

Irish Bards and English Consumers: Thomas Moore's "Irish Melodies" and the Colonized Nation

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IN A LETTER to John Stevenson, printed in the first volume of the *Irish Melodies* (1808), Thomas Moore announced his excitement over the "truly National" project which he was undertaking: reclaiming Irish songs which had, "like too many of our countrymen, passed into the service of foreigners" (*Works* 4: 113). Daniel O'Connell's speech at a meeting of the Dublin Political Union indicates his confidence that the *Melodies* fulfilled this nationalist function: "I attribute much of the present state of feeling, and the desire for liberty in Ireland to the works of that immortal man [Moore]—he has brought patriotism into the private circles of domestic life . . ." (Jones 292). But other commentators have condemned Moore for selling out the Irish nation in order to enjoy commercial success. Yeats, for example, although he praised certain of the *Melodies*, called Moore "merely an incarnate social ambition" (*Letters* 447). Such critical disagreement regarding Moore's political position provides insight into the vexed nature of cultural nationalism in a colonized country.¹ Specifically, the case of the *Irish Melodies* illustrates the ambiguity on which the self-image of a colonized people rests; the self-image may serve a strategy of resistance, but it is always partially created by the desires of the colonizers and is therefore always co-optable. In this discussion, I want to read the *Irish Melodies* as cultural products of a colonized country, taking into account the various factors influencing their conception, dissemination, and reception.² My concern is not to condemn or condone Moore's presentation of the Irish nation, but rather to unfold and explain the multiple readings to which the *Melodies* have been subjected by both Irish and English readers.

Moore began his writing career at Trinity College, Dublin, when he published several nationalistic articles in the *Press*, a journal operated by Arthur O'Connor and Thomas Addis Emmet. His early pieces indicate his sympathies for the rebel cause. His article of December 2, 1797, admonishes his fellow students to "show these ministerial minions [the University administration] . . . that Ireland has Sons untutored in the school of corruption, who love her Liberties, and, in the crisis, will die for them" (Jordan 26). His next piece was a prose effusion in the style of Ossian: "O! children of Erin! you're robbed: why not rouse from your slumber of Death? Oh! Why not assert her lov'd cause, and strike off her chains and your own, and hail her to freedom and peace?" (Jordan 25-26). He also published several translations in the periodical *Hibernica*.

The *Irish Melodies* are, on one level, an extension of Moore's earlier desire to encourage nationalist sympathies. The prefaces to several of the *Melodies* proclaim the Irish cause. The first and second editions of the *Melodies* feature a letter by Moore expressing his belief in the connection between Irish music and politics and announcing: "We are come, I hope, to a better period of both Politics and Music; and how much they are connected, in Ireland at least, appears too plainly in the tone of sorrow and depression which characterizes most of our early songs" (4: 113). He continues his articulation of Ireland's oppression in his "Prefatory Letter On Irish Music," which introduced the third edition of the *Melodies*, noting that the music of Carolan, a harpist from the early eighteenth century, "takes us back to the times in which he lived, when our poor countrymen were driven to worship their God in caves, or to quit forever the land of their birth—like the bird that abandons the nest which human touch has violated" (4: 120). In the same letter, he feels it necessary to stave off criticism of the subversive nature of his work by explaining that the *Melodies* are not designed to "appeal to the passions of an ignorant and angry multitude," because they are not intended to circulate among the lower classes; they are rather aimed for the parlours of "the rich and educated," 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." Still, he

wants to claim some bite for his work, as he indicates that many of the parloured class have nerves which can be "now and then, alarmed with advantage," because "much more is to be gained by their fears, than could ever be expected from their justice" (4: 129-30). Moore also notes with seeming satisfaction the rumour that the fourth edition was delayed because it was suppressed by the government. Although he dismisses the rumour, pointing it out to his readers suggests that he wants them to be aware of his works' potential for subversion. He plays back and forth, at times suggesting his *Melodies* as politically radical, then recovering himself by claiming that "ballads have long lost their revolutionary powers, and we question if even a 'Lillibulero' would produce any serious consequences at present" (4: 134). This last assertion can be read as either a statement of fact or, in the hands of a reader like O'Connell, a provocation to change.

The poetry of the *Irish Melodies* certainly promotes the cause of Ireland, although the sentiment is tempered in comparison with Moore's college pieces. The series begins with "Go Where Glory Waits Thee," which presents a female speaker enjoining her lover to remember her as he moves on to new fame and friendship. The phrase "Oh! still remember me," and the alternate, "Oh! then remember me," appear nine times in a poem of thirty-nine lines, haunting the poem as the speaker haunts her lover, through summer joys and autumn cares:

When, around thee dying
 Autumn leaves are lying
 Oh! then remember me.
 And, at night, when gazing
 On the gay hearth blazing,
 Oh! still remember me.
 Then should music, stealing
 All the soul of feeling,
 To thy heart appealing,
 Draw one tear from thee;
 Then let memory bring thee
 Strains I us'd to sing thee,—
 Oh! then remember me. (3: 222-23)

The association of the woman with song connects her with Ireland; these are, after all, *Irish Melodies*. This reading is borne out

by later references to a female personification of Erin. The “truly National” project begins with Ireland, poignantly calling up the loyalty of both the poet and the audience who have left her behind.

The activity of remembrance shifts from a scene of love to one of war in the second poem of the first volume, “Remember the Glories of Brien the Brave”:

Forget not our wounded companions, who stood
In the day of distress by our side;
While the moss of the valley grew red with their blood,
They stirr'd not, but conquer'd and died. (3: 225)

This “Lillibulero” hints at serious consequences, as the speaker urges the reader to take up the cause of “the star of the field”: “enough of its glory remains on each sword, / To light us to victory yet.” The themes of memory and freedom, love and death, which are introduced in the first two poems constitute the basis of the rest of the pieces in this and the remaining nine volumes.

Poems like “Sublime Was the Warning” and “Erin, Oh Erin” introduce a revolutionary note into the collection. “Sublime Was the Warning” draws a parallel between the Spanish resistance to the Napoleonic forces and the Irish cause: “If deceit be a wound, and suspicion a stain, / Then, ye men of Iberia, our cause is the same!” (3: 257). It suggests that even England will sheepishly come to recognize the parallel, and defend the rights of the Irish as it has those of the Spaniards. At that time, lovers of liberty will “forgive even Albion while blushing she draws, / Like a truant, her sword, in the long-slighted cause / Of the Shamrock of Erin and the Olive of Spain!” (3: 258). The lines “God prosper the cause!—oh it cannot but thrive, / While the pulse of one patriot heart is alive . . .” are sufficiently ambiguous to be applicable to both national struggles.

“Erin, Oh Erin” focusses specifically on Irish liberty. It envisages the spirit of Ireland appearing through “a long night of bondage” and conveys optimism about the future:

The nations have fallen, and thou still art young,
Thy sun is but rising, when others are set;

And tho' slavery's cloud o'er thy morning hath hung
 The full noon of freedom shall beam round thee yet.
 (3: 260)

"Avenging and Bright" registers an even stronger sense of righteous indignation and gives a historical example of the Irish spirit of vengeance, using the story of Deirdre and the sons of Usna: "Though sweet are our friendships, our hopes, our affections, / Revenge on a tyrant is sweetest of all!" Clearly, in the *Melodies* Moore attempts to reiterate in poetic form his earlier assertion that "Ireland has Sons untutored in the school of corruption, who love her Liberties, and, in the crisis, will die for them."

But Moore's *Melodies* appealed to a much wider audience than his earlier political journal pieces could ever hope to. Although several Tory journals, including *Blackwood's*, confirmed the subversive nature of Moore's work by labelling it "mischievous" and "a vehicle of dangerous politics" (White 36), Moore was extremely popular east of the Irish Channel. He eventually made more than twenty thousand pounds for his literary endeavours in England (Brown 18).³ Augustine Martin suggests that the *Melodies* "struck at an English sense of guilt which had been stirred by the crushing of two rebellions and the corrupt passage of the Act of Union" (88). But not all of the hundreds of consumers of the *Melodies* can have suffered from guilt complexes. I suggest that a more general reason for the appeal of the *Melodies* was that they reflected a colonial ideology produced by England back to England. While Irish readers of the *Melodies* could see their own desires for independence expressed in the work, English readers saw Romantic images of Irish defeat and subordination. Such a double reading was possible because the the *Melodies* were conceived, produced, and distributed within a hegemonic system of English colonialism.

Before I turn to more of the *Melodies* themselves, I want to consider the constraints on the development of an Irish national identity in the eighteenth century. Benedict Anderson, Anthony Smith, and other scholars who study the "cultural systems" which precede and constitute national ideology argue that the political and literary conditions in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe worked together in the production of the idea of the

nation (Anderson 27-40; Smith 59-61). England, for example, was shifting from a monarchical to a representative government and further to a capitalist economic system. Literary production both reflected and encouraged such changes. The development of novels and newspapers, as Anderson points out, encouraged the reading public's sense of communality. Literature came to serve as a vehicle for channelling and directing an imagined national sentiment. Anderson asserts that print capitalism "made it possible for growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate to others, in profoundly new ways" (40). While Anderson indicates the cultural domination which occurred as a result of the precedence which certain vernacular languages ("national print languages") acquired over others, and while he notes that "the concrete formation of contemporary nation-states is by no means isomorphic with the determinate reach of particular print-languages" (48-49), he does not address the complexities the book-marketing system introduced into the process of imagining the nation.

In Ireland, for example, the expression of communality was made difficult, not necessarily because social, religious and political differences were greater than in England; England, too, contained vastly different populations and was the site of much social unrest. But in Ireland, the production of a national image through literature was in part determined by England because the London literary market exerted such a powerful influence over the Irish publishing system.⁴ This kind of interference with the internal publishing system in Ireland had two profound effects on the national images produced in Anglo-Irish literature. First, the sense of dependence on a foreign cultural market affected the Irish writer's self-conception; regardless of how favourably or unfavourably he or she was disposed towards England, the Irish writer was always aware of writing for a double public sphere. And second, those images of Ireland which were popular in England were published in more editions and subsequently enjoyed a greater distribution in Ireland.⁵ As Vivien Mercier suggests, "in poetry, the shape of Anglo-Irish literature up to 1848, and indeed for most of the century, is dictated by

readers in Great Britain: when these are interested in Ireland, our literature proliferates; when they are not, it begins to wither" (Mercier 5).⁶ J. C. Beckett also points out the eighteenth-century Irish writer's sense of dependence on England: "for the literary aspirant who looked to his pen to provide him with a living there was really no choice. Though publication in Ireland might bring local reputation and even a modest financial return, success, in the sense of a continuing livelihood, depended upon the establishment of a reputation in England" ("Literature in English" 427).⁷ At the time Moore was writing, for example, there was little opportunity for an author to make money directly from his bookseller. Instead, "Almost always the author's main hope lay in attracting the support of a powerful patron — hence the importance attached to the dedication of the work" ("Literature in English" 427). The patron could supply the writer with a gift of money, but the best hope for the author lay in the political connections, for the patron could either "secure him a pension or find him a place." And, as Beckett suggests, the Irish author needed to have influence in London in order to have any hope of either ("Literature in English" 427).

The case of Thomas Moore exemplifies how the English patronage and market system determined the fate of an Irish writer and subsequently the Irish national image he helped to create. Moore's literary success did not occur until he moved to London. There he gained the favour of the Irish expatriate, Lord Moira, and received permission from the Prince of Wales to dedicate his translations of the *Odes of Anacreon* to him. This patronage assured Moore's popularity in the English market. In a letter to his mother dated June 6, 1801, Moore indicates the importance he places on the English literary market and English criticism in comparison to their Irish equivalents:

My little poems are very much admired here [in London]. . . . You cannot imagine how much my name is gone about here; even of those poems my bookseller sells at the rate of 20 copies a day; and the shabby demand of Ireland for 50 copies (which Grierson has written over) will surely appear very contemptible to this. . . . I am very indifferent about it, for they are not very liberal to the style of my youthful productions. (*Letters* 1: 48)

The shift in Moore's allegiance is visible here, as he contrasts the "shabby demand" for his books in Ireland with his immense popularity in London.

Part of Moore's contract of five hundred pounds per year included his recitation of the *Melodies* in English parlours. He came to represent Ireland for the English, and his popularity in England in turn affected his reputation in Ireland. In a gesture which suggests the importation of English values, Lord Moira proposed inventing for Moore the position of Irish Poet Laureate. Even more suggestive of the power which England exercised over Irish artists is the fact that Moore rejected the offer because he preferred to wait for "advancement under the [English] government" (*Letters* 1: 41-2). He believed that the position of Irish Poet Laureate would prevent him from accepting a more lucrative English political position. Moore's expectation was that Lord Moira's connections with the Prince would prove useful. When the Prince, upon assuming the role of Regent, decided to retain the Tory ministry, Moore's hopes for preferment were dashed (Jordan 206). Nevertheless, after 1811 Moore lived in England, making only the occasional visit back to Ireland. The patronage possibilities had fallen through for him, but he was still dependent on the English book market for his success.

Equally revealing as the dislocation of Moore as an individual writer from the country whose national identity he was supposed to be expressing is the history of the publication of the *Melodies*. The two Irishmen who published the *Melodies*, James and William Power, makers of military instruments, were originally inspired by the success of Scottish melodies with English words, such as George Thompson's *A Selected Collection of Original Scots Airs for the Voice* (1793) and James Johnson's *Scot's Musical Museum* (1797-1803). In an attempt to capitalize on the contemporary vogue for folksong and pianoforte music, they commissioned John Stevenson to arrange a number of Irish melodies for the piano. The Powers initially intended to feature several poets as lyricists and approached Moore to write lyrics for the first edition. What is crucial to understand here is how the dictates of the English market determined Moore's selection as lyricist for the prospective *Irish Melodies*. The Powers did not choose Moore

because of his dedication to or experience with authentic Irish material; although Moore had applied to help Edward Bunting with the later volumes of his *General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music*, he had been turned down. Rather, the Powers selected Moore because his translations of classical material, the *Odes of Anacreon*, had been extremely popular throughout Great Britain. Subsequently, the acclaim with which the public greeted the first volume of the *Melodies* with Moore's lyrics made the Powers settle on him as sole author for the remaining volumes. The *Melodies* were produced from the beginning in part to meet the desires of a non-Irish reading public.

The fight between the Power brothers regarding the place of publication of the *Melodies* is another indication of the influence of the London book world on Irish matters. The Powers first agreed to publish two simultaneous editions of the *Melodies*: one in Dublin, where William resided, and one in London, where James lived. The Dublin edition appeared first. But, as Miriam DeFord notes, because London was the more important publishing centre, "James Power (and Moore with him) came to think of the growing series as his property" (35). As early as 1813, the brothers were in dispute about the copyright of the *Melodies* (Jones 153). Although William was granted a renewal of the copyright in 1815, James filed a bill in the Irish court of chancery "to compel William to give him the exclusive right to sell the *Melodies* in Great Britain" (Jones 159). An arbitration was attempted, but James did not accept the decision. In July 1817, William sued James in London for five thousand pounds. An eventual compromise was reached, but the situation still proved troublesome. James won the right to publish the rest of the volumes of the *Melodies* on the condition that he send copy to William. He did so for volume seven but not for the rest, and William took to pirating the remaining editions. Moore's letters to James Power indicate his concern about public opinion on his role in the matter. He fears that "the world should suspect [he] stood quietly by, *taking advantage of the dissention of two brothers, and leaving to the side that it is most for [his] interest.* . . ." He indicates his own sense that the agreed settlement was unfair to William: "I certainly feel it due to candour to declare that I think

he has every right to the sort of arrangement he demands, and that however we may be borne out by the *bond* in resisting him, we shall never stand clear in the code of honour & fairness for it" (*Letters* 1: 266). Nevertheless, in the ensuing battle, Moore supported James, who had the best access to the English market, and continued to send James the words for subsequent editions of the *Melodies*. The settlement of the editorial seat of power in London also resulted in another displacement of Irish by English interests, as James Power commissioned Henry Rowley Bishop, an Englishman, to arrange the melodies instead of Stevenson, an Irishman who had sided with William in the dispute (DeFord 35).

I have related these incidents not to disparage Moore for being opportunistic, but to illustrate the inevitable domination which the London market had over the Irish book-publishing industry and indicate that Moore himself was aware of that domination. They also suggest how the national image of Ireland which Moore presented was necessarily created in part by an English reading public. But just what did that national image consist of that made it so attractive to an English readership?

The publication of the ten volumes of the *Melodies* from 1808 to 1834 coincided with a period of intense debate about the Irish question, particularly the Irish Catholic question, in the Westminster Parliament. The English readers and singers of the *Melodies* had the issue of Ireland foregrounded for them in the daily papers during this time. For liberal-minded readers concerned with the plight of the Irish people and perhaps sympathetic with the push for Catholic relief, the *Melodies* expressed a view of a wronged nation in the lyrical language of Ossianic sensibility. But the *Melodies* also pleased a more conservative readership; for the poems present an essentially non-threatening view of the Irish nation. What I want to examine now is how the *Melodies* actually provide a means of resisting the possibility of an independent Ireland for which they strive.

For one thing, although the *Melodies* constantly proclaim the Irish cause, they also contain poems which promote English and British interests. "The Prince's Day," for example, was written in celebration of the Prince of Wales' birthday. The poem advises

that the Irish can be loyal followers if treated fairly: "Tho' fierce to your foe, to your friends you are true." It suggests that, if summoned, the Irish would "cast every bitter remembrance away, / And show what the arm of old Erin has in it, / When roused by the foe, on her Prince's Day" (3: 286). The poem's royalist sympathies are understandable if we consider that at the time Moore wrote this piece, he was still expecting preferment from the Prince and aid for the Irish cause. However, such sentiments also promote an image of Irish subordination. "How Oft Has the Banshee Cried" (3: 246) contains a similar ambiguity, as it draws a parallel between Lord Nelson and the Irish "Hero of One Hundred Fights." While such a parallel includes Ireland's history in Europe's contemporary battles, it also suggests Irish complicity with English governmental decisions.

The image of Ireland which appears in the *Melodies* is indeed ambiguous. For one thing, contemporary Ireland does not appear. The poems which address the plight of the Irish nation and accuse England of subjugating the Irish people avoid reference to present-day situations. Thomas Flanagan comments that "some of the most celebrated [footnotes] of the *Melodies*, suggest a more immediate political perspective. . . . The immediate past is thus joined to the vanished, antique world of Brian and Malachi" (487). However, he neglects the fact that the original pianoforte music did not include footnotes regarding contemporary issues. Moore did not provide details about the immediate political events to which poems like "Breathe Not His Name" (concerning the death of Robert Emmet) refer until later editions of his work.⁴ In the original editions, Moore's comments on Irish events dealt solely with figures of mythic history, such as Brien Boru, Deirdre, and Fionnuala, daughter of Lir.

Furthermore, although the poems welcome the idea of an independent Ireland, they also constantly defer the fulfilment of that nation; Ireland's independence is either long ago and now remembered, or still to occur. "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old," for example, situates an independent Ireland only in the past. The poem recalls a time before Erin's "faithless sons betrayed her." But that time is perceived only in a dream when "Memory" looks "through the waves of time / For the long-faded

glories they cover." The proud nation of Ireland is thus triply occluded by a combination of dream, memory, and lapping waves (3: 252). Conversely, in "The Legacy," Ireland is deferred to the future. The narrator requests that certain emblems of his affection—his heart, his harp and his cup of wine—be preserved after his death. But only in the future when "some warm devoted lover" appears will the hovering "spirit" of the speaker (and of the nation) find its fulfilment (3: 244). In the end, even though the oppressors may weep at the laments of their captive, they nevertheless continue to "rivet [the] chains" (3: 264). On one level, Moore was being realistic; it was of course true that Ireland had ceased to be an independent nation. However, his presentation of the Irish nation as situated in the past or in a permanently deferred future made it easy for readers to ignore the circumstances of the 1797 Rebellion and the subsequent enforcement of Union.

The subject matter of the *Melodies* also affects the image of Ireland which the reader conceives. The *Melodies* consist of both overtly political poems, some of which I have examined, and poems which can be read as domestic pieces. The themes of memory and freedom, love and death, are also utilized in songs about drinking and courtship. For example, the desire for "Freedom, whose smile we shall never resign" expressed in "Remember the Glories of Brien the Brave" (3: 224) is curiously echoed in the celebration of man's liberty to choose a mate in "To Ladies' Eyes":

Fill up, fill up—where'er, boy,
Our choice may fall, our choice may fall,
We're sure to find Love there, boy,
So drink them all! so drink them all! (4: 18)

As we saw in "Go Where Glory Waits Thee," there are poems which combine personal and political appeals. "Eveleen's Bower," for instance, can be seen as drawing upon the traditional allegorical image of Ireland as a woman wronged:

Oh! weep for the hour,
When to Eveleen's bower
The Lord of the Valley with false vows came;
The moon hid her light

From the heavens that night,
 And wept behind her clouds o'er the maiden's shame.
 (3: 250)

The Lord of the Valley, according to this interpretation, would be England, which has shamed and disregarded Ireland. But there are many other poems which refuse allegory. In these, a woman appears as merely a generic woman. "We May Roam Through the World," the poem which precedes "Eveleen's Bower," discusses the merits of the Irish woman in non-political terms: "When a cup to the smile of dear woman goes round, / Oh! remember the smile which adorns her at home" (3: 248).⁹ "Come Send Round the Wine" goes so far as to deny the importance of the political, advocating leaving "points of belief / To simpleton sages, and reasoning fools" (3: 256). The inclusion of drinking and courtship songs may have helped insure the popularity of the *Melodies*, buffering the "mischievous" nature of the political poems, but they also provide a path for side-stepping contentious issues.

In "Oh! Blame Not the Bard," Moore seems to want to account for the contradictions in his poetry. The poem expresses the dilemma of a poet who neglects the cause of his country to write pleasantries and to "ceaselessly smil[e] at Fame." The speaker claims:

He was born for much more, and in happier hours
 His soul might have burn'd with a holier flame.
 The string, that now languishes loose o'er the lyre,
 Might have bent a proud bow to the warrior's dart;
 And the lip, which now breathes but the song of desire,
 Might have pour'd the full tide of the patriot's heart.
 (3: 264)

His rationale is that now "'tis treason" to love and "death to defend" his country. Her sons are "unpriz'd," at least until "they've learned to betray," and the only torch of hope must be lighted "from the pile, where their country expires." The speaker then asks for understanding that "He should try to forget, what he never can heal." He suggests, however, that if there were but a gleam of the possibility of freedom for his country, he would reject every passion of the heart except patriotism. In the final stanza, he contents himself with the thought that even "tho' glory

be gone, and tho' hope fade away," he can remember Erin in his poetry, and his songs will be so plaintive that Ireland's masters "Shall pause at the song of their captive, and weep!" (3: 365-66). The poem itself directs us to see social context as the factor determining artistic production; the speaker suggests it is the attitude of the times which affects his tone. The poem also illustrates the dilemma Moore was under, writing both to create and keep a positive image of Ireland for his compatriots and to entertain the English who had controlled them for centuries.

One way in which Moore's work helped to create a positive national image for the Irish was by reformulating the basis of Irish nationalism into a more abstract "spirit of the nation." The definition of the Irish nation which the *Melodies* encouraged was based on general national characteristics, as opposed to specific religious or regional affiliations or antiquarian and musicological facts. The new "spirit of the nation" was conceived of as a feeling, as we see in "Tho' the Last Glimpse of Erin":

Tho' the last glimpse of Erin with sorrow I see,
 Yet wherever thou art shall seem Erin to me,
 In exile thy bosom shall still be my home,
 And thine eyes make my climate wherever we roam. (3: 234)

The speaker's gaze projects the actual image of Ireland onto the screen of the beloved's eyes. It is the speaker's feelings for Ireland which constitute the nation now, not the actual image. This new way of conceiving the nation was useful in overcoming differences within Ireland and creating an "imagined community" homogeneous in sentiment if in nothing else; but in a colonial situation, nostalgia is eminently co-optable.

In Moore's "Prefatory Letter on Irish Music," addressed to the Marchioness Dowager of Donegal and prefixed to the third volume of the *Irish Melodies*, we see the basis on which this co-optation works. In his description, Moore associates Ireland more with an emotional ideal than with an actual country:

. . . absence, however fatal to some affections of the heart, rather tends to strengthen our love for the land where we were born, and Ireland is the country, of all others, which an exile from it must remember with most enthusiasm. Those few darker and less amiable traits with which bigotry and misrule have stained her character, and

which are too apt to disgust us upon a nearer intercourse, become at a distance softened, or altogether invisible. Nothing is remembered but her virtues and her misfortunes—the zeal with which she has always loved liberty, and the barbarous policy which has always withheld it from her—and the cruel ingenuity which has been exerted to wring her into undutifulness. (4: 117-18)

He emphasizes that Ireland has a special connection with nostalgia. It is “the country, *of all others*, which an exile from it must remember” (emphasis added). But one problem with Moore’s nostalgic depiction of the “spirit of the nation” was that it could be superimposed on other situations. Ireland could become interchangeable with any situation of oppression—as indeed it did in Moore’s later work, where Moore’s *Melodies* provided a universal prototype for Romantic nationalism in a defeated country. In *National Airs*, for example, Moore extended his material to melodies of other countries. But all the national airs sound remarkably similar to the *Irish Melodies*. One of the few political poems in *National Airs*, “Where Shall We Bury Our Shame?,” billed as a “Neapolitan Air,” works on the same emotional appeal as “Sing, Sweet Harp” in the *Irish Melodies*. The Neapolitan version reads:

Was it for this we sent out
 Liberty’s cry from our shore?
 Was it for this that her shout
 Thrill’d to the world’s very core?
 Thus to live cowards and slaves!—
 Oh, ye free hearts that lie dead,
 Do you not, ev’n in your graves,
 Shudder, as o’er you we tread? (4: 217)

The Neapolitan poem even contains verbal echoes of the Irish poem, in which Moore mourns for the Chieftains and Bards now dead who would “but wake to weep” at “their children’s slavery” and comments that “The dead, at least, are free!” (4: 80). The Irish and Neapolitan situations are conflated in the aesthetic realm. An ironic complement to the universalizing of national sentiment through song is found in the sixth volume of the *Melodies*, in which J. Power notes that he has just published *A Selection of Scottish Melodies* [sic], *A Selection of Indian Melodies*, and *Spanish Airs*, all of which are available for less than fifteen shill-

ings. For the reader of the advertisement, all of the above are presented as interchangeable with *Irish Melodies*.¹⁰

It was an Englishman, William Hazlitt, who recognized how the *Melodies* could serve the potential denial of the Irish nation as a political unit. Critical of Moore's patrician friendships, Hazlitt berated him for converting "the wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box." He warned:

If these national airs do indeed express the soul of impassioned feeling in his countrymen, the case of Ireland is hopeless. If these prettinesses pass for patriotism, if a country can heave from its heart's core only these vapid, varnished sentiments lip-deep, and let its tears of blood evaporate in an empty conceit, let it be governed as it has been. (256)

Hazlitt hit the nail on the head. Moore's patriotism was popular in England because it was pretty; it gave the English a picture of what they wanted to see and encouraged the kind of "conciliation" for which Matthew Arnold provided the masterplan in "On the Study of Celtic Literature": a "conciliation" based on the assimilation of Romantic Celtic feeling and English rule.

A further problem with the national image which Moore presents in the *Melodies* is that it is after all a reflection of a colonialist ideology based on binary oppositions. The *Melodies* present an embryonic model of the "contrasting stereotypes" which Seamus Deane identifies as characteristic of Irish nationalism:

. . . Irish nationalism is, in its foundational moments, a derivative of its British counterpart. Almost all nationalist movements have been derided as provincial, actually or potentially racist, given to exclusivist and doctrinaire positions and rhetoric. . . . The point about Irish nationalism, the features within it that have prevented it from being a movement toward liberation, is that it is, *mutatis mutandis*, a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed. (7-8)

The images in the *Irish Melodies* reproduce the colonizer's vision of the colonial encounter. In Moore's "Prefatory Letter on Irish Music," for example, the political complexities in Ireland are reduced to two sides: "virtue" and "barbarous policy." Similar oppositional forces are represented in the poetry of the *Melodies*. "Before the Battle" draws a dichotomy between "chains or freedom, death or life" (3: 271). "Weep On, Weep On" expresses

astonishment that "hands so vile / Could conquer hearts so brave" (3: 288). Moore's work represents a reaction to negative stereotyping by the English. It was extremely influential on the Young Irishmen, and indeed on Irish nationalism up to the twentieth century. But it operates by reversing, not redefining, the boundaries of Self and Other.

Moore's Romantic vision of Ireland, then, actually worked in several directions. The *Irish Melodies* gave the Irish people a more positive national identity than that of the classic stage Irishman of the eighteenth-century drama. The *Melodies* also provided the Irish with the kind of "imagined community" which is necessary for self-consciousness and change. However, because Moore's image of the Irish nation was also informed by the ideology of Ireland's political oppressor, the *Melodies*, particularly as they were played and sung by the genial Mr. Moore, were popular within the dominant English culture. Moore's "truly National" project both brought Irish patriotism from the podium to the parlour, as Daniel O'Connell suggested, and provided a means by which the English could appropriate that patriotism. In his essay in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, Edward Said reads Yeats's poetry as "an achievement in decolonization" (Eagleton et al. 94). In this discussion, I have suggested that one way of understanding the critical problem of Moore's work is to read it as an achievement of colonization. Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* both paved and blocked the way to the decolonization which is still in process in Ireland.

NOTES

- 1 For discussion of this problem in more general terms, see Cairns and Richards, and Eagleton et al.
- 2 My debt to Janet Wolff is obvious here. In *The Social Production of Art*, Wolff disagrees with the notion that art is a product of individual genius. She argues rather that "many people are involved in producing the work, that social and ideological factors determine or affect the writer/painter's work, and that audiences and readers play an active and participatory role in creating the finished product" (25).
- 3 Brown contrasts this with the one thousand pounds Wordsworth made in his lifetime.
- 4 The fact that the London publishing scene was dominated by Scottish expatriates adds another dimension to the study of cross-cultural influences in the book industry, one which I do not have space to pursue in this argument. Suffice it to say

- that there was no love lost between the Irish and Scots. For further commentary on the nineteenth-century book trade, see Feather.
- 5 According to J. C. Beckett, eighteenth-century Irish audiences were in general not interested in "novels, poems and plays that were distinctly Irish in character" ("Irish Writer" 103).
 - 6 Mercier also quotes Daniel Corkery, who suggests that Anglo-Irish writers "would have written quite differently if extramural influences, such as the proximity of the English literary market and the tradition of expatriation, had not misled them from the start" (5).
 - 7 In *Irish Booksellers and English Writers 1740-1800*, Richard Cargill Cole suggests that the Irish publishers also had a kind of power over the English market. Because Ireland was not included in the 1709 or 1739 Copyright Acts, Irish publishers could sell cheaper editions of works originally printed in London as a threat to their profits. I would emphasize, however, that the Irish publishers were still using a copy of the printed sheets of a book deemed publishable by London publishers.
 - 8 It is possible that he feared reprisals for being too much "a vehicle of dangerous politics" so short a time after the Rebellion.
 - 9 Brown suggests that the audience hearing Moore's poems is first encouraged to experience the sensation of loss on a personal level. He argues that "The *Melodies* treat of Irish history as if its true significance was to provide a drawing-room audience with metaphors of its own indulgent sense of personal mutability" (19-20). According to Brown, the political implications are transformed into personal psychic suffering.
 - 10 See "A Catalogue of Vocal Music," published in *A Selection of Irish Melodies with Symphonies and Accompaniments by Sir John Stevenson and Characteristic Words by Thomas Moore* (Dublin, 1808).

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