

The Cultural Transnationalism of Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*

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1. POSTMODERN PRELUDE

IN 1999, an article published in *Entertainment Weekly* titled “Celtic Inc.” remarked on the emergence of Irish music, a once folky, retro niche, that has since become a lucrative global franchise. While the article was careful to establish an aesthetic debate pitting the protestations of “purists” against cultural industrialists who sinisterly debased traditional folk forms into pop productions of “ethereal, high pitched vocals dripping with synthesizers,” the article ended with a positive, if not positively postmodern spin on the music’s newfound appeal (20). Cindy Bryam, the publicist for a distributor of Irish music in the United States, remarked that “This is very clear, direct, emotional music. It gets people right between the eyes” (20). As the editors of *Entertainment Weekly* added: “It gets them in their wallets too” (20).

The author would like to express her gratitude to Celeste Langan for her intellectual guidance, especially on Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*. This essay is indebted to her work on the subject, and to the vibrant conversations in her graduate seminar on British Romanticism in the spring of 1997.

The “nouveau Celtic sound” gobbled up by global consumers is something Terry Eagleton might aptly describe as an “always already ‘aesthetic’ textured, packaged, fetishized and libidinized” artifact of postmodernism.¹ Yet the recent explosion of the so-called “new Celtic” sound is in many ways a contemporary echo of earlier events in international cultural history. Though temporally removed from the “cultural logic of *late* Capitalism,” and thus assumed to be exempt from certain elements of postmodern critique, Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies* can be looked upon as a precursor of the contemporary Celtic culture industry eyed suspiciously by *Entertainment Weekly* and Irish cultural advocates alike. Published serially from 1808 to 1834, Moore’s *Irish Melodies* is a “multimedia” musical and literary text that rapidly proliferated from one to twelve volumes as consumer demand necessitated. Like the new Celtic sound, Moore’s melodies emerged as a result of a cultural and commercial Celtic wave in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As James Flannery, the contemporary Irish tenor, dramatist, and cultural advocate explains, the late eighteenth century saw a surge in what he calls “Celtomania,” a phenomenon inspired by the discovery of ancient texts from a bardic figure of Scottish origin known as Ossian.² Though the Ossianic poems were ultimately proven to be a fraudulent invention of an aspiring man of letters named James Macpherson, these events whetted the Romantic European appetite for an ancient Celtic culture that could serve as a correlative for other national attempts to locate lost cultural origins.³

Bolstered by a favorable commercial and cul-

1. See Terry Eagleton’s “Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism” from *Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985* (New York: Verso Press, 1985).

2. MacPherson, Ossian’s creator, dismissed Irish attempts to claim Ossian as part of an ancient *Irish* heroic lineage. Basing his claims on Ireland’s shared Gaelic literary heritage with Scotland, Flannery, meanwhile, draws a connection between the Ossianic poems and movements in Irish national resistance. See Flannery’s *Dear Harp of My Country: The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore* (Nashville: J. Sanders and Company, 1997), 23-24.

3. The Ossianic poems were especially popular among the German Romantics. As Flannery explains, Johann Gottfried von Herder “fused his admiration for Ossian with an enthusiasm for Homer, Shakespeare and a wide interest in folk culture as a source of national identity.” *Ibid.*, 21-25.

tural climate at home and abroad, Moore embarked upon his own translation of traditional Irish airs into English as part of an effort to disseminate Irish folk culture on an international scale. However, Moore's precarious position as a prominent Irish author in a British literary marketplace complicated his approach to the task. Indeed, his serial roles as an Irish nationalist and cultural liaison to the British provoke an important question facing Irish nationalists from the nineteenth century to the present: must the Irish literally sell themselves to save themselves? As the literary critic Declan Kiberd explains in *Inventing Ireland*:

The Irish Writer has always been confronted with a choice...of whether to write for the native audience—a risky, often thankless task—or to produce the texts for consumption in Britain and North America. Through most of the nineteenth century, artists tended to exploit far more of Ireland than they expressed (136).

The *Irish Melodies*' rhetorically alluring publisher's preface affirms Kiberd's depiction of national exploitation. The publishers render Moore's work as a product "which has long been a Desideratum" in England. Made consumer-friendly by Thomas Moore's lyrical adaptations into English, and sweetened by his musical collaborator Sir John Stevenson's symphonic arrangements, the *Irish Melodies* did indeed become a consumable, fetishizable artifact of Irishness for a British consumer class. Yet according to Moore's own prefatory testimonials, he strove not only to sample the disparate regional "airs," "customs," "history," "manners" and "native charms" of Ireland for the benefit of British sales, but concerted-ly tried to broaden the *Irish Melodies*' worldly appeal

by incorporating the alluring continental harmonies of Haydn, Händel, Geminiani and Corelli.⁴

In this essay, Moore's efforts to emphasize the *Irish Melodies'* global appeal is the focal point for an analysis of cultural nationalism in the face of international commerce and "universalist" aesthetic principles. Such an argument comes in part as a response to the previous critical reception of the *Irish Melodies*, which has thus far limited its scope of analysis to the text's failure to meet the criteria of cultural *nationalist* projects. In her article, "Irish Bards and English Consumers," Leith Davis has argued convincingly that Moore's equivocal political position as both a "sell out" of the nationalist cause and a patriotic symbol of Irish culture grants us greater "insight into the vexed nature of cultural nationalism in a colonized country" (7-8). Revered by the likes of the Dublin Political Union for "fulfilling a nationalist function," Moore and the *Melodies* also provoked scathing assessments from prominent figures such as Yeats, who famously derided Moore's excessive "social ambitions" (Davis, 7). At every textual level—in the surrounding prefatory letters, advertisements, lyrics, and in the author's theoretical musings about the text's melodic and harmonic elements—Moore does engage with the problem of establishing a distinct, Irish subjectivity in the context of a British colonial economy.

Yet as this essay argues, the peculiar status of Moore's ideologically and aesthetically diffuse text allows us to push the envelope further, and explore the possibility that the commercialism branded by critics as a debased incarnation of cultural nationalism ceases to be nationalism *per se*. Instead, I propose that

4. Thomas Moore, *Irish Melodies with Symphonies and Accompaniments by Sir John Stevenson*. 12 vols. (London: J. Power and Company, 1809), prefatory letter to the first number (no page number).

the category of the nation is, if not effaced in Moore's work, modified into a cultural *transnationalism* that refuses to engage colonialism through contestation, but strives (in my paraphrase of *Entertainment Weekly*) to "get them in their wallets" by "getting them right between the eyes." In other words, Moore accesses an international commercial market by virtue of a direct, emotional appeal engendered by the aesthetic. As this essay shows, cultural transnationalism simultaneously engages and undermines colonialism by using cultural particularity itself—the "native beauty" and "charm" of the melodies, as Moore refers to it—to appeal affectively to a consumer base that extends beyond the colonizer, and engages with an *international* aesthetic community. As the prefatory advertisement to the *Irish Melodies* promises, "Lovers of simple National Music may rest secure, that, in such tasteful Hands, the native Charms of the original Melody will not be sacrificed to the Ostentation of Science" (*IM*, i). By carefully balancing a seductive Otherness with signs of "civility," if not scientific innovation, cultural transnationalism strives for a victory comprised of widespread acceptance and affective affiliation, rather than of violent overthrow.

Instead of focusing exclusively on the commercial transactions and consequences of cultural transnationalism, I endeavor in this essay to reveal the contours of cultural transnationalism's aesthetic processes and political potential. Applying the notoriously contemporary label "transnational" to a work which traffics itself through the aesthetic is admittedly a vexed proposition, for we tend to associate the category of the aesthetic (particularly of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) with the efface-

ment of nationality and the triumph of “universal validity.” To emphasize the viability of the term “transnationalism” in the discourse of aesthetics, as well as in the language of commerce, this essay revisits Kant’s significant work on aesthetic judgment. With the help of more recent commercial and political interpretations of Kant, especially Jürgen Habermas’s and Hannah Arendt’s, this essay rearticulates the Kantian *sensus communis*—a community founded on common sense—as an inter/national rather than universal phenomenon. Bringing Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies* into a critical dialogue with Kant’s *sensus communis* and vice versa allows the idea of a community forged by “common sense” to become transformed into an idea of communities bound together by common sensations.

2. AUDIENCES REAL AND IMAGINED: JUDGING THE *IRISH MELODIES*

IT IS striking that the first edition of Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies* is prefaced with a letter that anxiously considers the formal complications that arise in recuperative projects, while lamenting the unsettling cultural lack that occasions such endeavors. As Moore writes to his collaborator, the musical arranger, Sir John Stevenson: “I feel very anxious that Work of this Kind should be undertaken. We have too long neglected the only Talent for which our English Neighbors ever deigned to allow us any credit” (*IM*, vol. 1). Significantly, the economic metaphors used as part of the rhetoric for his aesthetic defense of the project suggest an intricate link between the political and market forces motivating the formal production of the *Irish Melodies*. That Moore willingly, if some-

what backhandedly, refers to his "English Neighbors" as a vital presence both motivating and scrutinizing the project insinuates that national identities inform his idea of the audience as a consumer base and as an assembly of aesthetic judges.⁵ Likewise, an ambiguity arises about *whose* desires for cultural fulfillment are met, the English or the Irish; and whether or not Moore's imaginative construction of an audience in his prefatory letters limits the formal parameters of this "truly National task," thus conforming conceptualizations of the Irish nation to the colonialist gaze and ear.

The palpable presence of an audience and the manner in which this audience is rhetorically con-

5. Moore's description of his "English neighbors" happens very quickly and swiftly, and seems to be a secularized representation of a community of critics. Yet, it would be foolish to completely ignore the religious and legislative subtext in Moore's backhanded remark. English aesthetic critiques of Irish music and literary forms also stem from what are conceived to be formal weaknesses resulting from an overabundance of emotionality in the "Celtic spirit." Although Matthew Arnold's "Study of Celtic Literature," which famously portrays Irish emotionality, is published much later, these characterizations arise within Moore's immediate context, even in Irish cultural nationalist writings by his rival, Thomas Davis (see also Thomas Carlyle's "The Dandiacal Body" from *Sartor Resartus*, 1833-1834). Davis suggests that as long as the English can primitively cast the Irish nation as an "ignorant, wailing slave," any attempts at forming a coherent Irish nation will fail ("Literary and Historical Essays"). Reform

begins with the individual subject's improvement in Davis's essays (echoing MacCaulay's essays on education): "Besides, the *first* business of life is the improvement of one's own heart and mind" (190). More specifically, education becomes a genealogical system of inheritance in which tropes of the "proper" patriarchal transfer of "property" (at once both cultural and material property), operate in tandem with domestic principles to form a modern Irish subject. Ultimately, the rescue and liberation of Ireland as a "wailing and ignorant slave" is contingent upon the cultivation of the intellect (reason) *and* feeling: "to make our spirits lasting and wise as it is bold—to make our liberty an inheritance for our children and a charter for our prosperity, we must study as well as strive, and learn as well as feel" (191). Structure and the observance of propriety via emulation are vital to Ireland's nationhood and bound to proper constructions of individual, gendered subjectivity as demonstrated in Davis's own

gendered, economic discourse on property and legitimacy.

This gendered discourse on "the nation" intersects with religious discourse and the prejudice against Catholicism because of its effeminized status—at times routed through Catholic valorizations of the Virgin Mary—as an overenthusiastic faith founded on public, emotional displays of allegiance and spirituality rather than inward (read: Protestant) contemplations of faith. Subsequently, English legislation in relation to Ireland is also dictated by certain religious imperatives which, if they did not explicitly censor Irish literary productions, secularly ridiculed them via aesthetic critiques to prevent further dissemination in the marketplace. Among the things I will consider in this essay is Moore's willingness to activate the same prejudicial stereotypes in his description of the audience he wishes to exclude from what I'll identify as something similar to, but not quite, a Kantian *sensus communis* formed by the *Melodies*.

jured or “imagined” is instrumental to the formal execution of the *Irish Melodies* and the aesthetic defenses of the project in Moore’s prefatory letters to the various numbers. In a letter to a valued patroness, The Marchioness Dowager of Donegal, which prefaces the Third Number, Moore defends and defines the patriotic value of his work by imagining a volume of the *Melodies* tastefully displayed on the pianofortes of the rich and educated:

It is not through that gross, inflammable region of society, a work of this nature could ever have been intended to circulate; it looks much higher for its audience and readers; it is found upon the Piano-fortes of the rich, and the educated; of those who can afford to have their national zeal a little stimulated without exciting much dread of the excesses into which it may hurry them (231).

As an artifact, the *Melodies* is placed in an intermediary position, one necessarily beyond the reach of a dreaded underclass prone to excessive actions as a consequence of underdeveloped interpretive skills, yet a work humbly gazing upward to the purveyors of culture and taste, “the nobility and gentry of Ireland” who grant it privileged access to their drawing rooms, and for whom the work is inscribed. Nationalism, then, or perhaps more innocuously, “patriotic sympathy,” is a prerogative of the moneyed and educated, which functions to maintain (while entertaining) the status quo.

Yet in issuing his defenses, Moore both responds to the class anxieties provoked in Ireland by potentially inflammatory sentiments and strives to incorporate a salve for English fears of Irish insurrection. Meanwhile, he carefully avoids any compromise

of his own performance of patriotism by alluding to his own national feeling. As Moore segmentalizes Irish society by situating the *Melodies* in an intermediary position—as a barrier that separates the lower classes from the nobility and gentry—so too does he cordon off a problematic sector of *English* society by offering no apologies to Englishmen who “nursed in the gloom of prejudice, are alarmed by the faintest gleam of liberality, that threatens to disturb their darkness” (230). He does, however, appeal to the sensibilities and pocketbooks of an enlightened and discerning stratum of English society:

As there are many, among the more wise and tolerant, with feeling enough to perceive all the danger of not redressing them, may yet think that allusions in the least degree bold or inflammatory, should be avoided in a publication of this popular description—I beg of these respected persons, to believe, that there is no one who deprecates more sincerely than I do, any appeal to the passions of an ignorant and angry multitude (231).

If not a kinship, at least an accord based on common class sensibilities and sensitivities, and founded on feeling and sympathy, emerges between the English and the Irish in Moore’s imagined audience. Moore reconsolidates this bond by demonstratively refuting the politically “mischievous tendency” in his lyrics. The patriotic sympathy in Moore’s argument must necessarily be construed as a countervailing consequence of his magnanimous gesture towards the English. He discretely (and discreetly) addresses multiple national communities, the English and Irish, while rhetorically melding them together based on common class sympathies and aesthetic sensibilities. Moore manages to empathetically inhabit both

national subjectivities while remaining remote from the site of conflict as a spectator describing the situation. Implicitly judging with some distance (affective and spatial), Moore further acts as a mediator with rhetoric encouraging the more general exercise of aesthetic judgment. Here Hannah Arendt's reading of "Kant's world citizen," a figure who is ultimately nothing more than a "*Weltbetrachter* or world spectator," sheds further light on the kind of aesthetic positionality Moore models in the prefaces.⁶

In Moore's appeal to the English, he adopts a pose that is strikingly similar to Kant's advocacy of "comparing our judgment with the *possible* judgment of others rather than the *actual* judgments of others" (Arendt, 43, my emphasis). As Arendt stresses, "the faculty that makes this possible is the imagination...by the force of the imagination [critical thinking] makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public, open to all sides; in other words it adopts the position of Kant's world citizen" (43). Indeed, Moore is quite actively engaged in an act of imagination when he conjures the players in the prefatory letter's scene of reception. Able to occupy, if only momentarily, the subject position of "wise and tolerant" Englishmen, Moore not only demonstrates his ability to "*Selbstdenken*," to think for himself, and not according to the sway of misguided, prejudiced passions like his lesser countrymen. He also shows that his mode of judgment is compatible with a larger community of autonomous judges. He allies himself (and those with similar abilities like the nobility and gentry of Ireland) to his enlightened and "liberal" counterparts, the English. At the same time, his rhet-

6. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 42-45.

oric interpolates these divisive national parties into a provisional community with himself by virtue of the aesthetic effects produced by the *Irish Melodies*. As Arendt states, “enlightenment is, first of all, liberation from prejudice” (43). Because this occurs in the “*potentially* public space” of a letter, of a “private” document subsequently published as part of a commercial product (Arendt 43, my emphasis), the result is a mutual collapse of the boundaries between public and private, and between political diplomacy and commercial savvy.

An argument invested in the commercial ramifications of political diplomacy can only be abstracted from Arendt’s account of Kant’s position as a world spectator—“he never left Königsberg”—and his voracious reading of printed materials, including “travel reports” (44).⁷ Habermas’s reading of print culture, meanwhile, allows us to further extrapolate, if only theoretically, a notion of “transnational exchange” on political and economic registers in Moore’s context. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas acknowledges that the increased avenues for an exchange of knowledge via printed materials also opens up the routes of exchange for print *commodities*. Moore’s exclusion of the undesirable registers of society in his construction of an audience results in what could be considered a Habermasian “*Intimsphäre*,” an intimate public sphere in which the “heirs of the humanistic-aristocratic society, in their encounter with the bourgeois intellectuals...buil[d] a bridge between the remains of a collapsing form of publicity (the courtly one) and the precursor of a new one: the bourgeois public

7. Spectatorship, in this instance, is meant to signal not only viewing from a distance, but in private isolation away from the actual location of the event. See Arendt’s *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* for a further explanation of this mode of viewing.

sphere" (30). The bridge erected by the *Melodies*, it seems, is one that connects a collapsing Irish aristocracy with the emerging English bourgeoisie, spheres that in their separate contexts begin to share the "world of letters" and the "market of culture products" (Habermas, 30). The passive stance of the aesthetic spectator and listener occupied and advocated by Moore is, paradoxically, a conservative liberal position relying on a careful balance between the political and commercial necessities of his project in both spaces. While the "tones of national complaint" and "warmth of political sentiment" in Moore's lyrics are necessarily diffused by the author and rendered as a passive, retrospective "mourning for the wrongs against [Ireland]" that sensible strata of society in both Ireland and England can empathize with, his defense of his collaborator, John Stevenson, stems from an opposite objection, but is resolved by similar means.

3. THE PROBLEM OF IRISH HARMONIES

MOORE was not the lone target of cultural nationalist critics who feared that Irish national culture was somehow compromised in his collection of *Irish Melodies*. Moore's collaborator, the musical arranger Sir John Stevenson, had to contend with charges that his musical settings no longer retained the national character of Irish melodies because they were too harmonic. In his prefatory defense, Moore writes that Stevenson was "accused of having spoiled the simplicity of the airs, by the chromatic richness of symphonies and the elaborate variety of his har-

monies" (231-2). Whereas Moore faced concerns that his lyrics would be construed as threateningly "too Irish," Stevenson's musical arrangements, harmonically influenced by the symphonic innovations of Händel and Haydn, were charged with not being Irish enough, of being inauthentic because of their ornamental layerings over "the chaste simplicity of the airs" (228). Inevitably, the political accusations directed towards the project were administered and addressed on the basis of aesthetic criteria. The threat harmonic innovation posed to national specificity and to the authenticity of national feeling is perhaps best addressed by revisiting Jean Jacques Rousseau's "Essay on the Origin of Languages" (1753). By doing so, I am not suggesting that Moore was directly responding to Rousseau or to the Rousseau/Rameau harmony squabbles. Rather, Rousseau's idea that harmony obliterates national particularity serves as a useful philosophical correlative for the concerns Moore had to address in his prefatory defense of Stevenson.

For Rousseau, music and language—specifically melody and speech—are founded simultaneously and share a common origin. Likewise, music and language produce nascent cultural formations by arousing empathetic passion between isolate individuals:

Around the fountains which I have mentioned, the first speeches were the first songs: the periodic and measured recurrences of rhythm, the melodious inflections of accents, caused poetry and music to be born together with language; or rather all this was nothing other than language itself in those happy climates and those happy ages where the only pressing needs that required another's collaboration were needs born of the heart (276).

Aside from sharing a common origin with language, Rousseau further contends that the melodic line is imbued with the qualities of linguistic accent: “melody...imitates the accents of [various] languages as well as the idiomatic expressions commonly associated in each one of them with given movements of the soul” (282). Because, according to Rousseau, harmony’s emphasis on interval mates or altogether eliminates “accent”—that passionate quality which enlivens and makes speech and melody communicable between a specific set of people—it is incapable of eliciting a sympathetic bond. The threat, then, that harmony poses to melody, the component of musical expression which is most idiomatic and particular according to Rousseau, is one of dilution and dissolution, specifically the severing and “deprivation” of the passions which serve as the connective tissue between isolate beings.

Rousseau elaborates on this effect through a dramatic figuration of the passionate bond as the initial connection between song and speech:

[H]armony deprives [melody] of energy and expressiveness, it eliminates the passionate accent in favor of intervals, and it eradicates and destroys a great many sounds which do not fit into its system; in a word, it separates song and speech to such an extent that these two languages contend, thwart one another...and cannot be united in the treatment of a passionate subject without being absurd (282).

Rousseau’s emphasis on the “passionate subject” bears striking similarities to Moore’s characterization of an audience (both English and Irish) united in sympathy, yet as I will make clear when I return to Moore’s and Stevenson’s text, Rousseau conceptualizes the trans-

mission of feeling as something which is nationally and—interchangeably for Rousseau—linguistically contingent. “The physical power of sound,” in Rousseau’s estimation, is not portable to other cultures and nations. He makes this explicit in his anecdote about the Tarantella, which further debunks claims to the universality of musical expression:

It is not the case that absolute sounds or the same tunes [i.e. the Tarantella] are the indicated cure for everyone who has been stung by that insect; rather, each one of them requires tunes with a melody he knows and lyrics he can understand. An Italian requires Italian tunes, a Turk would require Turkish tunes. One is only affected by accents that are familiar; the nerves respond to them only as the mind inclines them to it...Berniet’s Cantatas are said to have cured a French musician of the Fever; they would give one to a musician of any other nation (insert added, 284).

For Rousseau, music is not the medium through which transnational sympathies can be trafficked or exchanged as Thomas Moore infers it to be. That an Englishman’s emotions could be stirred by *Irish* melodies would be rendered absurd based on Rousseau’s theorizations. A translation from Gaelic to English, however, coupled with harmonized arrangements obscuring the particularized inflections of melodic “accent” could, perhaps, make such an alliance possible for Moore. Likewise, Rousseau’s aversion to print, juxtaposed with Moore’s reliance on the medium for the dissemination of what is fundamentally an oral/aural medium, is closely connected to each author’s considerations of music, language and liberty.

Rousseau ominously predicts that the onset of political apathy and the erasure of national difference are the inevitable repercussions of the rise of mass

print media. As Downing Thomas summarizes in "Music and Original Loss": "The silence of gesture, at first valorized, has returned again as the deplorable silence of writing and as the paradoxical condition of social isolation" (113). Rousseau's emphasis on accent and idiom is an abstraction of the isolate parts of speech and vocalization that resist standardization (i.e., a "national language") through print, retaining the vibrancy found in speech and melody. He equates speech with democracy and liberty: "Some languages are conducive to liberty; namely, the sonorous, rhythmic, harmonious languages in which speech can be made out from far away" (294). Meanwhile, according to Rousseau, government statements—"there is nothing left to say but *give me money*"—are issued through public, printed materials equated with coercive and invasive measures in the private sphere: "it is said with posters on street corners or with soldiers in private homes...subjects must be kept scattered; that is the maxim of modern politics" (294).

8. Other Irish cultural nationalists later in the nineteenth century more explicitly endorsed English as Ireland's language of liberty. In "Gaelic Folk Songs," Douglas Hyde famously makes a case for the publication and standardization of folk songs translated into English in order to ensure their survival. Hyde recognizes, as certain "leaders of the Irish race" have in his time, that English is the language which is destined to bind Ireland together linguistically and thus, geographically: "from the centre to the sea English will be the language of the rising generation, it may be possible that a poet may yet spring up amongst us who shall combine in a union of sympathy both the upper and lower classes, not of one province, but all of Ireland" (107). This notion of English as a "neutral language" or universal solvent appears in the English statesman Charles Trevelyan's accounts about India. There is a "currency" to English, a currency that may be read multivalently as economic potency and temporal endurance; i.e., English is a "current language" that is at once the language of trade and a modern medium of previous languages (such as Latin) which maintain law and order.

Moore, meanwhile, favors a translation of the Gaelic into English because it purportedly prevents the *Melodies* from being obliterated by the passage of time, and fixes it in the language that is becoming increasingly standardized not only in Ireland and Britain, but throughout the world as well.⁸ The lyrics' assumed inscrutability in Gaelic prior to Moore's poetic intervention with the "appropriate English words" does not require any further "distressing or antiquing," but is a necessary act in an *occasion* of distress, a crisis necessitating the restorative, not recuper-

ative nature of Moore's work.⁹ He imagines the printed artifact resting peacefully and decoratively (one could say "beautifully" or "aesthetically") enhancing private spaces (the drawing rooms of the elite), rather than invading the domestic sphere with politics as Rousseau imagines the bodily presence of the soldier.

The commodity Moore produces is one Rousseau would undoubtedly reject because it muddles the senses of reception and silences music and idiomatic particulars by reducing them to objects for sight. While this is a threat to liberality in Rousseau's model, Kant's conceptualization of the autonomous aesthetic subject who rejects sensuality in favor of form (preferably form evacuated of any particularity or cultural contingency) seems more in line with what Moore is trying to achieve with the *Melodies*. As we reapproach the problem posed by Stevenson's harmonic arrangements of the *Irish Melodies*, it is necessary to bear in mind the imbricated aesthetic and political ramifications of the melody/harmony divide.

Responding to the alarm caused by Stevenson's harmonic arrangements, a concern predicated on the threat "innovation" poses to the original or "authentic" versions of the melodies, Moore represents Stevenson's innovation as an act of *intervention*.¹⁰ According to Moore, what is perceived to be the "original" version of these airs is in many cases already contaminated by "the unskillful performance of our own itinerant [*sic*] musicians, from whom, too frequently the airs are noted down, encumbered by their tasteless decorations, and responsible for all their ignorant anomalies" (227). Working from a corrupted

9. I've borrowed this application of the terms "distressing" and "antiquing" from Susan Stewart. Stewart suggests: "The cultural reproduction of value works by attaching itself to particular forms. The valorized temporal category is not a category or kind that is abandoned; rather, it is a kind summoned from the dead which acquires a particular purpose and assumes a particular status by the fact of its anachronism." *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 74.

10. "Innovation" is used pejoratively by Moore as a description of the "ornaments, or affectation of science" characteristic of early Irish composers' attempts to incorporate the "harmonic innovations" of continental composers, such as Geminiani and Corelli. The most serious charge Moore levels against Carolan, an early Irish composer, is that "in that curious composition, indeed, called his Concerto, it is evident that he labored to imitate Corelli, and that this union of manners, so very dissimilar, produces the same kind of uneasy sensation, which is felt at a mixture of different styles of architecture" (227).

source with ill-conceived harmonies and improvised performances of “inelegant superfluities” (a remark which reverberates with the same distrust Moore shows for ignorant interpretations of his poetry by a “gross inflammable region of society”), it is subsequently Sir John Stevenson’s task to “restore the regularity of [the melodies’] form” with his tasteful, civilized intervention (228). By implying that Stevenson’s arrangements are more original than the transcription of a debased “original,” Moore combats the claim that Stevenson’s harmonies and introductory symphonies efface the Irishness embedded in the melodic line of the airs:

Far from agreeing with the critics who think that his symphonies have nothing kindred with the airs they introduce, I would say that, in general, they resemble those illuminated initials of old manuscripts, which are of the same character with the writing which follows, though more highly colored and more curiously ornamented (232).

Moore’s emphasis on a sameness of “character” in his print analogy immediately follows a brief discussion of Stevenson’s own “character” and the “vein of Irish sentiment” expressed in his work. Moore insists, by default, that Stevenson is indeed “particularly suited to the task” of arranging the airs because he *is* an Irishman: “Sir John Stevenson has brought a national feeling to this task, which would be vain to expect from a foreigner, however tasteful or judicious” (232). Again, Moore’s discourse on nationality, however emphatic, is always couched in terms of “sensitivity” and “feeling,” on sensations which result in artistical-

ly productive effects and inspire sympathetic, beautiful affects rather than retributive action: "Every voice has an air to itself, a flowing succession of notes that may be heard with pleasure...so artfully has the harmonist (if I may thus express it) *gavelled* the melody, distributing an equal portion of its sweetness to every part" (emphasis in original, 233). Careful to subdue any potentially threatening emphasis on Stevenson's Irish nationality with a harmonized image of "equality" and "sweetness," there is no question Moore regards Stevenson's "gavelling" and his own lyrical work as a diplomatic, artisanal labor. Moore promotes the *Irish Melodies* as a uniquely crafted work that requires, in turn, to be received by those capable of appraising, appreciating and ultimately purchasing the *artifact*, the mediating product that is neither brusquely too Irish or blandly un-Irish. Instead, his project tries to exist above the fray of contentious politics as a work uniquely representative of everything "beautiful" and exemplary about Ireland; the "feelings," "sentiments" and "manners" manifested in its music and interpretable by those capable of responding with empathy, not to mention purchase power. The *Irish Melodies* is indeed a handsome and expensive, twelve-volume collection (at 15 shillings per volume), a stark contrast to the broadsheet street ballads disseminated amongst Ireland's "commoners." Even other ambitious collections of Irish music, as Moore's rival Thomas Davis reminds us, are "cheaper and contain pure [as opposed to Moore's 'corrupt'] settings" (124).

4. FINAL JUDGMENTS

AS MUCH as Moore's project occasionally conforms to the "aesthetic politics" described by David Lloyd, the prominent Marxist literary critic, as a requisite combination in Irish cultural nationalism, Moore's focus on the "intermediate subject of taste" in descriptions of himself, his collaborator and his audience never makes the crucial move of creating or imagining the "citizen-subject itself," the political subject of the state who is ethically moved into action (Lloyd 1994, 54). Instead, Moore remains fixated on the aesthetic subject of taste who is not subjected to any state except one of emotional stimulation, a subject whose actions are either passively sympathetic laments for grievances temporally removed in the "past," or productively channeled into the exemplary aesthetic task of the present, the task of rendering the *Irish Melodies*. Moore's characterization of himself and Stevenson as nouveau "bards" of the Irish nobility and gentry who are both humble servants of their patrons and uniquely sensitive artisans especially qualified for their task figures the two men as exemplary Irish geniuses.¹¹ The constant assertion of their authorial "presences" and personae in the prefatory letters and across the terrain of the printed matter is an assertion of autonomy: large inscriptions of Moore's and Stevenson's names are ornately scripted on each of the volumes along with their titles: "Thomas Moore, esq., and Sir John Stevenson." At the same time Moore defends his and Stevenson's brand of Irishness, he refuses to be integrated into a cultural nationalist agenda demanding the "transparency" and self-efface-

11. For an excellent study on the bard as an exemplary figure of national origins in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain and Ireland, see Katie Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

ment of the artist as a medium for the nation.¹² Rather, Moore attempts to reconfigure the idea of Irishness itself as an internationally viable, beautifully appealing category of “taste.”

Likewise, Moore’s demographically specific audience of educated, tasteful elites endowed with purchase power is also part of the author’s refusal to appeal to a “common” denominator associated, for Moore, with a patriotic orthodoxy.¹³ Another powerful persona whose presence looms in the *Irish Melodies* is the Marchioness Dowager of Donegal, a patroness whose social status and critical skills are emblematic of the tasteful “community”—a sort of *sensus communis*—created by the *Melodies*.¹⁴ Indeed, the only actions permitted as responses to the *Melodies* are criticism, performance and purchase; a musical performance of the *Melodies* is contingent upon the purchase

12. The rapid treatment of this subject in the limited space I have available does little justice to the complexities of the process which David Lloyd has thoroughly and convincingly identified in *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism*, as well as in “Adulteration and the Nation: Monologic Nationalism and the Colonial Hybrid,” published in *An Other Tongue* (see bibliography for complete reference). Lloyd’s description of Clarence Mangan and the poet’s precarious position as an Irish cultural nationalist is something which signaled comparisons with Thomas Moore’s status for me. Dealing with Mangan’s “non-integration” into nationalist projects, Lloyd looks closely at his poetic form, at the “uneven faltering numbers of Mangan’s

nationalist poems,” and describes the process of Mangan’s alienation from a “nationalist vision” as a form of “self-subtraction.” By “uneven faltering numbers,” I take Lloyd’s remarks as signaling the speaker’s unwillingness to join the “ranks” he writes into existence in the poems, and his action of refusal is subsequently, rhetorically exercised by various ironic “distancings” (81). After this process of subtraction is left a remainder, the figure of an individual (here the poet) standing or lying (in reference to the “dead body” analogy associated with martyrdom and sacrifice in nationalist rhetoric) distinct and apart from a unity. Lloyd further suggests that “self subtraction in this context becomes a parodic version of the ethical self-effacement called for by a nationalist literary program.”

13. Flannery, *Dear Harp of My Country*, 73.

14. Moore goes to great lengths to address the Marchioness’s exemplary status as an individual who is critically adept and artistically gifted. He writes: “If your Ladyship’s love of music were not known to me, I should not have hazzarded so long a letter upon the subject; but as, probably, I may have presumed too far upon your partiality, the best revenge you can take is to write me just as long a letter upon Painting; and I promise to attend your theory of the art, with a pleasure only surpassed by that, which I have so often derived from your practice of it. May the mind which such talents adorn, continue calm as it is bright, and happy as it is virtuous” (233).

of the printed matter in order for the voices and pianofortes to join in a harmonic resonance of sympathetic lament and artistic celebration. Moore's model virtual community and the individuals of whom we are offered a glimpse (including himself, Stevenson, and more obliquely, the Marchioness) seem ideally to represent the autonomous subjects of Kant's *sensus communis*. Like the autonomous, judging subject in Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful," Moore and his cohorts win assent through critical thinking and a subsequent articulation of "the beautiful" (in this instance through song), rather than through force.

Reconsidering Kant's statements on the "universal voice" allows us to acquire a better understanding of the processes of aesthetic judgment Thomas Moore employs in his articulation of "the beautiful":

The judgment of taste itself does not postulate the agreement of everyone (for that can only be done by a logically universal judgment because it can adduce reasons); it only imputes this agreement to everyone, as a case of the rule in respect of which it expects not confirmation by concepts, but assent from others. The universal voice is, therefore, only an idea (we do not yet require upon what it rests). It may be uncertain whether or not the man who believes that he is laying down a judgment of taste is, as a matter of fact, judging in conformity with that idea; but that he refers to his judgment thereto, and consequently that it is intended to be a judgment of taste, he *announces* by the expression "beauty" (my emphasis, §9, 51).

That Kant refers to the judgment of beauty as belonging to a universal *voice* is striking enough, yet the requisite "announcement" of beauty into what is conceivably a public sphere is a performative speech act which actively materializes the beautiful before it can be comprehended by another. In other words, the beauti-

ful can only exist once it has been enunciated. Similarly, for Moore, the *Melodies* simultaneously articulates and materializes the beautiful. We can think here of the music being sung and performed, and the recreation of scenes of performance noted earlier. Yet when considering the particular medium of what Moore and Stevenson have produced, we must also remember to distinguish between what Kant refers to as “free beauty” (*pulchritudo vaga*) and “adherent beauty” (*pulchritudo adhaerens*) (66). Interestingly, Kant classifies “all music without words” as free beauties, or beauty unnecessarily bound to any conditionality of a concept (66). Adherent beauty, meanwhile, “presupposes a concept of the purpose which determines what the thing is to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection” (66). Among other interesting examples, language implicitly falls under the rubric of adherent beauty because there is an *a priori* assumption about its conceptuality and possible perfection. How then, do we judge music with words like the *Irish Melodies*, a mixed medium Kant never explicitly addresses as belonging to either category? Perhaps it would, like “the building which would immediately please the eye if it were not a church” and the New Zealanders tattooing “were it not attached to the form of a human,” qualify as an adherent beauty, and thus be judged as such (66). Bound to the very explicit concepts of “nation,” “custom,” “manners” and “history” (if we recall the Publisher’s introduction and Moore’s own emphatic defense of the text’s national particularity), the *Melodies* necessitates its own model of judgment conceived in part to address its status as a hybrid text both

musically and linguistically. Its confluent status as an aesthetic work *and* a cultural commodity also enables us to see how aesthetics, including a traditional Kantian notion of the aesthetic, is complicit with the commercial venture, even though Moore attempts to dignify the *Melodies* by using formal criteria.

The unity which emerges from the *Irish Melodies* is not a national one per se, since it self-consciously recoils from the foundational tenet of Irish cultural nationalism that demands "an intellectual bond of union between upper and lower classes," thus making Irish music "equally familiar to cabin and drawing room" (Hyde, 105). Nor is the venture founded on an aesthetic "universalism" merely content with the enjoyment of the art for its own sake. Instead, the *Melodies* is a transnational product whose exportation across contested boundaries and commercial success is founded upon and facilitated by the aesthetic and emotional response it engenders. Ideally, Kant conceives of replacing the senses with a *sensus*, whereas Moore cannot create a consensus of consumers without a direct appeal to multiple senses, to the visual and the aural. In an effort to be interpretable and accessible to a special, but nonetheless vast audience, Irish feeling previously incomprehensible in its Gaelic antiquity and melodic particularity becomes translated into English words and continental harmonies influenced by Germanic and Italian symphonic forms. Perhaps Moore is best described in his own words, as a "Wandering Bard who/roams free/As the mounting lark that o'er him sings/And, like that lark, a music brings/Within him wher'er he comes or goes" (*IM*, 242). Moore used his "native

Charms” to acquire for himself, and his work, access to the drawing rooms across Europe. In doing so, Moore also found a way, as problematic as it is promising, to communicate Irishness *affectively* to multiple communities. Moore abandoned a strain of Irish patriotic orthodoxy in favor of an internationalism modeled on the principles of aesthetic seduction and mutual affiliation. In short, he “got them in their wallets” by using the *Irish Melodies*’ “direct, emotional music” to “get them right between the eyes.”

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