), 107–25.

[103] On Joyce's relationship to music and the significance of music in his works, see Gerry Smyth, *Music and Sound in the Life and Literature of James Joyce. Joyces Noyces* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020). See also the following homepage 'Music in the Works of James Joyce', maintained by Frank Weaver, on Killarney: https://www.james-joyce-music.com/songb_04_discussion.html (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[104] James Joyce, *Dubliners* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 145. See also Martin Dowling, '"Thought-Tormented Music": Joyce and the Music of the Irish Revival', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 45/3-4 (2008), 437–58.

[105] Smyth, *Music*, 175.

sentimentality'.[106] This defines the scale of tension in which the song and its Irishness were discussed: on the one hand, 'Killarney' was deemed suitable to be performed at an event organized by a nationalist association[107]—even if Joyce chose the concert programme more as an example of an inappropriate programme compilation.[108] On the other hand, it was a popular song written by Falconer and Balfe (in the English tradition of the musical picturesque[109]) with an eye to commercial success and therefore designed for English tastes and markets. Consequently, the song itself – like so many other songs and compositions by Irish composers of the time[110]—was capable of a double reading: acceptable as Irish, whether through musical reminiscences or the images it evoked, and at the same time un-Irish in terms of being in form and design a typical English drawing-room song of the Victorian age.

It is therefore not surprising that evaluations of the song vary. For those like the critics mentioned by O'Neill who only wanted 'real' traditional music to be considered truly Irish, Balfe's song was anything but. Songs like 'Killarney' supported a view of Ireland that was shaped by tourism (and the reports about it). Here, the Irish landscape seems to be transfigured into a place of longing that offered an exotic counter-image to a present-day England that had been greatly changed by industrialization and was increasingly shaped by large cities.[111] The postcards described in this article serve precisely this touristic view. Furthermore, the bourgeois critics combined reservations about popular culture in general with a nationalism aimed at a return to Gaelic origins and a romantic search for the supposedly pure *Volksseele* (soul of the people) in music

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[106] Joyce, *Dubliners*, 294.

[107] This was also the case in reality. See the report of a celebration from the United States in *United Ireland*, 29 March 1884, 2.

[108] See https://www.james-joyce-music.com/songb_04_discussion.html (last accessed: 25 August 2024).

[109] Stephen Groves, 'The Sound of the English Picturesque in the Age of the Landscape Garden', *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 9/2 (2012), 185-212.

[110] As is well known, the accusation of writing primarily for the English drawing room was also repeatedly aimed at Thomas Moore by his critics.

[111] See, for example, the following comment on a presentation of the Killarney panorama (with a performance of Balfe's song) 1863 in Birmingham: 'In the contemplation of these charming scenes the visitor may be well excused if he imagines himself transported far beyond the chimneys belching forth volumes of black smoke and the dirt of the midland metropolis, to where, amid the lakes of the Emerald Isle, so charmingly depicted by Mr. Telbin's pencil, no sound except the splash of a solitary oar, or the shriek of the eagle, breaks the brooding silence.' Anon., 'Whitsuntide Holiday Amusements', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 9/1,507 (26 May 1863), 3. For the connection between the exotic and tourism in Ireland see Williams, *Irish Tourism*, chapter 8.

that was as 'original' as possible—a combination which could also be found in other countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[112]

On the other side stood those who remembered Balfe's Irish roots, even though he had lived in England for a long time and had orientated himself musically towards London's musical life. They appreciated the song not only because of its catchy and simple melody, but also because it evoked images of a unique Irish landscape that one could view with pride and melancholy. The latter seems to have been particularly the case for Irish people in exile, where the 'Paddy Sad', described by Gerry Smyth a hundred years later, remembered his beautiful distant homeland, symbolized by the town and landscape of Killarney, and used music to cope with his homesickness.[113] There was good reason for writing the following on an American postcard for St Patrick's Day:

> A bit o'Blarney and lakes o'Killarney
> Will stir each Irish heart.
> For they bring memories,
> Bring back sweet memories
> That no earthly power can part.[114]

Of course, this idealization again had a touristic aspect: Balfe's 'Killarney' offered all those who were interested in Ireland as a travel destination an attractive image of the Emerald Isle in an almost ideal combination of text, music, inner idea and (in the case of the postcards) visual presentation. Thus there was good reason for a reporter from an English newspaper to state that the performance of the song had put the audience in 'a holiday humour'.[115]

However, it seems that during the first half of the twentieth century criticism of works purveying such an outdated image of Ireland became louder and more substantial. As a result of the Gaelic Revival the understanding of Irishness began to

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[112] There were similar tendencies in Germany, for example, where, following Johann Gottfried Herder, the German *Gruppenlied* was idealized as a 'folk song' (*Volkslied*), sometimes ardently venerated and ultimately ideologized (see Ernst Klusen, *Volkslied. Fund und Erfindung* [Cologne: Edition Hans Gerig, 1969], 139).

[113] For the image of the 'Paddy Sad', see Gerry Smyth, 'Paddy Sad and Paddy Mad: Music and the Condition of Irishness', in Gerry Smyth, *Music in Irish Cultural History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), 51-64. On how this image was reflected in songs on the other side of the Atlantic, see Cathal Pratt, 'Rebel Records or "Sweet Songs of Freedom"? Transatlantic Republicanism in Irish-American Music', *American Journal of Irish Studies* 14 (2017), 83–111.

[114] Osnabrück Archive, os_ub_0028640, http://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:700-2-0028640-1.

[115] Anon., 'District News, Earlestown', *The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser*, 1/111 (20 March 1875), 8.

change, especially in Ireland itself.[116] The stereotypical image of Irish people as cheerful country folk living a simple life, spiced with feasting, drinking and dancing in a supposedly unspoilt natural environment, far removed from the hardships of modern civilization—an image that both Falconer's text and the picture postcards conjured up—now appeared questionable and was increasingly rejected. Given the efforts to preserve the dignity of Irish-Celtic traditions (even if they were often invented) and in view of the acute social problems in Ireland (among other things the abject poverty of a large part of the Catholic rural population), the idealized depiction of Irish life not only seemed unrealistic, it even looked like a cynical expression of a colonial English perspective.

This change had consequences for numerous nineteenth-century works connected with Ireland that had been written in England for the English market and stages. Works such as Benedict's *The Lily of Killarney* or Charles Villiers Stanford's *Shamus O'Brien*[117] became obsolete not only musically, but also in terms of content. The changed (self-) image may also have contributed to the fact that such works disappeared from programmes of opera houses and concert halls in Ireland and the English-speaking world from the first half of the twentieth century, and are still rarely performed today. Balfe's and Falconer's 'Killarney' seems to have been similarly affected by these developments. This can be seen, for example, in the British Newspaper Archive with performances only appearing sporadically from the 1930s onwards. Apparently, the memory of the song was strongest in the United States, as the 1948 song 'How can you buy Killarney?' exemplifies. This became famous in a version by Bing Crosby and in his recording Balfe's melody is briefly quoted.[118] What many of these works had in common was that they offered a 'picture-postcard image of Ireland'[119] which indeed, as in the case of 'Killarney', went perfectly well with the corresponding images on picture postcards. However, in the course of the twentieth century this image seems more and more to have been cultivated only in places where Ireland was nostalgically idealized

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[116] See Timothy G. McMahoon, *Grand Opportunity. The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

[117] On *Shamus O'Brien* and the question of Irishness David Cooper, 'Stanford's and Le Fanu's Shamus O'Brien: Protestant Constructions of Irish Nationalism in Late Victorian England', in Rachel Cowgill et al. (eds.), *Art and Ideology in European Opera. Essays in Honour of Julian Rushton* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 85–102; Klein, 'Stage-Irish', 46–8; White, *The Keeper's Recital* , 105–10.

[118] Listen to Bing Crosby, 'How Can You Buy Killarney', *Top O' The Morning / His Irish Collection*, MCA Records (1996 [1950]), MCD 11406, Track 6, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tW_fR7fNrEE (last accessed: 25 August 2024), the quotation starts at 2:42 min.

[119] Paul Rodmell, for instance, speaks of 'an overly sentimental picture-postcard image of Ireland' in connection with Stanford's 'Londonderry Air' (Danny Boy) in the *Irish Rhapsody No. 1*, op. 78: Paul Rodmell, *Charles Villiers Stanford* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 229.

and where it was known—if at all—less from personal experience than as a place of longing and an attractive holiday destination.

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