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„Irish Dance:

Performing National Identity through Sports"

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Eurovision Song Contest in 1994 was held in Ireland and included an interlude dance show called Riverdance. In this short Riverdance show, dancers performed synchronous step dancing in a chorus line using battering rhythms at breathtaking speed and received standing ovations (Whelan 33). The step dancing displayed in this interlude was Irish step dance. It was Irish folk dancing adapted for shows. The dancing was accompanied by the singer group Anuna and included Irish music specifically composed for this interlude (33). It was a presentation of Ireland to celebrate the Eurovision Song contest in Dublin (33). Sales of the video recording of this 7- minute performance were highly successful earning 300,000 pounds revenue (38). The sum was donated to help victims of the civil war conflict in Rwanda, (38). Incited by the enormous success, the 90-minute show *Riverdance* was further developed and premiered at the Point Theatre Dublin on 9 February 1995 (47). *Riverdance* and follow - up shows such as *Lord of the Dance* and *Feet of Flames* became the most popular dance world tour productions in history.

Irish dancing, previously performed in a closed world of tradition and competition, came to world-wide attention and recognition due to the success and popularity of the Irish dance shows. Competitive Irish dancing became the backbone of *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*. It is necessary to emphasise that the Irish dancing shows admired by audiences worldwide are based on competitive sport seeking perfection. Without the high-standard dancing skills developed through competitive Irish dancing, Irish dance shows could not have been as accurate, strong and skilful performed.

Irish dancing can be regarded as merely being a folk dance, as art or an expression of culture, but it can be clearly defined as competitive modern sport. This paper will explain the diverse nature of Irish dancing as it will centre on investigating the aspects that qualify Irish dance as modern sport. This will be achieved by applying sport studies for definitions and principles of modern sports.

Defining Irish dancing as modern sport is not enough as Irish dancing is intricately linked to Irish identity. Thus, the question arises how national identity is performed through Irish dance as modern sport. In order to explain Irish dance as expressing national identity through sport, the paper will deal with the principles of Irish nationalism and the formation of imagined nationalism.

In terms of structure, the paper will first produce an explanation of the phenomenon of nationalism which will be followed by an account of its connection with the history of Ireland. Then, an overview of various approaches to modern sport and sport studies will be provided. Subsequently, insights into both nationalism and sport studies will be used for directly looking at the Gaelic League's taking charge of Irish dancing in the 1890s. Furthermore, it will be investigated how dancing in Ireland became standardised and promoted as "the Irish dance". In addition, research on the development from folk dance to Irish dance as sport will be presented including the creation of controlling organisations such as the Irish Dancing Commission. Subsequently, the structural organisation and rule system of the Irish dance competition-system will be highlighted in order to prove that Irish dance meets all criteria characterising it as modern sport.

Researching on Irish dance as sports proved to be difficult due to the fact that only a small number of publications dealing with Irish dancing exists and due to a tradition of passing Irish dance knowledge informally without written record or notation system of step repertoire. Although basic information on Irish dance is provided in some books dealing with Irish history, theatre, and music, publications dealing exclusively with Irish dancing remained scarce until 1987. Cullinane, from 1987 onwards, successfully attempted to collect comprehensive material on different aspects of Irish dancing. He published his finding in a series of books dealing generally with the aspects of Irish dancing. Arthur Flynn provided a basic introduction to the history of Irish dance for the general reader, while Brennan highlighted early history of dancing in Ireland, variations of style, and written records of stylistic debates. Frank Whelan published a comprehensive guide and overview helping with the difficult topic of Irish dance. None of these books, however, focuses on Irish dance as sport. In 2003, Frank Hall published his book

Competitive Irish Dance: Art, Sport Duty, using an anthropological approach and field research to come up with a detailed analysis of Irish dance as competitive sport.

All authors mentioned highlight the problem of lacking written records when facing knowledge of Irish dance. From the historical point of view, Irish dancing has always been fragmented; as to this day, it has only been taught orally and by imitation. No records of dance repertoire and steps have been made. There is no elaborate notation system as in ballet, and Irish dance steps have been continually changed and adapted between competitions. In most cases, not even the dancer himself remembers earlier version of the dance s/he dances. Film and picture material of competitive Irish dance is extremely scarce, as filming and taking photos during competitions is strictly prohibited at contemporary competitions. All data on the structure of historically early traces of Irish dancing performed before the invention of filming seem lost (Brennan 13). With a dance form which is so rapidly changing, and has undergone such dramatic changes since the 1940s it is hard to dig deeper into the matter. It is difficult to see what Irish dance consists of today, so it is even more difficult to grasp the components it consisted of in the past. For this reason I had to rely on the scarce publications dealing with gone by developments of Irish dancing and had to rely on findings of literature research in connection with the experience of my own ten- year- long career as competitive Irish dancer.

Prior to continuing with the main body of the text it is vital to provide a concise overview of Irish dance forms. Irish dances can be divided into the type of shoes used. Social dances such as the ceili and set dances as well as designated "light" dances at competitions are danced in soft palms enabling jumping and elegant pointed motions. Hardshoes are the popular step dance shoes used for battering rhythms as an iconic feature of competitions and dance shows. Broadly speaking, Irish dance can be distinguished between informal social dance, informal sean-nós (old-style) dancing, show-style dancing, and the standardised competitiive sport (see "BBC Irish" bbc.co.uk).

The paper will concentrate on Irish dance as modern competitive sport and will seek to prove that apart from artistic and cultural aspects it qualifies as modern

sport in all aspects. It will not deal with Irish dancing prior to the foundation of the Gaelic League due to the lack of earlier sources and the prominence of the League's influence on Irish dance. In addition, the importance of Irish dance for nationalism and for expressing Irishness will be outlined. The mode of its development from local informal performance to global sport will be highlighted as the code of modern Irish dance will finally be extracted and differentiated from informal social dances found in Ireland.

2.0 NATIONALISM, NATION, AND IRISH IDENTITY

The following section of the paper will elaborate the concepts of nationalism and nation and will explain the reason for their significance with regard to Irish identity. To put the initial focus on nation and nationalism will prove to be fundamental for assiduously investigating Irish dance.

2.1 NATION

Irish identity is solidly based on the terms of "nation" and "nationalism". "Nation" is a concept used prior to "nationalism" as nationalism was not fully established in politics before the late nineteenth century. Although this distinction cannot be considered clear-cut (see English 432), the introduction of the concept of nation highlighted a battle for power between the monarch and the aristocracy leading to an important political and historical shift of sovereign power from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie during the English Civil War in the sixteenth century, and after the French Revolution, in the nineteenth century (see Foucault 273-275).

Michel Foucault (170-71) analyses the historical development of "nation" comprehensively, explaining that the term initially denoted a certain group of people inhabiting certain land surrounded by a common border and being governed by a federal government enacting common laws. This definition of *nation* is, however, almost identical to that of *state*.

According to Anderson (6) the term of nation is to be understood in a sense of (political) community. This view is reflected in Anderson's definition of the term specifying that "it is an imagined political community –imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6).

According to Anderson (6), "imagined" means that even though members of a nation cannot know the vast number of co-members personally or do not even perceive them; they still believe that they share the same point of view and certain similarities which define them as belonging to the same nation. Anderson puts it that way: "In the mind of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Anderson (6) highlights the fact that nations are defined as communities, as he clearly observes that "the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (6). Communities rely on intimacies, but the community being a nation is not directly formed by face-to-face contacts or personal acquaintances between members. In the light of the vastness of co-members, a mutual understanding and sense of community can only be bestowed by imagining that all members, even without personal contact, are interlinked, if only in national spirit (6). The intimacy between members of a nation is imagined, thus, the nation is an imagined community (6)

Anderson's definition (7) implies that nations are limited due to their given size, whether they are clearly defined by boundaries or encompass a certain number of members. No nation constitutes a universal unit, as exemplified in Anderson's description of Christianity envisioning "a wholly Christian planet" (7) in certain periods of history. He claims that nation is always limited since "no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind" (7).

Richard English (466) indicates that nations, though having a territorial claim and being confined, can exist in one geographical area, their community relying on a

certain political goal. English (466) argues that nations are not confined by borders or a certain government. In fact, one state does not necessarily encompass one nation. He points out that states are not "homogenously national" (466).

Foucault (77), by historically analysing discourse of war, discovers that the British and especially the French Revolution show several nations in conflict within one country, thus hinting towards the fact that several nations with conflicting political goals can exist within one state (77). In particular, Foucault (65, 77) interprets the two contrasting visions of sovereignty leading to the English Civil War as being based on two conflicting nations in Britain, thus allowing for the term "British Revolution". He further suggests that political agitators did not apply *nation* as a synonym for *state*, not even during the zenith in the rise of the modern nation (77-81).

Foucault's statements lead us to the political meaning of *nation* which became established in the late nineteenth century. Hobsbawm (15) states that the term nation was used synonymously with 'descent' or the German 'Volk' before the French Revolution originated the modern and political concept of *nation* (Hobsbawm 15). Hobsbawm claims however that the territorial factor did not play a major role until the beginning of the twentieth century. He quotes Maurice Block suggesting that the French Revolutionist version of *nation* corresponded to self-determination only (19-20). The geographical meaning, according to Hobsbawm (19), is thus derived from the amalgamation of the terms *nation* and *state* and the people living in it forming a nation-state.

2.2 FROM NATION TO NATIONALISM

The following section will deal with definitions of nationalism, as it will answer the question of how nationalism can be used to explain the link between *nation* and *state* with nationalism being its form of transition.

English (432-459) provides a definition of nationalism which is lined to four aspects dealing with the emancipation of a group of people. First his definition is based on a sense of protective community securing basic needs for their members. Second, it focuses on self-determination thus striving for political goals. Third, in order to achieve these goals, nationalism frequently goes hand in hand with struggle. And fourth, possession of land is playing a vital role in nationalist visions.

English (432- 459) provides a discussion which aims at explaining the psychological appeal and the immediate and emotional bonding effects of nationalism. Primarily, nationalism is based on fundamental human needs such as the need for protection or belonging to a community. He concludes that nationalism is based on a sense of community which, according to him, does not rely on shared characteristics and thus can prove to be highly integrating (432, 436). Furthermore, he states that this sense of community is built on loyalty bestowed by the group members in return for their need of gaining security and being part of that community (432, 435). Another point he mentions is that nationalism can provide fundamental meaning to the lives of group members as it provides a political purpose through a common identity and a distinctive collective history (444). Fourthly, by providing an increased purpose of living it also enhances the position of members themselves by offering "a more celebratory self-image" (444), which means that "the affirmation of one's own culture is the affirmation – among other things – of oneself" (444).

English (455) emphasises the political goals, without which nationalism would be fruitless, just as he refers to the struggles these goals create. Reasons for nationalist claims for self-determination can be the desire to protect in-group ties from a perceived hostile out-group. In many cases, a shared historical

consciousness motivates nationalists to politically attempt the revival of a lost national era and re-establish its past quality. Of course, economic factors calling for nationalist action cannot be neglected. English clarifies that: "[A]t times the struggle is for survival, whether literal […] or cultural […] or it can involve more abstract but no less important struggle towards the recognition of group rights […] and of the freedom for particular cultural expression" (English 455).

English (456) further argues that nationalist struggle to secure basic needs of protected community is inextricably linked to agitation that involves a notion of a golden age which was destroyed and needs to be reinitiated. English (456) states that "nationalist restlessness with current imperfection must be assuaged through a grievance-driven struggle for redress. This often involves a quasi-religious sense of time […]" (English 465) and can mean the re-establishment of past independence or former cultural glory and greatness, and finally, the rebirth and renewal of a "true" national culture (465).

English (468) claims that certain nationalists strive for an independent state to fulfil their self-determination. The nationalists' goal is to gain power to make political decisions for their community. The national collective ties serve as a basis for creating an official state. Legitimated by their official state status, they have the political power to decide and enact laws according to their will. In other words, creating a nation is the basis for establishing an independent state which can be seen as the epitome of self-determination. All this can be achieved through active nationalism (English 468).

Nationalism tends to extend its idealist values with a distinct notion of history used to legitimise political goals. The perception of a glorified era in the past in need of revival along with the fear of losing one's culture constitutes a key factor for nationalism. Foucault (62, 67) discusses a line of thought, or rather a discourse from the Middle-Ages, which corresponds to the nationalists' ideal of re-establishing a former glory. In this context, Foucault (62, 67) mentions the everlastingness of war dating from the Middle-Ages, when war was seen as a guideline for analysing history and power and as a process of creating states (67). The mythology applied in this respect remained of great importance until the nineteenth and twentieth century (74). According to Foucault (75), this mythology

is the vision of a glorious age being lost while its resurrection is at hand through the final victory against the oppressors eventually leading to a new everlasting golden era. It is the mythology of the people who regard themselves as being oppressed and seek revenge.

2.3 NATION AND NATIONALISM IN IRISH HISTORY

Before analysing how Irish dancing developed from a local performance to a national canon of dancing, eventually becoming a global sport, we need to clarify the meaning of nation and nationalism in Irish history.

The following will help us understand why Irish national identity is inter alia defined by cultural and social practices such as Irish dancing, as well as to which extent Irish dancing contributed to the emergence of national identity, evolving from the 1880s to 1930s, a time when Irish nationalists sought to establish an independent Irish nation.

The French Revolution had large-scale effects on the Irish fight for freedom as it motivated the leader of the "United Irishmen", Theobald Wolfe Tone to build up resistance against Britain (English 477). In addition, the philosophy of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau had major effects on Ireland. Both philosophers strengthened the confidence of the governed to claim political power. According to Locke's philosophy, monarch and citizens form a contract based on the citizens' consent (approval), according to which the citizen has the right to abolish the monarch if he/she breaches this contract. English (477) explains that:

> The French revolution helped bringing nationalism to Ireland, a process aided by the fact that the radicalism of that other great contemporary Revolution – in America – again involved the flowering of such radical notions. […] Drennan and Russel were directly influenced by Rousseau's ideas; Tone and Emmet had read Locke; […] Locke, Rousseau and Paine being the routes by means of which nationalism arrived in late-eighteenth-century Ireland in egalitarian, emancipatory form. Once embedded in Irish nationalist thinking, this central notion – the welding together of sovereignty, equality and liberty – then became seemingly ineradicable,

evident in epochal moments such as the 1919 Declaration of Independence. (English 477)

Nationalism in general, but notably in Ireland, is a complex category as, in fact, there is no Irish nationalism. Rather the plural is the case meaning there are several Irish nationalisms (English 9). From a historical point of view, nationalism in Ireland consists of several nationalist movements, some more, some less radical. Until today they disagree and struggle over conflicting ideas of their vision of Ireland and take varying approaches to fulfil them. As in the course of time "the terms and aspirations and even the vocabulary of nationalists have altered dramatically" (English 9). English refers to the story of Irish nationalism: "It is a tale of the Irish nationalist conflict with England and Britain; but it is also a story of the conflict between Irish people –- nationalist-versus-nationalist as often as nationalist-versus-unionist" (English 9). In fact it is about the severe disagreement regarding independence vs. home rule, political vs. cultural nationalism (9).

Nationalism in Ireland has proved to be a force both democratic and anti-democratic. English (475) argues that nationalism is a democratic force as the foundation of a democratic society demands a consolidating unit. In addition, he claims that historically liberal democrats have used nationalism for rallying their supporters and for establishing a democratic identity. At the same time nationalism is also anti-democratic. In the course of political struggle, "[n]ationalist regimes have all too often been authoritarian in practise […] and while nations might be necessary for the effective functioning of democracy, establishing the appropriate boundaries […] has proved an often bloody and difficult process, generative of further conflict and cruelty. (475)"

The first nationalist mass movement, which took place in the first half of the nineteenth century, was highly democratic in nature (English 139). Daniel O Connell's non-violent approach to nationalism consisted of democratic gatherings and was based on parliamentary intervention. He "pioneered a socially conservative, mass nationalism based on Catholic Ireland [...] pragmatic rather than romantic in orientation, and libertarian in much of its spirit." (English 139)

However, this was soon followed by the anti-democratic nationalism of the Fenians (English 180). The Fenians, later called *Irish Republican Brotherhood*, were founded in 1848. Fenian symbolism is based on Celtic mythology, their inspirational icon being Theobald Wolfe Tone (183). The goal of the brotherhood was not self-determination under the suzerainty of Britain, which was O Connell's aim (136). Instead, they envisioned an independent Irish state which was not to be established through democratic action but through violent force (179).

Upon the investigation of Charles Stuart Parnell and his Home Rule party, the complexity and variety of Irish nationalism in the late eighteenth century was revealed. Before Parnell's leadership, nationalism proved to be highly controversial and fragmented (Fitzpatrick 182). The Land League, initially led by the Fenians, ceased to use grave violence to fight for the tenant-and peasant rights and continued their boycotts (180). The Fenian rising since 1867 failed and their supporters waited for a further call to arms (180, 181). In 1885, Parnell's Home Rule party won four fifths of the Irish Parliament's seats. Parnell, himself being a Protestant landlord, managed to disparage the landlords and to attain wide non-fractional support. Fitzpatrick explains that achieving such wide support "gave unprecedented stability to politics in Catholic Ireland" (181). Parnell's campaign was successful because he could convince the Fenians that a parliamentary course of action was more efficient than violent uprisings (181). The Catholic Church functioned as a main assistance and information network. "The parochial clergy became indispensible as local organizers, officers, and subscribers to party funds, while church porches provided the forum for political oratory" (182)

On investigating Irish history, English (46-49) argues that the crucial factor for Irish nationalism were not differences in ethnic descent but religious conflicts. It was not the English invasion of the twelfth century that can be regarded as the cornerstone of large-scale resistance against England, but rather the process of Reformation. He suggests that seeing the English invasion as an early trigger for the conflict between the Irish nation versus imperial England is part of the Irish nationalist historical symbolism and stereotype (26). English suggests that "the Irish population has been heterogeneous and kaleidoscopic in terms of race or

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ethnic origin for as long as we can trace it" (26). The invaders led by Anglo-Norman lords themselves were rather "an international group" (38). He continues that the English invasion was no full-scale invasion at all, as after its completion the majority of power continued to rest with the Gaelic lords (37). In addition, full conquest was not possible for England at that time due to a lack of resources (40). The English monarch's claim for Irish possessions arouse because of a power dispute between him, his Anglo-Norman lords and the Gaelic lords. As a matter of fact, Gaelic Ireland was not unified, and military incidents had existed before the English invasion (37). Until the fifteenth century, the Anglo-Norman lords had lost power and retreated into the territory of their influence around Dublin known as the Pale (45). During the Reformation, King Henry VIII converted his realm to Protestantism himself being the head of the Church of England (48). Consequently England took action to convert Ireland to Protestantism, the Irish population, however, remained Catholic (49). English explains the significance of the unsuccessful Reformation in Ireland:

> For the sixteenth century onwards political or ethnic division between English power and any Irish who opposed it was a division made more deeply and impermeable because it was reinforced, if not defined by religion. [...] Catholic belief, experience and culture were indissolubly part of one's sense of proto-nationality (50). [...] Thus, politics and religion became decisively interwoven [and] the Reformation came to be seen as an English, foreign imposition. The conquest non-cooperation of the lay-Irish elite with this attempted process of Reformation was one of the key factors explaining the failure of that undertaking. (53)

Unlike Ernest Gellner (qtd. in English 486) who defines nationalism as a political force conditioned by industrialism, English (486) points out that in Ireland, industrialisation and urbanisation were only emerging gradually not affecting political developments. Compared to the urban economic sectors of Britain, the urban sectors in Ireland were few in number and small in terms of populace as merely seven percent of the Irish population lived in cities (502). During the nineteenth century, Ireland's economy was based on agriculture (Fitzpatrick 178). Fitzpatrick (178) emphasises that, even in agriculture, "[t]echnological innovation and improved systems of crop rotation and manuring were slow to affect Ireland" (178).

Dispute over symbolical and actual inheritance of land became an essential aspect of Irish nationalism during the late nineteenth century as the land issue had moved to the centre of political and nationalist attention (English 438). In 1879, the Land War marked the peak of a conflict concerning tenant rights and security of tenure (Fitzpatrick 178). In 1879, Michael Davitt established the Irish National Land League incorporating Fenian support. The Land League provided a forum and network for the coordination of land agitation. However, according to Fitzpatrick (178) the League lost the citizens' support as the campaign became increasingly radical and violent.

For nationalists, fight over land rights has a symbolic meaning attached to it. This symbolic and more concrete meaning is composed of the notion of home crops nurturing Ireland and thus granting survival (English 438).

3.0 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SPORTS

Nationalism and in particular Irish nationalism have been dealt with in theory and with regard to history in the chapters above. Following this, the argument will be elaborated that both nationhood and national identity in sports are not mere notions restricted to abstract theory, but are subtly present in everyday life. Thus, the following section will show that national identity performed through sports has meaning and influence beyond the mere cultural level.

3.1 POWER AND IDENTITY IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The question of identity can be seen as being linked to the question of power in sports. Marschik (16) presents Foucault's discovery that in sport and physical training in general power is exercised on the body itself. He quotes Foucault who claims that that shaping and training the body is subjugating the body to the athlete's will. This means that the physical power exercised is self-governance of the body (16). This domination of the body is subjected both to the athlete's will and the body norms predominant in a society at a given time (17-18). Thus the body becomes a vessel for embodying a society's norms and codes.

Alkemeyer (48) quotes Gebauer who claims that the body itself becomes a carrier of identity. Not only does the kind of sport reflect the identity of the athlete and the society or nation the athlete represents, but it also segregates different norms and identities (48). Alkemeyer continues by using Gebauer's argument that sport is both a sphere of defining and distinguishing identities and norms, and differentiating what is perceived as "the other". Thus, sports can be used for defining- and differentiating policy (49).

Gebauer's ideas are further developed by Alkemeyer (48) who demonstrates that by shaping the body, identity becomes apparent and readable because it denotes a person's conduct of life. During the rise of modern democracies, the body

became a means of symbolic expression (Gebauer qtd. in Alkemeyer 48) which, however, coincided with a notion of physical equality (48). Due to this notion of equality of bodies, sport became employed as an instrument for distinguishing oneself as an individual (48). It is this potential to re-invent the body and perform identity which leads Alkemeyer (48) to regarding sport as a method of political resistance against hegemonic predominance.

Alkemeyer (48-54) shows that portraying body exercise as lifestyle and identity has a symbolic meaning regarding collective identities. Alkemeyer (49) provides a history of the body using the example of Germany. This sheds light on how different connotations of the body can appear diachronically. Alkemeyer (49) explains that, during the nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie's vision of the ideal body focused on the upright body-carriage, physical strength and display of good manners. With these qualities, they sought to differentiate themselves from the aristocracy and display superior moral conduct (49). Until the late nineteenth century, rigidity was enforced to resemble military erectness and toughness and became the major mode of physical education of school children (50). In this connection, the marginal design and semantics of physical activity were extended to a collective representation.

The arguments presented above show that not only does the symbolic significance of sport cover movements, composure, and dress codes representing a certain identity or ideology. But in fact, as Marschik (28) says, identification with sport is written into the body itself, as sports interact with ideology and norms by altering performance to suit proposed values. Such as industrialisation corresponded with the ideal of maximising efficiency and productivity (26-27), the same ideal of maximising efficiency was incorporated into sports leading to an advanced rule systems, precise measurement and to rationalising space and time in which sport is performed (27). In following this trend, physical performance also adapted to changing patterns of norms dealing with class, race, and gender as athletes sought to satisfy the ideals of body (29). In adapting sports to new gender- and ethnical norms, those norms became embodied through physical exercise, thus being re-created and, in being so, influencing in turn norms of society (29).

The link between society, culture, and sport is outlined by Foucault as quoted by Alkemeyer (48). Foucault (qtd. in Alkemeyer 49-50) claims that sport is intertwined with power relations thus making the physically active body a carrier of an ideal identity. Not only does sport correspond to shifts in perspectives as demonstrated above, but it also offers a way of analysing society by demonstrating, mirroring, or contradicting its values and norms. For Foucault (49), physical expression in sports offers the opportunity to shape both one's body and mind. Although these ways of shaping one's own identity are still subject to any given society and power, Foucault (49) claims that the forms of self-indoctrination may still counter-dominate power relations (50).

The fact that the desired way of life has a strong impact on the individual body is an advantageous factor in the performance of national identity. The national theme inscribed into the social character of a national sport reduces the need of direct control as it reproduces itself and is performed through the self-motivated activity of the athletes and social sphere of teachers, organisers, sport clubs and international umbrella organisations.

3.2 Sports and Nationalism

According to English (462) sport is a daily social practice seeming fit to perform national identity. In order to explain how Irish dancing can be characterised as modern sport, the categories "sport" and "modern sport" based on the discipline "sport studies" need to be investigated. It is necessary to define sport in order to understand the interrelatedness between sport and nationalism. The definition presented below is focused on modern sport, as this paper aims at analysing to which extent Irish dancing can be labelled and defined as such.

Sport is an intricate social sphere re-creating its own set of norms, codes and semantic symbols of representation (Marschik 26). Marschik (16) quotes Leis who claims that sport tends to incorporate rule systems following the world of

work in terms of structure. Furthermore, for an adequate performance of sport, moral codes of fair play and mode of proper conduct are to be defined, as well as basic rules such as the economic binary of win-lose (16).

Sport studies are, in fact, a complex field. There are various approaches and theories. In contrast to sport history, sport studies are primarily targeted at understanding sport as a modern development (Marschik et al. 9). In terms of scope, an interdisciplinary approach may be applied on the basis of cultural studies as well as sociology, philosophy, political philosophy, economics, geography; psychology and gender studies (see Marschik et al. 255-286). Thus, sport studies require different approaches to cope with the complex social matrix of sports.

A main achievement of sport studies is the definition of modern sports and the explanation of historical trends having brought about its transformation to this day (see Marschik 23-34; Müllner 35-46). Clearly, the emphasis is on comparing pre-modern forms of sports to modern sports on the basis of detailed classification (see Marschik 27, Guttmann 15-56) and are to be differentiated from pre-modern forms of sports with regard to standardisation and quantification by seven criteria provided by Allen Guttmann (15-57).

Marschik (23) and Müllner (43) demonstrate how modern forms of sports first developed in Great Britain until the development was gradually spreading over mainland Europe. Whereas, previously, sport was characterised by local performance being executed by amateurs, modern sports can be seen as an international event, being performed by professional athletes and enjoying great media appeal (Marschik 26). Marschik and Müllner agree that the core of modernisation, however, is provided by Guttmann's theory (qtd. in Marschik 26 & Müllner 42) of the seven 'inner' criteria defining the transition to modern sport. They share Guttmann's point of view that the seven criteria mark a development making sports comparable and quantifiable along the quest for record-breaking achievements (Marschik 26, Müllner 42). To put Guttmann's criteria in a nutshell, modern forms of sport involve standardisation, rules and the ideal of a world record (Marschik 27, Müllner 42).

By characterizing the successful Austrian weightlifter Joseph Steinbach, Marschik (24-25) explains the transformation of sport to modern sport. Joseph Steinbach, who was born 1879, was already seen as local hero in 1900 as his success in weightlifting astounded the local audience. He actually worked as a waiter signalling that weightlifting was an amateur sport. His continuing success of breaking the world record in 1904 and being awarded as World Champion in Vienna was reported by the sports magazine *Allgemeine Sport Zeitung* (24-25). Vienna based media appeal was soon followed by international media representation as Steinbach won another two world championship titles in Berlin in 1905. Steinbach's weightlifting marks a transition from informal sports to modern sport as he was qualified to compete in the unofficial Olympic Games in Athens in 1906. There Steinbach was accused of "professionalism" in weightlifting by opponent Dimitrios Tophalos, which was seen as an insult to the Austrian national identity (Lennartz qtd. in Marschik 24-25). By transgressing from local execution of weightlifting to international competitive performance, he successfully highlights the main components of modern sport outlined as follows (Marschik 25): Steinbach highlights the standardisation of rules being applied and compared on an international level. Furthermore, the local character of sports was substituted by international games, competitions and organisations. "Going media" became a major factor due to the fact that sports became attractive to the media, culminating in the big turnover of specialised sports magazines. Coinciding with the wide audience appeal and the economic utilisation, the upper circles of athletes transgressed from amateurs to professionals (24-25).

Furthermore, Steinbach's example illustrates the fact, that performing sports on an international level has turned out to be a competition between nations as individual athletes symbolise a nation's national consciousness (Marschik 24-25). Marschik (30) points out that modern sports are, in essence, both national and international. International competition requires national structures determining the national qualifiers for performing sports on an international level. This global mechanism demands organisations to impose and control the rules of sport and cooperation and are organised in hierarchical order (30). On an international level, some athletic disciplines correspond to certain nations as Marschik

provides the examples of German gymnastics, Nordic skiing or English sports. In these examples, a specific type of physical activity stands for a whole nation. Next, Marschik quotes Alkemeyer (30) who explains that at international sport events like the Olympics, the achievements of the individual athletes are overshadowed by the achievements of their corresponding nations. Athletes and their achievements do not stand for themselves but for the country they represent, as their success or failure is felt and experienced and commented upon by citizens (30). Thus, Alkemeyer concludes, international events such as the Olympic Games represent a competition between nations (30).

3.2 SPORTS AND MODERNITY

In support of the above mentioned argument, I would like to demonstrate the correlation between the paradigm of modernity and sports as outlined by Marschik (23-34) and Manzenreiter (112-125). In addition, a short survey of the history of modern sport is essential for understanding the transformation of Irish dance from a social form of expression to a competitive sport in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as Irish dancing followed the same patterns of development as other sports in the same period of time.

Marschik (26) cites Giddens who argues that, in a traditional sense, sport has always been highly interwoven with the social life of people and follows their customs and daily routines. He supports Kaschuba's argument that in modern times, however, sport started to dislocate from quotidian life and formed a world of its own (Kaschuba qtd. in Marschik 26). While first, Marschik (26) points out that Giddens regards this development as the core of modern transformation of sports he later supports Kaschuba's argument that sport was not only transformed along modern lines but became a symbol of modernity itself (26). This transformation is a process which began in the eighteenth century and has lasted until contemporary times (Marschik 26).

Modernity is defined by Marschik along the categories of industrialisation, democratisation, secularisation and capitalism (26-27). Marschik (26-27) explains that these four aspects are understood as the cornerstones of modernity as they changed both the way of life and political topography. The rise of industry and technical mass production of goods coincided with capitalism and the secularisation of beliefs shifting from a religion-centred ideology to a belief in human capability and progress. In the second half of the twentieth century, democratisation and capitalism amalgamated and gave rise to a liberalism of social life pointed towards a "western" individualism (Marschik 27).

Guttmann (59-60), however, who regards the correlation between sports and capitalism as a prerequisite for modern sports, goes as far as to claim that the modernisation of sports would not have been possible without the rise of capitalism. Mass production of goods changed social patterns, and generated "social imperatives" (59) resulting in changing patterns of sports (59). Guttmann (59) claims that in Britain, the imperative of maximising efficiency and productivity primarily affected team sports such as football and baseball. These team sports became a means of socialising lower classes and were re-designed to provide an arena for the workforce in order to maintain their bodily strength (59). The British elites, however, practiced sports in order to emphasise their athletic individuality and to train leadership (59 -60). Guttmann's strongest claim dealing with sports and capitalism is that "the first nations to industrialize were also the first to establish national organizations for modern sports, in almost the same order" (61). He stresses Britain's role of being the origin of modernisation of sports by labelling Britain as the "homeland of industrial capitalism" where society is socialized along capitalist patterns of living at an early stage (60).

According to Manzenreiter's account (114), sport became further interlinked with economy from the eighteenth century onwards. He divides this interlinking process into three steps: He explains that during the new era of mass production of goods and urbanisation between 1860 and 1920, sport and its professionalization became a new form of business (114-115). In Europe, sport still adhered to moral and educational maxims, whereas it was corporate-governed and highly profit-orientated in North America (115). Consequently, sport

included liberation of working class resulting in higher wages and more leisure time during the era of Fordism between the 1950s and 1960 (116). The combined purchasing power of both the working class and the other classes gave rise to profitable sport merchandising (117). Subsequently, collective participation in physical sport activity and an increased interest in consuming sports through radio and television raised the economic value of sport and made it attractive for the state-run health– and leisure policy (116-117). In the third step of Post-Fordism from the 1960s onwards, sport assets became a further form of investment as the commodity sport has been interfering with the marketing worlds of fashion and entertainment (119). Manzenreiter (120) argues that sport has become a tool for guaranteeing health and fighting adiposity and an anti-aging method. Manzenreiter (120) calls this amalgamation of living and consuming sport "economisation of the cultural sphere" ("Durchökonomisierung des Kulturellen") and "corporatisation of the individual" ("Korporatisierung des Individuums") as the individual invests in his/her living and future by consuming sport and health goods supplied (120).

Guttmann's seven criteria of sport (see Guttmann 15-57) define modern sports and help to differentiate between pre-modern forms of sport from modern sports. They are a useful tool for analysing Irish dance and help to distinguish different features of Irish dancing marking it as a sport, and more especially, as a modern sport, which will be outlined below.

These criteria or features of modern sports are interdependent in terms of their development and are needed in a system directed at a competitive physical contest awarding a winner (Guttmann 55). Guttmann describes the interrelatedness of the criteria as follows:

> The modern quest for records is certainly unthinkable in its present form without quantification. It is also impossible, after a certain point reached by the untrained body, to achieve new records without specialization and rationalization. But specialization and rationalization usually imply bureaucratic organization, without which world championships cannot be staged nor rules established nor records duly certified. [...] The specialization, rationalization, and bureaucratization of modern sport also assume certain kinds of equality of opportunity. [...] Finally, the very notion of quantified achievement is probably more compatible with the

standards of a secular system than with one closely oriented to the transcendent realm of the sacred. (Guttmann 55)

Marschik (30) explains that sports require institutions controlling standardisation, codification and transnational performance. Guttmann (45) labels the process of competitive sports leading to the development of organisational structures as the bureaucratisation of sport. He emphasises this aspect, as bureaucratisation is a decisive step in the development of modern sports (see Guttmann 45).

The tasks of the hierarchically-structured sport organisation are varied. First, the organisational bodies are primarily in charge of enacting rules and membership on a universal and unified level. In addition, they seek to maintain and organise competitions and the interlinking of regional, national and international championships, the so-called "ratification of records" (Guttmann 47).

Guttmann states that primitive and ancient sports primarily had a religious function, which is in contrast to secular modern sports (17). In other words, ancient sports were necessary to establish a link between people and sacred rituals and were not a means in itself as they are today. He quotes Carl Diem who states that "all physical exercises were originally cultic" which means that primitive sports cannot be seen as linked to modern sports at all (17).

What Guttmann (17) clearly shows is that modern sports have abandoned any religious use of sacred rituals and have developed into a modern thus secular phenomenon.

Rationalisation in sports is reflected in the organisation of processes involved and in the finding of ways to maximise performance. In order to determine the winners, sports need rules establishing the mechanisms of contests as well as the choice of the winner (Guttmann 43). In addition, they determine which actions are to be prohibited and which physical achievements are to be performed and awarded. Furthermore, rationalisation means the study of physical activity for the sake of advancing physical achievement, such as the science of physical ergonomics (43).

The distinction between primitive and modern sports cannot be assessed on the basis of presence versus absence of rules but rather on their purpose (49). Guttmann (40) highlights that anthropologists have challenged the notion of the noble savage expressed by Rousseau. They claim that primitive cultures were not characterised by an entire lack of rules and taboos but, in fact, showed a high degree of restrictions. Thus, Guttmann argues, the distinction of rationalisation between primitive and modern sports cannot be based on the existence or lack of rules, but rather on the purpose of these rules. He suggests that the rules of primitive sports underlined the sacred cult and were not imposed to affect the game's mechanics. In modern sports, however, Guttmann explains the purpose of rules in terms of Max Weber's "Instrumental Reason" and claims that "the rules of the game are perceived by us as a means to an end" (40) which is quite the opposite of the meaning they had in primitive sports.

Specialisation involves several aspects. First, specialisation means the athlete's focus on one type of physical contest (Guttmann 36). Second, competitive games involve the strategic structuring of a team according to positions and roles to fulfil in order to win (37-38). Third, the goal of meeting ever higher targets in sports has resulted in a split between the amateur and the professional athletes (39). All these three phenomena of specialisation have developed as they became necessary and inevitable for successfully competing in sports by maximising outcome (39).

Another criterion for distinguishing non-modern from modern sports is equality. While ordinary games solely played for pleasure involve participation of a group of players mixed in aspects such as age, height, gender, contests today require equal standards for contestants' as far as preconditions and abilities are concerned, in order to determine the best (Guttmann 26). The meaning of equality in sports is best outlined by Guttmann who explains: "The second characteristic of modern sport is equality in two senses of that complex concept; (1) everyone should, theoretically, have an opportunity to compete; (2) the conditions of competition should be the same for all contestants." (ibid.)

Adding a careful "theoretically" in his claim above, Guttmann states that in spite of the necessary theoretical aspect of equality, sports are characterised by a high

amount of inequality, especially as everyone should be allowed into contests. Still, sports have shown exclusion on the basis of class, gender and race or simply membership (see Guttmann 26-36). On close investigation, inequality in sports seems inevitable. Guttmann states that the equality of participation and the equality of results are interlinked insofar as the higher the equality of participation the more inequality there is in the results (ibid.).

Quantification of modern sports is the desire to put physical activity and its achievements in synchronically and diachronically comparable numerical order (47). This means that achievements are counted and determined through time measurement and detailed statistics (47-78). Guttmann (47) states that "modern sports are characterized by the almost inevitable tendency to transform *every* athletic feat into one that can be quantified and measured".

According to Guttmann (48) this maxim of quantification is a hint towards the zeitgeist of modern sports in present-day societies. He comprehensively comments that:

> The statistics of the game are part and parcel of the statistics of modern society. The Earned Average and the Gross National Product, Yards Gained Rushing and the Grade Point Average. We live in a world of numbers. Computers inform us of the successful batter's new average before he arrives breathlessly at second base, just as computers provide us with data on the Dow Jones Average and the felony rate in twenty-five metropolitan areas (Guttmann 48)

Quantification of gymnastic sports has pointed out the problem of inaccurate measurement. Sports such as gymnastics, ice-skating and dancing are difficult to quantify, as their execution is primarily assessed on the basis of aesthetics. One can quantify numbers and heights of jumps, the length of a pitch or the duration of a racing lap, but to accurately measure the greatness of a skilled figure in ice-skating is problematic (Guttmann 50-51).

However, Guttmann (50) indicates that there is a demand for quantification, even with regard to aesthetic performances and he explains the way in which the problem is being solved. Organisations managing such disciplines have introduced assessment on the basis of a numeric point system to be used by judges. Exercise of certain movements is given a pre-set number of points. This

method of evaluation represents a numeric translation of the partly subjective aesthetic opinion of the judges into quantifiable measurements, as Guttmann suggests (50-51).

Due to detailed quantification and statistics, which have become vital for modern sports, it has become possible to determine both the best athlete of a current game and the best sport achievement over a longer period of time (Guttmann 51). Guttmann clarifies that the aspiration to attain best achievements, i.e. records, has been an inevitable result of the process of quantification. Records provide an opportunity for athletes to diachronically compete with scores of athletes who exercised their sports earlier in sports history. As a consequence, ever more records are broken and the record itself steadily approaches the highest possible degree of human achievement potential (51-52).

Sports whose execution is assessed on the basis of their aesthetic values, can likewise provide their own history of records. Guttmann (52) suggests that a certain number of titles won constitute their own realm of records, as do the recurring numbers of highest-point results.

4.0 SPORTS AND NATIONALISM IN IRELAND – THE GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

The question remains why cultural practices such as Irish dance are essential for nationalism. Irish dancing as a carrier of national identity is important because nationalism relies on creating a national identity through cultural and social activities in quotidian life (English: 462). English (462) provides the link between nationalism and everyday life and states that nationalism "can be […] culturally orientated (campaigns for the extension on national language use, for the establishment of norms of cultural practice), and frequently reflected even in daily routines and rituals" (462). He continues that:

> Shrewd nationalists recognize that national consciousness, cultural practices and the like must be embedded in daily routines and habits and assumptions; and so campaigns can revolve around […] the reinforcing and reproducing of national consciousness through day-to-day language and practice: the people and events commemorated in the names of streets, buildings, stations, airports, [sic] sports […] and so forth (462).

Summing up, nationalist thinking is bound to manifest itself in cultural practises, as it needs to be promoted and developed through these in order to be effective and capable of mobilizing masses of group members (462).

With regard to sport, English demonstrates the importance of cultural practices (such as Irish dance) for establishing and maintaining a national consciousness. This does not mean that every development in the recent history of Irish sports and Irish dance has been motivated by nationalism. However, English succeeds in portraying the way in which cultural practises can support national interests, whether deliberately promoted in a nationalist sense or not (see English 462).

Foster (231) explains that the late nineteenth century in Ireland was characterised by the urge to create a national consciousness suitable for representing a collective Irish nation. As for the cultural impact, this was achieved through the influential poetry of William Butler Yeats as well as the creation of the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Gaelic League (Foster 231). The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in 1884 in order to promote Irish sports, whereas the

Gaelic League (founded in 1893) initially focused on the promotion of the Irish language before it started to collect and promote Irish dances (Foster 231; Whelan 17). Foster quotes the military leader Michael Collins who claimed that "we only succeeded after we had begun to get back our Irish ways […]" which Foster considers to be achieved in Yeats' literary creation of a national canon. According to James O'Grady, Yeats is 'the father of the Irish Revival' (qtd. In Foster: 231). Not only did the Irish Revival rest on cultural and literary movements, but was interwoven with political agendas of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Fenians and the Parnellite approach (231).

While the struggle for independence did not rest on mutual consent, the composition of a national consciousness was envisioned unanimously (31-39). The Irish nation was seen in close connection to a glorified Gaelic past whose former glory was to be continued. This vision was "supported by the image of high kings, saints, and scholars" (Cronin 39). Cultural aspirations such as the Literary Revival, the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association as well as political nationalism, no matter whether para-military or Irish Republican, all based their notion of Irishness on this vision (39).

Gebauer, who is cited by Alkemeyer (48) emphasizes that sport has both the power to include and define an in-group and to distinguish the in-group from a constructed out-group. As indicated in chapter three, sport can function as a carrier of lifestyle and identity (Alkmeyer 48-53). As will be outlined below, Irish sport contains the moment of defining and bestowing itself with identity by linking the newly constructed version of Irish sports with a nostalgic sense of history (see Cronin 72). I will subsequently explain that the same mechanism is true for Irish dancing.

Cronin states that there is an urge to revive Gaelic order in sports by establishing a historical link between modern Irish Gaelic sports (such as hurling) and the glorified past (72). With regard to history, Gaelic sports are seen as a continuation of former Gaelic sports or a direct transformation of these into their modern equivalents. Cronin criticises the practise of establishing such a historical connection (74). He explains that there were indeed Gaelic Games before the eighteenth century, but to exactly "name them hurling and football is difficult" (75).

Due to historical vagueness, it is not possible to directly compare former Gaelic sports with the distinctive hurling or Gaelic football which already underwent a nationalist transformation (39).

Promoting Irishness in the history of Irish sports extends to providing national icons and legends, as well as the question of origin (73). Cronin indicates the lore about the origin of Gaelic games revolving around initiation rites symbolising male transgression from adolescence to manhood (73). Furthermore, Gaelic sports are symbolised by the mythical figure of Cú Chulainn (who has been a role model for the Fenians) as the first national sportsman (73). According to popular lores, the origin of Gaelic sports is said to have taken place at the battle of Moytura and is credited to the "annual fairy battle of Munster" (Cronin 72). The examples given highlight the interaction of Irish Gaelic consciousness with history, mythology and legends.

Cronin's critique that Gaelic sport is depicted as being connected with ancient Gaelic practise along with lore and mythology also applies to Irish dancing. Prominent examples for including myths and lores into the history of Irish dance are given by the origin of Irish dance and the rigidity of arms in Irish dancing. Traditional explanations for the rigidity of the upper body have been passed on orally. They are briefly mentioned in print in the history article section of an Irish dance wear retailer's homepage (see *Why the Straight Arms*) highlighting the popular belief of Irish dancers and teachers in two different myths: The first myth indicates that dancers from Ireland were brought to the court of queen Elisabeth I. and - refusing to pay tribute to her majesty - danced with their arms kept rigid as a sign of resistance (ibid). Another myth states that dancers behind the pub bar or behind windows would keep their arms and body rigid to prevent the English police officers from recognising their performance (ibid.). Later this myth was altered as it was the clergy from whom the dancers were hiding (ibid.). Hall (15) refers to myths in Irish dancing dealing with rigidity of arms to counteract opposition to dancing, but he concludes that such myths are treated as jokes and are not believed. I strictly disagree with this conclusion. The article mentioned above shows that popular believe regards the counter-hegemonic essence of those myths as the only valid answer available for addressing questions about

rigidity of the upper body. Hall fails to see the importance of the fact that certain myths and developments of Irish dance are consciously linked to national narratives of resistance against authorities.

Historical vagueness constitutes a problem when doing research on Irish dance history. The book *Irish Dance* by Arthur Flynn serves as a prominent example of historical vagueness. He argues in a section named "Origins of Irish Dance" that "[a]mong the earliest influences were the Druids who danced in religious ritual to the oak and the sun. Traces of their circular dances still survive in the ring dances of today" (Flynn 13). In his text, Flynn does not provide further explanations for his argument and does not state any evidence that ritual dances of druids directly influenced contemporary Irish dancing. His argument seems doubtful and far-fetched as other authors do not mention such a relation. Earliest sources mentioning dancing in Ireland date from the middle ages (Brennan 15). The first reference to *rince* describing "[a] dance around fires by a slender swift vigorous group" (Carney qtd. in Brennan 16) dates from 1588 (16). Brennan (15) makes clear that "references to dancing in Ireland in the years prior to the seventeenth century are few [...] [and] [e]ven where the Irish words for dance – *rince* and *damsah*- do occur, it is not possible to glean any information as to the precise nature of the dance".

Cronin's statement (75) that it is not possible to compare modern Irish sports with traditional equivalents due to nationalist transformation is true for Irish dancing. Flynn tries to establish a connection between dances of "Celtic" druids and modern Irish group dances in order to provide a sense of continuity, while glorifying an imagined past and depicting Celticism as closely belonging to Irishness. This practice, however, is not history but nationalist story-telling.

Following Cronin's line of thought it is not possible to use such early sources of dancing in Ireland for explaining the origins of "the" Irish dancing we know today. In the first chapter of *Further Aspects of the History of Irish Dancing,* Cullinane (17-50), too, investigates the origins of Irish dances and repeatedly warns of the scarcity of historical sources. Nevertheless, there seems to be an urge to present an origin and this urge is expressed by Cullinane (17): "[...] [W]e just do not know at what date the human race first started to dance and we do not know at what

date the Irish race stated to dance. We can only speculate that it was way back in prehistoric times and almost certainly pre-Christian times." (Cullinane 17)

As stated in the introduction, this paper focuses on the 1880s as being the starting point for research due to a lack of data about Irish dancing prior to the late nineteenth century. Cronin helps us understand the nationalist transformation of Irish sports by providing essential background knowledge of the year 1880 (76-77). He states that after the 1880s, Parnell, the Fenians, the Land League campaign and the introduction of the nationalist newspaper *United Irishman* supported nationalism to be represented by the masses (77). Cronin highlights the role of the Catholic Church which controlled the "make or break movements" (Cronin 77).

A vital factor for providing cultural nationalism through sport has been the Gaelic Athletic Association founded on 1 Nov 1884 in the Hayes Hotel billiard room in Thurles, Ireland (Cronin 80). Key figure Michael Cusack intended to establish a cultural nationalism for promoting a political nationalist course of action. This was an endeavour he clearly stated in a letter to the *United Irishman* (80). The Association had broad support with Charles Stuart Parnell, Land Leaguer Michael Davitt and the Archbishop of Croke as its patrons (80).

Apart from supporting Irish sports, the G.A.A also distinguished Irish sports from those of other nations, especially Britain, as it tried to exclude the hegemonial out-group (see Cronin 78). This development reminds us of Gebauer's argument that sport is a sphere of differentiating policy (qtd. in Alkemeyer 48).

As Cronin (78) suggests, the Gaelic Athletic Association was founded not only to promote Irish culture, but to oppose British influence in the field of sports (78). The late nineteenth century witnessed a growth of popularity of British sports such as cricket and soccer. This spread of British sports was seen as endangering Irish sports. According to Cronin (82), Archbishop Croke pronounced the fear of an extinction of Irish sports due to British Influence. Other attempts to save the Irish culture from oblivion was the establishing of sport organisations such as the National Athletics Sports of Mayo (Foster 224). Foster (224), like Cronin, highlights the Irish nationalist motivation behind these

institutions; Foster explains that Irish nationalists "felt the need for a national body to oversee athletics on a national (and Irish nationalist) basis [and it] was held to be important that distinctively Irish national sports should not die out and be eclipsed by their English rivals" (229).

To oppose the British dominance of sports in Ireland, The G.A.A. introduced three major bans (Cronin 84-85). The first ban of 1885 tied athletes to the association by allowing them only to compete under the rules of the Association. The second ban introduced in 1887, later dropped and reintroduced in 1905, stipulated that no member of the Royal Irish Constabulary was allowed to enter the Association. The third major ban, introduced in 1905, stated that "persons who play rugby, soccer, hockey, cricket or any imported games shall be suspended for two years from date of playing such games" (qtd. in Cronin 84).

Cronin (84-85) suggests that the bans were not introduced as a political act, but to secure the Association's future in the first place. It is Cronin who explains that the bans have to be seen in a wider context beyond the structure of sports, as the introduction of restricting rules and membership was required to "ensure the success of the GAA as a sporting body" (Cronin 84). The banning was to "ensure standardisation [...] and is part of the broad Victorian standardisation of most sports at the time" (84).

I deem it necessary to emphasise Cronin's argument (84), that Irish sports, in spite of trying to oppose and contrast British sports, incorporated the British sports model involving standardisation and quantification. The spheres of defining and distinguishing with regard to sports are therefore not to be considered as being clear cut. First, the introduction of the Victorian sports model into Irish sports is based on the desire to present Irish sports that are not to be seen inferior to British sports in terms of efficiency, codification, and rationalisation. Second, standardisation and quantification, according to Marschik (23), were the new trends in sport emanating from Britain and taking ground in all of Europe preceded by the maxim of "faster, higher, stronger" (23). In adopting the Victorian sports model, Ireland followed the general trend in Europe towards modern sports proving the actual lack of independence of Irish sports in spite of the nationalists' desire to design it as closed world.

Cronin points towards a disagreement among scholars as to what extent the Gaelic Athletic Association was politically motivated and structured and to what extent it was "only a sporting movement" (Cronin 85). Regarding the fact that the bans of 1885 and 1905 prevented athletes from joining organisations and sports other than those of the Association, Cronin's argument of a primarily sports-connected concern seems not highly convincing at first glance. But rather than denying a political complexity of the Gaelic Athletic Association, Cronin wants to indicate that its political role was exaggerated. He states that scholars are too pre-occupied with describing the Gaelic Athletic Association in political lines, thus neglecting the cultural impact it had (92). An authentic description of its political influence is bound to involve the inner circles of the Irish Republican Army. Cronin highlights that due to Parnell's influence, it was not the Catholic Church but the Irish Republican Army that came to control the majority within the G.A.A. (86). According to Cronin (89), the IRA's description of the Association's role, implies that the political importance of this institution was exaggerated in order to make use of it in the war of independence. He also points out that initially the heads of the Association strongly opposed to be seen as primarily politically engaged, whereas later they adhered to its political connection for the national prestige this point of view provided (85-87).

Nevertheless, The Gaelic Athletic Association became a national symbol and model of a New Ireland (Cronin 90; English 359). Cronin states that the Association's importance and influence was rising as it became the most important organisation next to the Catholic Church and the state (Cronin 89). In the 1920s it was accepted as a national symbol representing an Irish Free State (89). Not only was it a symbol but also a model for an Irish state, as the dream of a nationalist and independent Ireland seemed to be materialising (English 359). English explains that:

> The Gaelic Athletic Association indeed offered a kind of sublimated republic: it was an all-Ireland organisation, basically Catholic and, of course, proudly and distinctively Gaelic. A counterlife, linking locality to nation and [...] recreation. (English 359)

Cronin (90) presents an argument focusing on the symbolic quality of the physical activity in Irish sports under the auspices of the Gaelic Athletic Association. Cronin states that Irish symbolism does not end with the Gaelic Athletic Association as an institution representing Irish culture as such. Cronin regards "sporting physical fitness as a route to securing national self-determination" (90).

This, in turn, can be linked to the theory of the symbolic value the physically active body presented in section 3.1. Symbolism of Irish sports extends from the sport as being labelled Irish to the physical activity itself, as the training of the body provides a method of actively building up Irish national culture through performance (see Gebauer qtd. in Alkemeyer 48). Thus, performing physical strength means performing "national strength" (Cronin 90).

Just as Gaelic sports represent Irish national strength, other European countries express their national identities through sports using the symbolism connected to it. As shown above, the bourgeoisie in Germany used sports to express moral superiority in the nineteenth century and physical exercise was practised in the style of military training symbolising unity and strength (see Alkemeyer 48-53). In Vienna, workmen sports were undergoing a similar process. Initially forbidden to engage in sports, (Stecewics qtd. in Marschik 32) workers started to organise their own sport gatherings on grassland and public places in 1900. These were initiated by factory owners who saw sports as a method of maintaining physical strength of labour. Excluded from middle-class sports, the first Labour Associations emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century promoting labour sports with the distinctive aim to create the "New Man" symbolising solidarity and activism (32).

Cronin (51) investigates how nationalism is presented and reproduced in sports and tries to understand and express its multi-dimensional complexity as a carrier of meaning and vessel for performing identity (51). He claims that sport is part of the popular culture. He says it is "a forum of ideals" and cites Horkheimer who explains that sport is "a world of its own" where identity is performed (51).

Cronin states that the complexity of the relation between nationalism and sport stems from the fact that the relation is "multilayered and multifaceted" (56).

Nationalism in sport is built up and maintained by a variety of different agents such as athlete, spectator, organisation, media, and individual (55). Furthermore, nationalism can create or just display current notions of a variety of nationalisms. Political, Cultural, historical and individual nationalisms are interrelated in a complex way and simultaneously carried and expressed by the different agents involved. Nationalism performed in sports can appear as both an inclusive unifying force and an excluding separating force. These effects can last only for the duration of a game/sport event or as long as a team/athlete remains successful. Finally performing identity can involve 'real' nationalism tied on real objects such as flags, team uniforms, athlete's body or can be 'imagined' as symbolised by values, conduct, or just the inclusive "we" the athlete represents (55-56).

5.0 IRISH DANCE AS NATIONALIST ALIGNMENT

The following section of the thesis deals with the analysis of Irish dance as promoting Irish identity in the nineteenth century with the Gaelic League attempting to find a representative example of Irishness in Irish dancing. As will be outlined below, the Gaelic League's support of Irish dance constitutes the transformation of Irish dance under the terms of nationalism prior to its transformation into a sport.

5.1 THE DANCE MASTER – A NATIONAL ICON?

In order to understand the individual development stages leading to Irish dancing under the aegis of the Gaelic League, the travelling dance master's stylistic and wide-spread influence on Irish dancing during the nineteenth and early twentieth century has to be taken into account, as the institution of the dance teacher has been shaping the nature of Irish dance to this day (Hall 49).

The dance masters (Cullinane 1999: 35) were travelling dance teachers who taught their skills to pupils among rural communities from the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. (Cullinane 1999: 33). According to Arthur Young's (qtd. In Cullinane 1999: 33) description from 1779, these dance masters were often accompanied by musicians who provided the music needed for the dancing lessons. The master and musician stayed in an area for a pre-set duration (commonly six weeks) teaching locals, whereupon they moved to the next area. Frequently, the pupils used the steps acquired at a 'benefit night' to entertain the local community and their parents, who paid the dance master and the musician (33). Carleton, the author of *The Dancing Master,* written in 1835, (qtd. In Cullinane 1999: 35) agrees with Young's description of the journeywork of dance masters but differs by mentioning that he (in Cullinane's words) "himself usually supplied the music" (36). Being highly respected in the nineteenth century

the dance master wanted to be regarded as a gentleman as he, "considered himself to be a gentleman and conducted himself accordingly" (35). It is quite remarkable that Young, writing in the eighteenth century, highlights the teaching of children, whereas Cullinane points out the fact that dancing during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was primarily performed by adults (44).

Upon closer examination, Arthur Young's description includes two interesting facts characterising Irish dancing in the eighteenth century, and stresses the importance of Irish dance with regard to the Irish sense of community. In the first place, Irish dance was largely performed by the poor population; second, Irish dance teachers were key figures in the education of Irish Catholics during the penal laws. Dance masters could be seen as being associated with the 'plain people of Ireland' as Cullinane (1999: 33-34) quotes Arthur Young to express the rural character of the master's journeywork when mentioning that the dancing was particularly popular with the poor. Another link between dance masters and Irish Catholic peasants was their involvement with so-called 'hedge schools' (39). In the first half of the eighteenth century, the penal laws did not permit education for Irish Catholics. These hedge schools secretly employed dance teachers and provided certain kinds of teaching. Dance masters "either carried out the profession of teaching dancing alone or else combined with other trades" (Cullinane 1999: 34) and as a consequence of hedge schools the dance masters "taught skills such as deportment and fencing as well as Irish dancing" (34).

The impression is conveyed that the dance master was generally a dance teacher by profession teaching other trades and crafts at the same time. While this was true, the opposite was true as well. Culliane (1999: 34) points out that some were professional teachers, but "for example, some Cork dancing teachers were in fact plasterers by trade and they followed the available work around and very often taught dancing where ever they happened to be working" (Cullinane 1999: 34).

This shows the cultural importance of the dance teacher and his teaching as well as his integration in Irish culture. The figure of the dance master represents gentlemanly qualities, basic learning and tendencies opposed to British-predominance.

Cullinane (1999:33) and Whelan (14) show that the dance teacher's achievements included the creation of various dances including the advancement of the step dance, the further spreading of these newly created forms and a first basic standardisation. Cullinane (33) suggests that these travelling dance teachers were responsible for the evolution of the step dance in Irish dancing. In line with their creative output, those teachers introduced a basic standardisation of styles and step sequences as their quality was also assessed on the basis of their ability to create new step choreographies (34).

Cullinane (1999:37) indicates early contests and points out that, when they met, dance masters often competed with each other at fairs or sport events. The winner was declared on the basis of the number of steps he could perform, not the quality of their execution. Thus, the masters were keen on constantly composing more steps (37). The contest had economic purposes and was used to settle area infringements as the unsuccessful teacher often was withdrawn the right to teach in a specific part of the area (37).

The early reference to contests between dance masters proves to be highly interesting. The fact that dance teachers engaged in rivalling dance contests shows that early Irish dancing already disposed of enough diversity and potential to provide the differentiation needed to evaluate the winner. However, those early contests were not yet sports as they were spontaneous in character and lacked unified rules and organisations. For their definition as modern sports they would need to show tendencies towards codification and unification so important to modern sports as defined by Guttmann.

Cullinane (1999: 37) places emphasis on the importance of the dance masters' work in the Irish counties Cork, Kerry and Limerick. By mainly teaching in these areas, they helped increase the significance of the three counties as important centres for early Irish dancing at the beginning of the nineteenth century (37). As one dance master claimed a particular area of up to 20 miles (36) for his profession with a high number of pupils and future masters to teach, Irish dance forms and particular steps appear highly homogenous (34-35).

The development towards early regional dance styles in Irish dancing points to standardisation. This development can be assessed as an important step in Irish dancing as regional styles precede national and superregional standardisation in sports. Irish dance, however, was far from being sport in the beginning of the nineteenth century due to a lack of any codification and rationalisation.

As I see, it, the findings of Cullinane's research make it clear that apart from the highly–valued creation of new steps and different techniques, any form of standardisation and homogeneity was a side effect of the teacher's wide influence and not an interest in standardisation as seen in nineteenth and twentieth century modern sport and modern Irish competition dancing.

It may be of some interest that although not much is known about the development of the step dance by the dance masters, they are still provided with a national code. To summarize, Young and Cullinane describe it as follows: The dance masters were deeply involved with countering hegemony through hedge schools, considering themselves as gentlemen or higher Irish genteel, as they taught Irish dancing in rural areas to the catholic 'plain Irish people'. I deem it important to investigate how the dance masters are depicted by the authors mentioned. Describing the dance masters as hedge school teachers displays them as anti-British icons, providing education to the rural catholic population which had no right for education under Protestant administration. Thus, the three key factors defining the situation in the late nineteenth century in Ireland are expressed by the land question, the importance of Catholicism for the nationalist struggle and the emancipation from hegemonial oppression. Due to a lack of detailed descriptions by the above-mentioned authors it is indeed difficult to say, whether the situation of the dance masters is an actual fact or just another feature of made-up Irishness. Defining the era of the dance masters as a historical development is not within the scope of my thesis, as the sources required are clearly lacking. What is important, however, is the fact that the dance masters are portrayed as a cornerstone of Irish dancing and as figures defining the nationalist qualities of Irish dancing. Furthermore, they represent the local Irish folk dance culture which appears to be yet free from both the direct nationalist intervention by the Gaelic League and a development towards global sports, thus serving as a

starting point for the nationalist movement of Irish dance which will be dealt with in the next section.

5.2 THE GAELIC LEAGUE– IRISH DANCE AS CARRIER OF NATIONALIST IDENTITY

The dance masters were renowned for performing and spreading Irish dancing up to the 1950's. The Gaelic League, however, was the first organisation to use Irish dancing for spreading their vision of Irishness, by strongly relying on the work of the dance masters. It was also claimed to be the first organisation to officially control and support Irish dancing (see Hall 23; 49-50).

English (455) points out that the driving notion behind the creation of the Gaelic League and the reason for their interest in Irish dancing was a rising concern among members of the League for losing the Irish language and culture. In order to counter decline they revived and preserved the Irish language through establishing and organising clubs and official bodies for its support, such as the Gaelic League (English 227). Countering language decline began with the introduction of the Society for the Preservation of Irish Language (founded 1877) and later the Gaelic League led by Douglas Hyde, who later became the first president of the Republic of Ireland (227). The fear of language decline was justified. English (227) states that by 1800, half of the Irish population spoke Gaelic Irish, by 1950 five percent spoke Gaelic Irish and by 1900 there remained only one percent of Irish speakers (227).

English stresses the link between language commitment and the supportive role of social events to add a cultural touch to the League's efforts. English points out that:

> The League ran language classes and social events (as so often in nationalism, the social dimension swiftly became an important part of a movement's appeal) and it hoped to revive Irish, (227) [...] [T]he absorption of linguistic revivalism into Irish nationalist enthusiasm is the key point (228).

A milestone in the development of Irish dancing under the control of the Gaelic League was the first official Irish "ceili" evening in the Bloomsbury Hall in London on Saturday, 30 October 1897 (Brennan 30), held by the Gaelic League to provide entertainment and a base for allowing Irish culture to prosper. Here, ceili does not only refer to the kind of group dance performed, but also to the event itself. The ceili event is a non-competitive dance event where people assemble to be in company with each other, to party and dance. Cullinane (1999: 18) cites Gaelic League representative Fionan Mc Coluim, who after attending this ceili event of 1897 explains that the dancing involved trained dancers, but most of the dancing was performed by non- trained laypeople. The musicians were piper Tomás Ó Garracháin from Birmingham and pianist Dr. Annie Patterson from Cork alongside others not named by Mc Coluím.

Brennan (30) describes the outline of the first Gaelic League ceili in London:

> Amongst the invited guests were a group of Scottish dancers and singers and some Welsh singers, who performed on stage. The dance programme proved a problem. The majority of the Gaelic League members in London were white-collar workers – journalists, doctors and civil servants – and according to Mac Coluim's account, their knowledge of Irish dance was limited. Most, however knew the basic form of the double jig danced in couples with a row of men facing a row of women: all move around the room for 8 bars, then dance for 8 bars opposite partner, change places, dance new step, change back to place, and so on. The only other dances known to the company were the quadrilles and waltz, which were performed by "Fitzgerald's Band" to Irish airs in honour of the occasion. (Brennan 30).

The fact that the social context provided by Irish dancing could be advantageous for the Gaelic League was discovered rather incidentally when Gaelic Leaguers visited an Irish dance evening in London (Cullinane 1999: 17). This first official ceili event in London was inspired by a Scottish ceili event in London including two group dances with Irish titles into the event's repertoire (the dances were called Rory Ó Mór and The Priest in his Boots). After attending the Scottish ceili events, Fionán Mac Coluim suggested to the Gaelic League in London to work on an Irish ceili to celebrate the November Irish Festival, which finally resulted in the Bloomsbury Hall event presented above (17). The London Gaelic Leaguer's interest in initiating an Irish ceili event was seen as necessary. Brennan (29)

states that "whilst their Irish language classes were operating successfully, they were keenly aware of the lack of social dimension to their activities, particularly when they attended some lively Scots *céilithé* in London" (Brennan 29).

In my view it is necessary to stress that Irish dancing witnessed at the Scots ceili in London was more than just a social dimension the League members felt amiss. It was living identity – it was, according to Marschik, (28) identification written into the physically active body itself. The dancing was yet not sport, not driven by nationalistic feelings, but rather spontaneous folk dance including set dances and quadrilles, and co-existing with Scottish and Welsh folk culture. This, as will be explained below, should change drastically with a 'purification' of Irish dance.

The Bloomsbury Hall ceili was just the beginning of a series of popular ceili events organised by the Gaelic League in Ireland and London (Cullinane 1999: 18) Brennan's description of the Bloomsbury Hall ceili includes a line that became decisive for the Gaelic League's approach to Irish dancing. It said that "The dance programme proved a problem [and] according to Mac Coluim's account, their knowledge of Irish dance was limited." (Brennan 30). To remedy the problem of their scarce knowledge concerning Irish dance, the London Gaelic League started journeys to Ireland to expand their knowledge. Dr. Partick Reidy, who originally came from Kerry and was a dancing master there, was asked to hold the first dancing lesson organised by the League in which ceili dances were taught (Brennan 30). A variety of dances of both ceili and later even step dance sequences were constantly supplied and extended by dance teachers from Ireland. The Irish county Kerry was of special importance in terms of dances as 17 out of 26 dances performed came from the county Kerry (Cullinane 1999: 20).

The gradual accumulation of knowledge on Irish dancing by the London Gaelic League branch was the impetus for the League to extend their teaching programme by including dancing classes. As the social dimension the London Gaelic League was seeking was provided by the dancing, pupils of Irish language classes were taught newly acquired dances by the Gaelic League organisers (Brennan 31). The dance material was provided by the dance masters on the basis of both the traditional values which the teachers of the Gaelic League

individually passed on to their language students, and Irish dance tuition partly provided by Gaelic League officials (Cullinane 1999: 20).

It is indeed noteworthy, that the new dance tuition was partly taught by G.L. language teachers, laypeople to the field of dancing. Irish dancing was informal, and locally and orally transmitted. Onlookers and visitors of dancing events could take part in informal Irish dancing. There was no distinct boundary between the role of dancer and spectator, or teacher and dancer. There was no governing institution deciding which form of dancing was permitted or not or who was to be permitted to teach. Thus, if Gaelic League language teachers decided to introduce dancing to their classes, it was a welcome addition to their lessons. There are no sources mentioning any opposition towards the incorporation of dancing into the Irish language class setting.

In the late 19th century, another organisation was active in collecting and supporting Irish dancing similar to the League, namely the Cork Pipers Club founded in March 1898. The Club, which had a major influence on Irish dancing in Cork, was initiated by John Smithwick Wayland, who promoted Irish dancing without being a dancer himself (Cullinane 1999 85). Similar to the ceili events held by the Gaelic League, the Cork Pipers Club was involved in collecting and performing Irish dance with resident Cork dance masters functioning as primary reference for dances. In addition to the Cork Pipers Club's own dance master, teachers from other areas as well as retired teachers were heartily invited to show and exchange their steps (86). The example of the Cork Pipers Club indicates the extent to which a raised interest in Irish dancing led to a rapid accumulation of steps and varieties of dances. This knowledge was spreading from Cork to other regions such as Dublin or Ulster from where teachers came in order to learn the Cork steps (86).

Following the lines of thought suggested above it becomes clear that the dance masters greatly determined both the Irish dances prevailing in the Gaelic League and the Cork Pipers Club and the newly gained significance of the counties Kerry, Cork, and Limerick styles. Cork can be regarded as another centre of collecting and spreading Irish dancing (Cullinane 1999:20). Together they subsequently

exerted a dominating influence on unifying Irish dancing and establishing its predominance in Ireland (Brennan 58).

Both the Gaelic League and the C.P.C supported and collected Irish dances. I clearly see the difference between the organisations Cork Pipers Club and the Gaelic League is shown in the fact that the Gaelic League's interests were not restricted to the support of Irish dancing for its own sake but included clearly nationalistically motivated reasons. The C.P.C centred on supporting the Irish dance community without showing any tendencies of taking control of the dance community. The Gaelic League, however, started to support Irish dance in a prescriptive way. Their urge of controlling Irish dancing can be seen as corresponding with the notion of establishing Irish culture through dancing to repel British cultural hegemony (Hall 29). The next chapter will explain how repelling British culture through Irish sports and dance took form within the G.A.A and Gaelic League.

5.3 PRESERVING AND REVIVING IRELAND – PURIFYING IRISH DANCE

In order to understand why the Gaelic League was so keenly interested in Irish dancing and sought to use it as an instrument to 'ignite' Irishness and oppose Britishness, one has to bear in mind that it appears that opposition to British hegemony followed the pattern of the Gaelic Athletic Association's campaign of countering British influence in terms of culture by providing an 'Irish' equivalent (Hall 29).

In fact, each cultural influence perceived as British influence was countered by providing a "Gaelic" equivalent (Kilberd qtd. in Hall 29). Kilberd (qtd. in Hall) provides a list structured in binary pairs demonstrating the process of counter culture.

English language – Irish language

English law – Brehon law

Parliament- Dáil

Prime Minister – Taoiseach

Soccer – Gaelic football

Hockey – Hurling

Trousers – Kilt

Hall (29) quotes Kilberd adding that "it mattered little whether those devices had a secure basis in Irish history, for if they had not previously existed they could be invented". Kilberd's argument speaks for the construction of Irishness in the sense of Anderson's imagined community. In the following, it will be dealt with the interconnection between the development of Irishness and the formation of the Irish dancing culture.

The mode of opposing hegemony by providing counter models was extended to dancing, as Irish dances constitute a direct counter model to British dances (see Hall 29). In order to contrast British dances, the Gaelic League deemed it important to create an Irish dance that was considered as purely Irish without a tint of 'foreign' influence. This quest for creating a genuine 'Irish' dance began with filtering the present dances in Ireland through a kind of cultural filter in order to differentiate and separate foreign influences from 'truly Irish' origins (see Brennan 31-43). Although this filtering of Irish dancing can be seen as the starting point for a subsequent standardisation (which will be dealt with in the next section of this paper), the purification process is discussed in connection with the Gaelic League on a primarily nationalist and non-structural basis.

The process that is apparently bearing in mind the purification of Irish dancing from vilified 'out-group' elements is the nationalist transformation of Irish dance through direct control by the Gaelic League. It is of some interest, that – by collection and dismissal - the League provided a first general accumulation of dance knowledge which was then standardized thus preceding the later phase of sportification. I dare suggest that the development of Irish dance from local folk dance to modern sport is indeed rooted in the dual process of nationalist transformation, first, and modern sportification, second. The Gaelic League's

purification of Irish dance starts with standardisation and a first outline of a general mode of conduct, but it still does not comply with detailed bureaucratisation and specialisation. This is why I claim that the process of sportification was a subsequent development.

In the course of the process mentioned, a debate on the exclusive Irishness of group dances evolved (see Brennan 31-43). Questions arouse, such as whether foreign, that is, mainland European and British dance trends influenced dancing in Ireland or whether Irish dancing was the trend setter for mainland European dances (Cullinane 1999: 8). In order to meet the purpose of this thesis, it is not crucial to provide an answer to this question by comparing the different points of views and arguments. However, it is important to mention and emphasise the debate itself as it highlights the pursuit of evoking Irishness through dancing and that there was a basic awareness of the interconnectivity of European dance trends.

As a matter of fact, the development of Irish dancing is not analogous to the Gaelic Athletic Association's strategy to counter British sports in Ireland. Basically, the process of differentiating between Irish and foreign dances is a course of action in line with the Gaelic Athletic Association prime agenda based on concerns for the survival of Irish sports. I am suggesting that, on examining Brennan's accounts of the first ceili evenings (30) above, it is clear that Irish dancing had never been on the brink of extinction as it was culture practised though on a small scale, thus filling a social gap the Gaelic League felt amiss. In clear contrast to the G.A.A's agenda is the fact that countering British influence in dancing was extended by the exclusion of any 'foreign' influence from Irish dancing. In my view, this desire to arrive at a genuine Irish core of dancing is a reason for the urge of most authors investigating the early history of Irish dance to arrive at a kind of starting point of dancing in Ireland, which in turn is a difficult task bearing in mind the nationalist designing of Irish dance.

At the first official Gaelic League ceili in London, the endeavour to present authentic Irish dance culture was successful. Even though the program of the event consisted of set dances and quadrilles, Cullinane (1999:19) notes that

> It would appear as if, following on the initial success of the first céilí at the end of the last century, the Gaelic League then made an effort to make these evenings truly Irish. The thinking at that time was rather puritanical and anything that even vaguely smacked of not being truly Irish was discarded. As a result, the sets and Quadrilles that had been performed at the first céilí were then put aside and an all-out effort was made to develop an interest in the "new" figure dances and to adopt them - and them alone - as being the only true Irish dances.

As the Gaelic League attempted to create a cultural and national basis for Irish citizens to initiate national consciousness, the set group dances were neglected. (Cullinane 1999:19). The ceili group dances, however, which were largely choreographed and introduced by the dance masters, were accepted and promoted as being truly Irish, as they were danced to "pure" Irish reels and jigs (19). Following this, the distinction between the Irishness of ceili dances and the un-Irishness of set group dances, as Cullinane (1999: 9) claims, was based on the kind of music accompanying Irish dances on the one hand and the step figures or elements on the other hand. The set group dances included polka rhythms and French quadrille-like patterns which were adapted to Irish music patterns. That was the reason why the Gaelic League regarded these as being too 'foreign' to be promoted.

Brennan (23) further clarifies the source of hostility towards the set group dances as their origins go back to the French quadrille. The French quadrille is a group dance which itself is a variation of an older English square eight formation and became highly popular in Ireland during the first half of the nineteenth century. Brennan mentions that the first evening of quadrilles was reported to have been danced in Dublin in 1816 (23). She adds that the quadrille was mainly a ballroom dance and was danced by all social classes until it gradually became a dance for the upper circles of society (25). These quadrilles were transformed into the Irish set group dances as they were newly composed to be danced to Irish tunes. In addition, Brennan indicates that new and popular derivations of set dances from quadrilles were widely known as she quotes Éibhlín Ní Mhurchú (Brennan 26) who says that "the old people had contempt for the sets" and further stresses the opposition to the popular set dances by the older generation.

The statements of both Culllinane and Brennan make clear why the sets were regarded as being ´foreign` and were consequently banned. Although dance masters used the popular French quadrille as one of the sources of inspiration for creating the ceili dances (Cullinane 1999: 9), the ceilis were accepted as belonging to the national canon of dancing and, today, they are still the most important part of traditional group dances in competitions.

At this point, the process of purification can be linked with the idea Alkemeyer (48) provides by citing Gebauer claiming that national identity in sports is constituted through both inclusion and exclusion. The Gaelic League's purification of Irish dance is inclusion as they seek to unify Irish dance and spread their version of national identity through it. However, at the same time, exclusion is realised by abandoning any elements interpreted as not fitting.

The campaign of excluding foreign elements from Irish dancing in Gaelic League circles was not based on mutual consent. It was rather a bone of contention, mainly opposed by several dance masters. Brennan (31-43) highlights the fierceness of the debate about the call to set aside traditional dancing scenes such as the sets. Brennan emphasises that the debate was "in essence, a cultural civil war with dance as the arena of combat" (31). Brennan (31) argues that the London Gaelic League's efforts to teach Irish dancing were not accepted by the general Gaelic League. She explains that:

> During the early 1900s the great debate as to which dances were acceptable and which were not raged in the columns and letter pages of *An Claidheamh Soluis,* the Gaelic League's newspaper, as well as in other publications of that period. The weapons of political debate – vilification, ridicule, scorn and caricature – with their attendant power to wound and alienate, were all employed in the debate which surrounded the attempt to create a canon of Irish dance (Brennan 31).

One line of argument sought to identify and abandon all non-Irish influences from Irish dancing especially as regards the quadrille-derived group dances. Others criticised the Gaelic League's dance agents lacking knowledge of and qualification for teaching (Brennan 36). Different voices were raised not to abandon dances on the basis of their non-Irish origin. Éinrí Ó Muireaghasa (qtd. In Brennan 36) argues that "in many localities the boycotting of foreign dances

would at present time put an end to all dancing" and that "[w]e cannot afford to be very drastic in our reform lest we kill the movement by starvation". In fact, Ó Muireaghasa suggests imposing a code providing that older dancers should be allowed to dance non-Irish forms of dancing whereas young dancers should not (35). A major part of the debate was spread in the newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis* from 1904 until 1906. Brennan does not mention a deadline as to the end of the debate, as she points out that "hostility towards 'foreign dance' has persisted into modern times" (37).

Cronin's argument that the bans introduced by the Gaelic Athletic Association were to ensure the triumph of the organisation's version of Irish sports (see above) is also true for the Gaelic League's attitude towards Irish dancing. The distilled form of genuine Irish dance promoted by the League should be the only one to be practised in future. Hall (29) indicates that:" Participation in dancing and language classes was a way to directly involve oneself in the deanglicization and preservation of Ireland."

As a matter in fact, exclusion occurred in three ways. First, elements declared as non-Irish were excluded from Irish dancing. Second, the distilled version of Irish dance created was enjoined on the dance masters, whose work and importance had diminished. By explicitly blaming the dance masters' previous teaching for being non-Irish, they forced the new version upon them. And third, Cullinane (1999: 17) mentions that membership and permission to participate in dance events was controlled for the first time.

Access to events hosted by the Gaelic League and Gaelic Athletic Association was – based on a kind of "exclusivism of an emphatically non-English variety" (English: 227-228). English's statements comply with Cronin's claiming that Royal Irish Constabulary members were exempt from taking part in sport events of the Gaelic Athletic Association and adds that the member prerequisite of being Irish included being Catholic as well. Similarly, the same restrictions can be applied to the Irish ceili dance evenings organised by the Gaelic League. Cullinane (1999: 17) mentions that only persons affiliated with the Gaelic League were permitted to attend, other visitors were only allowed in with a special permit.

Whether the impulse for selective admittance was based on codes of behaviour or expressively grounded on nationalist delimitation is not explained by Cullinane.

Rules stating that athletes affiliated with the Gaelic Athletic Association were not allowed to practise sports not featured in the Association's programme, was stipulated similarly in Irish dancing. It is made clear by Hall (30) that in the early days of the Irish Dancing Commission members were not allowed to take part in non-Irish dances. These restrictions were enforced rigidly. Brennan (37) provides several examples such as one incident occurring at a Gaelic Athletic Association dance event in 1950, when a dancer from Clare performing a dance not accepted by the Association was asked to leave the stage. At another ceili evening held in the Mansion House Dublin two Connemara dancers were ordered to stop dancing because they danced a highland fling which was not part of the "official" canon of Irish dance (37).

Hall (30) highlights why abiding by these restrictions was so important to the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association. Performing Irish dances or exercising Irish sport was no longer a matter of culture but "became a declaration of political alignment" (Hall 30). Either an athlete or dancer took part in Irish sports/dance or the dancer decided in favour of foreign sports/dances. No solution in-between was seen acceptable, as "there could be no room for ambiguity" (Hall 39) in order to ultimately save the organisation from "foreign" compromisation (39).

It is clear to me that the Gaelic League imposed their new hegemony upon dancers and dance teachers by directly controlling Irish dance and abolishing previously vital parts of Irish dancing culture. The League feared a loss of Irish culture due to British hegemony, but in trying to oppose it, they created a new cultural hegemony shifting from support of Irish culture to a new form of cultural oppression which had not existed before the League took interest in dancing.

Banning of nationalistically inacceptable dances/sports efficiently demonstrates how cultural activities such as sport and dancing have direct nationalist effects. As Hall (29; 30) indicates in his statement, the individual dancer takes part in promoting the nationalist image and defending the nation against any hostile

influence. Thus, the dancer unknowingly puts nationalist politics in practise by abiding by set rules and regulations while exercising sport and dance. The feeling of belonging to one group does not need to be politically promoted by nationalist supporters, as Irish dances are performed collectively. For this reason, English is right to see culture and social practices as the essential tools for nationalism (see English 462).

The question to what extend the Gaelic League was politically and nationalistically guided, is indeed justified. According to Hall (28) the Gaelic League showed a gradual transgression from one extreme to the other. He explains that when founded the League "was proclaimed as non-political" by supporters, members and its leader Douglas Hyde (28). By 1915, however, "militants managed to pass a resolution committing the League to the support of "a free Ireland"" (28). This placing of the Gaelic League in nationalist hands led to the resignation of Douglas Hyde who saw his non-political League lost (Garvin qtd. in Hall 28).

But why is the Gaelic League so essential for the history of Irish dancing? The reason is, as Hall (27) pointedly makes clear, that in the wake of the Irish Revolution, dancing as practiced under the aegis of the Gaelic League in Ireland became 'the Irish dance'. He is right in clarifying that Irish dance "emerged as a category, a genre of dancing [as] [...] expressive forms [...] became politicized [and] dancing took on new meaning [and] new significance in opposition to other forms designated as foreign" (Hall 27).

Along with the development of Irish dance under the aegis of the Gaelic League modern Irish dance was created as a substitute for the regional variations of standardized Irish dance. Dancing in Ireland proved to dispose of a wide range of varieties allowing each county and parish to perform their own versions of dances, regional variations and styles differing considerably from each other (Brennan 66-72). The Gaelic League set the standard of Irish dance which was to become its future frame (Hall 27). Thus, it is not surprising that the purification initiated by the League was opposed by many groups as the changes happening to Irish dances were fundamental reflecting a "paradigmatic shift [...] in Irish culture" (Hall 27). Hall (37) sees the evolution of one unified version of Irish dance

as primarily rooted in the idea of the unified nation, by questioning that "if the nation is one distinct community conceived according to the model of the individual, one body, then isn`t there also one Irish dancing, one unified movement symbol?".

Hall (30-35) indicates that trying to link today's Irish dancing with traditional origins in the past is not possible due to a lack of information on dances performed in Ireland before 1800. Cullinane (2001: 8-10) looks into the problems concerning historical sources of Irish dance more closely. So does Brennan (15). Hall points out that all scholars dealing with Irish dancing have a sense of this set of problems. He efficiently summarises the unreliability of sources:

> Often the people who mentioned dancing in historical texts, if they categorized dance forms at all, did not describe the dancing they saw (e.g. Young). Virtually nobody described the dancing they taught [the dance masters], for the very good reason that movement description defies spoken and written language capabilities. [...] Without some means of recording movement, not to mention understanding its formal structure, it is impossible to know what sorts of matchings exist between linguistic terms employed for categories of movements and various movement practices themselves. (Hall 30)

Without sufficient knowledge of the past of Irish dancing, the Gaelic League was left alone with their interpretation of what could be truly Irish and what not, thus having to adapt the present Irish dance to serve their historic ideals. In my view, Hall's reflections mentioned above about the right of any given nation to one unified movement symbol are partially applicable here. The Gaelic League claimed that Irish dancing symbolised a new Irish consciousness, but the dancing itself was not unified but rather extracted by the exclusion of foreign elements, as it was made up due to a lack of historic information on dancing. According to Kilberd's argument that missing features of culture could be invented (qtd. in Hall 29), the Gaelic League valued symbolism over historic exactness and filled missing links with their own nationalist designs. What is explained and taken for granted as traditional Irish dance, is in fact a made-up design and a constant re-interpretation of Irish dancing based on a scarce and vague knowledge of its history.

In order to arrive at one authoritative form of Irish dance, debates on creating a nationally unified set of Irish dances did not entirely centre on excluding foreign influences, but additionally involved a distinction on the basis of aesthetic factors (Moloney: 2-3). Exclusion of and opposition to certain dances were due to the fact that they were seen as "untamed", resulting in the demand to execute a more cultivated national dance. (Moloney: 2-3). Thus, purification of Irish dance encompassed the exclusion of both foreign and improper elements. The dance masters already focused on acquiring a form of Irish dance characterised by the execution of steps with highly skilled technique, elegance and fine body posture (see sources above; Moloney 2). This desire for aesthetically proper elegance is reflected in the rigidity of the upper body while dancing. To hold the body rigid while dancing and only move from the waist down, is seen as a defining feature of Irish dancing. This feature also symbolises the above-mentioned call for elegance and manners as Moloney puts it. (3). He states that the rigidity of the upper body was not fully present in the days before the second half of the nineteenth century. In fact, it was introduced during the time of social change in Ireland when peasants demanded power against the Anglo-Irish elite (2).

As a result, there was a call for the abolition of forms with a sexual connotation and for the promotion of a well-mannered national dance rooted in Catholicism, Gaelicism, and the Victorian ideology of good manners (Moloney 2-3). Moloney (2) explains that "the rigidity of these forms and the decorous behaviour expected of male and female alike were in large part the product of the neo- Victorian sensibilities and ideology espoused by members of the upper echelons of the [Gaelic] League." (Moloney 3). To illustrate the appeal of sober and well-mannered Irish culture at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, Moloney refers to the *Gaelic American* newspaper from 11 June 1931 issuing a remark dropped by the onlooker of a performance in New York City: "Here one saw a truly Irish gathering: fine clean, youth, decent and sober; wholesome dancing, free from all taint of the sensual" (qtd. in Moloney 3).

In the course of the development of the new Irish dances, the set group dances were, apart from the concern about non-Irish features, no longer accepted, as they were considered too boisterous to display good manners (Moloney 3).

Moloney (2) agrees with Hall that the League seeks to revive a glorified Gaelic past, but extends his explanation by adding the Victorian ideology of manners. He points out that the League regarded the accepted Irish dances as an art form (3). They were especially highly regarded if, as he emphasises, they corresponded to Gaelic tradition as the dances were "emblematic of [...] national identity" (3). Next to upholding Gaelic tradition, the Victorian ideology was a vital factor, as the glorified Gaelic image was combined with an image of an "idealised pre-industrial pastoral Victorian society where there would be not a hint of indecorous behaviour or sexual impropriety" (3).

Marschik's (29) argument that athletes are a forum of societies' norms can be applied to Irish dancers as they became an arena for the struggle of ideals. The Irishness which dancers expressed at the Scots ceili in London impressed Gaelic League officials. The League members interpreted the dancing they saw according to their values regarding it as a remnant of a former glorious Irish past. This image was used by the League to design Irish dancing according to their vision. By opposition to and adoption of the Gaelic League model the dancers' body became the site of a struggle for what was perceived as authentic Irish dancing and the nationalist re-invention of it. In other words the dancers forwarded their take on the League's norms and values through dancing which the society took on, re-invented and reflected back onto the dancers.

Identity was embodied through physical activity, thus being performed by the body itself. The Victorian manners identifiable in Irish dance and the upright bodily conduct were taught by the dance masters and enforced by the Gaelic League as they were a mode of representing power, a power which the rural community wished to claim their own (Hall 23). Hall highlights that this "aristocratic posture was appropriated by Irish dancers as an expression of Irishness" (page -23).

In order to show how socialised values and norms are written into the body itself, Hall's (24) interesting interpretation of the rigidity of the upper body in dancing is presented. He describes the ideals and qualities inscribed in the Irish dancer through rigidity of the upper body and the vitality of rhythmic step-dancing as follows:

> The lower body is the site of expression in the sense of dynamic movement, change, and exuberance. In a context where stillness of the upper body is defined in terms of morality and civility, movement of the lower limbs might seem to represent wilderness and subversion. [...] While the opposition of the controlled, moral, held upper body to the wild, subversive, moving lower body may not warrant literal association, it is nonetheless suggested by the dualism inherent in the aesthetic of the divided body: discipline above, dynamics below. [...] What is Irish about this posture is the contemporary salience of these themes incorporated (literally, in + corpore) in contrasting halves of the Irish dancing body: Imposition and rebellion, control and exuberance, stasis and change, order and dynamism." (Hall 24).

This is where several lines of thought stated above come together. Sports are a mirror to society and reflect their values and norms by being a "forum of ideals" (Cronin 51). Irish dance, from 1886-1930 was such a forum of ideals and, as Brennan calls it, a battle arena of a "cultural civil war" (Brennan 31). As we can see, Irish dancing clearly reflected the quest for Irishness, as well as the political and cultural emancipation from Britain (see Hall 29). It posed a forum of ideals regarding the forms of expression in Irish dancing. It was supposed to be Irish and morally sober (Moloney 3).

5.4 DE-CATHOLISATION AND SECULARISATION OF IRISH DANCE

The initial problem of proving that Irish dance is a modern sport - by referring to Guttmann's criteria of secularisation - is due to the importance of Catholicism for the Irish nationalist ideology. As outlined in section two, Catholicism has always been a vital factor for Irish identity and nationalism as it can be defined as opposition towards British Protestantism. Thus, the question arises why the Catholic religion no longer plays a role in modern Irish dancing, if after all Irish dance was so neatly embedded in the Gaelic League's Irish nationalism as stated above? The answer to this question can be found by investigating Brennan's accounts (121) revealing that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish dancing faced strong opposition of the church, based on the argument that Irish dances were seen as morally improper.

Brennan refers to early clergy bans on dancing in Ireland, such as in Cashel in 1777 and Meath in 1803, leading to considerable tension in 1890 (121-122). She provides a report from county Wexford from 1890 expressing the tension between clergy and citizens at that time. In this report the local priest kept patrolling the district every night with a stick punishing any dance activity. Still, dancing was continued, though with great efforts by the local communities to hold their dance balls in secret and hidden from any clergy (Brennan 122-123).

A similar situation occurred in 1912 as the reports provided by Brennan display an even darker reality:

> The heart and spirit gave way in a sort of terrorism before the priest. In his day of dominance, he did much to make Irish local life a dreary desert. He waged war on the favourite cross-roads dances – with exception here and there – and on other gatherings where young men and women congregated in the company of their older relations and friends. (W.P. Ryan qtd. in Brennan 123)

Punishment and actions against hosting dances are expressed in a report from 1920 in which:

> Wooden road-side platforms were set on fire by curates; surer still, the priests drove their cars backwards and forwards over the timber platforms; concertinas were sent flying into hill streams and those who played music at the dances were branded as outcasts (Bryan Mac Mahon qtd. in Brennan 123).

Brennan notes that in 1920, declarations banning dancing and opposing dance masters were widespread in Ireland. The year 1920 witnessed the peak of this process. Being those who brought Irish dancing to different rural areas, the dance masters faced the most severe opposition by the clergy (124, 125). Outright quarrels and disputes are reported in which the dance masters tried to defend their profession. In vain, as the dance master, the dancers and musicians, faced the threat of "public penance" (Brennan 123).

Again, the reason for banning dancing was moral concern. The church regarded the dancing-together of men and women as untamed and sinful condemning any sexual approach. Furthermore, informal country dancing in Ireland did not adhere to the exclusive Irishness of dancing. Moralists criticised country dancing for degeneration brought about by non-Irish elements added to the dance. In 1935

pastoral statements clearly opposed "imported dances of an evil kind" while favouring Irish dances as "Irish dances do not make degenerates." (qtd. in Brennan 125).

Here the importance of the Catholic Church for the support of Irish nationalism is obvious. Non-Irish culture was not only rejected, but, with the help of pastoral argumentation, displayed as degenerating Irishness and linked with the symbol of evilness (see English 442).

Moral concerns of both clergy and moralists led to an entire ban on country dancing under the Public Dance Hall Act which was passed in 1935. This Act stipulated that only officially licensed dance events were allowed; but taxes had to be paid (125). This practice put an end to informal country dances, which was the aim of the moralists' and pastoral intervention (126-128). Brennan highlights that the people lost "one of their favourite forms of entertainment" (126). Resistance was punished. House raids by the police putting an end to non-licensed dance events were common and a breach of the Public Dance Hall Act was prosecuted in court (126, 126-130).

In my view, Irish dancing stands the test of Guttmann's secularisation maxim. Brennan's accounts (125) revealing the severe opposition of the Catholic Church cause the dancers to perform secretly without pastoral consent. This is, as I suggest, the moment of secularisation in Irish dancing. It is important to note, that the only option for Irish dancing to persist was to take side with the morally unquestionable nationalist-oriented dancing under the control of the Gaelic League and later the Irish Dancing Commission as Irish dancing was not church-supported although Catholicism is seen by English (181, 359) as a key feature of Irish identity.

6.0 COMPETITIONS OF IRISH DANCE: THE LINK BETWEEN NATIONALISM AND SPORTS

The first step of Irish dance becoming a sport was its being performed at dance contests (see Hall 36). In those competitions Irish dancing developed into an elaborated system of organised competition sport.

The growing influence and importance of the Gaelic League's efforts was due to the re-initiation of the competitive tradition named 'Feis' (pl. Feisanna) in which the nationalist pursuit to revive a lost golden age connects with sport. As claimed by Gabor (qtd. in Cullinane 1999: 138) the modern dancing competition 'Feis' deliberately links modern Irish cultural efforts with ancient Gaelic times. Seamus MacManus vaguely explains the ancient connotation of Feis:

> In ancient Gaelic times, the Feis was known as a political assembly of chiefs and the high kings of Tara in Ireland. Throughout the kingdoms and provinces of early Ireland, there were times and places set aside from the general assembly of the people. Chief of these [...] was the Anoach or Great fair at Tara, seat of the Ard Rí, or King of Ireland. [....] it was seven or eight hundred years before the time of Christ [...] (Seamus MacManus qtd. in Cullinane 1999 138)

Despite the vague link between an ancient political and social meeting of Gaels and the modern dance competitions known as Feisanna, Gabor (in Cullinane 1999: 140) highlights the significance of the modern dance Feis and sees them as symbolising a continuation of glorious times. He mentions that in the course of time, the political aspects of the Feis have decreased, whereas the cultural importance has increased significantly (Cullinane 140). Indeed Irish dance and music are constructed and seen as the only remnants of the cultural variety of the ancient Feis (140). Gabor nostalgically claims that: "Wherever in the world Irish people gather for a Feis today – be it ever so large, spectacular, and even beautiful – there persists that haunting memory of a splendid vanished glory" (in Cullinane 1999: 141).

This demonstration of the link between contemporary practise and ancient historical glory illustrates nationalism in practice. Cronin clarifies that the mythology of reviving a lost glory is in progress by making use of a newly constructed national consciousness (Cronin 31, see Foucault 60, 88-93). The nationalist vision, in connection with the ideal of reviving historical glory, is confirmed as existing, once the nation-state envisioned has become reality (Cronin 31).

The Feis was the driving force behind the spread of the Gaelic League's Irish standardised dancing, as it was a key factor for the initialisation of Irish dance as modern sport. First, the Feisanna directed their training efforts towards record reaching and maximising skills. Since the competitions demanded the best dancers to compare their abilities, the implementation of standardised and rationalised rules and bureaucratic structures was facilitated (Marschik 26-27; Guttmann 40, 47, Hall 27, 35).

Pinning down the exact date of the first official Feis in Ireland promoted by the Gaelic League is difficult as sources are unclear. However, the year 1899 may be assumed as a point of reference since this is the year when the first Feis is said to have taken place in Macroom (Cullinane 2001: 41). The secretary of the Macroom Feis, D. Mahony called this "first" Feis in Macroom in 1899 an event that "widened the movement" (41). In the years 1899 and 1900 many locally organised Feisanna were organised throughout Ireland. Cullinane mentions Feisanna held in Dunmanwa, Ballyvourney, Galway, Cullen, Milton Malbay and Tonawilly in 1899 (Cullinane 2001: 42-43). He adds that, in 1900, further Feisanna were held in Macroom Ballyvourney, Ardmore, Galway, Killeagh, Fintown, Canovee, Cork and Belfast (43-44). These Feisanna set the foundation stone for the continuity of regular Feisanna to this day (41).

The composition of the early Macroom Feis poses several interesting facts different from modern competitions, as the Gaelic League newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis* reports: "The competitions include a written essay on the life of David Thomas, recitations, ballads and folk songs, narration of folklore, reel, jig and hornpipe dancing" (Cullinane 2001 41). As far as dancing was concerned, Cullinane (41) makes it clear that two competitions were held, one being the reel

and the other being the hornpipe, each being awarded with a silver medal. Thus, the early Feisanna had a wider cultural repertoire than contemporary competitions (Cullinane 2001: 41). In the Feis of 1899, dancing was merely one of several competitions including literature, music and singing, whereas today competitions centre on judging dancing skills; the accompanying music simply provides the standardised tunes to be danced to. Nowadays, no recitations or singing are performed at contemporary Feisanna held by the Irish Dancing Commission and dancing has turned out to be the only remnant of a former diverse Feis culture. The rich cultural heritage Feisanna once had is not obvious in today's Irish dance community. This is due to the fact that competitive Irish dance grew in scope and size and increasingly functioned as sport. In my opinion the abating inclusion of singing, literature, and music competitions in the dance Feisanna's repertoire and the increase of Irish dancing is the process of specialisation according to Guttmann's criterion. As Irish dancing steadily developed into a sport, the competitive framework rose in complexity thus overshadowing the cultural aspects of the Feis, by not allowing any other focus than dancing.

Hall (36) stresses that the first Feisanna from 1899 onwards were organised as local events and were not centralised in terms of rules and structure. Although more comprehensive Feisanna were set up enabling dancers from all parts of Ireland to compete, such as in the Munster Feis (as noted by Cullinane 2001: 45). The rules of the competitions and criteria of evaluation were still determined by the local organisers.

The fact that each local Feis had its own rules resulted in a series of problems and debates about the justness of evaluation and competition standards. (Hall 37). Furthermore, Hall (37) indicates that the adjudicators judging and evaluating the dancing at these events were not dancers but laypeople. They were respectable and notable persons from the circles of the Gaelic League. Compared to contemporary standards, this might seem odd at first glance, but proves plausible on closer examination. Hall (37) explains that it is not the quality of dancing to be given priority in the long run, but upholding and supporting Irishness (37). This militates in favour of enlisting adjudicators who are close to

the Gaelic League and are entitled to support and control the League's vision of Irishness (37).

As presented in the paragraphs above, Hall speaks about Irish dancing as showing first features of sports but not yet having the potential to become a sport. He denies the importance of the early Feisanna for the sportification of sports as he says that "at the time [...] it would seem that the promotion of Irishness took precedence over the finer points of distinction between dance performances" (Hall 36). Though this is entirely true, Hall fails to recognise the drastic shift which had already happened at that time. I hypothesize that the early Feisanna mark the shift from nationalist transformation to the creation of Irish dance as sport. It has to be pointed out that this trend was indeed a drastic change. With the early Feisanna, the promotion of Irishness was still of primary concern, but this was about to change. As mentioned above, Hall provides some information on a new debate revolving around fair basis of judging dance skills emerging with the early Feisanna (see Hall 37). This new debate is of utmost importance, as the desire to evaluate the best dancer on a fair basis of rules and conduct was still amiss, as Hall points out. The mere existence of this debate proves that Irish dance already had the prerequisite for sports. The selection of dances reflecting Irish dance culture best was no longer based on arbitrariness. In other words, the control of the Gaelic League, which had decided upon the layout of the dance, was substituted by the inner mechanics of sport. From that time onwards, which I define as the introduction of the Feis, competition started to control the dancing. At that point, the nationalists apparently lost Irish dance to the driving force of competition.

The competitive culture steadily spreading from 1900 onwards is indeed sport, but not yet modern sport. The following analysis was inspired by the comparison between folk games and modern sports carried out by Dunning et al. as cited in Penz (27). The organisation of early Feisanna was local and without a superregional organisation dealing with a standardised set of rules, modes of entry and conduct. Thus, a high variation of Feis procedures, rules and evaluation standards resulted in calls for a fair basis for better comparability of competitive skill (as in Hall 37). Furthermore, entries in competitions reflected local Irish

culture and did not follow a nationally standardised programme. The early Feisanna also showed a lack of specialisation due to the varied repertoire of competitions including singing, music and poetry. In short, the early Feisanna were a local sport with locally organised rules and procedures. They were not modern sport as the competitions were not governed by a national dancing board and did not involve specialisation or strict standardisation of rules.

While the Feisanna of 1899 and 1900 were local in character, superregional competitions were also planned (Cullinane 201: 45). These bigger Feisanna were the Munster regional Feis and the Leinster regional Feis in 1900, as well as the Oireachtas. The Oireachtas can be labelled as championships as they were "the highest or prestigious Feisanna" (Cullinane 2001:45) already held for the third time in 1899 (45).

The first Oireachtas to be seen as the epitome of promoting Irish culture and dance was held by the Gaelic League at the Rotunda in Dublin in 1897 (Cullinane 2001: 46). The master of ceremony was Douglas Hyde himself and Padraig Pearse was in charge of the competitions. Similar to the regular Feisanna, the Oireachtas included literature, music and singing competitions as well as dancing (46).

An insight into the importance of the Oireachtas is provided by an article of the Gaelic League's newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis (Sword of Light)* published in March 1899:

> The third Oireachtas will take place on the 7th of June, and it is, perhaps, well to remind competitors and our readers generally to prepare for the festival. It is hardly necessary to point out the important place which the Oireachtas holds in the movement. Common festivals have ever been a tie between the individuals of a race. After community of blood and community of language, community of festivals was the strongest bond that held the various independent Greek republics together as one Greece, What the Pythean, the Olympic, the Nemean and Istmian games were to the Greeks, the assemblies of Tara, Emanaia, Carman, and Tailtenu, were to the men of Ireland. At these last-named gatherings laws were promulgated, synods were held, appeals were decided, feats of arms, athletic games, and horse-racing took place, bardic and musical contests were carried out. Now the Gaelic movement has to take up the threads of national life at the point where they were broken in the past, to wave them into a harmonious web for the future. The ancient assemblies are revived in the Oireachtas. The

festival is the rallying point of the movement. It affords a centre for the thought of all Irish Ireland. It makes for a social as well for a linguistic and literary unity. Funds are, of course, necessary to make this assembly a complete success. But it is even more necessary that competitors should be numerous. We therefore urge earnestly on all our writers to compete. It is not enough to honour our language, our literature, and our traditions, by one day's grand demonstration in the capital of Ireland each year's Oireachtas must yield a permanent addition to our growing modern literature. (quid. In Cullinane 2001: 45-46)

The above-mentioned quotation from the newspaper *Sword of Light* proves Hall's (36) and Gabor's (in Cullinane 1999: 138) arguments that the term Feisanna is to remember the annual political and cultural meetings of the Gaelic past. It also proves that the Gaelic League sought to deliberately reconnect with an image of Ireland set in the Gaelic past (Hall 37). In this process they have been eager to promote a version of Irishness that puts Ireland in one glorious line with Ancient Greece (Cullinane 1999: 138).

The quotation above illustrates how strongly Irish dancing is used to evoke Irishness and a sense of history. However, one key mechanism of modern sport was already at place with the Oireachtas - the introduction of superregional and national championships. Assumingly, the forces of nationalism and sport were still closely connected at that time, both shaping Irish dancing. The Oireachtas, in turn, mark the transition from local to national performance. They can be seen as facilitating the gradual change in the structures of regional competitions: Dancers seek to compete at championships, which necessitates the development towards a centralised organisation.

7.0 Transformation from Local Folk Dance to Global Modern Sport

The successful course of competitions encouraging the development towards modern Irish dancing necessitated the establishment of umbrella organisations for standardising and controlling competitive Irish dance. At first, associations solely dealing with dancing on a local level were later joined by globally acting associations (Hall 40). Hall (40) claims that Irish dance organisations have shaped the world of Irish dancing to this day and paved the way for "a new mode of competition – modern institutionalized competition".

The Gaelic League provided the network coordination and support for the broad field of Irish culture (see Hall 28-29). In the 1920s, however, support of Irish dancing itself still rested with the dancing teachers and was organised in their own associations (Whelan 44). The dancing teachers were dance masters dealing with the microstructure of Irish dancing (Cullinane 2001:58). Cullinane (58) mentions teacher associations which, up to the 1920s, were active in major cities of Ireland and outside Ireland in cities with high Irish population such as Melbourne.

The question of locally organised Irish dance run by several teacher associations faced a variation of rule-standards and fierce debates on evaluation and qualification (Hall 37). Hall quotes MacConuladh who explains the fierceness of such quarrels:

> Irregularities of all sorts were common and fierce disputes frequently occurred at dancing competitions, even violence and threats of violence being not unknown. Since all or nearly all competitions at that time were at Feisanna and other events organised by An Conradh [The Gaelic League] that organisation soon became perturbed as the irregularities and rows connected with dancing tended to bring its Feisanna into disrepute. (Mac Conluadh qtd. in Hall 37)

Hall (37) argues that the varying standards of locally run Irish dances and debates eventually prompted the Gaelic League to centralise Irish dance. Furthermore, it appears clear to Hall (37) that, if the League envisioned one Irish

nation, there should be one Irish dance as well – not fragmented in organisation but centralised.

As shown in Hall's arguments above, the factors of nationalism and sports are still interdependent. Dispute over standards, which is clearly the process of rationalisation outlined by Guttmann, and call for centralisation which corresponds to Guttmann's criteria of bureaucratisation, coincided with the idea to promote one version of Irish dance that is to be considered 'the' national Irish dance.

The bureaucratisation of Irish dance performances was achieved with the implementation of the Irish Dancing Commission also referred to in Irish as An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha. Hall (37-38) explains that for the purpose of reforming the structure of Irish dancing in Ireland, the Gaelic League introduced a task team they loosely called "commission" to analyse and assess how Irish dancing was practised throughout the country and how it could be reformed. Subsequent action following the findings gained was declared at the Annual Congress of the Gaelic League in 1929. From 1930 onwards, the official body of An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha has dealt with Irish dance on behalf of the Gaelic League to this day (see History of An Coimisiún).

Dissent and opposition to the Irish Dancing Commission was inevitable due to an inefficient incorporation of the prevalent teacher associations in the Commission's structure (Hall 38-40). Only teachers registered with An Coimisiún were allowed to partake in their events and to gain support. While the Dublin Teacher Association gained full recognition by the Commission in July 1932, the Cork Teacher's Organisation, whose membership was discussed in September 1932, did not. Hall, who collected this information from the minutes of An Coimisiún from 1932 further claims that the Commission's intention was to "end all dance teacher associations and have full authority and control vested in the Commission only" (Hall 39).

This intention, however, resulted in a large-scale dissent with regard to the control of the national Irish dance. According to Hall's description (39), the control of Irish dance was again contested between teachers on the one hand, and "non-

dance-expert Gaelic League members" on the other hand (39). After what had happened at the Gaelic League dance events, the teachers felt again their control slip away to the culture-centred Gaelic League.

Cullinane's comments on the reaction of the Commission and the teacher associations are not as negative as Hall's. Cullinane (2001:58-59) makes clear that the Dublin Teacher Association was so quickly incorporated because three of their teachers had already been included by the Commission of Enquiry which was to set up the Irish Dancing Commission as a representative body. Concerning Cork, he presents written Commission correspondence from 1932 in which the Cork-based associations did not want to cooperate with An Coimisiún, but rather stayed associated with the Cork branch of the Gaelic League (Cullinane 2001:60). According to Cullinane, the teacher associations existed parallel to the Commission acting jointly, as the Commission had no internal teacher examinations until 1941. Cullinane (59) says that:

> In 1965, I myself on qualifying as a TCRG with An Coimisiún was automatically accepted as a member of the Cork Dance Teachers Association, all members of which in turn were affiliated to the parent or national body of Irish Dancing Teachers Association ["An Chomdháil]. This satisfactory arrangement continued up to the late 1960. (Cullinane 59).

Cullinane and Hall mention that disagreement with the Commission's programme and agenda led to the formation of "breakaway organisations" (Hal 39; Cullinane 2001: 59). One such organisation is the Festival Association of Northern Ireland which runs dance competitions with its own set of rules and teacher examinations but also provides a creative-expressive option for non-competitive dancers called Irish ballet (Hall 39-40). A rift between the interests of the Commission and the Teacher Association resulted in the association leaving the Commission and creating its own body Comdháil Muinteoirí na Rincí Gaelacha (Congress of Irish Dance Teachers) in 1969. An Chomdhail is operating in Ireland and Britain, but is also active in Australia. Their structure is based on competitive Irish dance expressed in Feisanna and regional and supra-regional championships. The congress implements rules and carries out teacher- and adjudicator examinations.

Irish dance, as it was newly defined by the Gaelic League included the moment of imitation, which is outlined by Hall (40) below: The modern institutionalised competitions were a further step in Irish dance development facilitating its becoming a modern sport, as this new mode still incorporated influences from Victorian ideals of sport (see Hall 40). Modern sport with its call for precise measurement, comparability of evaluation and institutionalisation of sports originated in the nineteenth century in Britain and gradually spread all over Europe (Marschik 23). Hall (40) claims that the Commission modelled the structure of the organisation according to the structures of the Gaelic Athletic Association. By copying the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Commission incorporated the Victorian modern sport model, just as the Gaelic Athletic Association adapted the British sport model prevalent in Ireland. Thus, due to adoption from the G.A.A, the British sport model made its way into Irish dancing.

As Irish dance is designed on the basis of the Victorian modern sport model, the dance bodies are obliged to codify, unify and impose a morally proper mode of conduct (Hall 40). Hall quotes Mandle who points out:

> Organised sport... sprang from the society that nurtured and supported it. I suggest that its framework, organisation, ethics [...] were nineteenth century industrial. [...] Whatever you like to name as part of Victorian industrial society was there: its passion for classification, order and detail, for moralising, for self-improvement, for respectability. (Mande qtd. in Hall 41)

Hall (41) agrees with Mandle on Ireland's "cultural environment", the Victorian ideals of sport, as shaping Irish sports and Irish dance respectively.

The modern sport setting was interwoven with the Irish nationalist agenda. Hall indicates that "the nationalist cultural movement infused the practice of step-dancing with political and cultural identity [...]." (Hall 41). For Irish nationalism, the Irish dancing commission and its successful competitive model of Irish dancing became an indispensible hallmark. For the Gaelic League it was the essence of their visions made real because "it accomplished with the dancing what it could not accomplish with the language, it fashioned a standard dialect of Irish dancing and [...] control over it for much of the century." (Hall 115). It was the creation of a vivid Irish culture gaining its own dynamics (115.). Before the independence of

Ireland, Irish dancing was used as a device of separation from British influence. After political independence was established, "it was a matter of continued association with the political culture of romantic nationalism" (115).

As I see it, Hall touches an interesting point by indicating that the creation and dominance of the Irish Dancing Commission marks a victorious achievement for the Gaelic League. However, he does not investigate the long-term effects this accomplishment had on Irish dance as sport and on Irish dance as carrier of national identity. The Irish Dancing Commission was the first organisation to exclusively deal with Irish dancing. Thus, all efforts of this institution rest with elaborating the dance form and competitive structures and extend the dominance of the form in Ireland. As of the ascendancy of Irishness was achieved by the Gaelic League and the Free Irish State was proclaimed, the nationalist grip which had held Irish dancing decreased, as modern sport became the dominant factor shaping Irish dancing. I emphasise my hypothesis that the increasing involvement in competition resulted in a decrease in displaying and carrying nationalist ideals. In my opinion the Irish Dancing Commission constitutes a radical break in the history of Irish dancing. The prime target of supporting nationalism through Irish dancing was substituted with the new target to provide a competitive Irish dance setting including specialisation, rationalisation and - with the creation of the Commission - bureaucratisation. Specialisation was radically implemented due to the fact that the Commission have put the main focus on dancing while steadily removing other forms of Irish culture such as music, literature and singing from the competitive repertoire up to this day.

After the Gaelic League imposed a new form of hegemony by trying to cleanse Irish dancing from the British predominant influence, modern sports became the new mode of control. Hierarchical structures, needed to centralise and organise the national Irish dance, coincided with this new form of control. The hierarchical control of sports resulted in an alteration of sport performances according to the knowledge and contents provided, to given structures, and finally to the most valued techniques. Hall (114, 50-52) reveals how the maxims of sport being the desire to win controls the community involved in competitive Irish dancing. He argues that the individual dancer, teacher and supporting parent acts in line with

what needs to be done in order to win (Hall114, 50-52). Structural alteration can have tremendous effects on the dancer's life depending on changes in the training methods or step repertoire, on financial factors and the free time management of any dancer's family (personal experience). Hall (50-52) establishes the triumvirate of dancer/teacher/parent whose sport- lives depend on the decisions of the governing Commission or Association. He interprets the conception of social control as exercised by these umbrella organisations as he emphasises the control that these bodies exert on the social sphere of any given dance. However, to clear up misconceptions, he admits that, despite the control of the general set-up of dancing, Irish dance as a sport has developed its own dynamics (Hall 48-49). What he vaguely describes as the inner dynamics of sport is, in my view, the underlying reason for the social control exercised by the umbella organisation. The true source of social control of Irish dancing is the maxim of winning and the competitive framework urging the Irish Dancing Commission to impose this framework upon its members and dancers. Hall analyses how the desire to win affects the world of Irish dancing and provides the joy and drama of competitive dancing, but he does not see it as a clear effect of Irish dancing becoming a modern sport relating to Guttmann's sport criteria, which is clearly done here.

Hall (48) stresses the impact of social control exercised by the Commission and suggests that the competitive framework design of Irish dancing be regarded as a kind of dogma. He continues that due to the set-up of a dogma subjugating Irish dancing to social and moral control, Irish dancing "became a closed world" (Hall 48). Hall (114-115) explains the reasons for this control which has always been and still is so highly present in Irish dancing. He argues that the Gaelic League and the Commission based their authority in Irish dancing on the authority of the church and that of Victorian sport ideals. The Commission maintained power over dance skills, in-/exclusion of dance, rules, as it maintained the social control of dancing. This dogma implies that Irish dancing is to be carried out without room for individual expression. These guidelines became indispensible due to the fact that just evaluation in competitions had to be guaranteed (114-115). As a result, however, dancing had to abandon its former social connotations by

becoming a closed world only accessible to registered teachers, dancers and their families (115). Hall indicates that all Irish dance organisations dealing with competitive dancing developed the same principles and hierarchical structures as the Commission had, thus "contribut[ing] to the marginalization of Irish dancing" (Hall 115).

The Introduction of the Irish Dancing Commission was a great step towards Irish dancing as modern sport. The bureaucratisation of modern sports, which this step represents is so important as it controls the mechanisms of quantification and rationalisation and spreads the codified system nationally. One has to bear in mind that before the Gaelic League promoted Irish dancing, the organisation of Irish dance was carried out by the local administration fully resting with the teacher (or the dance master respectively). As mentioned in section three, the dance masters were the creators of styles and steps, the ones who laid down basic rules and codes of proper conduct and spread the newly composed forms regionally within the range of their journeywork. Apart from their influence corresponding to their area of teaching (about 20 miles maximum), there was no umbrella organisation to control Irish dancing. Irish dancing itself did not have any standardised form of expression but showed a great extent of regional variations (Cullinane 1999: 34-36). Thus it can be said that the only form of control of Irish dancing was embedded in and did not stretch further than the social sphere of the dance master and the local communities involved.

Hal (46), however, points out that with the Irish Dancing Commission's authority is maintained by a "triumvirate" of teachers, adjudicators, and chairpersons. Hall (46) continues that, in terms of hierarchy, the committee of chairpersons is the highest ranking body, followed by the teachers and the adjudicators. The members of the organisation decide the rules, control the enactment of these rules, and manage the registration of new dance schools, competitions and championships. The adjudicators control the results and technical balance as they decide winners and losers on the basis of a point system (ibid. 46-48). The teachers, however, connect the bureaucratic sphere with the social sphere. They have to carefully keep the balance between both the expectations of the association and the demands of dancers and their parents (Hall 46, 49-50).

Hall emphasises (48,49-51) that It is not primarily the umbrella organisation that is in control of Irish dance sport, but rather the competitive power and the combined presence of teachers, pupils and adjudicators. Although I agree with Hall, especially in saying that the development of a competitive framework pushes Irish dancing towards modern sport, I disagree with his support of bureaucratisation to be placed behind the power of the organisation's members. Irish dance, in particular, shows that it is the general control of the form that decides its execution. If the combined presence of teachers and pupils was that decisive, the Gaelic League would not have been able to take over Irish dancing and dominate it through the subsequently established Irish Dancing Commission. In addition, it can be assumed that without the Irish Dancing Commission regulating international support of Irish dancing, the dance would not have become a globally exercised sport. This will be dealt with in the following section.

8.0 IRISH DANCING AS A GLOBAL SPORT

The trend of standardising and centralising Irish dance was applied on an international level. Overseas cities with large Irish population had begun to improve dance efficiency and to provide a network. The Irish Dance Teachers Association of North America (IDANTA) built up a structure based on the Commission's model in 1964 (Cullinane 1999: 142, 15). As early as in 1932, Melbourne had established an active Irish dancing culture with The Irish National Dancing and National Dress Promoters Association of Victoria (Cullinane 1999: 156-157).

Until 1970, centralisation and internationalisation had transformed Irish dance from a local folk dance to a globally exercised competitive sport. This fact is highlighted by the event of the first Irish Dance World Championship in Collaiste Muhire in Parnel Square in Dublin in 1970 (Cullinane qtd. in *Irish Dance Center Stage*). While the All Ireland Championships have existed since 1933, discussions about contacting and connecting with Irish dance scenes of North America and Australia had not started until the 1960s. The notion of staging world championship was close to the idea of organising modern sports. Cullinane, who was one of the Commission members negotiating and initiating the first steps towards a world championship, mentions "I think the original idea was that each country would send – like the Olympics – its best dancers." (Cullinane qtd. in Irish Dancing Center Stage).

The first world championships also marked an important step of development in terms of approaching a unified style of dancing. Cullinane (Irish Dancing Center Stage) continues to explain that the dancers from North America and Australia participating in the first world championships were performing "the old Cork-Kerry style from the 1890s" (ibid.). Subsequently those dancers and especially their teachers adapted to the newer Irish styles of dancing they had encountered at the world championship and spread the acquired knowledge in North America and Australia as the dominant form of Irish dancing (ibid.).

Seamus MacCon Uladh (see Hurley) , Chief Executive of the Irish Dancing Commission in 1994 explains in an interview dating from 1994 how competitive Irish dancing steadily became popular across countries with high Irish population. He reveals that there were registered teachers in Britain as early as 1940. He adds that, by 1994, there have been as many registered teachers in the United States and Canada as there are in Ireland which he roughly numbers as 300 teachers. He concludes that in Australia the number of teachers has increased from 2 teachers in 1969 to 108 teachers in 1994.

The tremendous difference of Irish dancing practised in the United States and the Irish dance from Ireland is highlighted by an anecdote provided by Michael Flatley during his opening speech for the Irish dancing World Championships in Philadelphia in 2009. The quote is taken from video footage provided on Youtube by user KellyOsterNY and is presented here as a short transcript:

> And my brother and I we came over [from the U.S. to Ireland] and we had a bit of a holiday so we felt we might take the world championships, and we came and I got onto my costume and came to side of stage. It was my turn to go up to stage, and I got out at stage and immediately I noticed that something was a little different than it was at home when we have been to a few local Feises. There were other guys on the stage with me, and I have never seen that before. So I came out and I remember before the music started tipping this guy "Buddy! Buddy! Hey! It's my turn!" and he told me to shut up and dance. And the music started and they were flying around in these little light shoes. And they were leaping all over the place and so I tore into my treble reel - that was the only thing we did in the States - and it was very embarrassing. (*Michael Flattely [sic] Appearance 2009*)

Michael Flatley's anecdote highlights that the development of Irish dancing towards modern sport was not readily incorporated in the United States. Flatley was surprised that several soloists simultaneously competed on one stage. This was clearly an effect of rationalisation and designed to assess the dancing of an increased number of dancers in a shorter time span. The difference in steps and style, however, is most interesting. Flatley danced a trebble reel and referred to it as the only dance that was performed in his American dance school. As a matter of fact, the treble reel has not been a traditional dance in Irish dance competitions and only gained some minor importance inside competitions (note its existence in the rule system of the Vienna Feis in 2011 provided in the appendix) due to its

popularity with the Irish dance shows *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*, which were both choreographed by Michael Flatley himself.

What can be deduced from the quote above is that what was considered as traditional Irish dancing in the States did not match the traditional Irish dancing in Ireland. Such a phenomenon points to the fabrication of tradition as well as the changeability and construed nature of Irish dancing.

The competitive framework introduced by the Irish Dancing Commission was spread across the Irish diaspora through the work of dance teachers. Vice President Mae Butler explained in an interview (see Hurley) that when she emigrated to Canada in 1953, there had been no Irish dancing in her place until she opened dancing classes. She explained that a few Feisanna initiated Canada's development to a centre for Irish dancing.

Cullinane (Irish Dancing Center Stage) explains in an interview given for the website Celticcafe, that contemporary Irish dance competitions differ considerably from the early Feisanna from 1898 in terms of size and global scope. He mentions that being competitive nowadays can involve travelling to superregional competitions, which was impossible in 1900 due do the high costs of travelling. When comparing the numbers of contemporary Feis entries with those of earlier Feisanna, it is obvious that the size of the competitions has increased drastically in some areas, especially in North America. Cullinane mentions that:

> Now, the whole concept of competition has changed. And it's of interest to learn that the first competition in McCroom had about 6 or 8 competitors, and even the first oireachtas in Dublin had only about 6 or 8 competitors – less than 10 – whereas nowadays, we are talking about competitions of 2,000, 2,500, the dancers from Cork City, just flying all over the world. They fly to England quite regularly. They go to North America every year for the North American Championships. They're held at different venues around North America, and they attract somewhere in excess of about 3,000 competitors. (Irish Dancing Center Stage)

The situation of Irish dancing in the late twentieth century, described by Cullinane above, can be interpreted as its transition to a global mass sport. Local competitions are inextricably linked with superregional competitions. Dancers

travel from Feis to Feis and to regional and world championships held throughout the globe. Being successful in competitive Irish dancing is no longer possible without travelling. This corresponds to the zeitgeist of globalisation.

The globalisation of Irish dance is a development that has been and still is shaped by zeitgeist as sports correspond to actual patterns of daily life. Manzenreiter (116), as outlined in section three, defines the era of Fordism ranging between the 1950s and 1960s as a time in which sport corresponded to mass consumption of goods, when less working hours and the rise in economic demands on leisure activities changed sports fundamentally. Cullinane (Irish Dancing Center Stage) emphasises that prior to the world championships in 1970, large-scale competitions involving travelling were not possible as travelling did not become affordable before the 60s. Thus, the staging of the world championship in 1970 reflected the change of living conditions involving a higher degree of free leisure time and a market prepared for sport tourism.

When eventually Irish dance became globalised, dancers without Irish descent were integrated into the framework of competitive Irish dancing. Due to the popularity of the Irish dance show productions many dancers from Mainland Europe, Russia, Asia and even Israel have joined in exercising Irish dancing as a hobby and from 2000 onwards as a sport. John Egan wrote a newspaper article for the *Irish Post* mentioning the qualifying championships in Hoogerheide:

> The location was Hoogerheide in the Netherlands. The event was the second European qualifying championships in Irish dancing to determine who would go forward from mainland Europe to compete in the World Championships to be held in Belfast in April 2006. Who would have thought that the establishment of the World Championships in Dublin in 1070 would one day lead to qualifying events around the world, including one that would have dancers from Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia and Switzerland? [...] This impressively slick dance Oireachtas, with its Olympics-style opening ceremony attended by local dignitaries, was organised by RTME [...] And judging from what I saw in Holland, some of these kids have already put down markers with a clear message: "Look out, 'cos here we come." (Egan *Irish Post: 37*)

By way of example mention is to be made of the Registered Teachers of Mainland Europe organisation as the Mainland European branch of the Irish

Dancing Commission consisting of teachers from Ireland and newly registered teachers from the new non-Irish generation of Irish dancers. Their competitive system is adapting to the new generation of dancers including adult dancers without previous experience in Irish dancing. This strongly contrasts with modern Irish dancing in Ireland where it is primarily a popular sport for children, adolescents and young adults.

9.0 IRISH DANCE SHOWS REFLECTING SHIFTS IN NATIONAL IDENTITY

With their media appeal Irish dance shows contrast with the competitive dance world. Hall (118) repeatedly highlights the fact that competitive Irish dancing is performed exempt from the public gaze. It is true, however, that prior to the emergence of dance shows local dance schools exercised their dancing at local fairs and festivals staging small shows (Hall 50), but the competitive dancing has always taken place without widespread public appeal even from the 1970s onwards when the first World Championships marked international participation (114).

The popular Irish dance shows, which were notably hyped between 1995 and 2000, brought worldwide recognition of Irish dance thus changing the significance of Irish dancing for the Irish national identity. Hall emphasises that the multimedia-based Irish dance shows introduced two new genres into Irish dancing, "the commercial-theatrical show (Riverdance) and the arena spectacle (Lord of the Dance and Feet of Flames)" (Hall 121). Irish dance was transformed into an internationally sold pop-culture phenomenon presented as a most successful dance performance (126).

The dance routines of the dance shows were still based on competition, but broke with the rules set up for Irish dancing. Arm movements by soloists were incorporated, the morally proper mode of dancing was abandoned by adding sexual connotations to traditional dance forms especially in Lord of the Dance (Hall 119; see *Making of Lord of the Dance*). The chorus line, however, still represents the original model: dancers thundering step dance steps apply the competitive model in terms of technique, movement and rigidity of the upper body (Hall 119). The Irish dance shows are free from the competitive rule set and hierarchical control of dance organisations thus allowing "creativity which nowhere had room to express itself" (Colin Dunne).

Smith (15) displays the impact of the show Riverdance as follows:

> Riverdance rescued Irish dancing from the cultural commissars, reclaiming its sensuality with its simple costumes and flowing hair while celebrating its traditions and skills passed through generations. And the resurrection of traditional Irish dancing on an international stage came after Irish music had taken its place as a important strand of contemporary popular culture. [...] Riverdance made its debut in the Eurovision Song Contest and went on become a theatrical phenomenon and a metaphor for a new Ireland dancing into the twenty-first century" (Smith 15)

Why did Smith call the shows of Riverdance and their Irish dancing as a metaphor for Ireland in the twentieth century? Because the shows have turned Irish dance into a market commodity (Hall 125) used for promoting Ireland as being confident and open towards Europe (126-127) . According to Hall (126) the fact bears significance that the Irish dance shows emerged after the successful seven minute performance of Riverdance at the Eurovision Song Contest in Dublin in 1997 when Ireland presented itself within the international context (126.). It means "cultural unity in cultural diversity" (Hall 126) symbolised by Irish dance. This is expressed in the rigidity of the dancers in line with the competitive dance tradition, whereas the soloist's free movements and arm composure point towards a national desire to be recognised and accepted on an international level (126). Openness towards other cultures is expressed in the inclusion of Afro-American tap dancers, Flamenco dancers and Russian ballet dancers to the Riverdance touring show (126).

Penz (99-101), argues that media representation is a defining feature of modern global mass sports. Although competitive Irish dancing is lacking any media representation, the factor of sports plus media appeal is fulfilled by the Irish dance shows as they have been capable to draw world-wide attention.

At last, Ireland got itself represented with the Irish dance shows attracting worldwide attention. This occurred upon the commercial impact of Irish dance shows added to the commercial international success of Irish music making Ireland itself a best-selling brand (Smith 54). Irish music, Irish dance shows, and Irish films were bestsellers from 1997 to 2002 and Irish tourism was booming (Smith 54). In studying Irish sports, Cronin (45) gets to the point as regards the pre-21st century Ireland and its dealing with Irish nationalism. His explanation can be applied on the situation of Irish dance as pop-culture and is entirely true for the development of Irish dance as Cronin (45) states that claiming oneself to be a nationalist has never been problematic. He regards the kind of nationalism nowadays held in the majority of the Irish Republic as "positive and self-believing" which allows for the changeability of Irish nationhood (Cronin 45). It is this form of national image that the Irish dance shows creatively convey in their performances. This is done as "Riverdance has changed the symbolic nature of Irish dancing by changing the context in which it is seen, viewed, recognised, and evaluated [w]hile the form and the literally contested meaning of Irishness and movement is still honed within the now traditional restrictions of the Feis" (Hall 124).

10.0 MODERN IRISH DANCE - IRISH DANCING IN 2011

In the present section, The Vienna Feis held 2011 will be outlined in detail. Note that a detailed description of an actual Irish Dancing Commission Feis was not yet provided in literature dealing with Irish dancing. First, modern Irish dancing will be compared with informal forms of Irish dancing and the question will be answered how Irish dance as sport is to be differentiated from Irish dance as play and game. It is important to bear in mind that Guttmann's categories of play, game and sport and his seven criteria of modern sport were not applied to Irish dancing before.

10.1 SEPARATING COMPETITIVE IRISH DANCE FROM INFORMAL DANCE AND SEAN-NÓS

Irish social dancing in Ireland was part of every aspect of rural and urban life before the twentieth century. It was greatly determined by occasions such as celebrations, weddings, funerals or other social gatherings like balls and school dances (See Brennan 103-119). Successful harvesting or labour and hurling games were celebrated with group dancing while dancing during "wakes" was a method to grieve over the demise of the house's son or daughter (114, 118-119). Social dance events provided enjoyment, company, and a possibility for bachelor boys and girls to get to know each other (106). Social dances consisted of set dancing and ceili dancing but sometimes included solo and special hard shoe dances if the floor was hard enough to provide a battering sound (111). Indoor dances were barn dances and balls commonly held at school houses. A "spree" was a dance event hosted at a local house (104), and the term "school dance" refers to dance events organised by musicians (112). Outdoor dancing was popular and is still remembered in nostalgia with the term "dance at the crossroads" meaning literally that a group of people meet and dance at crossroads (115).

Social dancing has declined since the beginning of the twentieth century, although it is still practised in some rural areas of Ireland along with the revival of ceili dancing (Brennan 103, 119). Brennan (103) argues that due to changing patterns of social life, urbanisation, and the Public Dance Hall Act of 1935 the commercialising of the previously entirely non-commercial social dancing went along with the declining significance of social dancing. Hall (47) points out that the support of non-competitive dancing within the Irish Dancing Commission was abandoned due to the fact that competition games had become the main attraction for new dancers.

Brennan regards competitive Irish dance as an "artificial counter-world" to social dancing and as a factor contributing to the decline of informal dancing (Brennan qtd. in Moloney 91). She claims that the competitive model is the dominant form and that competitiveness has taken the place of informal social dancing. She says that such a loss of informal tradition is reflected in the dance costume and appearance:

> I'm not being critical when I use the word "artificial". What I mean by that is that the hair now, is actually physically artificial, in terms of being a wig. The shoes are specially designed – engineered to produce a particular sound. Even the skin is affected. Now I understand that you need to look suntanned to have a better chance of winning. You see very young children with quite heavy make up [...]. (Brennan qtd. in Moloney 91)

The outsourcing of competitive Irish dancing from social dancing corresponds to Kaschuba's (qtd. in Marschik 26) argument of outsourcing sports from social quotidian life as a factor of modernisation. Giddens' (qtd. in Marschik 26) stresses that traditional sports are highly integrated into the lives and festivities of people. This is the case with social dancing in Ireland. As we have seen above, social dancing was part of every festival celebration or wake. In the nineteenth century sport started to form a world of its own separated from quotidian life. Irish dance was dissociated from social life as competitions had become its prime target. Dancing was no longer performed to accompany weddings or holidays. Instead competitions gradually became the main focus in a dancer's life. As Irish sports

imitated modernised sports in Europe, Irish dance competitions developed to a modern phenomenon. As Irish dancing has never been analysed along the lines of sport studies before, it is necessary to stress the fact that Irish dancing actually corresponds to the patterns of modern sport development outlined by Marschik et al, and adopted the modern sports trend taking root in nineteenth century Europe although nationalist circles tried to define it as free from any influence other than Irish.

In her quotation above, Brennan (qtd. in Moloney 91) points at the difference between traditional social dancing done for enjoyment and competitive Irish dance performed in order to win. She particularly emphasises the fact that authenticity and tradition are neglected due to the dominance of the modern competitive standard. Competitive Irish dancing is shaped to maximise competition results and grades to the extent of altering even the looks to maximise outcome (91). Social dancing is not organised, not attached to any umbrella organisation, is not settled by rules, and not standardised – whereas competitive Irish dance is. A competitive high-level hard-shoe dance may be performed at a social gathering or at a competition changing its purpose and meaning accordingly. Competition introduced the goal of winning (=quest for records see Guttmann 51) into Irish dancing and thus forever dissociating it from its social origins (see Brennan 119).

Another rather informal way of Irish dancing is sean-nós step dancing. "Sean-nós" is nostalgically referred to as "old style" Irish dancing differing significantly from the competitive model (Hall 8; Bhriain 13). In contrast to the global competitive Irish dance, sean-nós dancing focuses on the individual expression of each dancer. The body posture is not rigid but the arms are loosely held and arm movements can be incorporated in the performance. Furthermore, the feet are not neatly crossed as is common in Irish dance competitions and the dancing can contain improvisational features (Bhriain 13). Although sean-nós is a form of step dance, it does not require the special "hard-shoes" (Hall 10).

The reason for highlighting the sean-nós version of Irish dance is to show that Irish dance could have taken a different path from developing into a modern

sport. Sean-nós dancing is regarded as the true and authentic form of Irish dancing. It was seemingly left untouched by the Gaelic League's efforts and is characterised as being largely non-competitive (Hall 8-10). As mentioned above, the Gaelic League received a wave of opposition to their nationalist control and standardisation of Irish dance. Dissatisfaction with the modern step dance persists in the notion of old style dancing. Hall (8-10) notices contempt for modern Irish dancing as in "folkloristic circles there is an aura of authenticity that surrounds the category of sean-nós (old style) step-dancing" (Hall 8).

Although sean-nós dancing is informal, it has a competitive side attached to it. It focuses on competition regarding expression and displaying Irishness rather than winning through precisely performed dance techniques (Dance Teacher 2010). Bhriain (14-15) remarks that the sean-nós style has a differentiated system of competitions known as the Comórtas Rince ar an Sean Nós. At the sean-nós championships, the Oireachtas na Gaelige, the dancers are primarily native Irish speakers and the event itself is held in Irish language, which means that rules are expressed and announcements are made in Irish Gaelic. Bhriain reports the procedure of such an Oireachtas na Gaelige:

> The competitors performing in this arena perform one at a time and each establishes a relationship with the resident musician [...]. The musician plays solo on the accordion and the dancers choose the type of dance structure they wish to perform. For the most part the reel is the preferred choice although a smaller minority of dancers performs the jig or hornpipe tempo. In all cases the dancers and musicians are conscious of what the other is doing and there is a strong empathy between the performers. (Bhriain 15)

As can be deduced from the quotation above, old-style dancing strongly involves expressive and emotional elements. Dancers and musicians form an expressive bond as dancers are encouraged to improvise and interpret their attachment to the music using battering rhythms as their language of expression (Bhriain 14-15).

Emphasising expressional elements in sean-nós dancing is in stark contrast to competitions and championships hosted by the Irish Dancing Commission. In

competitive Irish dancing, the creative expression and relation to the musician is neglected. Music and tunes are standardised as two dancers perform their steps simultaneously on stage to a randomly chosen tune, thus representing a rhythmic battle between the contestants. Here focus is clearly put on following the rules governing the elaborate and appropriate dance techniques and attaining the points required to win (personal experience from World Championships Glasgow 2008).

Sean-nós dancing cannot be classified as modern sport, although it includes competitions. Hall (8) indicates that although old-style dancing is contested in competitions and championships, the sean-nós style "is a form that has not been subjected to an institutionalized competitive context nor, until recently, taught in classes" (Hall 8). Thus it can be deduced that it is still to be classified as folklore rather than modern sport. Its emphasis is on aesthetic and expressional features rather than on maximising results and seeking records. Thus sean-nós dancing is unlikely to be classified as modern sport. It has not been subjected to the standardisation, centralisation and moral purification which competitive Irish dancing has.

The aura of authenticity surrounding sean-nós dancing highlights the interpretation of Irishness involved in all forms of Irish dancing. As one dance teacher points out, in sean-nós competitions the winning candidate can be chosen on the basis of their display of 'authentic Irishness'. He adds that, according to the community of sean-nós, it cannot be learned, but is rather given by birth. The remark of the dance teacher is in itself stereotypical and implies a critique on the way Irishness is utilized by sean-nós, making it look inferior to competitive Irish dancing. The reason for this proposed hierarchy of Irish dancing is not clarified, but it may be assumed that whatever is regarded as being authentic Irishness in the competitive world of Irish dancing is labelled by the competitive sport in-group as superior to sean-nós. This superiority of competitive Irish dancing is claimed exactly on the account that dancing provided by the Irish Dancing Commission is codified and rationalised as sport. Competitive Irish dancers thus unknowingly accuse sean-nós of inappropriate Irishness upon the

fact that Irishness performed in competitive Irish dance is refined by rules and by assessing the best execution of steps. Sean-nós members, in turn, accuse competitive Irish dancing of an inappropriate display of Irishness based on the argument that – due to its development towards codified sport it has removed itself from any traditional ties Irish dancing had in the past Thus, the sportification of Irish dance is inextricably linked to what is perceived as Irish. What is not seen by those involved in the debate of authenticity of Irish dancing, but made clear in this paper, is that Irish dancing is a fabrication created in response to an imagined sense of Irishness. Competitive dancing and sean-nos are thus contrasting formations of Irish dancing responding to different interpretations of Irishness.

10.2 Irish Dance as Play, Game and Sport

In *From Ritual to Record,* Allen Guttmann (1-14) presents an interesting overview of sports by defining sports according to the categories of play and game. According to his definition, sports are rule-bound physical games competitive in character (5).

In order to understand how Guttmann arrived at this definition, one has to follow his line of thought beginning with the concept of "play". Other than the languages French and German, the English language divides the notion of playing into play and game. Guttmann splits "play" into two categories which are "spontaneous play" and "organised play" called "games" (4). As a matter of fact, "play "is a non-utilitarian physical or intellectual activity pursued for its own sake, whereas games are organised; they incorporate rules and a goal (3).

The pleasure of spontaneous play simply derives from enjoying its performance, whereas organised plays are extended in purpose. Guttmann (5) refers to a quotation from Bernard Suits as an appropriate explanation:

> To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs (prelusory goal), using only means permitted by rules (lusory means),

> where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favour or less efficient means (constitutive rules), and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity (lusory attitude). (Bernard Suits qtd. in Guttmann 5)

In Suit's argument, Guttmann (5) rightfully detects the desire to win, as the rules of the game are directed towards achieving this goal. This striving for winning points out the correlation between games and contest. In order to further clarify the distinction between spontaneous play and organised play, Guttmann provides the example of the difference between playing leapfrog and basketball (5). He says that both plays involve rules which mean that both do not belong to the category of spontaneous playing, but despite the fact that both are games, "leapfrog is not a contest and basketball is", (5) as leapfrog solely focuses on the pleasure it provides whereas basketball focuses on winning (5). He further clarifies the contrast between organised plays being games and their counterparts contests, as he demonstrates that there "are rules to "playing doctor," while winning and losing are not defined" (5).

This leads to his conclusion defining sports as "playful physical contests" (7). They differ from plays as they are overly centred on rules and differ from simple games as they are focused on winning (1-7). Sports are, in Guttmann's words, "non-utilitarian contests which include an important measure of physical as well as intellectual skill" (7).

It is possible to categorise Irish dance according to Guttmann's notion of discerning between plays, games, and sports.

In its development from 1850 to today, Irish dance has transgressed all three aspects of play, game, and sport. The work of the early dance masters predating the Gaelic League influence on Irish dancing and the social dance culture performed around the year 1900 are to be classified as play. Not only during the era of the travelling dance masters and ceili evenings did informal dance gatherings focus on the sheer excitement of dancing itself and its socialising function (see Brennan 103-119). Informal dancing was danced without rules, without organised contests, without strict organisation. It was performed for its own sake, as sheer excitement and, as mentioned in the previous section, it

constituted a usually spontaneous accompaniment at festivities and social gatherings thus standing true to Guttmann's definition as a spontaneous non-utilitarian activity. In other words, social life determined dancing. This is in contrast to modern competitive dancing, as Hall (4) explains, in which the competition determines the boundaries of social interaction.

In hosting and maintaining a competitive Feis tradition in the 1920s and 30s in Ireland, Irish dance became a game. The rules were still informal and simple, but the driving force of winning was not prior-ranking, as the main purpose was performing and legitimising Irish culture. Cullinane's account (2001: 41) of the first Feisanna in Macroom does not contain any information on the rules of the dance contests. He mentions, however, that the only two dance contests were held alongside contests including folk songs and narration (41). I gathered from his descriptions that Irish dancing was still marginalized and embedded in folk culture, not providing any means of specialisation or detailed notion of codification. However, it clearly involved the goal to compete as first attempts were introduced to structure dance contests into soft and hardshoe competitions danced by soloists each awarded with a medal. Although there was no clear-cut line between game and sport I am inclined to label the early Irish dance contests as games due to a lack of direct codification which, as mentioned before, only came later before the foundation of the Irish Dancing Commission.

As regards sean-nós and competitive Irish dancing, they too can be classified on the basis of Guttmann's categories. Sean-nós is to be labelled as "organised play targeting at fostering the expression of Irishness", whereas competitive Irish dancing, as Hall (44) argues, is clearly a contest for the sake of winning.

Irish dance as a game is defined by Hall (44). The early Feisanna were the beginning of rule-based games of Irish dance. Socialising aspects, however, have remained in modern games of Irish dance competitions (Hall 44). Hall (44) expresses the game Irish dance as follows:

> The whole event of an Irish dancing competition [...] is a very social one. [...] But at the heart of these social occasions is the game: it is an aesthetic game, an expressive game, but foremost a game. As Irish dance centres on the maxim of winning with the establishment of

competitive bodies such as the Irish Dancing Commission, Irish dance becomes a sport. In this sport the socialising aspect of playful dancing is present, but also gets reverted.

Hall (44) quotes Levi-Strauss who says that "Games appear to have a disjunctive effect: they end in the establishment of difference between individual players [...] where there was no indication of inequality. [...] [T]hey are distinguished into winners and losers.... Asymmetry is engendered."

Hall's argument that modern Irish dance is a game is not to be confused with Guttmann's notion of early Irish dancing contests being games. Hall (44) uses 'game' with a social connotation when he refers to competitions as a source of personal psychological and social excitement for dancers, as, in fact the communities involved are affected by the conjunctive and disjunctive effects of winning and losing. In my thesis I refer to game in Guttmann's sense in terms of the internal criteria of sports including the presence or absence of codification, not social connotation.

Hall (45) indicates that modern competitive Irish dance is to be classified as sport due its ultimate priority of competition. He makes clear that the system of Irish dance is centred on a competitive performance. The social ties and dependencies between dancer, parent, teacher, and adjudicator are determined by the mechanisms of competition (45). It is only possible to enter the Irish dance framework by entering its competitive environment. Within the framework of national Irish dance there is no alternative. Even the modern Irish dance stage shows are presented on a competitive basis in terms of style, and recruitment of new dancers (45).

It is necessary to highlight the difference between play, game and sport to be able to investigate Irish dance diachronically, but also for observing Irish dance synchronically. The popular Irish TV casting show *An Jig Gig* is used as an example here. *An Jig Gig* a casting show produced by the Irish language TV channel TG4 was first broadcast in 2009 and has its fourth serial running in 2012 (see An Jig Gig). It took inspiration from Britain's popular talent casting shows incorporating their framework into an Irish dance setting. As a matter of fact, the

dancing cast and displayed in a show dance-off is not restricted to modern competitive Irish dancing but rather includes elements from show style dancing (in the manner of the Irish dance shows) and sean-nós dancing, as well as social set dancing from rural areas of Ireland. *An Jig Gig* proves the survival of rural country dancing and sean-nós by putting it on an equal level with competitive and show style Irish dancing. Thus, *An Jig Gig* illustrates the full array of permutations of Irish dancing, as spontaneous plays in the form of Irish country dancing still persist alongside sean-nós games, competitive dancing sport, and pop-culture show dancing.

10. 3 THE VIENNA FEIS 2011

The Vienna Feis, which was held on first and second October 2011 in the "Haus der Begegnung" in the Schwendergasse 41 in Vienna, will serve here as an example of a modern Irish dance competition registered by the Irish Dancing Commission. It was organised by the Joan Rafter School of Irish Dancing Vienna and held under the auspices of the Registered Teachers of Mainland Europe (R.T.M.E.), the mainland European branch of the Irish Dancing Commission.

The structure of the Vienna Feis 2011 will be analysed in terms of the seven criteria of modern sports outlined by Allen Guttmann. Note that this was not done before. Neither was an actual Irish Dancing Commission Feis observed in detail and neither has it, or Irish dance in itself, yet been investigated in correlation with a sport studies approach and the seven criteria of Guttmann. This is a difficult task due to a lack of sources and literature dealing with Irish dancing forms and developments in the course of time. The following section thus includes a first attempt to provide a basis for classification of contemporary Irish dancing. Copies of the actual rules and syllabus of the Vienna Feis are provided in the appendix for reference.

10.3.1 COMPARABILITY

Equality in modern Irish dance competitions is maintained by four aspects. First, competitions are structured according to the level of competence in connection with a system specifying which dance movements are allowed on a given level. Secondly, competitions are structured according to age. Thirdly, dancers perform as individual soloists or mini-teams. Fourthly, regulations stipulate that dancers who have already successfully performed a dance on one level are restrained from dancing the dance on this level again, having to perform on the next level of difficulty, instead.

There are four levels to compete on. On the beginners' level, the dancers are required to perform basic movements. On Primary, a various steps are added to the basic moves, and the rhythmical intricacy is slightly intensified. On the intermediate level, the degree of stage movement is considerably extended; the step repertoire includes complex step routines and the extensive use of jumps and acrobatically complex movements. In addition, the intermediate level contains highly complex rhythmic and a-rhythmic step patterns and timing. On open level, there are no restrictions to the difficulty and complexity of dances performed, as it is the highest level danced at a Feis and the only level danced at regional championships and world championships. Hall (17, 57) explains that the complexity of steps, timing and stage movements have extended considerably during the last twenty years due to the exaggerating effect of competitions ever pushing the standards and complexity of dancing to the top.

The strict structuring of Feisanna according to age, level of competence and movements allowed in each grade is clearly the actual realisation of the criteria of equality defined by Guttmann. Fairness of evaluation is increased by providing the same conditions for all competitors (Guttmann 26) such as age and competence levels in Irish dancing.

It is important to mention that apart from the softshoe "team dances", all competitions are danced as solos. Each dancer pits his dance skills against other individual dancers in the same dance- and age group, and even against other

dancers stemming from the same school. Thus there are no direct school wins or grades in the competitive system. Dancers may represent their dance school, the dance results, however, are evaluated on the basis of the individual dancer's skill. Hence even in ceili and team dances, dancers and dance duets from the same school compete against each other. It can be assumed that putting the focus on solo competitions further raises equality of competitions and is beneficial for an increased transparency of evaluation marks. Furthermore, focusing on the individual dancers bears additional significance in terms of representing national identity. Irishness is thus not portrayed by collective performance but is written into the body of each individual dancer and is re-performed with each individual dance piece.

10.3.2 THE RULE SYSTEM OF THE VIENNA FEIS 2011

Today Irish dancing is rationalised in every detail as competition rules govern acceptable and unacceptable dance patterns, dress codes, participation and modes of progress. The sets of rules for competitions serve a distinct purpose and are thus very similar, although slight variations concerning the geographical area may occur according to the size of a Feis or championship.

The system of rules provided in the appendix provides regulations to emphasise that the Irish Dancing Commission is in charge of the competitions and to make sure that teachers and dancers comply with the rules outlined. Thus the organisation of the Feis is provided with a solid basis. According to the rules of the Irish Dancing Commission, only dancers registered with An Coimisiún are allowed to compete; furthermore it states that the adjudicator's decision is final while there is still room for rejections and complaints. As competitions are structured according to age, there is a clear guideline providing that a dancer's age on the 11th of January is to be the basis for the assignment to a certain age group.

Furthermore, the dances required for certain competitions are listed. Standardised dances such as the traditional sets are included in the rules, whereas a reference to the Handbook of Irish Dancing *Ar Rince Foirne* is given providing a list of the group dances required.

The tempo of dances is stipulated. This is done to provide dancers with the opportunity to properly prepare and to contain their dance performance within the limits given. The tempo of music can determine the complexity of steps. Fast music, as played in beginners' dances, renders difficult movements impossible due to the tempo, whereas slow music, as in open level, provides enough room per beat to include complex rhythmic step dance patterns and difficult jump movements. In Mainland European Feisanna such as the Vienna Feis, the tempo of music used in primary competitions was accelerated to prevent dancers from using movements only requested on the intermediate level.

Measures were taken to counter undesirable trends in Irish dance competitions regarding the complexity of steps. The rules state clearly that on beginners' level only basic step material is to be used. As competitions usually induce the dancers to use exaggerated step material and techniques (see Hall 57), beginners are explicitly asked to only use basic movements as to counter exaggerations on that basic level. In order to protect children under the age of twelve and to avoid injuries, no toe stands (as in ballet) are allowed for dancers of that age-group.

The 32 or 40 bar rule implies that the dances performed last 32 bars of music (40 bars for slip jigs and hornpipes) in competitions from the beginners' to the intermediate grade. This rule was introduced in order to push on the sequences of the Feis. Thus the dancers whose turn is next can start their performance immediately after the last step is done by their predecessor without the musician having to stop and restart tunes in between.

On close observation, the so-called 32 bar rule in connection with the grade system determines the general course of competitions. The number of dance floors and adjudicators depends on the number of participating dancers. In the Vienna Feis listed above, two dance floors and one stage are simultaneously used for competitions from beginners to intermediate level and for the traditional

sets and group dances, with one adjudicator judging each floor or stage. For the open grade and the open championship, only the stage is used as all three adjudicators judge the open championship. At the beginners' grade for example, two dancers per floor/stage get into position while the other dancers line up behind. The musician starts playing the tune and two dancers directly compete on one floor in a battle-kind of manner. This is done simultaneously on the other floors/stage as well. As each of the two dancers is getting to the end of the performance, the next two dancers get into position behind. The end of the 32 bars of music for the previous dancers is the beginning beat for the next dancers who follow on seamlessly with the previous dancers swiftly going back in line. This process continues until the group is finished with this particular dance. In order to be able to participate in this process, dancers need to manage to perform two areas of difficulty on top of showing an excellent command of dancing. They need to be able to recognise the music and count the duration of the 32 bars without assistance as not to miss the beginning of their 32 bar slot. They need to dance their solo part independently as they need to do this without getting distracted by the immediate opponent's steps, rhythm and stage movements.

Further important regulations deal with the levels of competence and the circumstances at which a dancer is exempt from dancing at an easier level. This is structured according to the results: The winner of a particular dance on a certain level advances to the next level and is not allowed to participate on the dance level already won. For example, a dancer who wins the beginners' hornpipe danced in hardshoes is required to dance the primary hornpipe at the next competition, whereas he is not allowed to participate again in the beginners' hornpipe competition. Due to the high number of competitors in the beginners' grade, the dancers placed first and second in competitions with 6 or more competitors advance to the next primary level, while in competitions with eleven or more competitors, the first three places advance. In competitions with few performances, such as in competitions with 5 or less dancers, being awarded with the first place does not affect an advance and the dancer can perform the same beginners' dance again. In primary grade, dancers winning the first place are not permitted to perform that dance in primary again; as for the intermediate

grade, special rules are being worked out. Winners in intermediate have to move to the open level for one calendar year. If, however, they fail to score first places in the open after the one-year-period, they are allowed to re-perform on the lower intermediate level.

Concerning these promotion rules, it is important to note that they stipulate situations in which a dancer is not allowed to participate in a certain level, while not being barred from general access to grades. A dancer, who might not have performed at any Irish dance competition previously, can start on a higher level, if the dancer's skills meet the requirements. In fact, most dancers commonly start competing on the beginners' level and "qualify" for the next level by getting the appropriate placing. Many teachers deem it wise not to allow dancers to perform on a higher level without an appropriate rating in the lower level, in order to prevent errors in techniques being developed from the start. Thus the grade system organises and structures Feisanna, provides a point of reference for teachers and dancers, as it helps organise and guide dancers through the intricacy of steps (personal experience).

Perhaps as a surprise for laypeople, the Feis rules deal with dress codes, both underdressing and overdressing. Rule 26 stipulates that dancers have to wear costumes 30 minutes prior to their performance, while according to rule 28 dancers have to wait and stay in their own clothing to prevent dancers from walking about busily in their underwear. To avoid overdressing on lower levels and to protect dancers under the age of twelve from giving in to peer pressure, make-up is not allowed in beginners' and primary levels, as it is not permitted for children under the age of 12 (see Feis rule 30, 31 in the appendix) . Protection of children is explicitly expressed in the child protection policy of the Irish Dancing Commission which stipulates that "it is the policy of An Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha to safeguard the welfare of all children associated in dance tuition and competition, within our organisation, protection them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse or harm" (An Coimisiún le RIncí Gaelacha).

10.3.3 Vienna Feis 2011 Structure

In order to provide better understanding of a Feis structure, the syllabus for the Vienna Feis of October 2011 is included in the appendix.

Regular Feisanna commonly take place on weekends due to the fact that the dancers are amateurs who can only partake in competitions in their spare time. It is worth noting that the Feis is organised according to age group and dance grade. The Vienna Feis program complies with the structure of the dance system. It includes beginners - and primary grades and the dances: reel, light jig, slip jig and single-jig in softshoes and heavy jig and hornpipe in hardshoes. This is followed by the standardised traditional sets which are listed and licensed for beginners and primary grades in rule 24. The so-called "primary trophy" is a combined valuation of a softshoe and hardshoe dance. The intermediate grade consists of the dances reel and slip jig in softshoes, and heavy jig and hornpipe danced in hardshoes. Note that there is no light jig and single jig on intermediate and open level. At the intermediate competitions the traditional sets danced in hardshoes are performed on the intermediate and open levels collectively.

The open championship consists of separate valuations of dances and combined valuations of all dances to determine the champion of the Vienna Feis. Dancers choose one softshoe dance and one hardshoe dance. In softshoe the choice is between reel and slip jig for girls (for boys reel only) while in hardshoe, dancers choose between heavy jig and hornpipe. These two dances are separately valued and awarded with medals. To arrive at a combined championship valuation, the dancers perform a non-traditional set containing a pre-set tune registered by the Irish Dancing Commission and chosen by the dancers. The set is uniquely choreographed for each individual dancer to present his/ her acquired skills and styles. All the competitions mentioned above are solo performances. Team dancing is rare at Feisanna, though highly valued. Team competitions include the 2 hand, 3 hand, 4 hand, 6 hand and 8 hand dances. The number of 'hands' tell the number of dancers participating in the team dances. Team dances include reels and jigs, and are purely danced in softshoes. They differ greatly from their

solo-counterparts as 4 to 8 hand - dances are standardised ceili dances. Only the standardised ceilis are to be performed in competitions according to the rules that "team dances (four hands and more) are to be performed in accordance with the Coimisiún ceili handbook *Ar Rinci Foirne (see Feis Rules* - appendix*)*.

The Vienna Feis is, like all Mainland European Feisanna, popular with adult dancers. This fact is highlighted in the structure of many Mainland European competitions. In Ireland, dancers start at the age of 4-6 years while the top age group is over 21. In Continental Europe the top age group is over 35. This is also highlighted in the introduction to the Adult Open Championship which provides adult beginners with the opportunity to compete in a special competition suiting their needs thus making a clear distinction to the standard "over-21- rule" of regular open championships. As regards this platform for adult dancers, Feisanna of Continental Europe are increasingly attracting adult dancers from Ireland who are left with no basis to compete in their home country.

When comparing the "first" Macroom Feis with modern Feisanna such as the Vienna Feis whose rule system is outlined above, the overall structure of the Feis, stays basically the same as both systems of competition are defined by an individual level-system focusing on the dance type. Irish dancers competing at a Feis partake in competitions' where they perform one of the Irish dances. By way of example, at a beginners' level, there are the reel, light jig, slip jig and single jig danced in softshoes and the heavy jig and hornpipe danced in hardshoes. Each of these dances is a competition. Beginners compete in all of these dances and are placed accordingly. For example, a dancer performing all of the above-mentioned dances might be placed first in the reel and fifth in the light jig and hornpipe. There are no overall standings in regular competitions. These are restricted to special competitions known as trophies (beginners, primary, intermediate) or the open championship. In a beginners' trophy, dancers perform a step of a softshoe and a hardshoe dance and the performance of both will render one single trophy result.

10.4 EVALUATION VERSUS AESTHETICS

In Irish dancing competitions held in line with Irish Dancing Commission regulations, the evaluation by judges is based on four compulsory dances (so-called: requirements) each assessed pro rata at twenty-five percent of the total point score (Hall 59). Hall (59,60) interviewed an Irish dance adjudicator in North America in 1988, who explained the four requirements assessed in competitions. Hall (59) mentions that "there are very basic rights and wrongs in Irish dancing" regarding timing, execution, deportment and overall impression each counting 25 % of the total grade. The music needs to be interpreted in terms of dance rhythm and dancers need to dance at an appropriate speed as not to miss beats. Body carriage is another crucial factor. Dancers need to keep the upper body in a rigid posture while their feet are moved in dancing. Balance problems are not to be shown in the posture of the upper half of the body. Technique refers to alignment of the feet meaning feet need to be crossed and turned outwards and the dancer has to be "up on his toes" as teachers call out during class, for Irish dancing is danced on the palm of the foot. Heels should not be dropped except in special steps requiring heel-drops (Hall 59). The last requirement refers to general appearance including style, overall impression and even dance costumes (Hall 60).

Even a standardised basis of assessment of competitive dancing requirements as mentioned above cannot negate the fact that Irish dancing is a sport based on different aesthetic values (Hall 60). In addition, variations in dance styles invoke a certain amount of varying valuations in judging (Hall 60). Differentiating judgements in terms of style is a commonly known fact as dancers extensively discuss which adjudicator prefers which style of dancing during competitions. In terms of its aesthetic value, Irish dancing sport differs from other types of sport in which precise time measurement of lap speed, or number of goals scored are the only decisive criterion of evaluation. Hall (58) clarifies that judging sports can be "interpersonal as well as an aesthetic, social as well cultural, and intersubjective in significance no matter how subjective or objective in process." (Hall 58). No matter how equally and fairly the process of choosing a winner is

applied, using the requirements of timing, carriage, execution and impression on a dancer's performance is done slightly different from judge to judge (60). I observed that this can stir unrest among dancers and teachers as they want to be given rational reasons for why a dancer did or did not place in competition. Such rational reasons are clearly distinguishable in terms of style and technique but explanations become more and more difficult if dancers perform equal skills, while the factor of overall impression decides the winner. Hall (60) claims that subjectivity in aesthetic evaluation is not a mistake of the competition-system. He rather explains it as a result of trying to rationally measure and compare aesthetic performance. Hall (60) even suggests that those adjudications which do not seem to have derived objectively are the areas which allow for creative innovation consequently saving the dance form from stagnation.

10.5 HIGHER, FASTER, STRONGER - THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHAMPION

Professionalization in Irish dancing did only emerge with the introduction of the modern Irish dance shows such as *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*. In other words, the competitive world of Irish dance is exclusively centred on amateur dancers (see Hall 45), while Irish dance shows are professionally commercialised touring productions recruiting and training Irish dancers as professional stage performers. Apart from becoming a teacher, adjudicator, or Feis musician, there is no possibility to perform Irish dance professionally in the competitive context (personal experience).

Professionalization does not only refer to those who earn their living by performing sports professionally, but also includes the amount of time and effort spent on sport. Although Feis competitors perform their art independently from schooling and professional occupation, the entire life of a dancer is dedicated to the Irish dance training and performance at competitions (Hall 53). Hall interviewed an Irish dance teacher in Limerick in 1999 who highlighted the enormous effort required to maintain standards and be successful at

competitions: "It's not reasonable to want to win the Worlds. You have to work too hard. You have to give up everything else and dedicate yourself solely to dancing and train every day. And you have to take constant criticism." (qtd. in Hall 53).

The dance masters conveyed their teaching of Irish dancing as a form of entertainment and introduction to good manners. Dancing was an integral part of every social event, New Year's party and was freely accompanied by vivid music (see Brennan 103). Dancing was spontaneous. Unlike today's competition business, it did without fixed training lessons, special training for building up stamina and strength and stretching lessons for flexibility as it did not concern itself with adapting the style of dancing to meet a jury's approval. (Personal experience). Though not being professional, competitive Irish dancing is highly time-consuming and demanding on both body and mind. Its tendency towards specialisation requires efforts to be steered at maximising the competitive outcome.

It is highly interesting, that according to Brendan de Gallai's account at a dance workshop in Rognac France in June 2010, awareness of maintaining fitness and stamina started with the famous Irish dance shows. Colin Dunne (qtd. in Mulronney 233) points out that warm-up, stretching, and cool-down routines were not a frequent part of the training: "As I started at a young age [...] I knew nothing about warm ups, had no real awareness of my body, how it worked or how to look after it. Very few of us did. It just wasn't part of the training" (ibid). In Riverdance, however, Irish dancers had to improve their fitness with physiotherapy, core workout and stretching in addition to the many hours of rehearsal and show dancing. This awareness, says De Gallai (France June 2011), was incorporated into Irish dancing. Today core-workout and stretching, as well as careful warm-up and cool-down routines are part of each competitor's training; bodily awareness even extends to detailed food plans for prior and past competitions.

This newly-discovered bodily awareness is presented by excerpts of a dance fitness guide by Stephen Pepper for competition dancing which "teaches dancers the correct techniques when Warming Up, Streching (pre & post dancing, Stamina Training, Flexibility Training, Carriage & Posture correction & Overall Stage Presence" (Pepper):

20 Minute Workout

I recommend you do this workout 2-3 times per week. It only takes 20 minutes to do. This workout will help you improve your stamina, strengthen your leg muscles as well as your core/abdominal muscles and hips. The workout will also help you get that extra lift when performing at competitions.

Set 1

- 1 minute light jogging
- 1 minute jumping jacks
- 1 minute jumps with heels to your butt (remember to land on your toes gently)
- 1 minute high knee running
- 30 SECOND WATER BREAK
  (Pepper)

The food plan in Peppers conditioning programme suggests that:

Because glucose is preferred energy source for most exercise, a pre-exercise meal should include foods that are high in carbohydrates and easy to digest. This include [sic] foods such as pasta, fruits and nuts, breads, energy bars and drinks. (Pepper)

Pepper's programme is not a detailed sports analysis of the physical mechanisms of Irish dance but rather a leaflet for quick reference designed for dancers. It is, however, sufficient for studying the high degree of bodily readiness necessary for executing Irish dance steps in 2011. Pepper's fitness programme seems to me an evidence that Irish dance movements exceed the physical boundaries of the dance form. Sheer practicing of the dance steps does no longer guarantee the bodily fitness needed to sustain endurance during competition. Colin Dunne, as he is quoted in Mulrooney (233), highlights that additional stretching and conditioning was not part of Irish dancing when he was younger. The reason for this may be seen in the fact that the dance form at that time demanded less endurance and strength than present day forms. On examining the short video recording of the 25th World Championships in Dublin (Dir. Hurley) I conclude that the prime maxim of competitive Irish dance has changed from finely executed techniques and appeal of aesthetics to modern demands of strength, high lift and stage movement in Irish dance. Note that according to Pepper bodily workout

facilitates better performances. This is reflected by the importance of the height of jumps and the rising frequency of jumps performed. However, once the possibilities in the field of techniques are exploited, other factors involving the form get in the centre of attention. If technique can no longer distinguish winners from losers, it is the physical ability to maintain a certain body posture, the strong loudness of beats tapped and the stamina that decide the winning form.

Fitness awareness was recently extended by incorporating mental training to improve self-confidence and stage presence. A first hint toward concerns about mental health and competitions is the recent publication *The Little Book of Inspiration for Irish Dancers* by Sean Connolly. In this small handbook targeted at adolescent audience, Connolly discusses the mental hardships encountered when competing and offers tips and solutions for building confidence:

> So how should you prepare yourself?
>
> When I speak of preparation I am referring to mental preparation which consists of self belief in your ability as well as self motivation.
>
> Exercise
>
> Let's take an example: If I asked you to carry out a task for me, something that you do not like or feel uncomfortable with like a big competition, where would your motivation be on a scale of between 1 and 10?
>
> Take a note of the feelings and mark down your score.
>
> [...] Now, once again, close your eyes and imagine that if i told you that if you performed the task really well there would be a party held for you, a holiday for you, somewhere you would really enjoy. Once again relax, close your eyes and use your imagination. How would you feel and where would you be on that motivation scale of 1 to 10 now? Remember, motivation is a feeling.
>
> Did you notice a change in the feeling of motivation? (Connolly: 38)

The publication of Connolly's motivation handbook can be interpreted as pointing towards the mental strains of competitive dancing and the lack of appropriate supplementary training. The excessive physical exhaustion is paralleled by mental hardship. The mental hardship involved is explained by Hall (51-53) who claims the drama of winning and losing to be the cause of anxiety and a loss of

self-confidence. In my opinion, the late introduction of Connolly's and Pepper's handbooks highlights that supplementary support such as physiotherapy, fitness training and mental training are only slowly adopted to the world of Irish dancing and that it cannot keep up with the fast sportification of Irish dance implying ever more strains on body and mind, thus raising the question of health.

In the process of the criterion of modern sport specialisation, Irish dancing further moved away from the social functions of informal dancing as competitive Irish dancing sport demands a considerably high amount of time, practice, fitness and mental training. The dancers may be amateurs but their efforts resemble those of professionals. Thus, the world championships define Irish dancing as a sport reserved for those seeking to become champions and by standing out from other champions, which stands the test of Guttmann's criterion stipulating that modern sports are designed for achieving sport records.

Record-achieving in Irish dancing revolves around perpetual trophies and the number of titles won. A dancer's feeling of being successful does not only depend on a high placing but also the frequency of placings. Once a dancer has reached the intermediate level by winning several medals at the beginners and primary dance competitions their self confidence will rise. Feis championships are awarded with perpetual trophies. The champion receives the trophy cup for one year and has to return it after that period in order to compete for it in the following year or to pass it onto the next champion. Dance legends of Irish dancing, such as Colin Dunne are not only famous for their sheer skill of dancing but for the number of world championship titles won such as Dunne's nine world championship titles (see Colin Dunne). Dunne's example shows clearly the effects frequent achievements in competitions can have on records and fame in the world of Irish dancing.

The quest for records in Irish dancing is based on the dynamic win/lose factor inherent in Irish dancing (see Hall 66). Hall defines that winning and losing is the driving force in Irish dance as it leads to comparison. (66). The desire to win and the fear of losing is the source of personal drama for individual dancers, parents and teachers (Hall 66-67) but it is also as a source of excitement and "thrill" for

dancers (Hall 54). Hall explains that being subjected to the binary win/lose in Irish dancing means being engaged in the following themes (67):

> These [themes] range from the personal stresses of nerves and anticipation to the social means of support and empathy; from the many and myriad explanations of competition results to questions of the relation of talent and effort; from questions of access to resources (whether costumes, choreography, lessons, and all the rest) to the authenticity of Irish dancing itself. (Hall 67)

The binary of winning/losing in connection with the maxim of permanently attempting to provide a better performance than opponents has an exaggeration effect on dancing, rules, and appearance (67). Winning means surpassing the current champion in terms of skill which renders the champion as an authority on future dance performances. The champion is taken as a point of reference whose style, technique and appearance becomes imitated by contestants and exaggerated to overcome it (Hall 64,67). In this manner, Irish dancing performance and appearance is pushed and developed, even exaggerated (67). Hall points out that assessing "timing, carriage [and] execution" (67) by adjudication imposes both requirements and constraints for dancers and limits creative innovation, yet innovations "produce an ever more impressive result: higher leaps and kicks, more colourful and ornate costumes, more audible beats per bar of music, and so on." (Hall 67).

The effect of exaggeration and innovation in Irish dancing by the constant imitation of champions seeking to present ever higher dance skills will be demonstrated below. An example of a hornpipe intermediate level step sequence danced in hardshoes dating from the 1980s will be compared with a more elaborated version used today. The steps presented are used with kind permission of Joan Rafter T.C.R.G. It is necessary to remember that no notation of step sequences exits in Irish dancing, and for this reason the version below can only be an improvised sketch in order to provide an overview. Detailed explanation of basic step dance moves found in the hornpipe below is provided in the appendix.

Table 1. Intermediate hornpipe hardshoe step comparison 1980 and 2010:

Intermediate Hornpipe 1980 (underlined = left leg, not underlined = right leg)	Intermediate Hornpipe 2010 (underlined = left leg, not underlined = right leg)
Double down, <u>double down</u>	Jump (on both legs) cut double <u>hop</u> back
Double cut, double down	<u>Tip down</u>, double <u>hop</u>, tip step <u>step</u>,
<u>Double down</u>, double cut, double down	Down <u>up, step</u> step <u>step</u>,
<u>Tip down</u>, double hop back	<u>Tip down</u> double hop back
<u>Tip down</u> double in front	<u>Tip down</u> brush <u>down</u> brush <u>cut</u>, brush down, <u>toe</u>, back click, <u>down</u> down
Tip down <u>double in front</u>	<u>Tip down</u> stomp <u>step</u> stomp <u>down</u>
<u>Tip down</u>, double down, <u>double down</u>	Tip down double hop toe
Double hop back	

In the table above, a progress in terms of complexity from the hornpipe of 1980 to the hornpipe of 2010 is observable. This complexity is distinguishable through repetition of moves. The 1980 hornpipe version includes a high amount of basic double sequences stemming from beginners and primary grades, but includes raised difficulty in terms of rhythm and timing. Uniform double sequences are rhythmically broken by cuts and tip downs into rhythmic variety. In the hornpipe of 2010, however, basic double sequences are virtually removed except for adding additional beats for changing legs. Step step (or known as step-close) sequences consisting of battering moves while shifting weight from one leg to the other, are intermixed with rising steps such as ups and cuts, tips and doubles into complex rhythms replacing basic trebbles. A complex sequence of brushes merged with clicks and toes is included in the middle section of the 2010 dance and is finalised by stomps danced diagonally to the right hand side.

Not visible in the table is the stylistic shift which occurred between 1980 and 2010 while it is noticeable in the step - choreography outlined. Repetition of basic

double sequences creates a uniform beat, rhythmically broken up. The difficulty with the 1980s version is the timing of the uniform beat in which each single beat has to be danced precisely and equally audible. The manner in which the 1980s version was danced was a relaxed but controlled style referred to by dancers as "flowy rhythm" whereas the 2010 version is designed for strong and powerful, even aggressive battering. The 2010 version keeps some principles of the "flowy rhythm" but adds visually compelling cuts, ups and clicks together with loud and audible steps such as toes and stomps in order to invoke the impression of dominance on the dance stage. I hypothesise that dancing upon becoming louder, faster and stronger is due to the fact, that with rising numbers of competitors in general and in championships, the technical skills have become fairly equal. Other points of differentiation such as height of jumps, stage movement and aggressive battering had to be used in order to provide a wider range of criteria for assessing a champion. Once a champion uses high kicks and strong step dance style, the other dancers will try to imitate his techniques and try to exceed them. This has the effect of dancing becoming higher, faster and stronger ad infinitum.

Beginners and champion-level dances are distinguishable along the repetition of moves. The difference between them is outlined by Hall (96) using a softshoe slip jig as an example.

Table 2: Beginners and champion slip jig step comparison (taken from Hall 96 and slightly adapted)

Beginners Slip Jig		Champion's Slip Jig	
Moves	Number of times performed	Moves	Number of times performed
Jump /kickB	4	Jump/kick FB	3
Hop/ Cut	7	Jump/ kick F	1
Step-close	1	Hop/cut	1
		Step-close	3
		Step-pivot	3
		Step-pivot-close	1
		Step-level-change	1
		Jump/touch	1
Total moves	12	Total moves	14

Hall (94-97) explains that by comparing the beginner's slip jig and the champion's slip jig noticeable differences in terms of move repetition can be found. He notes that the beginner's slip jig makes use of repeating moves whereas the champion's slip jig shows little repetition (94). He points out that the "beginner's dance uses three moves. Two moves are used repeatedly in the first three bars while the last bar has all three moves (hop/cut, jump/kick, and step-close or "two three")" (95). The beginner slip jig has twelve total moves compared to fourteen moves of the champion version. The champion version, however, uses eight different moves whereas the beginner's dance is comprised of only three different moves. Hall (95) adds that the moves of the champion's slip jig are not as difficult when danced separately. Their difficulty rises due to their sequences (97). The difficulty of the champion version is expressed in the composition of the dance, the rhythmic complexity and the complex use of space (97) as the champion version needs to gain the impression of dominance by using the full stage space.

11.0 Conclusion

Irish dancing undeniably arrived at the status of global competitive sport. The world of Irish dancing encompasses a detailed structure of competitions governed by superregional and regional dance organisations deciding on rules and modes of dancing. The most popular dance form practised is the form which enables the scoring of points and winning in competitions. This winning form of dancing is adopted by dance schools providing continuing contests to establish the best dancer commanding the best form and display of technique. Non-successful techniques are neglected. Thus, the maxim of winning and record-gaining by surpassing all contestants has become the main driving force in the world of Irish dancing. Organisational efforts are focused on the competitive business by elaborating and inventing rules. Non-competitive forms of Irish dancing have been neglected while social dancing was abandoned altogether.

Not only is Irish dancing a sport but it has become a global sport. The competitive structure requires success on the local level before advancing to regional championships and ultimately the world championships is possible Irish dance has slowly progressed to global participation from the 1960s onwards. Previously Irish dancing was considered a folk dance in Ireland and the Irish diaspora until travel became cheaper in the 1970 and enabled world championships connecting Irish dance with that of diaspora organisations to one superregional global body of Irish dance.

Performing national identity through Irish dance today means openly displaying and celebrating well-grounded Irishness at a time when Ireland is integrated and recognised within the European Union. Ireland does no longer need nationalism for creating Irish culture as for a means of separation from the British. In fact, Irish dance is used to perform and secure the identity that was created with the Gaelic League. This is reflected in Irish dancing. The Gaelic League used Irish dancing in the early nineteenth century to provide a cultural sphere to their language classes. In Irish dancing, they found an aspect of Irish culture which was vivid and not regarded as being on the brink of extinction as other Irish sports and the Irish language. Irish dancing became a model for Irish culture as the Gaelic

League sought to collect Irish dances and abandon any elements perceived as being influenced by non-Irish trends. Thus, in the wake of rising nationalism, the League created "the" Irish dance which was soon promoted as the only valid "Irish" version.

Performing national identity through Irish dancing in the early twentieth century meant displaying hostility towards foreign and especially British influence in dancing. British influence was opposed by facing British culture with "Irish" cultural equivalents such as Irish sports substituting British sports. Under the aegis of the Gaelic Athletic Association, the predominance of Irish sports, was maintained by banning athletes performing sports other than those promoted by the Association. In terms of structure, the British model of precise measurement, quantification and strictly structured rule-sets was incorporated in the same manner as other European countries and the USA adopted the British sports model. In fact, when Irish dance competitions became more popular in the 1920s, Irish Sports, and in particular Irish dancing slowly developed the same rules and structures

During the era of the dance masters, Irish dancing was highly intertwined with the daily lives of dancers as dancing was part of every festival and occasion. The Gaelic League became interested in Irish dancing especially because of these aspects. Irish dancing was Irish identity performed and displayed through the body. The Gaelic League took control of the support of Irish dancing and re-designed it according to their nationalist vision. In the course of this nationalist transformation, the League sought to remove any elements from Irish dancing which they perceived as inspired by foreign dancing trends as they tried to arrive at a unified Irish dance ready to display their vision of Irishness. Although opposition to the League's influence was formed, the newly standardised version of Irish dance became the predominant form of dancing first globally executed at the first World Championships in Dublin in 1970. Ultimately, the League achieved with dancing what they failed to achieve for the Irish language.

However Irish dancing, like any sport, has its own dynamics and began to form a world of its own, gradually distancing itself from the control of the Gaelic League and developing its own governing structures required by Irish dancing becoming

a modern sport. Competitions demanded control, rules and a method to ensure fair judging of dance skills for determining winners. In the course of rationalisation and quantification, Irish dancing was structured according to levels of difficulty, an adjudication system was imposed and rules were formulated As both the duality of win/lose and the maxim of dance exaggeration had taken control, Irish dancing gradually decreased its social function and increased the importance of competition. This process of sportifiation replaced a nationalist-driven design of Irish dancing and the competitive framework became a closed-off world only visible to members of the dancing community.

The world of Irish dancing which lost its ties with social dancing in Ireland returned to Irish consciousness and world-wide stardom with the popular dance shows *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*. These shows were an artistic breakthrough redefining Irish dancing and freeing it from constraints imposed by competition. Irish dancing was again a tool for promoting Irishness and depicting a self-confident Ireland. Tourism sales rose dramatically and the brand "Ireland" was in fashion. The professionalism of the Irish dance show performers had repercussions on competitive Irish dance. Bodily awareness expressed by fitness routines and stretching were incorporated in competitive Irish dancing, thus further distancing it from spontaneous folk dancing on social occasions, as it became dedicated to the improving the dancing qualities. Furthermore, the shows were responsible for the rising number of pupils joining dancing schools. The world of Irish dancing expanded as pop-culture phenomenon and incorporated dancers from Mainland Europe, Asia, Israel and Russia who were not from Irish provenience.

The changes Irish dancing has undergone reflect the fact that there is no traditional Irish dance as an unchangeable category. The history of Irish dance has been portrayed according to the Gaelic League's re-invention of Irish dancing. A historic link is constantly tried to be established between modern Irish dance and any historic ties stretching as far as to vague Celtic rituals. All of this, however, is not history or fact, but mere nationalist story-telling and shows that Irish dancing has been, to this day, laden with myths. What is often neglected by authors dealing with Irish dancing and the dance community is the fact that any

form of Irish dance is and has always been a construction. In the end, the Gaelic League did not re-establish a former dance culture but designed a new form of Irish dancing which became competitive dancing in the sense of modern sports. The Irishness performed in Irish dance has always been contingent on what was perceived as Irish by the variety of Irish nationalisms at any given time and has always been imagined in the sense of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communites*.

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13.0 INDEX

14.0 APPENDIX

14.1 TIMETABLE - VIENNA FEIS HELD 1. AND 2. OCTOBER 2011

The timetable of the Joan Rafter School of Irish Dancing Vienna Feis 2011 is presented with kind permission of Joan Rafter T.C.R.G. (see *Vienna Feis Timetable*).

Timetable

Saturday

Beginners Level (Age groups U8-19)

8 am

Floor 1			Floor 2			Stage		
Nr	Age	Dance	Nr	Age	Dance	Nr	Age	Dance
1a	U8	Reel	1b	8-10	Reel	1	10-12	Reel
2a	U8	Light Jig	2b	8-10	Light Jig	2	10-12	Light Jig
3a	12-14	Reel	3b	14-16	Reel	3	16-19	Reel
4a	12-14	Light Jig	4b	14-16	Light Jig	4	16-19	Light Jig
5a	U8	Single Jig	5b	8-10	Single Jig	5	10-12	Single Jig
6a	U8	Slip Jig	6b	8-10	Slip Jig	6	10-12	Slip Jig
7a	12-14	Single Jig	7b	14-16	Single Jig	7	16-19	Single Jig
8a	12-14	Slip Jig	8b	14-16	Slip Jig	8	16-19	Slip Jig
9a	U8	Heavy Jig	9b	8-10	Heavy Jig	9	10-12	Heavy Jig
10a	12-14	Heavy Jig	10b	14-16	Heavy Jig	10	16-19	Heavy Jig
11a	U8	Hornpipe	11b	8-10	Hornpipe	11	10-12	Hornpipe
12a	12-14	Hornpipe	12b	14-16	Hornpipe	12	16-19	Hornpipe

Results - 10.15

Primary Level (Age groups U8 -19)

Floor 1				Floor 2				Stage		
Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance
13a	U8	Reel		13b	8-10	Reel		13	10-12	Reel
14a	U8	Light Jig		14b	8-10	Light Jig		14	10-12	Light Jig
15a	12-14	Reel		15b	14-16	Reel		15	16-19	Reel
16a	12-14	Light Jig		16b	14-16	Light Jig		16	16-19	Light Jig
17a	U8	Single Jig		17b	8-10	Single Jig		17	10-12	Single Jig
18a	U8	Slip Jig		18b	8-10	Slip Jig		18	10-12	Slip Jig
19a	12-14	Single Jig		19b	14-16	Single Jig		19	16-19	Single Jig
20a	12-14	Slip Jig		20b	14-16	Slip Jig		20	16-19	Slip Jig
21a	U8	Heavy Jig		21b	8-10	Heavy Jig		21	10-12	Heavy Jig
22a	12-14	Heavy Jig		22b	14-16	Heavy Jig		22	16-19	Heavy Jig
23a	U8	Hornpipe		23b	8-10	Hornpipe		23	10-12	Hornpipe
24a	12-14	Hornpipe		24b	14-16	Hornpipe		24	16-19	Hornpipe

Results - 12.45

Set/Trophy competitions:

Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance
25a	U12	Trad'l Set		25b	12-16	Trad'l Set		25	16-19	Trad'l Set
26a	U10	Trophy						26	10-12	Trophy
27a	12-14	Trophy		27b	14-16	Trophy		27	16-19	Trophy

Results – 13.30 – followed by lunch break until 14.00

14.00 - Welcome addresses by District Mayor and Representative of the Irish Embassy,

Treble Reel /Freestyle (All age groups)

Floor1				Floor 2				Stage		
Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance
28a	U12	Treb. R.		28b	12-16	Treb. R.		28	16-19	Treb. R.
29a	19-30	Treb.R		29b	30-35	Treb R.		29	35+	Treb. R.

Results – 14.30

Open Championship (All performed on stage)

Nr.	Age	Dance
30	U 10	Open Champ.
31	10-12	Open Champ.
32	12-14	Open Champ.
33	14-16	Open Champ.
34	16-19	Open Champ.
35	19-21	Open Champ.
36	Over 21	Open Champ.

Dance of Champions

Sunday

Beginners Level (Age groups 19-35+)

8.30

Floor1				Floor 2				Stage		
Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance
37a	19-25	Reel		37b	25-35	Reel		37	35+	Reel
38a	19-25	Light Jig		38b	25-35	Light Jig		38	35+	Light Jig
39a	19-25	Single Jig		39b	25-35	Single Jig		39	35+	Single Jig
40a	19-25	Slip Jig		40b	25-35	Slip Jig		40	35+	Slip Jig
41a	19-25	Heavy Jig		41b	25-35	Heavy Jig		41	35+	Heavy Jig
42a	19-25	Hornpipe		42b	25-35	Hornpipe		42	35+	Hornpipe

Results – 9.30

Primary Level (Age groups 19-35+)

Floor1				Floor 2				Stage		
Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance
43a	19-25	Reel		43b	25-30	Reel		43	35+	Reel
44a	19-25	Light Jig		44b	25-35	Light Jig		44	35+	Light Jig
45a	19-25	Single Jig		45b	25-35	Single Jig		45	35+	Single Jig
46a	19-25	Slip Jig		46b	25-35	Slip Jig		46	35+	Slip Jig
47a	19-25	Heavy Jig		47b	25-35	Heavy Jig		47	35+	Heavy Jig
48a	19-25	Hornpipe		48b	25-35	Hornpipe		48	35+	Hornpipe
49a	19-25	Trad'l Set		49b	25-35	Trad'l Set		49	35+	Trad'l Set
50a	19-25	Trophy		50b	25-35	Trophy		50	35+	Trophy

Results – 11.00

Team Dances (All age groups)

Floor1				Floor 2				Stage		
Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance
51a	U12	2 hand		51b	12-16	2 hand		51	16-19	2 hand
52a	19-35	2 hand		52b	25-35	2 hand		52	35+	2 hand
53a	U12	3 hand		53b	12-16	3 hand		53	16-19	3 hand
54a	19-25	3 hand		54b	25-35	3 hand		54	35+	3 hand
55a	U12	4 hand		55b	12-16	4 hand		55	16-19	4 hand
56a	19-25	4 hand		56b	25-35	4 hand		56	35+	4 hand
57a	U12	6 hand		57b	12-16	6 hand		57	16-19	6 hand
58a	19-25	6 hand		58b	25-35	6 hand		58	35+	6 hand
59a	U12	8 hand		59b	12-16	8 hand		59	16-19	8 hand
60a	19-25	8 hand		60b	25-35	8 hand		60	35+	8 hand

Results – 12.45, followed by lunch break until 13.15

Intermediate Level (All age groups)

Floor1				Floor 2				Stage		
Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance		Nr	Age	Dance
61a	U8	Reel		61b	8-10	Reel		61	10-12	Reel
62a	12-14	Reel		62b	14-16	Reel		62	16-19	Reel
63a	19-25	Reel		63b	25-35	Reel		63	35+	Reel
64a	U8	Slip Jig		64b	8-10	Slip Jig		64	10-12	Slip Jig
65a	12-14	Slip Jig		65b	14-16	Slip Jig		65	16-19	Slip Jig
66a	19-25	Slip Jig		66b	25-35	Slip Jig		66	35+	Slip Jig
67a	U8	Treb. Jig		67b	8-10	Treb. Jig		67	10-12	Treb. Jig
68a	12-14	Treb. Jig		68b	14-16	Treb. Jig		68	16-19	Treb. Jig

69a	19-25	Treb. Jig
70a	U8	Hornpipe
71a	12-14	Hornpipe
72a	19-25	Hornpipe

69b	25-35	Treb. Jig
70b	8-10	Hornpipe
71b	14-16	Hornpipe
72b	25-35	Hornpipe

69	35+	Treb. Jig
70	10-12	Hornpipe
71	16-19	Hornpipe
72	35+	Hornpipe

Results - 15.00

Intermediate/ Open Traditional Set (All age groups)

Floor1		
Nr	Age	Dance
73a	U12	Trad'l Set
74a	19-25	Trad'l Set

Floor 2		
Nr	Age	Dance
73b	12-16	Trad'l Set
74b	25-35	Trad'l Set

Stage		
Nr	Age	Dance
73	16-19	Trad'l Set
74	35+	Trad'l Set

Results - 15.30

Adult Championship (All performed on stage)

Nr.	Age	Dance
75	20- 25	Adult Champ.
76	25-35	Adult Champ.
77	35+	Adult Champ.

Approximate finish 17.00

14.2 Rules of the Joan Rafter School of Irish Dancing Feis in Vienna 2011

The Feis Rules of the Joan Rafter School of Irish Dancing Vienna Feis 2011 are presented with kind permission of Joan Rafter T.C.R.G. (see *Feis Rules*).

Feis Rules - Rialacha NaFeis

1. The Feis will run in accordance with the Rules of An Coimisiún Le Rincí Gaelacha.

2. Entries will only be accepted from persons currently registered with An Coimisiún.

3. The lodgement of an entry will be taken to mean that teachers and pupils understand these rules and undertake to abide by them.

4. Objections must be lodged in writing within one hour of the announcement of the result of a competition accompanied by a fee of 40 Euro, which will be refunded if the objection is upheld.

5. Age will be taken as on 1st January 2011 (whatever age you turn this year in 2011, you dance under that age e.g. Date of birth is 29 May 2001, you dance under 10 all year long). Evidence of age may be requested, therefore dancers from Mainland Europe should have their dance cards or a valid ID with them in the event of a query as to their age.

6. The Adjudicator's decision is final.

7. Beginners Grade competitions are confined to dancers who have never won 1st or 2nd prize (also 3rd prize, please refer to rule 9) in any competition for that particular dance. In Beginners Grade competitions only basic steps may be performed.

8. Primary Grade competitions are confined to dancers who have never won 1st prize for that particular dance other than in Beginners Grade.

9. If a Beginner competition has 6 or more dancers, the first two places advance to the next grade, regardless of ties. If a Beginner competition has 11 dancers or more, then the first 3 places advance to the next grade regardless of ties. (RTME ruling Sept. 2007)

10. If a Primary competition has 6 or more dancers, the first place advances to the next grade, regardless of ties (RTME ruling Dec. 2009).

11. Beginners and Primary competitions are OPEN to dancers from ALL REGIONS.

12. Intermediate Grade competitions are open to all dancers who have not previously won first prize for that particular dance in Intermediate or Open Grades under the same or higher age limits. If a dancer in Mainland Europe wins in Intermediate, they must advance into Open for the rest of the calendar year. If they do not win in Open, they may return to Intermediate at the start of the next calendar year. (RTME ruling Sept. 2007).

13. For all Beginner, Primary and Intermediate competitions (excluding trophy competitions) the 32 bar method that has been used at previous feisanna on Mainland Europe will be applied. However, in the case of low entries the feis will use the bell method. For all Open Championships dancers will be required to dance 48 bars of music in the reel and jig and 40 bars in the slip-jig and hornpipe. Two and three hands are danced to 40 bars of music.

14. Adult Championships are open to Intermediate/Open level dancers who have never participated in an Open Championship (excluding other Adult or Preliminary Championships). Dancers will be required to dance 32 bars of music in the reel (gents, ladies) or slip-jig (ladies) in the light round, heavy jig or hornpipe in the heavy round, and a Traditional Set for the recall. **(Please note that these championships have been created for dancers who started Irish Dancing as ADULTS).**

15. **Beginner, Primary and Intermediate** Trophy Competitions will be a choice of either heavy or light dance. Dancers will dance 16 bar down the line in their chosen dance.

16. Where there are five dancers or less for Beginners, Primary and Intermediate competitions the results will not affect their grading.

17. Traditional set dances can only be performed in the Traditional Set competitions, in the Adult Championship and in the under 8 and under 10 Open Championships.

18. Music will be played at the recognized An Coimisiún speeds of Mainland Europe.

	Beg.	Prim.	Inter/Open
Reel	121/123	116\118	113
Light Jig	116	116	116
Slip Jig	121	120	113
Single Jig	123	123	121
Heavy Jig	89	82	73
Hornpipe	142	130	113

19. Team dances (four hands and upward) must be performed in accordance with the Coimisiún handbook "Ar Rincí Foirne".

20. Special Trophies (Traditional Sets, Treble Reel Competitions, Primary, Open and Adult Championship Trophies) may be retained by the winners. **Please note that the treble reel competitions are FREE STYLE – therefore use of hands and non traditional dance wear are permitted.**

21. A panel of three adjudicators will judge all Championships from under 8 upwards.

22. Within the limits specified in the Rules of An Coimisiún, the Organisers may at their discretion cancel or combine competitions with insufficient entries.

23. Order and quiet must be kept in the hall, particularly while competitors are dancing.

24. Traditional Set Dance competitions are a choice out of 6 traditional; St. Patrick's Day, Blackbird, Job of Journeywork, Garden of Daisies, King of the Fairies and Jockey to the Fair.

25. Any form of unauthorised photography which has the capability to capture a dancer's image whilst in motion, using electronic or manual means, e.g. mobile phone, standard camera, video camcorder, cine recorder, commercial film, with or without flash enhancement, is expressly forbidden during competitions. **Photographs may be taken during the award ceremonies**.

26. Competitors must be in costume and ready to dance 30 minutes before their competitions are scheduled.

27. The Feis organisers cannot accept any liability for injury or loss or damage to property while on the premises.

28. The dress code in accordance with An Coimisiún rules will be strictly observed i.e., for the sake of modesty and in the interest of safety to young people, dancers will not be permitted to walk around the Feis scantily dressed.
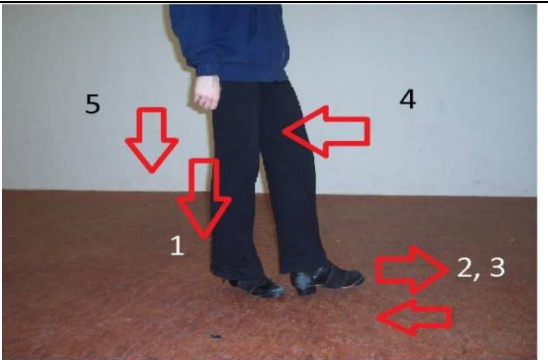
29. Only Feis officials may approach the adjudicators during competition sessions.

30. Effective from Oct. 23rd, 2005, make-up will not be permitted for any dancer in the first two grades up to and including the under 12 age group worldwide. This rule replaces the entire previous ruling on this matter.

31. An Coimisiun has ruled that from 1st January each year, that **no block, en pointe,** stationary or moving, be allowed to be performed for all ages up to and including the under 12 age group worldwide. **The Under 12 Age Group will be allowed to toe walk from September 1st.**

32. No refunds will be made.

14.3 BASIC IRISH STEP DANCE MOVES

	The **basic feet alignment** in Irish dancing consists of putting one leg in front of the other in crossed position. In addition, the toes point outwards. This position is the basic principle of Irish dancing as it is maintained throughout a whole dance.
	A **"double"** is the basic move combination consisting of 2 taps. The front leg taps once moving the foot forward and another tap is added on the foot's way back to center position. The third beat is produced while hopping on the leg behind. All 3 taps are called a **"trebble"**.
	A **"double hop back"** or "Trebble hop back" consists of 4 beats, or 5 beats if the onset down is added as below. An onset down with the back-leg (1) is continued with a front-leg double (2,3). Then the front leg is moved backwards (4) into a further down behind the back-leg (5) which hops in this process (4). There is a variation of this move called **"double in front"** in which the front-leg is not moved behind the back-leg.

	In the **"tip down"**, a skipping movement is produced by tapping once in front while simultaneously hopping down on the same foot.
	The position opposite is called **"up"** and is danced between treble beats, or more often as dance starters. A variation of the "up" is the **"cut"** in which the leg is crossed and pushed towards the opposite side of the hip.
	"Toes" add a different beat sound to trebble combinations by producing a tapping sound by hitting the floor with the toes rather than with the foot palm.

14.4 ABSTRACT

Irish dancing has gained worldwide attention due to the success of the popular dance shows *Riverdance* and *Lord of the Dance*. Apart from being a pop cultural phenomenon, Irish dance is a folk dance exercised as modern competitive sport. Little is known of the history and step development of competitive Irish dancing as the competitive dance community has always been a closed world of insiders. My thesis traces various stages of development of Irish dance from informal folk dance to competitive modern sport elaborating the close connection between Irish dancing and Irish nationalism. In answering the questions raised and in order to provide basic knowledge, the thesis compares publications dealing with Irish dance. Due to the fact that Irish dance is lacking any written historical records thus giving rise to nationalist myths, dealing with Irish dancing is rendered difficult. For this reason, the basic knowledge provided by literary research is filtered by applying the theory of Irish nationalism, sports studies and insights gained through my personal 10-year- long experience as a dancer, thus helping to define Irish dance as modern sport. Nationalists, dancing officials and popular belief coined a certain notion of competitive Irish dancing. This notion refers to Irish dancing as authentic traditional dancing symbolising a New Ireland fought free from British hegemony and linking its traces of origins back to a glorified Gaelic past. This notion, however, is based on nationalist myth-making and conceals the fact that "traditional" Irish dance is a mere construction. From the nineteenth century onwards, folk dancing in Ireland was intentionally transformed into a nationalist-driven version of Irish dance designed to counter British cultural predominance. Irish dance eventually became a global sport until the 1970s when the dance form increasingly incorporated features of modern sports due to rising demands for codification and rationalization of sports. Today, the hyperbole of competitive dancing seeking perfection has overshadowed any cultural and national functions of Irish dancing thus dominating any informal dance practices in Ireland. As previous academic publications dealing with Irish dancing are scarce, the thesis provides basic knowledge and helps to understand the various factors that have shaped Irish dancing. It defines Irish dance as

modern sport and uncovers myth-making processes by distinguishing historical facts from nationalist story-telling.

14.5 ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Ziel *von Irish Dance- Performing National Identity through Sports* ist aufzuzeigen, inwiefern Irish Dance, auf Grund von nationalistisch-politischer Motivation, zur Generierung eines irisch-nationalistischen Bewusstseins verwendet wurde, und wie sich die Tanzform im Laufe des vergangenen Jahrhunderts, im Hinblick auf modernen Sport und seinen Quantifizierungskriterien, verändert hat. Zunächst zeigt sich, dass man historisch nicht von einem irischen Nationalismus reden kann, sondern, dass Nationalismen der Fall sind, welche zwischen kulturellen oder politischen Zielen und demokratischen oder radikal-gewalttätigen Ansätzen zu unterscheiden sind. Ein Hauptthema des irischen Nationalismus ist die Herrschaft Großbritanniens über Irland und die Unterdrückung der katholischen Irischen Bevölkerung. Dieses Thema wird von Nationalisten verklärt bis in die frühen Anfänge des ersten Jahrtausends CE verortet, und bildet die Basis auf Grund deren Geschichte(en) über die Entstehung und Legitimation des Irish Dance generiert und als allgemein gültig beansprucht wird/werden. Da irischer Nationalismus sich um grundlegende Bedürfnisse, so wie dem Bedürfnis der Gruppenzugehörigkeit und des Überlebens der Gruppe, dreht, wurde Irish Dance am Ende des neuzehnten Jahrhunderts von der Gaelic League dazu verwendet, den von ihnen befürchteten Aussterben der irischen Kultur entgegenzuwirken und durch Tanz und irische Sprache die Basis für ein gemeinschaftlich-irisches Bewusstsein zu schaffen. Es sollte aber nicht jener Irish Dance sein, welcher in großer Volkstanzvielfalt in Irland gar nicht als ein einheitlicher Tanz zu sehen ist, sondern ein standardisierter Irish Dance, welcher für die Repräsentation Irlands würdig sei. Aus diesem Grund begann die Gaelic League irische Tänze zu sammeln und alle Tänze die sie von ausländischen Ursprüngen bedingt sahen zu exkludieren. Desweiteren musste der „neue" Irish Dance, gemäß von den damaligen viktorianischen Moralvorschriften, frei von jeglicher sexuellen

Konnotation sein. Die Veränderungen zogen großen Unmut unter praktizierenden Tänzern und vor allem den Dance Masters, welche als residierende- oder Wanderlehrer bisher die Kontrolle über irische Tänze inne hatten, nach sich. Letztendlich kann diese Standardisierung als erster Schritt auf die Richtung zum Sport gesehen werden, welcher mit der Einführung von Turnieren, genannt Feis (Plural Feisanna), fortgesetzt wurde. Diese Turniere waren in Sachen Struktur und Organisation noch informell angelegt und waren nur ein Teil von weiteren Bewerben in Poesie, Musik, und Gesang. Ungleichheit in den Tanz-Bewertungen der Juroren führte zu hitzige Debatten um die Qualifikation der Laienjuroren. Dieser Schritt war essentiell, denn hier gewann der Prozess der Sportifizierung, welcher auf bessere Messbarkeit und Gerechtigkeit von Bewertungen und rationalisierten Ablauf der Turniere zielte, überhand und löste somit die bis dahingehend wichtigere Funktion der national-kulturellen Interessensbildung ab. Der Prozess der Sportifizierung wurde immer spezieller als bis 1930 der Irish Dance jegliche Gesangs oder Literaturbewerbe vom Feis verbannte und von der Gaelic League die Irish Dancing Commission gebildet wurde- die erste national, und später globale, Organisation die sich exklusiv um den Erhalt und die Austragung der Tanz-Turniere beschäftigt. Bis dahin hatte der Irish Dance viele der Kriterien des modernen Sports vollzogen: Irish Dance war national standardisiert und unterscheid sich nurmehr durch stilistische regionale Variationen, das Reglement war einheitlich festgesetzt und Qualifikationsbestimmung für größere Meisterschaften, den Oireachtas, wurden im Rahmen des hohen Büroktariserungsgrades festgesetzt. Technik und Schrittwahl waren durch den Aufbau der Turniere und durch Quantifizierungs- und Rationalisierungsprozesse bestimmt. Das Jahr 1970 markierte durch die erste Weltmeisterschaft die Internationalisierung der irischen Tanzpraktik. Von nun an war Irish Dance von Organisationen gleitet und informelle irische Tanz-Ausdruckformen wurden nachhaltig verdrängt. Mit der Sportifizierung des Irish Dance ahmte Irland die Sportifizierung Europas nach, welche in England des 19. Jahrhunderts ihren Ausgang nahm. Nichtsdestotrotz wird Irish Dance, obwohl er so viele Veränderungen durchmachte, als einzig wahrer traditioneller Irish Dance propagiert und die Mythen um seiner Entstehung und Legitimation ranken sich ungebrochen um Geschichten des nationalen Widerstands gegen

Großbritannien. Mit den berühmten Tanzshows *Riverdance* und *Lord oft the Dance* zeigte sich ein geändertes repräsentiertes nationales Bewusstsein, erstmals selbstbewusst und offen für ausländische Einfluss, welches sich im folgenden Tourismus- und Popularitätsbooms Irlands zeigte. Kompetitiver Irish Dance schaffte es hingegen nur zögerlich sich aus der abgekapselten Wettkampfwelt zu lösen und strebt getrieben von dem Ideal des Rekords weiterhin zur größeren, besseren und schnelleren Tanzleistung, eingewoben in der imaginativen Konstruktion des Irischen Bewusstseins basierend auf einem verklärten nationalen Narrativ.

14.6 LEBENSLAUF

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*5. April 1984

2002	Matura am Realgymnasium BRG Biondekgasse Baden, Spezialgebiete Englisch, Biologie, Bildnerische Erziehung
2002	Zivildienst Bundesasylamt Traiskirchen
2003 – 2012	Angestellter bei Schleifdienst Schumacher
2003	Inskription Betriebswirtschaft Universität Wien
2004	Wechsel auf Anglistik Diplomstudium Universität Wien, freie Wahlfächer gewählt aus Betriebswirtschaft, Übersetzen und Dolmetschen und dem Modul Kulturwissenschaften
2009	University of Cambridge – International Summer School, Spezialkurse: The Origins of Modern Science, Political Philosophy, Education from Empire to Globalisation, Plenarvorlesungsreihe mit dem Thema: Understanding.
2010	Zusätzliche Inskription Lehramt: Unterrichtsfächer Englisch und Geschichte, Universität Wien

Meine Diplomarbeit für das Studium der Anglistik beschäftigt sich mit Irish Dance. Dabei ist anzumerken, dass es doch genau die Leidenschaft für irischen Stepptanz und mein Interesse für die irische Kultur war, die mich bewogen, mich genauer mit der Erforschung des Britischen Raumes zu beschäftigen, und Anglistik zu studieren. Ich wollte ein Fach studieren, welches mir Wissen vermittelte welches ich real anwenden konnte, und meine Wahl fiel auf die

Anglistik, da ich das darin angewandte Wissen durch meine vielen Irlandreisen und Reisen zu Irish Dance Turnieren damals tatsächlich schon benötigte, um mich sprachlich und kulturell ungehindert in dieser Tanzgemeinschaft bewegen zu können. Somit war von Anfang an ein klares Hauptinteresse an Cultural Studies vorhanden und so zögerte ich auch nicht im dritten Semester der Anglistik das Modul Kulturwissenschaften als freies Wahlfach zu wählen. Der Vielseitige Charakter der Anglistik, welcher sich aus Linguistik, Literaturwissenschaften und Kulturwissenschaften zusammensetzt, und auch historisches Wissen abverlangt, begeistere mich am meisten. Ich gab langsam meinem Hang zur Interdisziplinarität nach, in dem Gefühl, dass man großes Wissen nur durch Anschauungen aus verschiedensten wissenschaftlichen Bereichen gewinnen kann. So öffnete ich in Cambridge meinen Horizont und wählte hauptsächlich Vorlesungen und Kurse aus dem naturwissenschaftlichen Bereich. Durch den Kurs der Geschichte der Naturwissenschaft und Astronomie in Cambridge entdeckte ich meine Faszination für Geschichte, welches mich bewog, mich ein Jahr später zusätzlich für Geschichte als Unterrichtsfach in Wien zu inskribieren. Dies traf sich gut mit dem Umstand, dass ich im Jahr davor in dem Modul Language Teaching für Anglistik Diplomstudenten das unterrichten für mich entdeckte. Letztendlich bin ich stolz darauf, dass in meiner Diplomarbeit *Irish Dance: Performing National Identity through Sports* die Hauptanliegen meines Lebens des letzten halben Jahrzehnts kulminieren: das Tanzen und das Studium; und ebenso freut es mich, dass die Diplomarbeit durch geschichtliche, politische und sportwissenschaftliche Einflüsse meinen Hang zu Interdisziplinarität durchscheinen lässt.