

**Away o'er the Ocean Go Journeymen, Cowboys, and Fiddlers: The Irish in
Nineteenth-Century American Music**

by

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For Grandma Laffoley

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Abstract

Away O'er the Ocean Go Journeymen, Cowboys, and Fiddlers: The Irish in Nineteenth-Century American Music

In the nineteenth century, Irish immigrants and their musical practices shaped an immense amount of American music. Beyond studying the roots of direct musical descendants of Irish traditional music like Appalachian folk, however, little scholarly attention has been given to the topic. Integrating aspects of musicology, Irish studies, transatlantic history, and whiteness studies, this dissertation argues that understanding the role of the Irish in American music is crucial to understanding American music in the nineteenth century. The project examines a variety of genres and contexts that include examples of high and low culture; music directly imported from Ireland and music made in the United States; examples of popular sheet music, theatrical performances, and classical music; examples dating across the century; and music taking place in a number of locations.

The case studies approach allows for focused consideration of topics in American musical life and Irish musical practice while supporting the broader argument. Chapter 1, an American reception history of Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* (1807–1834), reveals how American sentimental songs were shaped by Irish examples of the genre that flooded the country early in the century. Chapter 2 focuses on early blackface minstrelsy of the 1830s and 1840s, showing that key

facets of the most popular U.S. theatrical genre of the nineteenth century stem from Irish dance music. Chapter 3 addresses shifting ideas about the Irish in the 1870s. As Irish-American communities gained political, social, and financial power, more positive constructions of Irishness were presented on American stages, including the variety productions of Edward Harrigan and David Braham. Chapter 4 offers a new interpretation of one of the most prominent expressions of Irishness in American classical music. The chapter challenges prevailing interpretations of Amy Beach's "Gaelic" Symphony as a statement of musical nationalism by resituating the work as a transnational encounter that also reflects local dynamics in Boston.

Introduction

“Never has a nation so small inspired so much in another.”

-Barack Obama¹

Traditional fiddling in Appalachia. Ribald blackface entertainments in New York’s Lower East Side. Orchestral music for Boston’s cultural elite. Widely distributed sentimental songs lamenting lost, idyllic love. Comic broadsides and songsters that lampooned American minority communities. Nineteenth-century American music was as varied as the country’s people, who constantly adapted their musical lives to the needs of a rapidly changing nation. The Irish immigrants who flooded the United States throughout the century indelibly influenced American music. Indeed, Irish-American people and dialogues about them shaped all of the above musical practices: Appalachian fiddling developed in part from the area’s Irish settlers, blackface minstrelsy was created largely by and for Irish-American communities, Boston composers Amy Beach and George Whitefield Chadwick looked to Irish music for inspiration, the sentimental songs of such Irish-American luminaries as Stephen Foster and Chauncey Olcott took much from Irish songs popular in the United States, and songs such as those found in *Barney Brallaghan’s*

¹ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President at Irish Celebration in Dublin, Ireland” (speech, Dublin, Ireland, 23 May 2011), The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/23/remarks-president-irish-celebration-dublin-ireland>. Accessed 24 April 2014.

Songster (figure I.1) explored stereotypes of the Irish and Irish Americans in the wake of immense demographic shifts as famine refugees settled into the New World.

This dissertation argues that understanding the role of the Irish is crucial to understanding nineteenth-century American music. The definition of “Irish” is cast intentionally broad to include people, material goods, ideas, and ways of life—music included—that emanate from Ireland. The mark of the Irish can be found in music that expresses an overt reaction to Irish immigration to the United States, as in the case of *Barney Brallaghan’s Songster*. In other examples, Irish influences lurk below the surface, sometimes hidden by common notions surrounding musical origin, as with blackface minstrelsy, which was often presented as African-American music. In still other cases, the significance of the Irish is sometimes simply overlooked or not fully addressed in academic discourse. Beach’s Irish musical borrowings, for example, have largely been discussed as reflections on American nationalist discourse without considering what the symphony’s Irish themes might mean on their own terms. In order to understand the breadth of the impact of Irishness on American music, this dissertation brings together disparate topics. Its case studies span the length of the century, examine contrasting socio-economic spheres and geographic locations, and address a variety of musical styles to show that the Irishness of American music transcended such demarcations. Pulling such threads together ultimately reveals a vast and enduring relationship between the United States and Ireland, played out in a variety of musical spheres.

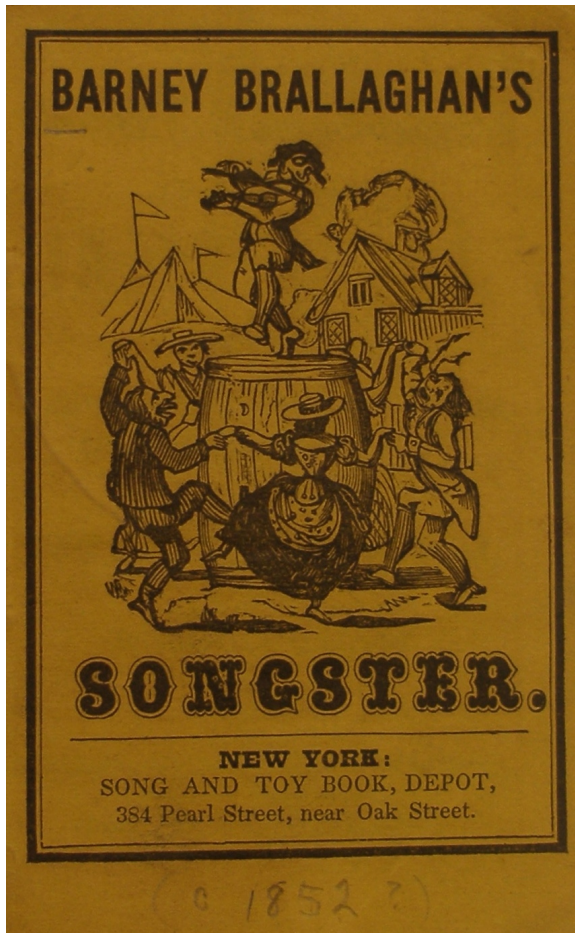


Figure I.1: *Barney Brallaghan's Songster*, published in 1852 by the Song and Toy Book Depot in New York.

Understanding Benedict Anderson's definition of nations as "imagined political communities" in which members need not reside within the limits of geopolitical borders, we might say that for centuries a significant amount of the extended Irish nation has resided in the United States.² Between 1820, when the US Census bureau started counting immigration statistics, and 1900, almost 4 million

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed (New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

people came from Ireland to the United States.³ That figure does not necessarily include those Irish immigrants who came to the United States via intermediary ports in England and Canada. It also represents a significant amount of the total Irish population, which peaked around 1840 at 8.2 million. The American population exploded from 9.6 million in 1820 to 76.2 million in 1900.⁴ Irish immigration was so profound that it decisively altered the demographics of America's cities, particularly in the north. In 1855, ten years after the onset of Ireland's Great Famine (1845–1849), a quarter of New York City's residents and almost a third of Boston's were born in Ireland.⁵ Smaller cities and towns absorbed fewer, but still dramatic, numbers of immigrants. In 1850, about 18 percent of residents of Worcester, Massachusetts, hailed from Ireland, as did about one in eight residents of Buffalo, New York, in 1860.⁶ And Irish heritage among Americans has

³ United States Census, 2004 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/2004/Yearbook2004.pdf>. Accessed 24 April 2014.

⁴ The Irish population number combines historic population statistics in the current Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in: M. Kelly and A. Stewart Fotheringham, "The Online Atlas of Irish Population Change 1841 – 2002: A New Resource for Analysing National Trends and Local Variations in Irish Populations Dynamics," *Irish Geography* 44, nos. 2-3 (July-November 2011), 215. For United States population data, see: United States Census, 1820 Fast Facts, https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1820_fast_facts.html. Accessed 6 July 2014; and United States Census, 1900 Fast Facts, https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1900_fast_facts.html. Accessed 6 July 2014.

⁵ Timothy Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 77.

⁶ For the Worcester statistic, Meagher notes Irish-born population in *Columbia Guide*, 81, and the population of Worcester can be found here: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population of 100 Largest Urban Places," <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab08.txt>. Accessed 24 April 2014. For the Buffalo statistic: Meagher, *Columbia Guide*, 81; and the general population:

not diminished significantly since that time; in 2012, the United States Census Office estimated that 37.3 million residents of the United States had Irish heritage.⁷ That figure represents almost six times the 2012 estimated combined population of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland of 6.4 million, and around 12 percent of the total population of the United States.⁸

As Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith observe, “the Irish always brought their music with them.”⁹ Indeed, the island’s vibrant musical traditions were deeply meaningful to its inhabitants, both as a cultural practice and a source of national pride. The title of this dissertation, “Away o’er the Ocean Go Journeymen, Cowboys, and Fiddlers,” comes from an Irish ballad about emigration, known variously as “Green Fields of Canada” and “Green Fields of America,” that circulated at least as early as the 1850s.¹⁰ The lyric groups musicians together with

<https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab09.txt>. Accessed 24 April 2014; For the Boston statistic: 1855 Massachusetts State Census, cited in William E. Newman and Wilfred E. Holton, *Boston’s Back Bay: The Story of America’s Greatest Nineteenth-Century Landfill Project* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2006) p. 44.

⁷ United States Census, American Community Survey, Selected Population Profile in the United States, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_1YR_S0201&prodType=table. Accessed 6 July 2014.

⁸ For the Republic of Ireland: Central Statistics Office, Population and Migration Estimates, 27 September 2012, http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/population/2012/popmig_2012.pdf. Accessed 6 July 2014. For Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Northern Ireland Population 1841–2013, <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp3.htm>. Accessed 6 July 2014.

⁹ Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith, “Irish Music and Musicians in the United States: An Introduction,” in “Special Issue on Irish Music in the United States,” edited by Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith, *Journal of the Society for American Music* 4, no. 4 (November 2010): 396.

¹⁰ The exact wording of the title is from a recording of Kevin Conneff of The Chieftains. Paddy Tunney also referenced a fiddler in his version.

journeymen, a class of skilled craftsmen, and cowboys, an iconically American group as well. The line suggests much about perceptions of emigrants from Ireland in naming these three particular groups. Journeymen imply that emigrants will attain middle-class standing in the New World. Cowboys suggest that the Irish will adopt new ways of life in their new home. Fiddlers will bring their old ways of life with them as well. This dissertation rests on this third notion—that the practices transferred via millions of immigrants in the nineteenth century engendered a vast and enduring synthesis of Irish and American music.

Despite the dramatic numbers of Irish immigrants to the United States and the importance of their musical traditions, however, the scholarly discourse on the Irish in nineteenth-century American music is relatively small and focused. Most published writings concentrate on exploring musical stereotypes about the Irish and largely ignore the music itself. Such studies look to textual sources to understand how Irish identities were strategically constructed to negotiate the place of the Irish in the New World. Historian William H. A. Williams and traditional music scholar Mick Moloney, for instance, examine Irish themes in popular song lyrics across the century, developing typologies that are useful in this dissertation.¹¹ Historians Noel Ignatiev, Eric Lott, David Roediger, and literary scholar Robert Nowatzki consider minstrel song texts, theatrical dialogue, and other literary evidence that illuminate

¹¹ Mick Moloney, *Far From the Shamrock Shore: The Story of Irish-Immigration through Song* (New York: Crown Books, 2002); William H. A. Williams, *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800–1926* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

how the fluid and contested racial status of Irish Americans affected minstrelsy.¹² Such scholarship, however, rarely addresses musical concerns.

Some musicologists examine the impact of the Irish on American music more directly, often in the course of writing more general studies on American music. Jon Finson considers connections between stereotypes and musical clichés in popular music. He notes musical markers of Irishness, what he calls “manifestations of the ‘characteristic,’” in songs with Irish themes.¹³ The connections he finds between nineteenth-century American music and stereotype formation are particularly valuable for my work on the subject. More recently, scholars have begun to think about Irish musical practices and their implications in the United States more broadly. A 2010 special issue of the *Journal of the Society for American Music*, “Irish Music in the United States,” edited by Wells and Sommers Smith, expands our understanding of traditional music practice in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Two articles on tune collectors—Boston-based William Bradbury Ryan and Chicago’s Francis O’Neill—provide insights into those vibrant traditional music communities and their tune repertoire.¹⁵ While my work focuses more on uniquely American music, rather

¹² Robert Nowatzki, “Paddy Jumps Jim Crow: Irish-Americans and Blackface Minstrelsy,” *Éire-Ireland* 41, no. 3 and 4 (Fall and Winter 2006): 162–184.

¹³ Jon W. Finson, *The Voices that Are Gone: Themes in 19th-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 271.

¹⁴ Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith, ed. “Special Issue on Irish Music in the United States,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 4, no. 4 (November 2010).

¹⁵ Paul F. Wells, “Elias Howe, William Bradbury Ryan, and Irish Music in Nineteenth-Century Boston,” in “Special Issue on Irish Music in the United States,” 401–420; Sally K. Sommers Smith, “An Eventful Life Remembered: Recent Considerations of the Contributions and Legacy of Francis O’Neill,” in “Special Issue on Irish Music in the United States,” 421–435.

than Irish traditional music in the United States, their work both informs and complements my own.

Most of the above scholars of the Irish in American music seek to comprehend how American music shaped or reflected concepts of Irish people.¹⁶ This is one of several questions I ask to discern how the Irish shaped American musical practices. This larger question has been considered by two earlier scholars, if briefly. First, Charles Hamm's chapter on Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* in his germinal survey of American popular music describes a few common musical characteristics of the collection, such as gapped scales and snap rhythms, and suggests that elements of Stephen Foster's style have roots in Moore's collection of Irish songs.¹⁷ While his coverage is short, the approach has served as a model for my inquiries into musical influence. Second, Christopher Smith's work on creolization in blackface minstrelsy reveals the genre's roots in a longstanding "Afro-Celtic synthesis" in maritime and riverine communities.¹⁸ His discussion is largely focused on recovering African and Caribbean sources for blackface minstrelsy. For understanding Anglo-Celtic music's role in the genre, Smith relies on Hans Nathan's work, which I rethink in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.¹⁹ My work also expands on Smith's focused study on a particular genre by showing how Irish musical traditions

¹⁶ With the exception of Wells and Sommers Smith, who are not concerned with American music so much as Irish music.

¹⁷ His work serves as a springboard for my own Chapter 1, on the American reception of Moore's *Irish Melodies*. Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 42–61.

¹⁸ Christopher Smith, *The Creolization of American Culture: William Sidney Mount and the Roots of Blackface Minstrelsy*, Music in American Life (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 44–68.

¹⁹ Smith, *Creolization of American Culture*, 155–56.

blended with many styles of music, over the course of the nineteenth century, leaving an indelible mark on American musical life on the whole.

Indeed, while other scholars have considered narrow aspects of how the Irish shaped American music in the nineteenth century, my dissertation is the first to address the wider subject and attempt to fill this significant lacuna. The broad nature of the inquiry leads me to develop a set of methodologies that include, but are not limited to, those of earlier scholars of the Irish in American music. In this dissertation, I plumb musical repertoire for how text and music constructed, transported, and reflected ideas about the Irish, revealing music to be a crucial site for negotiating the status of the Irish in the New World. I also look to notions surrounding musical influence, showing how Irish music synthesized with other styles to emerge in American idioms like blackface minstrelsy and sentimental song. Additionally, I trace people and their movements, to show how the Irish diaspora itself played a significant role in shaping American musical life.

Just what might be considered Irish for the purposes of this project is a productive issue for discussion. There is precedent in examining a particular minority in the nineteenth-century United States that helps guide such questions.²⁰ Studies such as Michael Pisani's *Imagining Native America in Music*, Krystyn Moon's *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance*, and

²⁰ While many now conceive Irishness as an ethnicity, the term "ethnicity" was not commonly used to refer to groups that share cultural or national traditions until the twentieth century. The earliest usage cited by the Oxford English Dictionary is from 1920. I avoid using the term in this dissertation. "ethnicity, n.," OED Online, June 2014, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/Entry/64791?redirectedFrom=ethnicity> (accessed June 30, 2014).

Douglas Shadle's "Louis Moreau Gottschalk's Pan-American Ideal" do not impose outside restrictions on what might count as Native American, Chinese, or Latin American.²¹ Rather, they look to their sources for how people define, represent, or inflect the group in question. In my dissertation, I take their lead, looking to the sources for what they say about Irishness.

Nevertheless, discerning exactly who can be considered Irish and what can be considered Irish music for the purposes of this dissertation is not straightforward. Ireland's historically conflicted and sectarian populace has long debated among themselves who might be counted as Irish. Likewise, Ireland's rich musical traditions that include diverse examples of traditional, popular, and concert music resist outward limitations on their definitions. Indeed, the Irishness at the heart of my study is unified only inasmuch as all examples share history in Ireland and they have made the transatlantic journey to settle in the United States. By the term "Irish," then, I mean any person, object, concept, or practice that comes from Ireland. The person or thing need not originate there, but can instead have become strongly associated with Ireland. "Irishness" refers to the quality of being Irish. Real or imagined, musical or literary, what it is that makes something Irish is its Irishness. I resist forcing any forgone conclusions on the nature of the terms beyond that, seeing them rather as historicized and unstable categories. Instead, I

²¹ Michael Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Krystyn Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s–1920s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Douglas Shadle, "Louis Moreau Gottschalk's Pan-American Symphonic Ideal," *American Music* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 443–471.

investigate what constituted Irishness in various contexts, often finding that ideas about Irishness were strategic social constructs serving varying purposes.

Without limiting the manifold possibilities for the shape that Irishness might take, my research reveals three major channels through which Irishness influenced American musical life. The first involves people, including Irish immigrants to the United States, their descendants, and Irish people who remained in the Old World but whose work significantly shaped musical developments in the New World. The second includes musical practices emanating from Ireland. The third comprises conceptions of the Irish in the United States. This includes the stereotypes that dominated nineteenth-century popular culture as well as dialogues about the status of the Irish in the complex social fabric of the United States.

Regarding the first, the Irish themselves are a heterogeneous group of people with major religious and class differences. Some historians claim that Catholics hold pride of place on the spectrum of Irishness, occupying primary positions of national identity.²² Others argue for a more religiously inclusive concept of the Irish.²³ The discourse also extends to other factors that include lifestyle, place of birth, and

²² Historian Lawrence McCaffrey writes “to be Irish was to be Catholic.” Lawrence McCaffrey, *The Irish Catholic Diaspora in America* revised edition (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 5–6.

²³ A groundbreaking work in that area is: William V. Shannon, *The American Irish: A Political and Social Portrait*, second edition (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989). Recent studies that do even more to integrate the histories of people of various faiths include: Bryan Albin Giemza, ed., *Rethinking the Irish in the American South: Beyond Rounders and Reelers* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013); David T. Gleeson, ed., *The Irish in the Atlantic World, The Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010); J. J. Lee and Marion R. Casey, ed, *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

political beliefs, among a litany of others.²⁴ The matter only becomes more complicated for Irish Americans, for whom issues of geographic, temporal, and generational distance from Ireland arise; though Kerby Miller demonstrates that Irish Americans commonly identify as Irish after many generations of living in North America, other scholars have questioned the limits of such concepts.²⁵ My definition of what constitutes the Irish encompasses any people with origins in Ireland, broadly construed.

In the nineteenth century, Irishness was more contested and the dialogues surrounding inclusion or exclusion have proven meaningful for this dissertation. For example, Thomas Moore, the poet born Catholic in Ireland whose *Irish Melodies* made an enormous impact on nineteenth-century sentimental song in the United States, spent much of his adult life in England, among aristocratic social circles.

²⁴ John Taylor, an Ulster Unionist politician from Northern Ireland, proclaimed in 1993: “we in Northern Ireland are not Irish. . . . We do not jig at crossroads, speak Gaelic, play GAA [Gaelic sports], etc.” His words are not entirely true. Northern Ireland has a vibrant traditional music scene as well as its own dialect of the Irish language, and Gaelic football is the largest participation sport in the country. However exaggerated his rhetoric, Taylor was speaking to felt cultural, religious, and class differences between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland that have weight in defining the Irish. Taylor’s speech is cited in: Brian Cathcart, “South of the Border: What Price Would the People of the Irish Republic pay for Peace? Brian Cathcart Reports,” *The Independent* (London), 12 December 1993.

²⁵ Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For the other side of the debate: Feargal Cochrane, *The End of Irish-America? Globalization and the Irish Diaspora* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010); Scholars of variety theater star Edward Harrigan have questioned his status as Irish-American because it was his grandfather who had emigrated. Richard Moody, *Ned Harrigan: From Corlear’s Hook to Herald Square* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980), 7; Katherine Preston, “Introduction,” in David Braham and Edward Harrigan, *Irish American Theater: The Mulligan Guard Ball (1879) and Reilly and the 400 (1891)*, ed. Katherine Preston, *Nineteenth-Century American Musical Theater* 10 (New York: Garland, 1994), xiii; James H. Dorman, “Ethnic Cultures of the Mind: The Harrigan-Hart Mosaic,” *American Studies* 33, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 24.

American newspapers sometimes conceived of him as more British than Irish, which significantly altered reception of his works in the United States, a matter investigated in Chapter 1. In other instances, sectarian conflicts have caused some with Irish roots to align more with their ethnic or religious identity than Irishness. The group known as Scots-Irish or Ulster Scots provides one example. These Presbyterians, many from Scotland, were originally installed in Ulster by Britain in the seventeenth century to replace recalcitrant Catholic aristocracy. They migrated en masse to the American colonies between around 1720 and the American Revolution. Today the American Scots-Irish often identify as a distinct group. Recent work, however, has revealed that such stark differentiation between “Irish” and “Scots-Irish” emerged during the mid-nineteenth century when largely Catholic famine immigrants overwhelmed concepts of the Irish in the New World.²⁶ Before that, their identity was far more fluid, moving between Scottish, Irish, British, and American.²⁷ In order to account for some of the contributions of the Scots-Irish in nineteenth-century America, Chapter 2 investigates early blackface minstrel performers of Scotch-Irish descent who used elements of Anglo-Celtic traditional music in their depictions of African Americans.

Musical practice, the second channel of Irish influence, occupies privileged cultural space in Irish national identity. Immigrants to the United States brought vibrant folk practices that are largely divided into the song tradition and

²⁶ David Noel Doyle, “The Remaking of Irish America, 1845–1880,” in *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 213.

²⁷ Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689–1764* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3.

instrumental music for dancing. The two are not completely separate; some tunes are both sung and performed on instruments, and some musicians both sing and play instruments. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the traditions experienced very different fortunes.²⁸

Sung balladry had steadily flourished in Irish folk traditions for centuries, but in the nineteenth century, associations with bards and ancient Gaelic aristocracy captured the imaginations of the middle and upper classes across Europe and the United States. Before British colonization, bards were highly skilled court musicians. Their numbers had declined precipitously since 1603, when Elizabeth I ordered her retainers to “hang the harpers wherever found, and destroy their instruments.”²⁹ The harp, the bards, and the ballads they sang became associated with ancient, lost gentility, and, by the nineteenth century, they had long served as a symbol of the lost Irish nation.³⁰ At that time, Romantic concepts of folk culture and nationalism, based on the ideas of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), suggested that characteristic song revealed the true spirit of a nation.³¹ Nationalistic movements sought to preserve cultural practices that were perceived to be old, particularly those that predated industrialism, modernity, and any colonization that could

²⁸ I acknowledge that I address only traditional music here. I do not want to diminish the worthiness of other kinds of music happening in Ireland, such as sacred music and classical music, and certainly not composers such as Sir John Stevenson, Michael William Balfe, and Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, whose work was important and occasionally performed in the United States. Another, more comprehensive history would certainly include performances of Stanford’s “Irish” Symphony and Balfe’s opera, *The Bohemian Girl*.

²⁹ Cited in William H. Grattan Flood, *A History of Irish Music* (Dublin: Brown and Nolan, 1906), 186.

³⁰ Though Henry VIII outlawed the instrument, ironically, he was also the English monarch to make the harp the official symbol of Ireland in 1541.

³¹ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Volkslieder* (Leipzig: Weygand, 1778).

obstruct what seemed to be the true national character of the art form. For the Irish, the music of the bards satisfied such requirements, and interest in bards surged, particularly among the educated and social elite. In the United States, music for the upper and middle classes, such as sentimental song and classical music, often invokes balladry and the harp to present ancient, pre-colonized images of the Irish.

In Ireland, instrumental music for dancing is more recent. The tradition solidified by the end of the eighteenth century and reflects its origins in baroque and classical dances.³² The repertoire includes several popular dance forms, like jigs, reels, and hornpipes, that are formulaic and repetitious to facilitate dancing. This largely oral tradition did not have the cultural weight of balladry, nor its courtly patronage. It did not capture genteel imaginations as balladry had and, as it was associated with dance, it occupied lower social positions than balladry.

The loose class associations of balladry and instrumental dance music highlight the significance of the third channel through which the Irish shaped American musical life: conceptions of the Irish in the United States. Throughout the century, debate raged in the theater of popular opinion on the presence of the Irish in the New World. The dispute over Irishness, particularly Catholic Irishness, had real consequences that included access to employment, constitutional rights, and social privilege. Historians such as Noel Ignatiev and Matthew Frye Jacobson note that even membership in the white race was contested. They describe an environment in which groups of various European origins now considered white were regarded as biologically distinct “races,” rather than culturally distinct

³² Lawrence McCullough, “Style in Traditional Irish Music,” *Ethnomusicology* 21, no. 1 (January 1977): 85.

“ethnicities.” Figure I.2 illustrates a claim that the Irish mixed with Moors during the occupation of Spain. According to Henry Strickland Constable, the supposed biological mixing “made way . . . for superior races,” such as the English, to control them.³³ In the illustration, the “Irish Ibernian,” left, and “Negro,” right, not only look similar to each other, but they also appear more apish than the “Anglo-Teutonic” in the middle.



Figure I.2: An 1899 illustration of racial theory from Henry Strickland Constable’s *Ireland from One or Two Neglected Points of View*, published by Harchards in London.

While such beliefs were among the more extreme instances of bias faced by the Irish in the United States, they were not the only stereotypes in circulation. Rather, at various times and in various places across the century, different ideas about the Irish emerged. Each representation needs to be understood on its own terms and in its own context. Figure I.3, for instance, shows the cover of *Barney Brallaghan’s Songster* and the cover of the blackface song “Jim Crow.” The image on

³³ Henry Strickland Constable, *Ireland from One or Two Neglected Points of View* (London: Harchards, 1899); cited in George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 146.

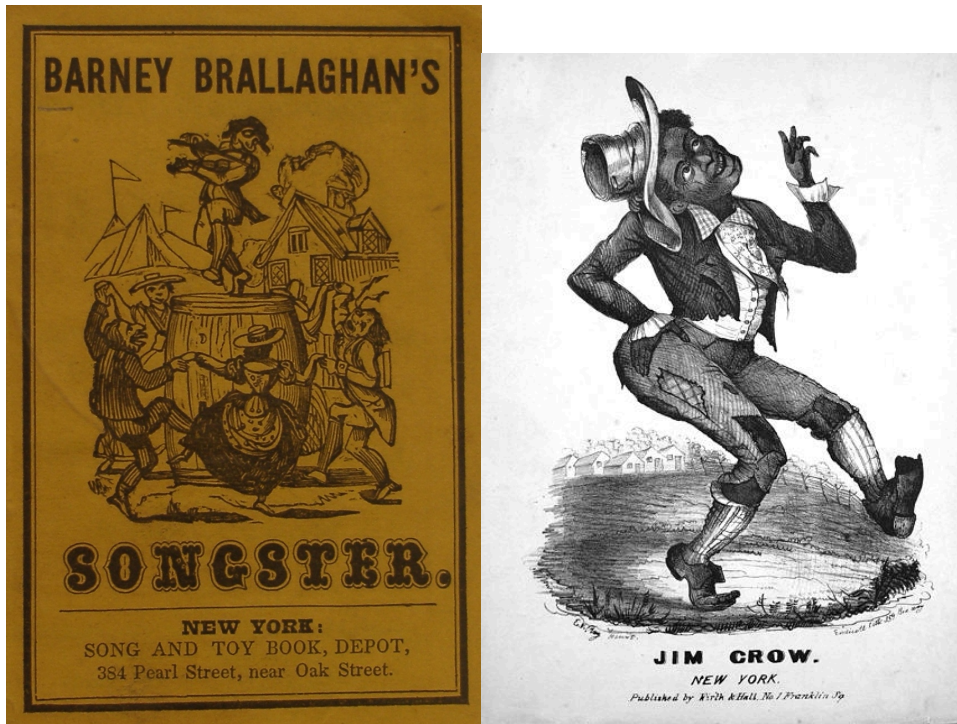


Figure I.3: On the left, *Barney Brallaghan's Songster*, published in 1852 by the Song and Toy Book Depot in New York. On the right, The cover of "Jim Crow," published in New York by Firth and Hall, with no date printed.

this Irish-themed booklet shows a fiddler with dancers around him in an urban context. Their faces are grotesque and their posture imitates the popular images of Jim Crow dancing that often featured one bent leg held in the air, recalling blackface minstrel images of the era. Indeed, in the 1850s, minstrel shows commonly included Irish characters as well as African-American ones, and this image clearly taps such comic representations of the Irish. On the songster, characters' eyes are sunken into their faces, and the shadows below the dancers emphasize that the festivities are taking place mid-day, when they should be working. The booklet was published around 1852 in New York, during the height of famine immigration. Such images illustrate fears of these refugees, most of whom had lived agrarian lifestyles in remote areas of Ireland before arriving, destitute and often in ill health, in America's

cities. Many thought that such immigrants were unused to, ill-prepared for, and dysfunctional in modern work and urban life.³⁴

But not all images of the Irish in the nineteenth century were negative. Indeed, equally as common and powerful were idealized and Romantic images of the Irish, as in figure I.4, from the original edition of Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, the subject of Chapter 1. This image draws on ideas about the Irish as an ancient race of noble warriors. In his lyrics, Moore, an Irish nationalist, depicted the Irish in a positive light. However, he did so in a way that avoids the controversies of his present moment by placing the characters so deeply in Ireland's past that it precludes mention of England's colonization of the island.

Music played a pivotal role in negotiating such identities. Indeed, the two above examples illustrate two major categories of Irish stereotypes, adapted from William H. A. Williams, in American music.³⁵ One revolves around a comic, dysfunctional, contemporary, and urban type while the other depicts the Irish as Romantic, idealized, ancient, and agrarian. The Romantic image is often set in precolonized contexts, illustrated by the image from Moore's *Irish Melodies*, while the comic, derogatory image is often placed in an urban, industrial, contemporary setting, as on the cover of *Barney Brallaghan's Songster*. The two resonate with the political situation in Ireland during the nineteenth century. Together, the images suggest that the Irish did not flourish in modern, urban industrial environments or

³⁴ For accounts of the experiences of such immigrants, see: Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York Neighborhood that Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum* (New York: The Free Press, 2001).

³⁵ Williams, *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream*, 11–12.

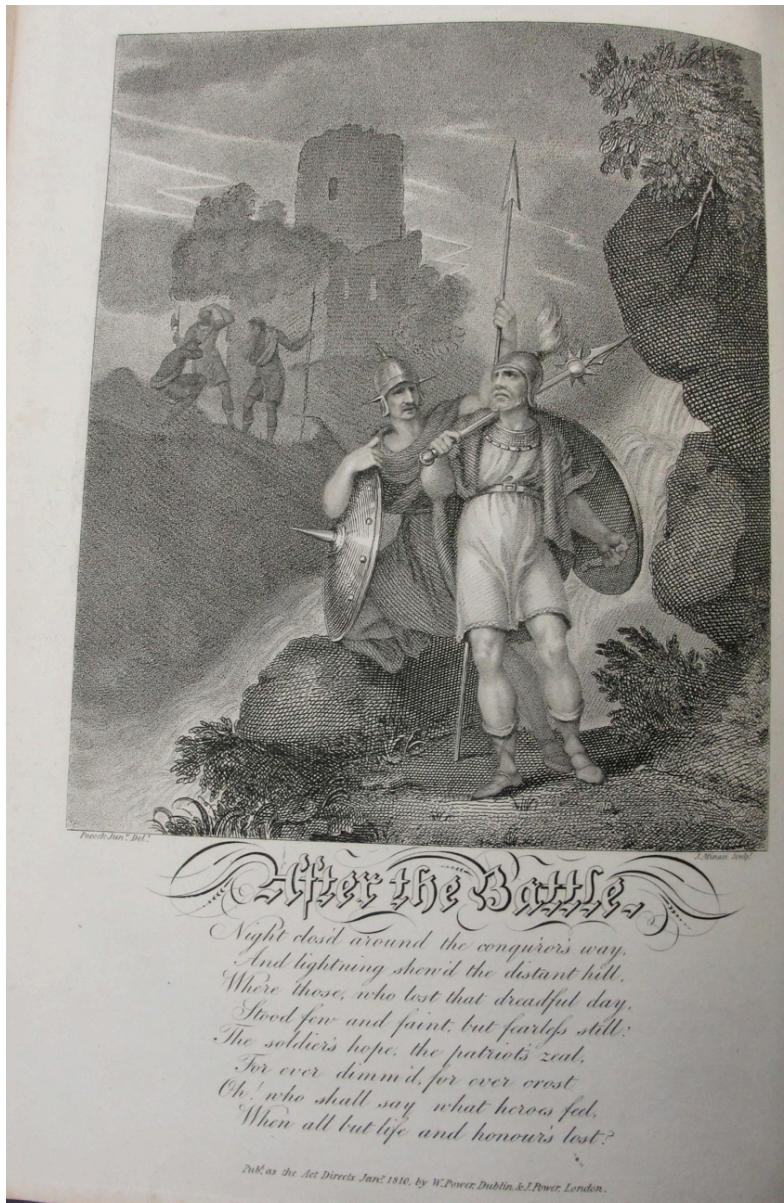


Figure I.4: An illustration of “After the Battle” from *Irish Melodies* by Thomas Moore and John Stevenson, volume 3. Published in London by Power in 1810.

that they were better off before British domination. They also carry implications for the Irish in the New World, particularly Catholic famine immigrants, who faced challenges and negative bias in the often-difficult transition from the rural estates and agrarian lifestyles of western Ireland to the bustling metropolises and industrial labor of American cities.

This dissertation examines Irish and Irish-American people, music, and stereotypes in a series of case studies. The structure allows for focused consideration of various aspects of both American musical life and Irish musical practice. All four chapters focus on music made in the United States that contains direct borrowings from Irish music. They examine diverse genres, including classical and popular music; examples from high and low culture; music imported from Ireland and music made in the United States; Irish traditional dance music as well as balladry; and examples of popular sheet music, theatrical performance, and classical music. As chapters progress, the body of music examined in each becomes increasingly more concentrated. The first chapter considers the impact of a collection of Irish music on the genre of sentimental song across the century. The second examines several decades of blackface minstrelsy. The third chapter focuses on the work of the variety duo of Harrigan and Hart in a series of specific, related theatrical pieces, and the fourth chapter concentrates on Irishness in a single symphony.

The chapters present as wide a variety of contexts as possible. Musical examples span the century, revealing that Ireland's influence in the United States, while shaped by each individual moment, was not contained within any single period. The earliest example is Thomas Moore's first volume of *Irish Melodies*, which dates from 1808, while the latest example is Amy Beach's "Gaelic" Symphony of 1896. Each chapter focuses on a different location in the United States, considering major urban centers such as New York and Boston as well as the country's interior, including the river towns of Ohio.

The chapters also address ideas about the Irish that largely fall into the two broad categories of comic and Romantic. Chapters on the music of Moore and Beach reflect the Romantic image, while my work on minstrelsy and *The Mulligan Guards* considers the comic type. Chapters 1 and 2 consider early constructions of the types, while the final two chapters consider later iterations and their contexts, when musical life responded to the participation and influence of growing Irish-American communities. In combining such diverse contexts and bodies of music, the four chapters collectively seek to show the extent of Irish impact on American music. Common themes between them are addressed in more depth in the conclusion.

Chapter 1 begins the body of the dissertation in Ireland itself by considering an Irish musical product, Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, and its reception and influence in the United States. Created in Ireland and published serially in Dublin, London, and Philadelphia between c. 1808 and 1834, this collection brought together Irish traditional ballads, new lyrics by the poet Moore and accompaniment by composer Sir John Stevenson, who was replaced in later volumes by Sir Henry Bishop, most remembered today as the composer of "Home, Sweet Home." The collection was enduringly popular across the English-speaking world, not least in the United States where it remains in circulation today. American reception, however, was complicated by several factors. Perception of Moore's national allegiances varied in part because his public persona straddled Irish and British identities. Also, ambiguity in the meaning of the texts in the songs circumvented political controversy, but led to widely differing understandings of the songs. After examining such contested reception, the chapter addresses Moore's immense

influence on the sentimental song genre. A wealth of musical tropes from Moore's collection continued to appear in American sentimental songs for the remainder of the century, and indeed into the twenty first century.

Chapter 2 highlights Irish musical influences on blackface minstrelsy, the most popular American theatrical entertainment in the nineteenth century. Other scholars have often cited anecdotal accounts of the Irish presence in minstrelsy, but details and a critical analysis of their impact are lacking. Among pre-1843 minstrel tunes, much sheet music directly adopts the formal structure, rhythmic idiosyncrasies, and melodic contours of Irish music. Many songs even fit specific dance-based classification. The chapter concludes by examining the music of a watershed moment, the 1843 formation and tour of the Virginia Minstrels, which established many musical and dramatic conventions for subsequent minstrel shows. I contend that the music of the Virginia Minstrels, mostly written by the Irish-American Dan Emmett, adapted the heavily Irish-inflected genre by infusing additional rhythmic complexities and song forms. The shifts in style moved the genre away from its earlier resemblances to Irish music.

Chapter 3 focuses on later incarnations of popular theater music, taking us from the minstrel stage to the variety theater. The chapter examines Irish comic characters in Harrigan and Hart's 1873 "The Mulligan Guards," a sketch about a New York-based Irish-American paramilitary organization.³⁶ Depicting two drunken, buffoonish men celebrating into the night, the production initiated a decades-long craze for related works. The sketch's appeal lay in its depiction of Irish characters in

³⁶ Edward Harrigan and David Braham, "Mulligan Guards" (New York: William Pond, 1873).

the tradition of the “stage Irishman,” a centuries-old stock theatrical character imported to the United States from Britain.³⁷ The Mulligans, however, differ from the most prototypical examples of the character, constructed in a manner that appealed to both sympathizers and detractors of working-class Irish Americans. The characters shift the allegiance of their national identity, at times leaning Irish and at times American. Musical markers of Irishness and Americanness are employed to appeal to many different views of the Irish in America. This reflects the growing complexities of Irish identities in the United States in the 1870s, when Irish-American communities were gaining traction in the dialogue about the place of the Irish in the United States.

Chapter 4 offers a new interpretation of one of the most prominent expressions of Irishness in American classical music, Amy Beach’s “Gaelic” Symphony. The chapter challenges prevailing interpretations of the symphony as a statement of American musical nationalism by considering other reasons why the work taps Irish music for thematic material. In doing so, it turns our attentions to late-century Irish-American dynamics and to the unique circumstances surrounding the city of Boston. Beach’s own heritage was not Irish, but she lived in a city with unique ties to Ireland via immigration patterns. I suggest that with her symphony, Beach engaged with emerging notions of Irishness around her in Boston, which was experiencing a revival of Gaelic cultures as some of its Irish residents ascended class barriers and asserted newfound cultural and social authority.

³⁷ For more information on the stage Irishman see Robert Welch and Bruce Stewart, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

Chapter 1

Thomas Moore's Long Reach: *Irish Melodies* and American Music

My boat is on the shore,
And my bark is on the sea,
But, before I go, Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee!

—Lord Byron¹

Thomas Moore (1779–1852) led a life of contradictions. He was a darling of the British upper crust who supported Irish independence, an Irish nationalist who staunchly criticized even the most peaceful branches of Irish nationalism, and a young student involved by association with the United Irishmen's uprising who later surrounded himself with the very people his earlier cohort fought against. Such dissimilarities have often led to ambivalent reception of Moore and his work. But Moore's biography is only one source of confusion; critics and historians have endeavored to reconcile the immense popularity of his writings with more recent denunciations of his work on the grounds that it is overly sentimental. Almost every biography of the poet begins with an apology for Moore's perceived artistic shortcomings followed by justification of the study on the grounds of his popularity. In the opening remarks of his 1937 book, Leonard Strong writes: "Tom Moore was

¹ Baron George Gordon Byron, "To Thomas Moore," *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* 2 (London: John Murray, 1855), 391.

not a great man or a great poet, but he has many titles to his attention.”² Likewise in 1967, Miriam De Ford writes: “Almost every biography of Thomas Moore begins with the statements that he was not a great poet, or indeed a great writer of any kind. This is quite true.”³ Even Moore’s recent biographer, Ronan Kelly, admitted in 2008 to a similar perception. He sets off by describing Moore’s 1835 return to Ireland, from decades spent living in England, as the triumphant return of a “conquering hero.” Kelly contrasts Moore’s status in the mid-nineteenth century to the one he adopted in his own youth. He admits that his own first encounters with the poet were colored by intellectual elitism, a “standing-start mix of ignorance and perversity.”⁴

This mixed reaction to Moore has shaped the reception of his most famous work, *Irish Melodies*, a large collection of songs for which he supplied the lyrics. Both the collection and ambivalent feelings about it came across the ocean in the nineteenth-century transatlantic exchange of materials, people, and ideas. American writers variously loved and loathed the collection and couched their arguments for and against *Irish Melodies* with provocative language that reveals much about the early nineteenth-century United States. On the other hand, *Irish Melodies* was also an unequivocal commercial success, containing some of the most enduringly popular songs in the country’s history. Julius Mattfeld claims that in the years when

² Leonard Strong, *The Minstrel Boy: A Portrait of Tom Moore* (London: Hooder and Stoughton, 1937), 3.

³ Miriam De Ford, *Thomas Moore*, Twayne’s English Authors Series 38, edited by Sylvia E. Bowman (New York: Twayne, 1967), 5.

⁴ Ronan Kelly, *Bard of Erin: The Life of Thomas Moore* (Dublin: Penguin Ireland, 2008), 1–3. For a more extensive examination of Moore reception in Ireland, see: Harry White, *Music and the Irish Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37–43.

the first two volumes of *Irish Melodies* were released, four of the five most popular songs in the United States came from Moore's collection.⁵ Again in 1813, the year of the fifth volume, the two most popular songs listed by Mattfield originated in *Irish Melodies*.⁶ This is especially remarkable given the continuation of the War of 1812 and the tendency toward homegrown and patriotic songs in times of war. As we shall see, Moore's *Irish Melodies* cast a long reach over American popular music, particularly songs with Irish themes and in the parlor or sentimental tradition. The songs from Moore's collection remained consistently popular throughout the century, attracting wide audiences and greatly influencing American composers.

This chapter examines the complicated reception of Moore's *Irish Melodies* in the United States and the collection's lasting influence on American popular song. The conflicting nature of its critical reception together with its cultural ubiquity suggest that attitudes toward Irishness on the whole were diverse and contested, early in the century. The story of *Irish Melodies* in the United States also illustrates a complicated relationship between the fledgling United States and Ireland. It reveals

⁵ There is some discrepancy over the initial year of *Irish Melodies*'s publication. Some claim the first volume appeared in 1807, and some claim 1808. Julius Mattfeld and cites 1807 as the date of initial release, while Leith Davis cites 1808. As the date stamped on the original Power editions is 1808 and have found no source for the 1807 date, I use the 1808 for the purposes of this dissertation. Mattfeld, however, uses 1807 for volume 1 and 1808 for volume 2.

⁶ Those songs were: in 1807, "The Harp that Once Thro' Tara's Halls" and "Rich and Rare were the Gems She Wore"; in 1808, "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms," "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old," and the one that Thomas Moore did not write, "Jessie, the Flow'r o' Dumblane," by Robert Archibald Smith. The 1813 songs were "The Minstrel Boy" and "Tis the Last Rose of Summer." Other Moore songs in *Variety Music Cavalcade* include "Mary's Tears" of 1817, "Hark! The Vesper Hymn is Stealing" and "Oft in the Stilly Night" of 1818, "Araby's Daughter," of 1826 and derived from Moore's play *Lalla Rookh*, "Nothing's True but Heaven" of 1829, and "My Heart and Lute" of 1830. Julius Mattfield, *Variety Music Cavalcade 1620–1969: A Chronology of Vocal and Instrumental Music Popular in the United States*, third edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 16–41.

empathy for the Irish, who also struggled with British colonial domination, combined with negative stereotypes about the Irish that emanated from England. The Irishness encoded in Moore's text is bucolic and ancient, tapping a version of Irishness that seemed unsullied by British domination. The music contains markers of Irishness that held sway for the duration of the century, indeed, even into the twenty-first century. As Moore's *Irish Melodies* was the first globally popular example of Irish music, I argue that the collection was particularly important for conceptions of the Irish in the New World. The omnipresence of these songs left any transnationally mediated Irishness in music to engage with their influence for the duration of the nineteenth century and beyond.

Irish Music Enters the Transnational Marketplace

From its outset, *Irish Melodies* was designed to satisfy cosmopolitan tastes and appeal across Europe and the English-speaking world. Though Moore's name is often singularly associated with *Irish Melodies*, the project was collaborative. The publishing firm of James and William Power first conceived the collection. The Power brothers initially opened a shop in Dublin, and by the time of *Irish Melodies*, they had opened a second in London. The two locations, one in Ireland and one in the capital of England, suggests that the brothers were conscious of the international marketplace and shaped *Irish Melodies* to appeal to varying consumers.⁷ They planned a series of volumes combining Irish traditional melodies,

⁷ Leith Davis, "Irish Bards and English Consumers: Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* and the Colonized Nation," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 24, no. 2 (April 1993): 7-25.

new arrangements for piano, and new lyrics supplied by a different Irish literary figure in each volume. The enormous success of the first volume, with melodies borrowed from various sources, arrangements by Sir John Stevenson (1761–1833), and Moore’s lyrics, led the Power brothers to rethink their plans.⁸ Moore became the sole lyricist for the run, which would include 10 volumes with 124 songs and a supplement published over twenty-six years between 1808 and 1834. His role in the creation of the collection extended far beyond that of a typical lyricist; he was responsible for many decisions about repertoire and, when needed, how best to alter the borrowed melody to accommodate text and contemporaneous taste.⁹ Stevenson provided piano accompaniments, with little input into which tunes were chosen and how the melody would be altered. Due to failing health, Stevenson was replaced in the eighth volume by Henry Bishop (1786–1855), the British songwriter most known for his 1823 song “Home, Sweet Home.”¹⁰ *Irish Melodies* became abidingly popular throughout the Western world and the British Empire. In the process, it shaped a generation’s notions of Irishness.

By creating a collection of Irish traditional melodies to market internationally, the Power brothers made a savvy business decision. A wave of antiquarianism throughout Europe and North America had recently brought attention to Gaelic artistic products. Interest in Gaelic culture was first aimed at Scotland and the work of writers Walter Scott, Robert Burns, and James

⁸ Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 153.

⁹ Richard Pine, “A Guest of Cultural Politics: The Twentieth-Century Musical Legacy of Thomas Moore,” in “Irish Issue,” ed. Csilla Bertha and Donald E. Morse, *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 8, No. 1 (Spring 2002): 104.

¹⁰ The song was initially part of an operetta with words by American dramatist John Howard Payne and music by Bishop. John Howard Payne, *Clari: or, The Maid of Milan* (Boston: William V. Spencer, 1856).

Macpherson, but political upheaval in Ireland quickly turned middle- and upper-class attentions there.¹¹ Music played an explicit role in Ireland's political turmoil, connecting the conflict with the tradition. The 1792 harp festival in Belfast became a focal point for the Irish nationalist movement.¹² Prior to the creation of *Irish Melodies*, Edward Bunting published a collection of tunes performed at the harp festival, arranged for piano to facilitate amateur performances in middle- and upper-class parlors.¹³ These arrangements were often easy enough for beginners to perform with simple, functional tonality. In "The Brown Thorn" (figure 1.1), the pianist is rarely asked to press more than two notes in either hand at any given time, and harmony only once extends beyond a tonic-dominant polarity. The collection resembles piano arrangements of folk music published by many composers in the late-eighteenth century, including Mozart and Haydn. In *Irish Melodies*, Moore used some of the tunes in Bunting's collection, a fact that frustrated Bunting and complicated reception of the Moore songs.¹⁴ However, the tunes' origins in the Bunting collection and the Belfast festival afforded *Irish Melodies* intellectual and political credibility in the transnational marketplace.

To a greater extent than Bunting's collection, Moore's appealed to cultivated taste, with a vocal part and elements of popular cosmopolitan styles that included

¹¹ For more on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century interest in Scottish music, see: Paul F. Moulton, "Imagining Scotland in Music: Place, Audience, and Attractions," Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2008; Roger Fiske, *Scotland in Music: A European Enthusiasm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹² Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770–1970*, *Critical Conditions: Field Day Essays and Monographs*, edited by Seamus Deane, 6 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 36.

¹³ Edward Bunting, arranger, *A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music* (London: Preston and Son, 1797).

¹⁴ Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 159–161.



Figure 1.1: “The Brown Thorn,” *A General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music*, transcribed and arranged for piano by Edward Bunting. Published in London by Preston and Son in 1797.

pianistic accompaniments and art song conventions. Moore and Stevenson created “St. Senanus and the Lady” (figure 1.2) with the melody of “The Brown Thorn.” The comparison shows how they altered Bunting’s material to suit those wealthy enough to purchase sheet music. The accompaniment’s 15-bar introduction and subsequent pianistic arpeggiations reflect classical aesthetics and the parlor song idiom. The song retains Bunting’s simple harmonic language, with mostly tonic and dominant chords. Brief references to the secondary dominant serve to reinforce, rather than confuse, the strong E-flat major tonality.

In “St. Senanus and the Lady,” Irishness was also constructed to appeal to cosmopolitan audiences whose differing interpretations of Ireland’s colonization

prompted various ideas about the Irish. The music and text combine to create a world that is ancient, simple, and idealized. Moore's lyrics depict St. Senan, born in 488. St. Senan founded a monastery on Scattery Island, in the estuary of the River Shannon, and banned women from the island for the sake of chastity. In the song, a woman approaches by boat, desiring to join him in prayer and she is turned away. Because the song names a Catholic Saint and Irish historical figure, it taps ancient Irish identity explicitly. The purity of St. Senan, both in his status within the church and his upholding of the gender code on the island contribute to the idealization of the Irishness portrayed, as does the woman's apparently virtuous reasons for wishing to join St. Senan. The simplicity of the music contributes to this sense of purity and ancientness. The clear, functional progression harkens back to earlier styles of music. The lack of adulterating dissonances or chromatic pitches sounds pure as well. The rectitude of the characters, their placement in a remote area of Ireland, and the distance of their historical setting all serve to create an idealized image of the Irish that predates colonization and thereby avoids controversy.

Moore's characterization of the Irish reflects what William H. A. Williams terms the "Romantic" image, discussed in the introduction of this dissertation. Following this vein, the Irish were often depicted in rural and ancient settings, as is the case in "St. Senanus and the Lady." The bucolic surroundings left Romantic Irish characters outside of industrialized contexts associated with the modernizing British Empire, and the chronological setting also placed the Irish in a precolonial version of Ireland. Such a position is far away from the political turmoil of British colonization. Characters, like the two in "St. Senanus and the Lady," are idealized

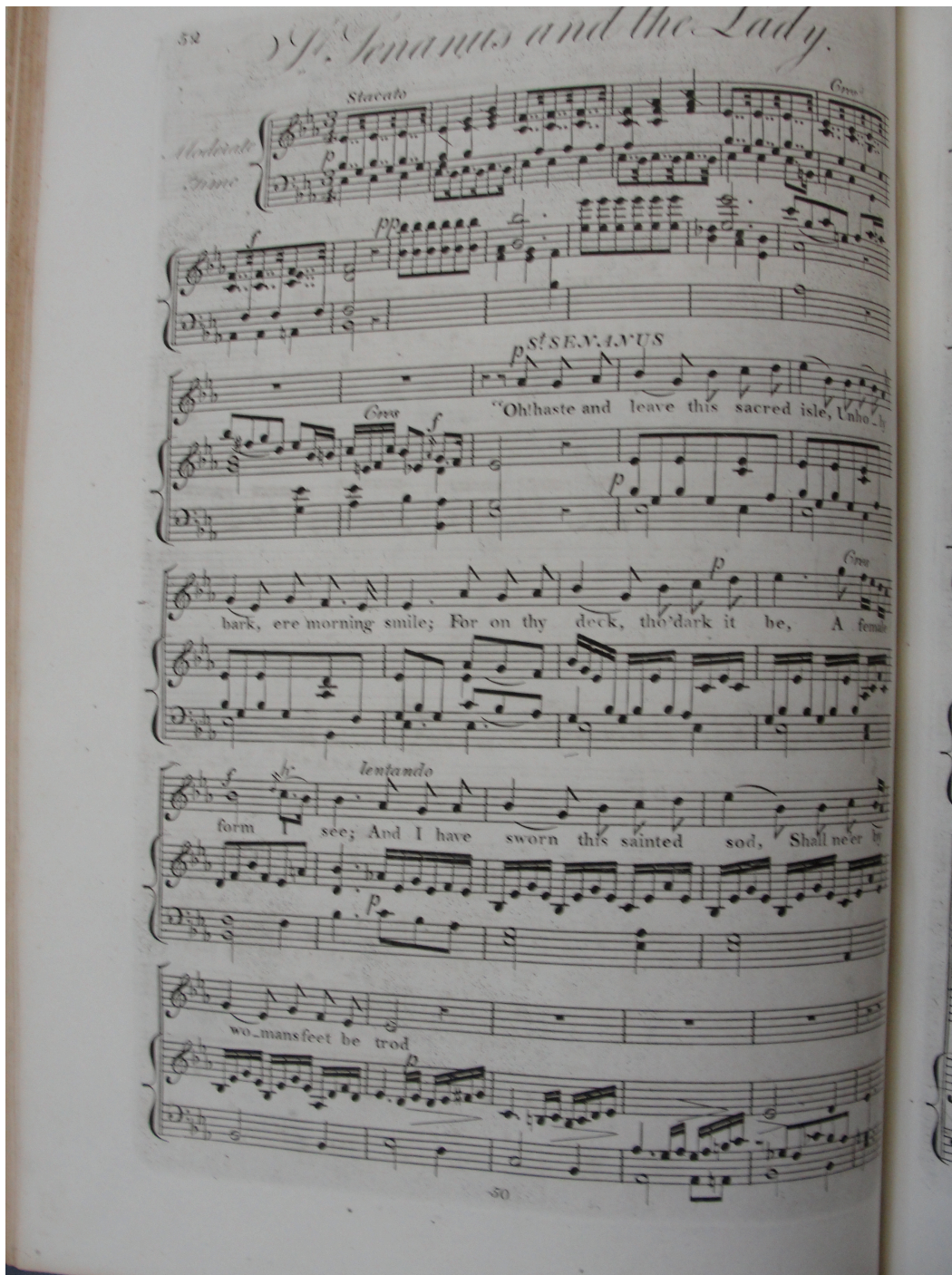


Figure 1.2: The first page of "St. Senanus and the Lady," in *Irish Melodies* vol. 2, by Thomas Moore. Published in London by Power in 1808.

and virtuous. This song is atypical in that the characters' Catholic identity is placed at the forefront. Generally, Romantic Irish are either valued as warriors or farmers,

two professions that were distant from the middle-class homes that comprised Moore's primary consumers. Placing them so far away circumvented political conflict that might stand in the way of *Irish Melodies'* commercial appeal.

Irish Melodies' creators were well positioned to create work that introduced Irishness to transnational commerce. Moore and Stevenson led cosmopolitan lives, surrounded by elite, international communities. Their experience with the world outside Ireland contributed to the creation and reception of their work. Stevenson's knowledge of contemporaneous art music practices, for instance, gave him the expertise to appeal to the tastes of middle- and upper-class consumers. Stevenson was born in Dublin in 1761. His father, a violinist in the state band, came from Glasgow. Stevenson received early musical experiences in the Church of Ireland, as a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral (1771–1775) and at St. Patrick's Cathedral (1775–1780). Membership in the Church of Ireland, seen by Catholic Irish as an instrument of British colonization, automatically aligned Stevenson with Irish upper classes. It also exposed him to British sacred music and the music popular among Anglican churchgoers, including concert music traditions. Stevenson appears to have had little formal training, but nonetheless began composing by 1780.¹⁵ His works reveal a firm grasp of concert styles of the day, often reflecting the influence of composers like Joseph Haydn and J.C. Bach. By the time the first volume of *Irish Melodies* appeared in 1808, Stevenson's status as a successful member of the British colonial establishment had been affirmed numerous times. He had attained

¹⁵ W. H. Husk, et al, "Stevenson, Sir John," *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press, accessed June 23, 2014), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/26738>.

knighthood, received an honorary doctorate from Trinity College, and served as vicar both at St. Patrick's Cathedral and Christ Church Cathedral.¹⁶ Stevenson was, then, a dyed-in-the-wool member of the establishment whose musical style was connected with concert styles popular across Europe. He was well-poised to help the Power brothers create an Irish musical product that would sell in Dublin and London.

Likewise, Moore could understand as perhaps few Irishmen could at the time the lyrical tastes of the British aristocracy, though his biography reveals a greater interest in Irish nationalism and folk traditions than Stevenson's. He was born to Catholic parents in Dublin in 1779. At the time of his birth, the harsh penal laws restricted Catholic Irish in religious, political, and economic spheres. Catholics could not vote, hold office in Parliament, enter the legal profession, nor study at Trinity College. As Moore grew older, however, religious conflict in Ireland cooled enough for new opportunities to open for a young and talented Catholic student. He excelled in academics and learned to speak with a British accent at Samuel Whyte's English Grammar School, run by a Protestant.¹⁷ His studies there suggest that he prepared to join the privileged classes from an early age. In January 1795, just two years after the 1793 Catholic Relief Act made university study available to Catholics, Moore entered Trinity College. His marks in the classics and English were particularly high. In his first year he won top honors in all subjects. He was, by all accounts, an extremely bright, promising student who looked forward to a successful legal

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ For the accent: Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 23. For Samuel Whyte's religion: Linda Kelly, *Ireland's Minstrel: Poet, Patriot, and Byron's Friend* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 9.

career, an option that had also only recently opened to Catholics.¹⁸ Following graduation in 1799, Moore immigrated to England to enter legal studies at Middle Bar.

While still a student, Moore published a translation of the *Odes of Anacreon*.¹⁹ The volume was carefully crafted and ornately decorated—an object designed for the most aristocratic circles (figure 1.3). Both the Irish revolutionary Daniel O’Connell and the Prince of Wales, to whom the volume was dedicated, took early subscriptions for it.²⁰ The dual support of the future leader of the Irish independence movement and a figurehead for the British Empire illustrates the wide appeal of Moore’s work.²¹ The effort granted him entrée into elite British circles. Moore soon became known around London for his witty repartee and vocal performances at social events, gaining social capital that not only increased his opportunities and provided an audience but also shaped his future musical output.

Throughout his education, Moore worked to straddle divides between the colonial situation and elite academic circles. The apparent conflict between the two proved challenging for Moore. Though he began at Trinity as a star student, his

¹⁸ Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 32.

¹⁹ Thomas Moore, Esq. trans. *Odes of Anacreon: Translated into English Verse, with Notes* (London: John Stockdale, 1800).

²⁰ Thomas Moore, trans., “List of Subscribers,” in *Odes of Anacreon, Translated into English Verse* (London: John Stockdale, 1800). Though the work is dedicated to the Prince of Wales, Moore, often derided the Prince’s “corruption, corpulence and personal immorality,” reflecting difficulties in reconciling Moore’s position within English society and his Irish identity in England. Robert Portsmouth, “Thomas Moore, Whig Propaganda and the Demise of Conciliatory Emancipation: 1810–1825,” in *Thomas Moore: Texts, Contexts, Hypertext*, edited by Francesca Benatti, Sean Ryder, and Justin Tonra, *Reimagining Ireland* 24, edited by Eamon Maher (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 88.

²¹ Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 77–79.

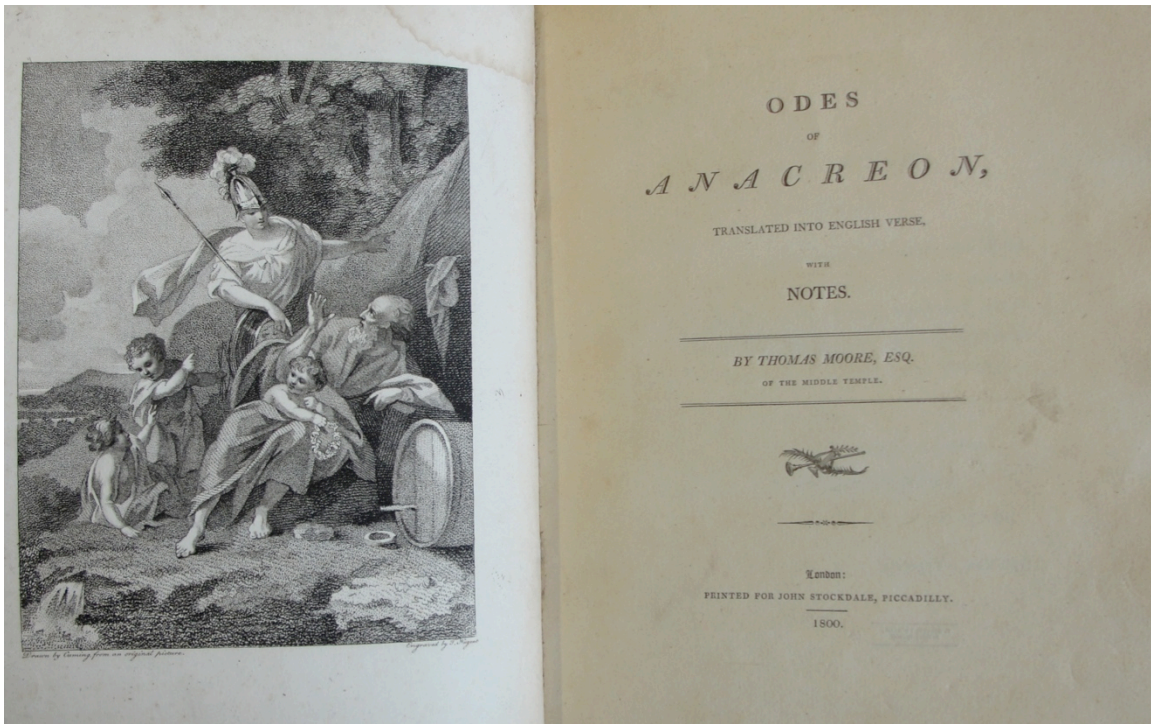


Figure 1.3: *Odes of Anacreon*, translated into English by Thomas Moore. Published in London for Stockdale in 1800.

marks declined precipitously during his tenure. Scholars often attribute this to disillusionment born of prejudice he faced as one of the first Catholic students there.²² Then, in 1798, Moore found himself amidst a revolutionary uprising. Many of his friends at Trinity, including Robert Emmet, were members of the Society of United Irishmen.²³ In the wake of the American and French Revolutions, this group wanted to agitate for a republic. Moore sympathized, but did not become actively involved. Violence erupted across Ireland, but the British military easily quashed the separatists. At Trinity, a known locus for the United Irishmen, suspected

²² For a fuller account of Moore's Trinity days: Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 29–65.

²³ Robert Emmet went on to rally the United Irishmen in an 1803 rebellion. He was captured and hanged that year. Subsequently, Emmet has become one of the martyrs of the Irish independence movement. Moore's "Oh Speak Not his Name" is about Emmet.

revolutionaries including Moore were put to the inquisition of a “general visitation” board. Though Moore was not expelled, many of his closest friends were, some in absentia because they were in hiding and afraid for their lives.²⁴

Moore’s move to England in 1799 came on the heels of these experiences. While young ambitious Irishmen often traversed the Irish Sea to seek career advances at the time, Moore’s writings reveal ambivalence toward the English people whose circles he hoped to join. His animosity for establishment figures reflected the conflicts he observed. When key figures of the visitation at Trinity subscribed to *Odes of Anacreon*, he wrote: “Heaven knows they ought to rejoice at anything like an effort of literature coming out of their leaden body! . . . They are a cursed corporation of boobies!”²⁵ And yet, Moore continued to take part in upper-class salons and study law in preparation for a career in politics. That career led Moore to traverse the Atlantic Ocean, traveling through the United States on his way to and from a post in Bermuda. From the start, Moore’s relationship with the United States was as conflicted as his relationship with aristocratic British circles, though for different reasons. Because he published his thoughts on the New World, an act he came to publicly regret, his experiences set the tone for American reception of his later work including *Irish Melodies*.

²⁴ Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 60.

²⁵ Thomas Moore, *Letters of Thomas Moore*, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden, vol. 1, 1793–1818 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 20.

Thomas Moore and the United States: A Conflicted Relationship

Upon completion of his studies at Middle Bar, Moore gained a post as Registrar of the Naval Prize Court in Bermuda, in 1803. En route there and back, he spent extensive time in the United States, reporting his thoughts on the new country in letters home. He often commented on the perceived lack of social graces of the people he met and insinuated that the democratic experiment was a failure because such people were in charge. His disappointment in the United States was made public when he published correspondence from the trip in 1806, just two years before publication of the first *Irish Melodies*.²⁶ This section examines Moore's experiences in the New World, his thoughts on American society, and reception of *Irish Melodies* together as aspects of a complicated relationship between Ireland's National Bard and the United States. Because of Moore's multifaceted, complicated identity, he could appear Irish or British, depending on how Americans interpreted the poet's work. This led to widely varying reception. However, within the body of reports on Moore's work, a remarkably unified solidarity for Ireland's political situation emerges. The Irish remained colonized by the same government against which Americans struggled, and in their writings about Moore and *Irish Melodies*, Americans expressed sympathy for what had been lost through centuries of British colonization of Ireland. The complicated reception of Moore revolved around whether he was seen as a symbol of Irish suffering, or as an instrument of the British Empire. Such sentiments of solidarity are largely ignored in current understanding of Irishness in the New World in the nineteenth century.

²⁶ Thomas Moore, *Epistles, Odes, and Other Poems* (Philadelphia: John Watts, 1806).

Moore set sail for Bermuda in September 1803. The post was short-lived; he remained in the island nation for scant more than three months before arranging for a surrogate to perform his duties in absentia. Before returning home, Moore underwent a Grand Tour, of sorts, in North America. He began in Norfolk, traveling from there through Washington, DC, to Philadelphia, New York City, Niagara Falls, and eventually to Nova Scotia, where he embarked on the journey home.²⁷ While abroad, Moore's urbane lifestyle clashed with the perceived unsophisticated behaviors of Americans. Though years before the publication of *Irish Melodies*, the conflict between the worldviews of the British upper crust and the United States that would later affect reception of Moore's work also shaped the young poet's experience of the New World.

In his writings at the time, Moore expressed seething disdain for American society. His contempt for President Jefferson emerged in poems lambasting the man who used republican rhetoric about freedom, yet still owned slaves:

To think that man, thou just and gentle God!
Should stand before thee, with a tyrant's rod
O'er creatures like himself, with soul from thee,
Yet dare to boast of perfect liberty:
Away, away—I'd rather hold my neck
By doubtful tenure from a sultan's beck,
In climes where liberty has scarce been named,
Than thus to live, where bastard freedom waves
Her fustian flag in mockery over slaves . . .²⁸

Aside from the contradictions of a democratic republic that accommodated slavery, Moore's criticisms of Jefferson, and American culture more broadly, focused

²⁷ For more on Moore's voyage see: Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 91–127.

²⁸ Thomas Moore, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore* (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1827), 97.

on Americans' lack of proper manners and decorum. Such behavioral codes, learned in the elitist, aristocratic circles in which Moore spent much of his time, could be interpreted as British to Americans who would eventually learn of his opinions. In a letter to his mother, Moore described an indecorous theatrical culture, using it as a metaphor for the shortfalls of the similarly ignoble country. This reveals as much contempt for popular culture as it does for the United States. In the letter, he suggests that Americans' lack of attention to formalities was a critical flaw that would cripple the new nation:

How often it has occurred to me that nothing can be more emblematic of the *government* of this country than its *stages*, filled with a motley mixture, all "hail fellow well met," driving through mud and filth, which *bespatters* them as they *raise* it, and risking an *upset* at every step. God comfort their capacities! as [*sic*] soon as I am away from them, both the stages and the government may have the same fate for what *I* care.²⁹

His vitriol was not directed at the United States as an experiment in democratic rule, but in the country's lack of aristocratic decorum. In the United States he encountered a world free from the colonialism he experienced in Ireland, but lack of manners proved equally as untenable for him.

In his distaste for Jefferson, Moore found company in Philadelphia, where he took part for a brief time in the community of Federalists—the opposition political party seen as elitist and pro-British. Joseph Denie, editor of Federalist magazine *The Port Folio*, took interest in the poet during his visit, finding common ground in the values of his community and Moore's disillusionment with Jeffersonian democracy. Moore expressed further anti-American sentiments through this outlet, often

²⁹ Thomas Moore, Baltimore, to his mother, 13 June 1804. *Letters of Thomas Moore*, vol. 1, 86–87.

focusing on an observed lack of urbanity among American society. He noted: “hostility to all the graces of life, which distinguishes the present demagogues of the United States and has become indeed too generally the characteristic of their countrymen.”³⁰

Moore’s criticisms of American culture eventually subsided after his return to the Old World. Moore, however, remained patrician, decrying any break with elite behavioral codes that could be aligned with the British aristocracy. Such admonitions of unrefined behavior were not confined to Americans, but also extended to the Irish, complicating his status as an Irish nationalist as well. Later in life, he criticized many actions of the Irish nationalist movement on account of vulgarity. He also consistently positioned himself as a member of the cultivated class and used that association to substantiate his claim that his works were not intended as inflammatory or rebellious. Here again, Moore faulted lack of attention to behavioral codes in others. In a preface to *Irish Melodies* he wrote:

There is no one who deprecates more sincerely than I do any appeal to the passions of an ignorant and angry multitude; but that it is not through that gross and inflammable region of society a work of this nature could ever have been intended to circulate; it looks for a much higher 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.³¹

This association, along with the Irish nationalist sentiments engrained in *Irish Melodies*, created the space for Moore and thus his works to be understood in multifaceted ways. Moore’s straddling of binaries—Ireland and England, moneyed

³⁰ *The Port Folio* 2, no. 36, 13 September 1806, p. 153.

³¹ Thomas Moore, *Irish Melodies, with the Original Prefatory Letter on Music; and a Supplement Containing a Selection from his Poetical Works*, third edition (New York: Bixby, 1843), 25–26.

classes and colonized, nationalist and cosmopolite—contributed to the ubiquitous popularity of his work.

In the American press, such attacks on the United States and popular culture did not go unnoticed. Indeed, Thomas Moore's fame in the United States was sometimes met with apprehension because Americans did not perceive him as being cut from the same cloth as themselves. They saw him as elitist, and they saw his elitism as un-American. In 1811, as popularity of *Irish Melodies* grew across the United States, newspapers reported that Moore had apologized for earlier insults to the country. The *National Intelligencer* claimed Moore regretted offending "American hospitality by ingratitude; and modest sensibility by some of his licentious though elegant rhymes."³² Whether the apology was sincere, or merely a public relations gambit, is unclear. Indeed, collective memory of the prejudices of Moore's youth stretched even into the 1830s, in at least one context where he was otherwise respected. By that time, St. Patrick's Day had become an event in which community leaders, Irish or not, often paid public tribute to Irish heroes. Toasts were often recorded in the newspapers. In 1833, the president of New York's German Society praised Moore as "a bright star of Erin, and the greatest Lyric Poet of the present Age," and declared "the experience of 52 has corrected the errors of 24."³³ In March 1833, Moore was 53 years old, and he had been 24 during his tour of the United States. The speaker's math was a bit off, but he had not forgotten Moore's youthful transgressions.

³² *National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), 5 October 1811.

³³ *New York Spectator*, 21 March 1833.

Yet Americans also responded to Moore as a figurehead for a suffering Irish nation. Many used the podium afforded by reports on Moore's publications to express sympathy for the Irish political situation. They perceived Irish nationalists as facing the same oppressor as did their own country. Fervent support for the Irish independence movement was expressed in Irish-American newspapers such as *The Shamrock*, which described Moore as "the most distinguished genius of our time" in 1815.³⁴ Other papers expressed similar sentiments. An 1815 article printed in the *Burlington Gazette*, *The Star of Raleigh*, and *Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger* praised Irish people who had risen to prominence despite Ireland's plight, claiming the country had been "left almost naked, and abandoned to the tempests of irregular nature . . . without a resident legislature to direct or cheer her spirit." The article toasted Moore as a supporter of his country: "an Irishman, distinguished patriot."³⁵ In 1809, a writer for the *Richmond Enquirer* expressed great sympathy for the Irish, valuing the pre-colonized Irish identities transmitted in *Irish Melodies* as a political argument against colonization:

In the songs he has written to Irish Airs, [Moore] has touched upon the ancient freedom and value of the Sons of Erin, and upon their oppression and suffering in the later periods of their history. We lately published one of those pieces, and we propose to publish more, in which the men of republican America will so warmly sympathize in the feelings of the Poet, and in the cause he advocates . . .³⁶

Another writer suggested that through his work, Moore openly laments the tribulations of Ireland. According to this journalist, Moore was an active agent of

³⁴ *The Shamrock* (New York), 18 November 1815.

³⁵ "Miscellany Preponderance of Irish Talent," *Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger*, 19 September 1815; *Burlington Gazette*, 29 September 1815; *Star* (Raleigh, NC) vol. 7 no. 43, 27 October 1815, p. 43.

³⁶ "Ireland's Music and Song," *Enquirer* (Richmond, VA), 31 October 1809, p. 4.

Irish nationalism: “The sight of Erin, of the green fields of his native country, laid waste by the foot of the oppressor, seems again to have warmed and purified his heart . . . he often tunes his harp to the wrongs and woes of Ireland.”³⁷

To this feeling of sympathy between Americans and Irish republicans was added another dimension of transnational unity when some writers added French revolutionaries to the mix. Upheaval in France between supporters of monarchic tradition and agitators for democratic revolution emerged several times in the nineteenth century. A writer in the *Providence Patriot*, for example, noticed how well Moore’s themes of grief in his song “Weep on, weep on” suit the French situation: “It is not Erin alone, that *these* verses suit—France, unhappy, distressed, agitated France, they suit too well.”³⁸ This was printed in October 1815, mere months after Napoleon’s abdication of power and the restoration of the French monarchy.

A decade and a half later, in 1830, the conservative French King Charles X was overthrown and a popular, centrist constitutional monarchy under King Louis-Philippe was instated. American newspapers reported on Irish celebrations of the event. The Richmond-based *Enquirer* described Moore’s delight, quoting him:

A brighter era it may well be called, and glorious the people who are authors of it. Surely, if there be a spectacle upon which God himself (if I may say so without irreverence) must look down with peculiar pleasure, it is that of man—social and enlightened man—asserting thus grandly the dignity of that image which the Almighty Workman has impressed upon him,—spurning away the rash hand, whether of priestcraft or tyranny, that would deface its

³⁷ “Thomas Moore,” *Providence Patriot, Columbian Phoenix* (Providence, RI) no. 41, 21 October 1815, col. B.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

lineaments and doing justice both to his Maker and himself, but standing free and undebased before the world.³⁹

The sentiments of unity and sympathy in Moore's reception might give the impression that a significant portion of the American population resisted negative stereotypes in considering Moore's work. However, even in sympathetic expressions of unity with the Irish, prejudice emerged with remarkable frequency. Some writers expressed bias against the Irish while voicing support for independence. In 1821, the *Illinois Gazette* printed Moore's lyrics to "Whiskey Punch," a term that refers to the product of an illegal distillery. The critic used the platform to advance the opinion that stereotypes of the Irish as dysfunctional contained truth, but failings of the Irish character arose from the oppression of British rule. This writer admitted the negative attributes often ascribed to Irish people but moved the blame for such characteristics away from the Irish themselves. According to this writer: "There is no country on earth in which the oppression of conquerors over the vanquished is more heavy than in Ireland. . . The inhabitants racked and oppressed, are driven to various resources to compensate by violating the laws."⁴⁰ The author showed understanding of the challenges of Irish peasants, describing the unfair system of land ownership and renting that aggravated the periodic famines that swept the country in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, the author expressed anti-Catholicism by lambasting priests as tyrannical and greedy. Also contributing to the problem,

³⁹ "Celebration of the French Revolution in Ireland," *Richmond Enquirer* 27, no. 55 (16 November 1830), p. 4.

⁴⁰ "Miscellany," *Illinois Gazette* (Shawnee-town, IL) no. 43, 8 December 1821.

according to the author, were predatory middlemen in the institutions of housing and religion:

The landlords are usually absent, and the tenantry are under charge of stewards, as their tithes are to be paid not to the clergyman direct, but to his proctor; who usually makes a trade of it and buys the tithe in consideration of being protected in collecting it.⁴¹

Later incarnations of such reviews indicated increased prejudice across the United States in response to the exponential growth of Irish-American communities in the 1840s. In 1843, a writer for the *Daily National Intelligencer* reflected the growing popularity of negative bias in a review of Moore's *The History of Ireland*. This journalist sympathized with recent Irish history, but more directly blamed the Irish for their own plight. He or she even suggested that English subjugation was predestined and advantageous for the Irish, as their dysfunctions required the custodianship of a more capable people:

It is easy . . . to see that the original subjugation of Ireland, though a spectacle which must command our sympathies for a nation so ill-fated, was a thing admitting no remedy but one which her own people failed to apply. . . . It may well, even while we mourn over the external tyranny inflicted upon her people, be doubted whether the sufferings thus heaped upon her by foreign force were severer than those with which continual and ferocious wars among her own children tormented her. She has been far quieter under the English sway than she ever was before it. . . . Except for the loss of political freedom—a heavy one for a brave people to bear—she has probably rather gained than lost by the establishment of English rule.⁴²

Other writers did not associate Moore so much with Ireland as they did with England, on account of his long-term residency in England and his relationship with Britain's upper crust. These reviews expressed the most damning reception of the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "The History of Ireland," *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), no. 9479, 6 July 1843, col. A.

poet. For instance, in 1826 a Rhode Island-based newspaper published a list titled “Sketches of British Characters.” Moore was criticized as lazy, dependent, ugly, and a bad poet:

Thomas Moore the poet is a squat, funny looking, short sighted, monkey faced, little man. He lives entirely off the bounty of the marquis of Landswon [sic], for all the products of his works have formed a minimum to his extravagance. . . His fame was very soon at its summit, and is now rather on the decline.⁴³

The complaints reflected concurrent social and political conflicts around the northern Atlantic World. Moore was criticized because he associated with the elite of the US’s former colonizer. Indeed, the rest of the article similarly criticized others, calling the British king a “fat drunken libertine” whose “extravagance is a particular item in his history,” and reporting that Lord Wellington, another Irishman-come-British-hero, had “lost his sense of principle and shame” on account of marital transgressions and gambling debts. While such attacks are personal, the deployment of the label “British” in the article’s title and grouping of Moore with Wellington and the British monarch suggested that the author sought to discredit prominent members of the British Empire, and Moore was one of them.

American perception of Moore and his songs was, then, complicated and multifaceted. Part of this was due to Americans’ conflicted feelings about Moore as a figurehead for the Irish nationalist cause combined with his unsupportive remarks about the United States. The urbane, aristocratic circles in which Moore spent much of his time were anathema to the republican ideals of the still-young country. Such contradictions emerge within Moore’s own identity—the straddling of colonizer and

⁴³ “From the National Banner: Sketches of British Characters,” *Rhode-Island American* 60, no. 61 (9 May 1826), p. 1.

subaltern, of commoner and aristocrat—that were reflected in his work. Also, the musical examples in *Irish Melodies* present Irishness in an ambiguous fashion, able to appeal to people with widely differing ideas about the Irish.

The Ear of the Beholder: Ambiguity in Moore's *Irish Melodies*

In *Irish Melodies*, Moore's music and text supported a number of readings of Irishness that could satisfy critics as well as supporters of British incursion in Ireland. Many have written on the richness of meaning in the text of *Irish Melodies*.⁴⁴ Leith Davis notes that the texts “promote multiple meanings” that can satisfy both Irish and English consumers in a “strategy of ambiguity.”⁴⁵ The music also contributes to constructions of Irishness through expressive devices and Irish musical traits that communicate Irish national experiences. With such techniques, the songs of *Irish Melodies* conveyed a sense of the Irish as chronologically distant, idealized, and tied to rural landscapes. This section examines the melodies of the collection to show how they reflect ambiguities and multiple meanings that resemble reception of the printed collection.

Moore's poetry often expresses an overwhelming nostalgic grief. His protagonists lose loved ones, their youth, their riches, and their home, and look through a rose-colored lens at a past in which they enjoyed life much more. Moore ties the sentiment to national experience, writing:

⁴⁴ See: Leith Davis, *Music, Postcolonialism, and Gender: The Construction of Irish National Identity, 1724–1874* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 149–152; Kelly, *Bard of Erin*, 164–169; White, *The Keeper's Recital*, 50–51.

⁴⁵ Davis, *Music, Postcolonialism, and Gender*, 149.

The loss of independence very early debased our character. . . . The annals of Ireland, through a long lapse of six hundred years, exhibit not one of those themes of national pride, from which poetry borrows her noblest inspiration, and *that* history which ought to be the richest garden of the Muse, yields nothing to her but weeds and cypress! In truth, the poet who would embellish his song with allusions to Irish names and events, must be content to seek them in those early periods when our character was yet unalloyed and original, before the impolitic craft of our conquerors had divided, weakened, and disgraced us.⁴⁶

He later described grief as an Irish national sentiment more explicitly:

The language of sorrow, however, is, in general, best suited to our music, and with themes of this nature the poet may be amply supplied. . . . While the national Muse of other countries adorns her temple with trophies of the past, in Ireland, her altar . . . is to be known only by the tears that are shed upon it.⁴⁷

The songs, however, only occasionally reference the Irish nation as the subject of the loss, leaving the consumer to connect Moore's output with his nationality.⁴⁸ The ambiguity in the source of despair allows the poems to enter British, Irish, and American living rooms without interference by the political history that led to grief as a national sentiment. An example from volume 1 is "Oh, Breathe Not His Name" (figure 1.4), which expresses grief for an unnamed man who has passed away. The text leaves much of the story to the imagination, including the nature of the narrator's intimate feelings and how the deceased passed. It might just as easily be imagined as a song about the death of a long-loved husband, a son taken too soon, or a fallen comrade-in-arms. In actuality, the song is a lament on the death

⁴⁶ Thomas Moore and Thomas Crofton Croker, *Notes from the Letters of Thomas Moore to his Music Publisher, James Power* (New York: Redfield, 1854), 2–3.

⁴⁷ Moore and Croker, *Notes from the Letters of Thomas Moore*, 3.

⁴⁸ A subset of the melodies directly reference Ireland with nicknames like Erin and iconic places like Tara. This category includes "The Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls," from vol. 1; "Erin! The Smile and the Tear in Thine Eyes," from vol. 1; "Though the Last Glimpse of Erin," from vol. 1; and "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old," from vol. 2.

of Robert Emmet, Moore's friend from his Trinity days. A leader of the 1798 uprising, Emmet attempted to ignite another rebellion in 1803. When this failed, he was captured, tried for treason, and eventually hung. Since then, Emmet had become a martyr and an Irish folk hero. Those who knew the association between Moore and Emmet easily identified "Oh Breathe Not His Name" with Emmet. Even at that, however, the text does not necessarily come across as politically-oriented to all audiences, as it also functions as a general lament for the death of a good friend. Those who identified Emmet as one of their own political leaders nevertheless could use the song to express their politically-charged grief for Ireland as a whole, nationalist Irish pride, or in the case of Americans watching developments in Ireland from afar, sympathy and political support. The ambiguity of the text enables the very perpetrators of Ireland's political grief, British aristocracy, to purchase and enjoy the song as well.

Loss was also expressed musically. One of the most common musical devices of the Moore songs, particularly those that achieved transnational popularity, is a descending motive that begins in the upper echelons of the voice range. The high tessitura often causes the voice to strain, sounding a physical discomfort that we can easily translate into emotional expression. When preceded by pitches set below, in a more comfortable range, a wide, virtuosic leap is created, in which the strain of the higher notes is emphasized. I term this the "sentimental longing motive," and it appears in the very beginning of some of the most popular of the melodies, often

Oh! breathe not his name.

DUET
Pensively.

Espress

a Tempo

Oh! breathe not his name, let it
Oh! breathe not his name, let it

f Dim

sleep in the shade, Where cold and unhonour'd his re-lics are laid: Sad,
sleep in the shade, Where cold and unhonour'd his re-lics are laid: Sad,

si- lent, and dark be the tears that we shed, As the night-dew that falls on the

si- lent, and dark be the tears that we shed, As the night-dew that falls on the

grass o'er his head!

grass o'er his head!

2.

But the night-dew that falls, though in silence it weeps,
 Shall brighten with verdure the grave where he sleeps;
 And the tear that we shed, though in secret it rolls,
 Shall long keep his memory green in our souls.

Figure 1.4: "Oh! Breathe Not His Name" from *Irish Melodies*, vol. 1, by Thomas Moore. Published in Philadelphia by Blake in 1808.

'Tis the last Rose of Summer, Harmonized for Four Voices

Feelingly

Treble.
'Tis the last rose of summer, left

Counter Tenor.
'Tis the last rose of summer, left

Tenor.
'Tis the last rose of summer, left

Bass.
'Tis the last rose of summer, left

blooming a_lone; All her lovely com_panions are faded and gone; No

blooming a_lone; All her lovely com_panions are faded and gone; No

blooming a_lone; All her lovely com_panions are faded and gone; No

blooming a_lone; All her lovely com_panions are faded and gone; No

17

flow'r of her kin-dred, no rosebud is nigh, To reflect back her
flow'r of her kin-dred, no rosebud is nigh, To reflect back her
flow'r her kin-dred, no rosebud is nigh, To re- flect her
flow'r her kin-dred, no rosebud is nigh, To re- flect her

blushes, or give sigh for sigh!
blushes, or give sigh for sigh!
blushes, or give sigh for sigh!
blushes, or give sigh for sigh!

210

Figure 1.5: "Tis the Last Rose of Summer" from *Irish Melodies*, vol. 5, by Thomas Moore. Published in London by Power in 1813.

communicating loss before the text has the chance to.⁴⁹ In “Oh Breathe Not His Name” it appears before any verbal text on the expressive “Oh!” and a fermata makes the gesture particularly acute.

The sentimental longing motive appears with preceding lower notes in “Tis the Last Rose of Summer” (figure 1.5). This most enduring of the *Irish Melodies* carries the ambiguity into the subject’s species, for the lyrics literally describe a flower’s death at the end of the growing season. We can easily imagine the flower as anthropomorphic and female, though details of the loss are again left to the imagination. It might be that the singer has watched an innocent, young woman lose her youthful glow and innocence. The song, however, might also describe grief for the perceived last and dying vestiges of native Irish heritage as the British government imposed laws aimed at destroying Irish cultural markers like language and religion. Americans too might have expressed sympathy for the Irish colonial situation with the song.

In many of the *Irish Melodies*, lyrics describing ambiguous grief accompany the sentimental longing motive, opening the songs to multiple interpretations. “At the Meeting of the Waters” was inspired by a geographical location—the merging of the Avonmore and Avonbeg rivers in County Wicklow, near the town of Avoca. It describes a beautiful and bucolic scene and the location’s ability to provide the narrator with a measure of inner peace. Figure 1.6 contains the song’s lyrics (see the

⁴⁹ Charles Hamm describes a type of sentimental longing motive that leaps by an octave and descends to the dominant. My sentimental longing motive is a broader category, encompassing other figures that begin high and descend, without ascribing a tonal goal. Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 56.

music in figure 1.15). The location here is not ambiguous; in the last stanza, Moore names the town. The ambiguity in this song lies in the subtlety with which distance from the scene is communicated. The narrator is no longer in the valley. The reader knows this through verb tenses: the poem begins in present tense, but in describing more directly the draw of the scene, the tense switches to past. In the final stanza, the narrator's absence from Avoca is confirmed by use of the conditional. He or she "could" rest, were he or she there. But that is not the case. The physical distance taps experiences of immigration and moving that were so common in the nineteenth-century United States. In this song, longing is conveyed much more clearly in the melody, which contains a number of descending passages that seem to sigh into resignation. In "The Minstrel Boy," about a young man who will not return from a war, the high note appears in the first phrase, but the descending sentimental longing motive only appears in the second (figure 1.8). The tune of "The Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls" delays arrival at the sentimental longing motive, rising and falling more slowly over time (figure 1.9). Its height is made all the more dramatic by an upper-neighbor grace note at its apex.

There is not in the wide world a valley so sweet
As the vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet,
Oh! The last rays of feeling and life must depart,
Ere the bloom of that valley shall fade from my heart.

Yet it was not that nature had shed o'er the scene
Her purest of crystal and brightest of reen;
'Twas not her soft magic of streamlet or hill,
Oh! No, it was something more exquisite still.

'Twas that friends, the beloved of my bosom, were near,
Who made every dear scene of enchantment more dear,

And who felt how the best charms of nature improve,
When we see them reflected from looks that we love.

Sweet vale of Avoce! How calm could I rest
In thy bosom of shade, with the friends I love best,
Where the storms that we feel in this cold world should cease,
And our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace.

Figure 1.6: Lyrics to “There is Not in the Wild World a Valley So Sweet,” commonly known as “At the Meeting of the Waters” from *Irish Melodies*, vol. 1, by Thomas Moore. Published in London by Power in 1808.



Figure 1.7: “Let Erin Remember the Days of Old,” from *Irish Melodies*, vol. 2, by Thomas Moore and Sir John Stevenson.

In “Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms” (figure 1.10), the melody takes as much time to ascend the scale as to descend it. The text, however, first admits the young woman’s charms of the title. The narrator, her paramour, expresses loyalty through the eventual and inevitable loss of her beauty. He is not fearful of the deprivation, nor does he anticipate emotional angst over the matter. The song, then, is a variant in that it addresses loss without grief, explaining the variation in the sentimental longing motive that presents an inversion first.

Curiously, in the 124 songs that comprise *Irish Melodies*, the sentimental longing motive is not as common as it is in the most popular songs from the collection. Three of the four most popular examples from the first two volumes, “The

The Minstrel Boy,

Harmonized for Three Voices

With Strength and Spirit.

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand (treble clef) features a rhythmic melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand (bass clef) provides a steady accompaniment with quarter notes.

The min-strel-boy to the war is gone, In the

The min-strel-boy to the war is gone, In the

The min-strel-boy to the war is gone, In the

This section contains the first line of the song. It features three vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, and Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "The min-strel-boy to the war is gone, In the". The piano part continues with a similar rhythmic pattern to the introduction.

ranks of death you'll find him; His fa-ther's sword he has

ranks of death you'll find him; His fa-ther's sword he has

ranks of death you'll find him; His fa-ther's sword he has

This section contains the second line of the song. It features three vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "ranks of death you'll find him; His fa-ther's sword he has". The piano part continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

girded on, And his wild Harp slung be - hind him. "Land of Song!" said the
girded on, And his wild Harp slung be - hind him. "Land of Song!" said the
girded on, And his wild Harp slung be - hind him. "Land of Song!" said the

war_rior-bard, "Tho' all the world be - trays thee, *One* sword, at least, thy
war_rior-bard, "Tho' all the world be - trays thee, *One* sword, at least, thy
war_rior-bard, "Tho' all the world be - trays thee, *One* sword, at least, thy

rights shall guard, *One* faith - ful Harp shall praise thee!"
rights shall guard, *One* faith - ful Harp shall praise thee!"
rights shall guard, *One* faith - ful Harp shall praise thee!"

25

TENDERLY *f*

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Figure 1.8: "The Minstrel Boy," from *Irish Melodies*, vol. 5, by Thomas Moore and John Stevenson. Published in London by Power in 1813.

23

The Harp that once thro' Tara's Halls.

Non

The Harp that once, thro' Tara's halls, The soul of Music shed, Now hangs as mute on -

Ta-ra's walls As if that soul were fled:— So sleeps the pride of former days, So

glory's thrill is o'er; And hearts, that once beat high for praise, Now feel that pulse no more!

50

Figure 1.9: "The Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls" from *Irish Melodies*, vol. 1, by Thomas Moore. Published in London by Power in 1808.

76

Believe me, if all those endearing young Charms.

With Feeling

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms, Which I gaze on so fondly to-

day, Were to change by to morrow, and fleet in my arms, Like fairy gifts fading a-

way! Thou wouldst still be ador'd as this moment thou art, Let thy loveliness fade as it

will; And around the dear ruin, each wish of my heart, Would entwine itself verdantly still.

Figure 1.10: "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms" from *Irish Melodies*, vol. 2, by Thomas Moore. Published in Philadelphia by Blake in 1809.

Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls," "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms," and "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old" (figure 1.7), contain the sentimental longing motive. This may be because the two earliest volumes both contained the sentimental longing motive the most and have proved the most popular. This also, however, suggests a process of selection by consumers about the most effective of the melodies that reveals the efficacy of the sentimental longing motive itself.

As Moore's melodies were borrowed from traditional Irish tunes, they follow the structures of Irish traditional music and adopt a musical language that emanates from the style, coding Irish along the way. "Tis the Last Rose of Summer" (figure 1.5) for instance, contains constant triplets in the left-hand piano part, invoking the 9/8 slip jig form. Indeed, compound time, atypical amongst dance forms, has come to conjure the jig in American music on Irish themes. Jigs are not the most common Irish traditional form; that distinction belongs to the reel. Jigs are, however, the most characteristic Irish dance form as the dance is more popular in Ireland than it is in the rest of the British archipelago. Dotted rhythms in the vocal melody, written over the piano's steady triplets, would have settled into a triplet feel as well in performance, particularly by the amateur consumers that formed Moore's primary demographic. Significantly, Moore never fully embraced jig style, remaining instead in the in-between of cosmopolitan and Irish traditional styles.

The compound feel of time in "Tis the Last Rose of Summer" is one of many characteristic rhythmic aspects of Irish music that emerge in the song. The melody contains relatively complex rhythms for sentimental song and profuse notated

ornaments. The majority of the ornaments mimic the cut, a common upper-neighbor grace note in Irish traditional music. More curiously, notated cuts often appear in the same beat, barred together, with a dotted eighth–sixteenth note figure, and the whole device is often repeated immediately. According to classical-era performance conventions, the grace note would have been played slightly before the beat, allowing the written note to be heard on the beat. That, followed so quickly by an ambiguously-notated sixteenth note, creates an open space for rhythmic play.

Such nuances of rhythm are not only characteristic of Irish traditional music. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were also antithetical to the ideals of classical refinement that included clean rhythmic execution and melodic emphasis. To ears trained on Haydn and Mozart, the rhythmic style of *Irish Melodies* stood out and required an explanatory note. Moore took care to suggest that performers treat time in his work differently in an 1836 edition of his work:

There is but one instruction I should venture to any persons desirous of doing justice to the character of these ballads, and that is to attend as little as possible to the rhythm, or time in singing them. The time, indeed, should *always* be made to wait upon the feeling, but particularly in this style of musical recitation, where the words ought to be as nearly *spoken* as is consistent with the swell and sweetness of intonation, and where a strict and mechanical observance of time completely destroys all those pauses, lingerings, and abruptness, which the expression of passion and tenderness requires. The truth of this remark needs but little enforcement to those who have ever heard a song of feeling and delicacy paced along in the unrelenting trammels of an orchestra.⁵⁰

Another rhythmic trait that communicated Irishness was the Lombard rhythm or Scotch snap, hereon “snap”—a stressed shorter note on the beat followed by a longer note. The term “Scotch snap” derives from its frequency in the

⁵⁰ Thomas Moore, *Melodies, Songs, Sacred Songs, and National Airs: Containing Several Never Before Published in America* (Bridgeport, CT: M. Sherman, 1828), vi.

strathspey, a Scottish dance. Nicholas and David Temperly have suggested that the rhythmic patterns of the English language mimic that of the snap and might have something to do with the prevalence of the rhythmic device in the British Isles.⁵¹ Snaps abounded in both Scottish and Irish music, and they are found in many of the *Irish Melodies*. They often occur at the end of a strophe, or in a particularly energetic moment such as the height of the sentimental longing motive. They appear, for instance, in the final phrase of “Rich and Rare Were the Gems She Wore” (figure 1.11). The snap may also have communicated an air of the old fashioned with it, not only because of general associations of rhythmic complexity with emergent ideas about the Other, but also because the device was associated with eighteenth-century concert music. The Lombard rhythm appeared in Italian music of the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but had fallen out of favor by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thus, to the educated elite the snap would have sounded old fashioned, exotic, or both, and for those more familiar with Irish or Scottish folk styles, the snap would have identified the music as such.

“The Harp that Once through Tara’s Halls” also names another stereotype of Irishness in the text: music itself. This claiming of the very idiom by which the Irishness is being delivered makes the suggested conflation all the more powerful,

⁵¹ They did not include Scottish or Irish languages in their study. Also, their definition of the Scotch snap is more narrow than mine, comprising only notated sixteenth—dotted eighth rhythms in music emanating from music of the British Isles. They exclude Lombard rhythms and triplet eighth-quarter note patterns as culturally distinct traditions. This makes sense because of the scientific, geographically-bound nature of their study. Since rhythmic notation and performance practices were somewhat loose in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, my definition of the snap does include Lombard rhythms and triplet figures. Nicholas and David Temperly, “Music-Language Correlations and the ‘Scotch Snap,’” *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 29, no. 1 (September 2011): 51–63.

Rich and rare were the gems she wore, And a bright gold ring on her hand she bore; But
 oh! her beauty was far beyond Her sparkling gems, or snow-white wand. But
 oh! her beauty was far beyond Her sparkling gems, or snow-white wand.

Figure 1.11: “Rich and Rare Were the Gems She Wore,” from *Irish Melodies*, vol. 1, by Thomas Moore and Sir John Stevenson.

particularly because the Irish harp and the bards who once played it had all but disappeared during the centuries of British occupation. The image of harps in the Irish national imagination proved much more prolific than the instruments themselves, frequently appearing in nationalistic literature and iconography. The cenotaph of Turlough O’Carolan (figure 1.12) was erected in St. Patrick’s Cathedral in the nineteenth century, revealing the significance of harping and its greatest luminary to Irish religious life. The harp has appeared on Irish flags and the current presidential seal, revealing its ability to symbolize the nation. An image of a harp in a rural landscape even graced the title page of the first edition of *Irish Melodies* (figure 1.12). In “The Harp that Once Through Tara’s Halls” (figure 1.9) the harp, an instrument with a short sustain, is conjured in the steady pulsing melody notes. The combination of ubiquitous harp imagery and its absence from daily life in the early nineteenth century, at issue in the song, made the loss of Irish identity apparent. However, the profusion of harp references in *Irish Melodies*, itself a musical object, suggests that Moore positioned the work as a beneficiary of that tradition.

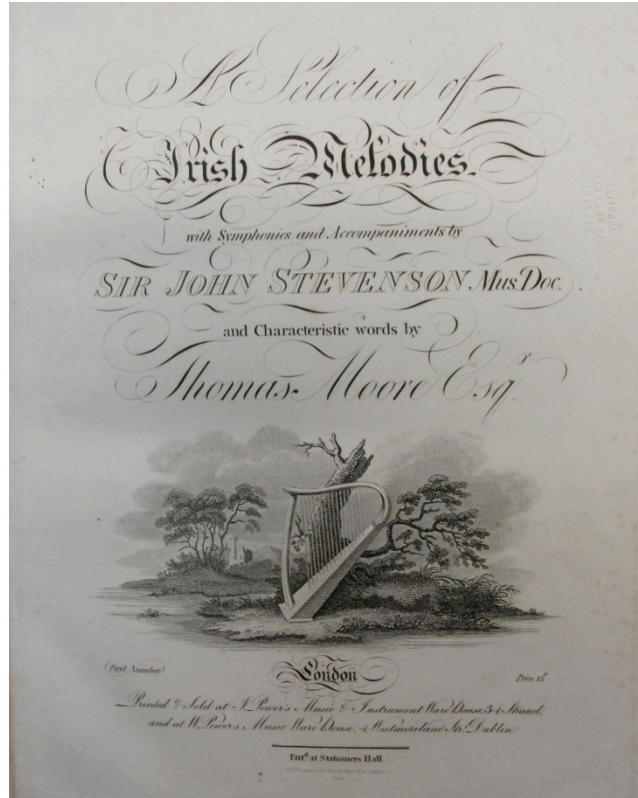


Figure 1.12: On the left is a cenotaph of Turlough O'Carolan in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Photograph by Sarah Gerke. On the right is the title page of *Irish Melodies*, vol. 1, by Thomas Moore. Published by Power in London in 1808.

Both music and text in *Irish Melodies*, then, contain a diverse and multivalent set of ideas about Irishness. Some examples leave much to the consumer's imagination, though a few notable common themes arise. The most significant of these is the image of Irishness as belonging to an ancient world, presumably lost upon foreign domination. The popularity of songs on this topic reflects American concern for the Irish political situation. In cases where the sentiment was more ambiguous, like "Tis the Last Rose of Summer," much was left to the consumer, creating space for Americans to perceive many things about the Irish. The musical encoding of Irishness established by Moore, however, did not stop when the Irish poet finished *Irish Melodies*. Instead, the techniques that defined musical Irishness in

the collection, and the image of the Irish they accompanied, influenced a great deal of other music in the United States, heavily shaping the genre of sentimental song.

***Irish Melodies'* Long American Reach**

In the United States, rarely has a musical work delivered such an impact as *Irish Melodies*. Not only were the songs popular for the duration of the nineteenth century, but they also influenced the compositions of many American songwriters, even as musical style developed and tastes changed. Investigation of the lingering effects of Moore's *Irish Melodies* in the United States also reveals the influence that the attendant Romantic images of the Irish and the musical style of *Irish Melodies* had on American musical life. As contexts changed, however, the meanings of the melodies shifted as well. Their resonance over time was enabled by the ambiguity that facilitated their transnational appeal in the first place.

The songs of *Irish Melodies* themselves have been incredibly long lasting in the United States. Musicologist Charles Hamm found evidence that at least thirty-three of the songs, more than a quarter of the whole, were still in print individually in 1870, by as many as fifteen different publishers at once.⁵² In 1895 the Irish composer Sir Charles Villiers Stanford released an edition of *Irish Melodies* with his own accompaniments.⁵³ It was published in England, where Stanford lived, and New York, revealing the continued transnational appeal of the songs.

⁵² Hamm, *Yesterdays*, 46.

⁵³ Thomas Moore and Charles Villiers Stanford, *The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore* (London: Boosey, 1895).



Figure 1.13: Thomas Moore and Sir John Stevenson, “Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms.” Published by Eclipse in Philadelphia, probably some time between 1901 and 1911.

Though the melodies remained the same, arrangements, listeners, and performers did not. New generations of consumers found different ways of valuing *Irish Melodies*. Figure 1.13 shows a typically elaborate Tin Pan Alley-era cover of “Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms,” likely from the first decade of the twentieth century when its publisher was most active. The pastoral setting, the idyllic love, and the man’s old-fashioned knee breeches all suggest the Romantic Irish stereotype. However, rather than tapping a lost, ancient world of noble Irish

aristocracy and warriors, this image rather suggests chivalric and ideal love, a common theme among Tin Pan Alley-era songs. The lyrics of this song in particular, in which a narrator assures his or her love object that feelings will not diminish as time passes, resembles the idealized love in other Tin Pan Alley songs like “After the Ball.”

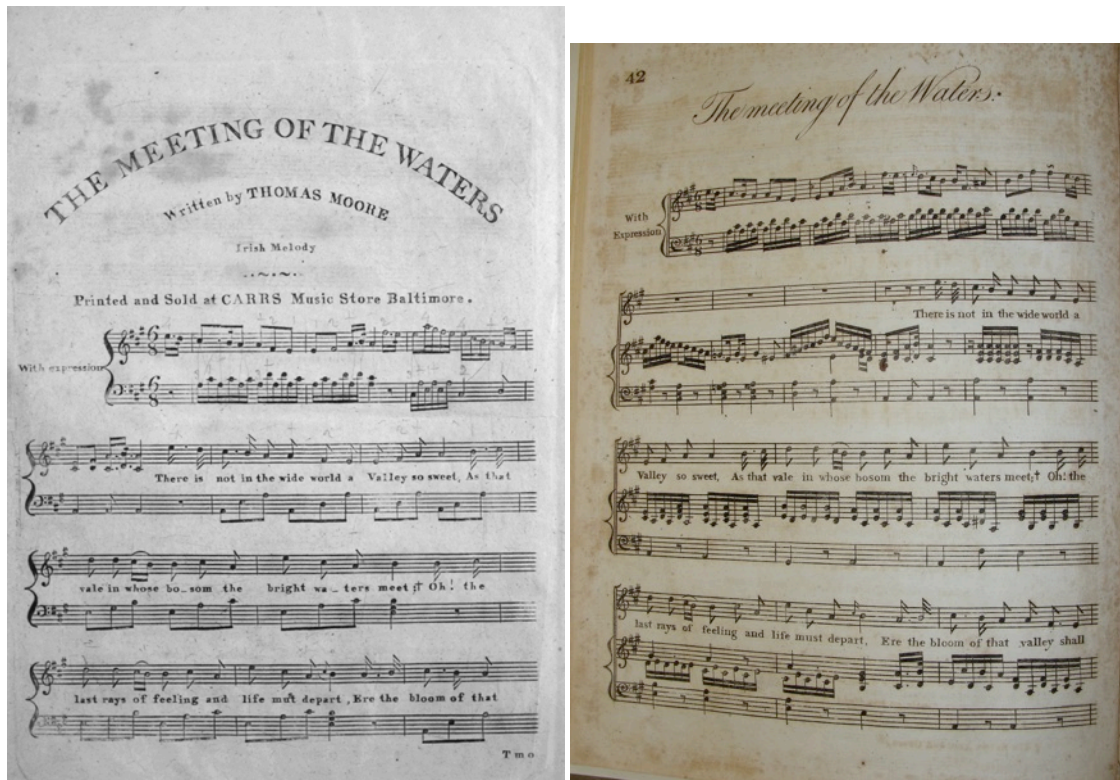


Figure 1.14: On the left is “The Meeting of the Waters” by Thomas Moore. Published by Carr’s Music Store in Baltimore. On the right is “The Meeting of the Waters” by Thomas Moore and Sir John Stevenson in *Irish Melodies*, vol. 1. Published in Philadelphia by Blake in 1808.

Throughout the century, American publishers also continued to offer new arrangements of *Irish Melodies*, adapting the material to satisfy their customers. At the time, changing a popular song to suit the needs of a particular market, often without paying royalties or concern for the author’s intentions, was common

practice and *Irish Melodies* was certainly no exception to this rule. Figure 1.14 reproduces an edition of “At the Meeting of the Waters” produced by a Baltimore publisher, shown against the original version for comparison’s sake.⁵⁴ The new accompaniment is sparse, suggesting that it was rewritten for a musician less skilled than the initial target audience. Indeed, its simplicity suggests that the publisher intended the arrangements to facilitate performance of both the vocal melody and piano accompaniment by a single amateur musician. The arranger might have left the introduction intact in part because the performer was not required to multitask. Stanford’s arrangement of the same song reflects his own station in life. Gone are the Italianate pianisms indicative of Stevenson’s time, replaced by a pared-down, flowing arrangement that allows the melody more room and reflects changing aesthetics in the late-Romantic era.

The melodies of Moore’s collection reached an even wider audience through publications that joined the tunes with new words. Changing words to a song that was already in the public consciousness promoted wider distribution when many people did not have access to notated music, whether by financial situation or lack of specialized knowledge. Creating a new song from an old one precluded the act of learning through notation, making it available to those who could not read music or could only afford to purchase broadsides. This approach also allowed publishers to update textual themes of a well-known tune, so that they could continue to capitalize on recognizable melodies as popular song topics changed over the years.

⁵⁴ Thomas Moore, “The Meeting of the Waters,” Baltimore: Carr’s Music Store, no date; Thomas Moore and Sir John Stevenson, “The Meeting of the Waters,” in *Irish Melodies* 1 (Philadelphia: Blake, 1808).

THE MEETING OF THE WATERS.

AIR. THE OLD HEAD OF DENNIS.

Andante tranquillo. *mf*

VOICE. 1. There is
2. Yet it
3. 'Twas that

PIANO. *pp* *p*

not in the wide world a val - ley so sweet As that
was not that Na - ture had shed o'er the scene Her—
friends, the be - loved of my bo - som, were near, Who—

vale in whose bo - som the bright wa - ters meet; Oh! the
pu - rest of cry - stal and bright - est of green; 'Twas
made ev' - ry scene of en - chant - ment more dear, And who

cresc.

Copyright 1895 by Boosey & Co

Figure 1.15: "The Meeting of the Waters" by Thomas Moore, arranged by Sir Charles Stanford, from *Irish Melodies*, op. 60. Published in London by Boosey in 1895.

The practice was further facilitated by a lack of international copyright law until 1886 and haphazard attention to federal copyright. Indeed, *Irish Melodies* itself came about in this way, as Moore used borrowed tunes from earlier sources and added his own lyrics. It only made sense, then, that others used the tunes that came to them through Moore to create new material. “The Meeting of the Waters of Hudson and Erie,” based on Moore’s “At the Meeting of the Waters” was performed at the New York City celebration of the Erie Canal’s opening, which marked the actual meeting of two bodies of water, in 1825 (figure 1.16). Many of the new words are explicitly patriotic, proclaiming the canal’s completion as evidence that the United States was an economically viable competitor with the established markets of Europe. The changing of the lyrics, then, implies that the bucolic setting of the original is distant and different from the Americanness of the new song. However, the act of setting a Moore song for such a patriotic event also admits that, within the mix of American identities, the Irish have a place. Indeed, many of the workers on the Erie Canal were Irish immigrants spurred by the 1817 famine, and the use of “At the Meeting of the Waters” is apt for another reason. Perhaps the immigrants present for the celebration recognized the melody and thus could learn the song quickly, or perhaps they sympathized with Moore’s narrator, longing for an idyllic Irish countryside from which they were geographically distant.

Direct transmission of the melodies across the ocean, however, is only one part of a much larger story of *Irish Melodies* in the United States. In both blatant and subtle ways, Moore’s works greatly influenced many forms of music. Indeed, the wake of *Irish Melodies’* popularity saw the emergence of an entire subgenre of parlor

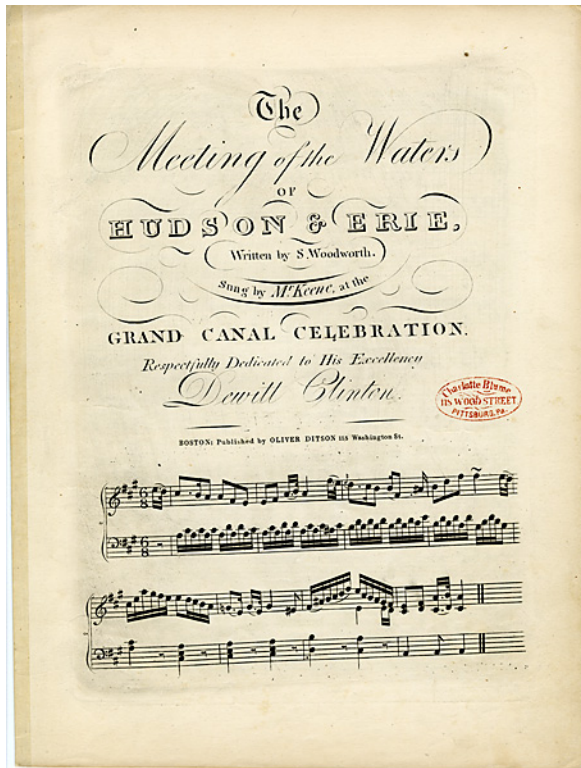


Figure 1.16: “The Meeting of the Waters of Hudson and Erie” by Samuel Woodworth. Published in New York by Oliver Ditson in 1825.

Let the day be forever remember'd with pride
 That beheld the proud Hudson to Erie allied;
 O the last sand of Time from his glass shall descend
 Ere a union, so fruitful of glory, shall end.

Yet it is not that Wealth now enriches the scene,
 Where the treasures of Art, and of Nature, convene;
 'Tis not that this union our coffers may fill
 O! no it is something more exquisite still.

'Tis that Genius has triumph'd and Science prevail'd,
 Tho' Prejudice flouted, and Envy assail'd,
 It is, that the vassals of Europe may see
 The progress of mind, in a land that is free.

All hail! to a project so vast and sublime!
 A bond, that can never be sevr'd by time,
 Now unites us still closer all jealousies cease,
 And our hearts, like our waters, are mingled in peace.

Figure 1.17: Lyrics to “The Meeting of the Waters of Hudson and Erie”

song known as the Irish ballad. Irish ballads typically channeled some of the salient characteristics of the Moore melodies: strophic form, a wide range, the sentimental longing motive, snaps, textual references to Ireland, and a Romantic characterization of Irishness that is ancient, idealized, and bucolic. Irish ballads carried an air of the old fashioned, not just through textual reference but also in musical practices of older ballad traditions that in the nineteenth century were being replaced in popular musical spheres. Strophic form and melodic lyricism of Irish ballads contrasted with the growing frequency of verse-chorus form and compact phrases of minstrel music. In adopting older musical practice, Irish ballads also propagated notions of Irishness as old.

One of the most popular Irish ballads was “Kathleen Mavourneen,” written in 1837 by Frederick Crouch with lyrics by Marion Crawford (figure 1.20). The song was written in England, a reminder that Irishness in the United States negotiates larger, transnational contexts. However, “Kathleen Mavourneen” is remembered today as one of the most popular songs of the American Civil War. The song is set at a particularly dramatic moment, when the singer makes his parting farewell to his homeland and presumably deceased lover. Irishness is conveyed via the Irish name and term of endearment, as well as a musical sentimental longing motive. Much like “Oh Breathe Not His Name,” the opening conveys immediately that the singer has lost his titular Kathleen, before he has the chance to verbally explain the situation to the listener. However, “Kathleen Mavourneen” does not only draw on the Irish tradition. Rather, it also reflects the German Lied as a through-composed work that requires virtuosic leaps and a wide vocal range. Such musical qualities are reflective

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Louis Trapp Jno. Church Jr.

O COLD WAS THE CLIMATE

OR
ELLEN AUREEN
Written by the Author of
The Captive to his Bird
Composed by
J. Monro.

BOSTON, Published by JAMES L. HEWITT & Co. at their Music Saloon N. 56 Market Street, and N. 129 Broadway, NEW YORK.

AFFETTO

O cold was the climate and shiver the moor, Where Ellen had chosen'd to dwell.

Figure 1.18: Clockwise from top left is “Norah Darling” by Harry Percy. Published in New York by Ditson in 1873); “Nora Mavourneen” by J. Starr Holloway. Published in Philadelphia by Starr Holloway in 1863); “O Cold was the Climate, or Ellen Aureen” by J. Monro. Published in Boston by James Hewitt, date unknown; “Nora Mavourneen” by Ed. O. Eaton. Published in Memphis by Bernard McClure in 1867.

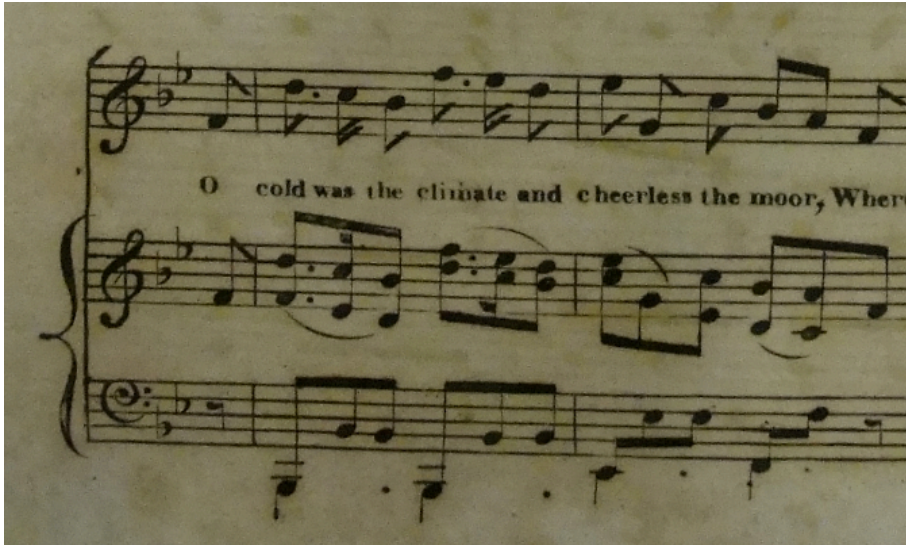


Figure 1.19: The opening gesture of “O Cold was the Climate, or Ellen Aureen” by J. Monro. Published in Boston by James Hewitt, date unknown.

of idioms that rely on musical notation for distribution, instead of Moore’s folk-based sources in *Irish Melodies*. Thus is “Kathleen Mavourneen” something of a hybrid between Irish songs like those of Thomas Moore and art music popular in Germany at the time.

The combination worked. “Kathleen Mavourneen” set off a craze for songs with the Irish word “Mavourneen,” Irish variants thereof, or its English translation, “Dear.” Figure 1.18 shows some examples of the trend, including competing “Nora Mavourneens” published in the north and south. In “O Cold Was the Climate,” composer J. Monro paid tribute to “Kathleen Mavourneen” in its opening gesture (figure 1.19). “You’ll Soon Forget Kathleen” is even more directly indebted to Crouch and Crawford, as an answer song to their work.

Laura C. Vaughan.

KATHLEEN MAVOURNEEN

IRISH BALLAD

Sung with rapturous Applause

BY
Mr. Dempster.

COMPOSED BY

F. N. CROUCH.

Published by **HORACE WATERS**, 333 Broadway, New York.

Andante e penseroso.

PIANO
FORTE.

The musical score is written for piano and consists of three systems of music. The first system begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Andante e penseroso'. The first system includes a dynamic marking of 'mf' and features a melody in the right hand with a 'V' (accrescendo) hairpin and a 'ten.' (tenuto) marking. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, with dynamic markings of 'mf' and 'ten.'. The third system concludes the piece with dynamic markings of 'sfz' (sforzando), 'cres.' (crescendo), 'sfz', and 'ten.'. The piano part is characterized by a steady accompaniment of quarter notes in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand.

mf Kath ... leen Ma_vour... neen! the grey dawn is breaking, ... The horn of the Hunter is



heard on the hill, The lark from her light wing the bright dew is sha.....king



Kathleen.... Mavourneen! what slum...bring still.



mf Oh hast thou for..gotten, how soon we must sever? Oh

mf *espressivo e legato.*



3

hast thou forgotten this day we must part, It may be for years, and it

colla voce.

may be for ever Oh why... art thou silent, thou voice of my heart, It

p

cres.

may... be for years and it may be for ever, Then why... art thou silent

mf

Kathleen Mavourneen.

Figure 1.20: "Kathleen Mavourneen," by Frederich Crouch, pages 1–3. Published in New York by Horace Waters, date unknown.

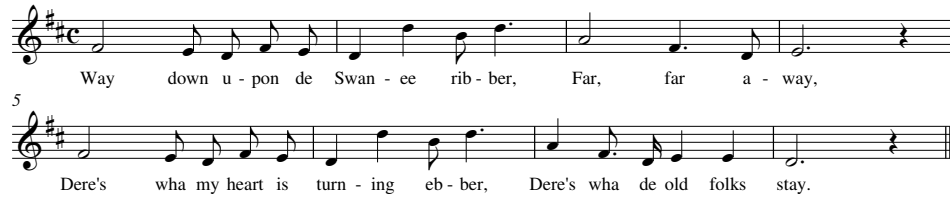


Figure 1.21: “Old Folks at Home,” written by Stephen Foster in 1851.



Figure 1.22: “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair,” written by Stephen Foster in 1854.

Even beyond the Irish ballad, the whole idiom of sentimental song in the nineteenth century reflects the influence of Thomas Moore and his collection. Nineteenth-century sentimental songs often exhibited general characteristics of *Irish Melodies*, such as themes of nostalgia and exoticism, wide vocal range, and high technical demands. The genre also resisted adopting refrains and verse-chorus form that grew in popularity in other styles of American popular music over the course of the century. In some specific examples, the similarities are striking, as in Stephen Foster’s debt to Moore in songs like “Old Folks at Home” and “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair” (figures 1.21 and 1.22).⁵⁵ Both songs take on themes of temporal and geographic distance, an idealized past, and nature. Both contain the sentimental longing motive. In the case of “Jeannie With the Light Brown Hair,” it occurs at the beginning, conveying the loss before the text has had the chance to. Neither example ever mentions Ireland or anything that may be inferred as such, showing that Moore influenced songs even outside the parameters of Irish themes.

⁵⁵ Hamm, *Yesterdays*, 56–57.

Increasingly as the century went on, a small set of ballads addressed the political situation in Ireland directly, reflecting growing public criticism of Britain's colonization of the island. In "Give Me Three Grains of Corn, Mother" a mother has only three grains of corn to give to her dying child. The sustenance does not miraculously revive him, and the child dies. The song identifies the family as Irish and uses the song's inner verses to address the inequities of wealth between Ireland and England:

The Queen has lands and gold, mother,
The Queen has lands and gold;
While you are forced to your empty breast
A skeleton babe to hold;
A babe that is dying of want, mother,
As I am dying now,
With a ghastly look in its sunken eye,
And famine upon its brow.⁵⁶

This song was published in Boston first in 1848 and again in 1861, and there are localized reasons why a song so sympathetic to the Irish might have been republished there. By the 1860s in Boston a class of Irish tradesmen had risen to some measure of prominence and likely had the market power to dictate the city's musical products more than in other parts of the country. That opened the possibility for songs that address British treatment of the Irish more directly and with more criticism. I will address these developments further in chapter 4.

Other examples from later in the century suggest that the Irish were becoming more normalized in American life. Thomas Westendorf's "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen" (1875) also adopts aspects of *Irish Melodies*, but only

⁵⁶ O. R. Gross, "Give Me Three Grains of Corn, Mother," fourth verse (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1848 and 1861). Text from a poem by Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards, sometimes misattributed to Amanda Edmond.

peripherally, suggesting that the Irish identities of the song's two characters were not so exoticized as earlier examples. It describes an immigrant man promising his homesick wife that they will return home. The only implications of Irishness come from the theme of displacement and the woman's name, the most characteristic Irish female first name of the time. The song hints at a sentimental longing motive, both musically and textually, as the opening phrase rises and falls expressing grief. Its small range in comparison to the wide ascents and descents of Moore, however, vary from the type. The text describes not only the sadness of displacement, but also the physical effects on Kathleen of that stress:

The roses all have left your cheek
I've watched them fade away and die
Your voice is sad when e'er you speak
And tears bedim your loving eyes.⁵⁷

We know that the narrator feels sympathetic pain in part because of lilting melody and the aforementioned hinted sentimental longing motive at the beginning that repeats itself for extra measure.

The limited references to the characters' place of origin in "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen" suggest that by 1875 more Americans accepted the idea of Irish immigrants as part of the fabric of the United States. Kathleen is clearly Irish, but it is not exceptional enough to warrant the Othering and exoticization seen in earlier iterations of Irish identities in parlor songs. Irishness is present but muted, part of the song's world but not the most significant one. What stands out in the song more than Irishness is displacement—an experience common to many

⁵⁷ Thomas Westendorf, "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen" (Cincinnati: John Church, 1876).

Americans at the time. The couple's experience emanates from their Irishness, but their identity of geographic origin operates on subtle enough levels that Irishness can stand in for a number of other groups with significant presence in the United States at the time—German, English, and increasingly in the 1870s, Italian and Eastern European. In this way, the Irish people in the song become a paradigm or signifier for a more universal European immigrant, and their Irishness suggests an idealization of the type.

At the end of the century, in popular song, the compositional techniques and business practices of Tin Pan Ally engendered shifts in popular music style and consumption habits, but sentimental songs continued to reflect the influence of *Irish Melodies*. They exhibited *Irish Melodies'* trademark nostalgia and idealization. However, the stories often had happy endings; lovers sometimes ended up together, and geographic displacement was less common. Musically, the sentimental longing motive persisted in songs with Irish topics, though Irish traditional structures increasingly disappeared, supplanted by verse-chorus and 32-bar form.

Chauncey Olcott's "My Wild Irish Rose" of 1899 references Moore's work in its text and music while maintaining Tin Pan Alley's conventions as well. The rose in this song conjures Moore's most famous melody. Indeed, the very first line of Olcott's song references "Tis the Last Rose of Summer":

If you listen I'll sing you a sweet little song,
Of a flower that's now drooped and dead,
Yet dearer to me, yes, than all of its mates,
Tho' each holds aloft its proud head.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Chauncey Olcott, "My Wild Irish Rose" (New York: Witmark and Sons, 1899).

Olcott's rose, however, is not dead or dying as is Moore's. His love object is fully healthy, with no sign of aging, loss, or apprehension from the narrator. This is in line with the aesthetics of the gay 1890s. In drawing on Moore's bucolic image of Irishness without adopting the implications of bereavement, Olcott's song presents perhaps the most widely acceptable example of Irishness in this study, revealing that by the 1890s Irishness was, even more than in the case of "I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen," more normalized and accepted. The sentimental longing motive also persists, in the song's most memorable line, at the beginning of the chorus.



Figure 1.23: "My Wild Irish Rose," written by Chauncey Olcott in 1899.

Persistence and Change: The Continuing Life of *Irish Melodies*

Since the nineteenth century, *Irish Melodies* continues to play a role in American musical life. The songs themselves have settled into the national consciousness. As the recording era arose, artists such as the Irish tenor John McCormack ensured that the songs' popularity endured as musical commodities and consumption habits changed.⁵⁹ Charles Stanford's arrangements of *Irish Melodies*

⁵⁹ John McCormack recorded the following selections from *Irish Melodies*: "At the Mid Hour of the Night," from vol. 5. Recorded 28 January 1941, His Master's Voice, I. R. 1044, Gramophone, OEA9083-1, 78 rpm; "Avenging and Bright Fall the Swift Sword of Erin," from vol. 4. Recorded October 1908, Odeon, Lx 2841, 10 3/4 inch disc; "Believe Me If All Those Enduring Young Charms," from vol. 2. With the Victor Orchestra, recorded 16 March 1911, Victor, B 8537-3, 10 inch disc; "The Harp that Once through Tara's Halls," from vol. 1. With Edwin Schneider, piano, recorded 4 December 1930, Victrola, Bb 21037-1, 78 rpm; "Has Sorrow thy Young Days Shaded," from vol. 6. Recorded 25 March 1910, Victrola 74184, 78 rpm; "I Saw from the Beach," from vol. 6. With Fritz Kreisler, violin, recorded 24 September 1924, His

were reprinted as recently as 2010, and still another edition of the original Stevenson and Bishop arrangements is set to be released in October 2014.⁶⁰ The songs have sometimes gained American historical associations with certain events or groups of people. “The Minstrel Boy,” for instance, was popular during the Civil War and has become associated with American war contexts generally. The soundtrack of the 2001 film *Black Hawk Down* features an arrangement of the ballad by Hans Zimmer, featuring the voice of British punk rock star Joe Strummer.

Musical elements explored in this chapter have also continued to shape songwriting practices. In the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*, a motive that signifies “Tara,” the estate on which the Irish-American Scarlett O’Hara and her family reside, begins with an ascending leap of an octave followed by a descending line in a sentimental longing motive (figure 1.24). In the 1936 novel upon which the film was based, author Margaret Mitchell wrote that O’Hara’s father, who named the estate, “knew no poetry save that of Moore and no music except the songs of Ireland that had come down through the years.”⁶¹ The film’s themes of exploring the losses of the South in the Civil War resonate with the themes of loss upon British domination

Master’s Voice, I. R. 1010, Gramophone, Bb 5119-1, 78 rpm; “Meeting of the Waters,” from vol. 1. Recorded 9 August 1940, His Master’s Voice, I. R. 216, Gramophone, OEA 8850-1, 10 inch disc; “Minstrel Boy,” from vol. 5. Recorded 1 February 1910, Victor, B 8590-1, 10 inch disc; “No, Not More Welcome,” from vol. 6. Recorded 25 June 1941, Gramophone, OEA 9330-1, 10 inch disc; “She is Far from the Land,” from vol. 4. Recorded 31 March 1911, Victor, C 10138-1, 78 rpm. Additionally, three recordings of “Tis the Last Rose of Summer” remain unpublished. For one: “Last Rose of Summer,” from vol. 5. Recorded 4 September 1924, Gramophone, Bb 5037-1, 10 inch disc.

⁶⁰ Thomas Moore and Charles Villiers Stanford, *Irish Melodies* Op. 60 reprint edition (LaVergne, TN: Nabu, 2010); Thomas Moore and James Flannery, *Dear Harp of My Country: The Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2014).

⁶¹ Margaret Mitchell, *Gone With the Wind* (New York: MacMillan, 1936), 46.

explored by Moore in *Irish Melodies*. Indeed, Mitchell even nicknamed the typewriter on which she produced the book her “harp.”⁶²



Figure 1.24: “Tara” theme from *Gone with the Wind*.

On the surface, the emphasis on the white, slave-owning family’s Irishness supports the notion that, by the time of *Gone with the Wind*, the status of the Irish in the United States was relatively equal to Anglo-Americans. The family’s financial success, contrasted with the slaves they owned, defined their class membership. The use of the sentimental longing motive might reveal that the musical trope had adapted along with the O’Haras, and become fully part of the mainstream. However, as Geraldine Higgins writes of the novel, the legacy of the family’s Irishness in *Gone with the Wind* is their defense of the land at all costs, even resorting to prostitution and murder. These ethically questionable behaviors are connected to notions of the primitive and “reconfigured as African,” calling their racial status into question.⁶³ The O’Haras’ Irishness is not normalized, rather it “complicates the racial hierarchies” of the South.⁶⁴ Tara, the film’s sentimental longing motive, and the reference to Moore become signs of difference and heterogeneity, rather than acceptance and assimilation. Though the context has changed, and notably, the financial situation of the Irish characters has changed dramatically since depictions of the nineteenth century, Irishness continued to be fluid and contested.

⁶² Geraldine Higgins, “Tara, the O’Haras, and the Irish *Gone with the Wind*,” *Southern Cultures* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 31.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

The mixed reception of *Irish Melodies* also remains, though the points of conflict over the collection are different. Rather than focusing on different interpretations of Moore's national allegiance, current reception of Moore and his work largely hinges on the loosely related issue of genre definition. That is, Moore's associations with the English have seemed to transform into general associations with cosmopolitan, elevated, classical spheres, and his associations with the Irish have become more connected with traditional, provincial, folk spheres. If Moore leans Irish, then his music might be counted as part of the traditional repertory, but if he leans British and aristocratic, his work belongs in the classical world. Such an issue has real implications for contemporary performance contexts; at my local Irish traditional session, I asked the leader Mick Gavin why Edward Bunting's melodies are often included in contemporary Irish traditional repertories and Moore's are rare.⁶⁵ His answer: "Thomas Moore? Well, that's parlor song, you see. It isn't traditional."⁶⁶

The story of *Irish Melodies* in the United States shows how a single musical product from outside the country's borders can become engrained in American musical fabric, whether in a pronounced or a tacit role. It also reveals how Irish people, their music, and related ideas about them have collectively shaped American musical life. The remaining chapters of this dissertation focus on smaller bodies of music and more focused time spans, but they similarly illuminate moments when the Irish, their music, and conceptions of Irishness resounded within American musical history.

⁶⁵ One exception is "The Minstrel Boy."

⁶⁶ Mick Gavin, in discussion with the author, September 2010.

Chapter 2

The Irishness of Blackface Minstrelsy

In the summer of 1834, American urban spaces rang with the sounds of the blackface song “Zip Coon.”¹ It appeared on stages and in print around the country, and George Washington Dixon banked unprecedented fame performing it.² The song, satirizing an African-American male, explores white fear of urban black men through the character of the dandy, a stock character whose overdressing and undereducation thwart aspirations of social mobility. The melody of “Zip Coon” originated as an untexted, traditional American fiddle tune now widely known as “Turkey in the Straw.” The infectious rhythms, inherited from traditional music, have afforded the melody currency in American musical life ever since. Blackface circus performers added words to the tune by 1833, though the song “Zip Coon” has since lost its footing among many musicians and audiences because of its racist themes.³

¹ “Zip Coon” (New York: Thos. Birch, 1834).

² Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and their World*, Cambridge Studies in American Theatre and Drama, ed. Don B. Wilmeth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 99.

³ The earliest known record of “Zip Coon” is a review of Bob Farrell performing it in Nashville in November, 1833. The article implies the song was already a popular hit, suggesting the song emerged earlier than that date: “There was a unanimous call for Mr. Farrell and ‘Zip Coon.’ That gentleman appeared and sung the song amidst universal thunders of applause.” *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC) XXI, no. 6477 (12 November 1833), p. 3.

Little about “Zip Coon” seems overtly touched by Irishness. However, the song was immensely shaped by Irish and Irish-American people, their musical practices, and social dynamics that were shaped by Irish-American communities. The American folk tradition in which the tune originated, for instance, was influenced by Irish music. Moreover, audiences for “Zip Coon” were the urban, white, working poor. In the 1830s, these communities were comprised of a high quotient of Irish immigrants and their descendants, making Irish Americans a primary demographic for early minstrelsy.⁴ Likewise, the ranks of blackface performers were overwhelmingly Irish. Though Dixon was conspicuously non-Irish, other notable performers, including Bob Farrell who rivaled Dixon and claimed to originate “Zip Coon,” were of Irish descent. Furthermore, the song’s text, expressing fears of black incursion into the city, resonated with working-class Irish fears of competition with their African-American neighbors for limited resources. Finally, the entire idiom of blackface minstrelsy was shaped by British theatrical traditions which used stock characters inside the theater to explore difference in the world outside. The most prevalent stock character in the British tradition was the stage Irishman, which shaped later blackface characters like Zip Coon.

In this chapter, I explore ways in which Irishness shaped blackface minstrelsy, considering the effects of Irish musical practices, Irish bodies, Irish-American experiences, and earlier depictions of the Irish on British stages, all of which indelibly marked blackface practice. I examine blackface minstrelsy during

⁴ Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 2nd edition, Race and American Culture, ed. Arnold Rampersad and Shelley Fisher Fishkin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 95.

the early stages, as its performance conventions coalesced. This began as significant numbers of performers emerged on American stages, including George Washington Dixon, Bob Farrell, and T. D. Rice in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The 1843 formation and tour of the Virginia Minstrels established longstanding practices such as the 3-act structure, and small ensemble format. During this time span, notated sheet music underwent a transformation from music such as “Zip Coon,” which reflected Anglo-Celtic musical practices, to music that incorporated different approaches to rhythm. This coincides with significant shifts in Irish-American group identity in which famine and immigration patterns created an increased sense that the Irish in the United States were themselves different and Othered. With this new understanding of the relationship between Irishness and minstrelsy, the changing musical vocabulary reveals much about the changing status of Irishness outside the minstrel theater in the 1840s.

Scholarly Treatments of the Irish in Minstrelsy

As the most important theatrical genre of the nineteenth century, blackface minstrelsy has imparted a legacy of performance customs and complicated racial dynamics in American entertainment culture. Because of minstrelsy’s significance to theatrical and racial history, it is also widely studied. Many scholars acknowledge anecdotally that Irish Americans played a role in the genesis of the minstrel show. Charles Hamm, Robert Toll, Eric Lott, and Christopher Smith refer briefly to the Irish

and/or British musical roots of blackface minstrelsy.⁵ Extensive consideration of the matter, however, remains elusive. Hans Nathan's brief treatment of Scottish, English, and Irish musical influences in blackface minstrelsy in his 1962 book *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy*—a study of the Virginia Minstrels' frontman and composer of "Dixie"—has proven quite influential on subsequent studies of minstrelsy.⁶ Nathan compares early songs by Emmett and others to Old World traditional tunes found in various collections, finding musical similarities between the two. Nathan claims that certain early minstrel songs descended from specific Anglo-Celtic traditional tunes. For instance, he describes "Sich a Gitting Up Stairs" as "a slightly but significantly changed English Morris dance tune."⁷ He then compares strikingly similar notated versions of the two tunes.

While I support Nathan's theories about minstrelsy's deep roots in the body of music he and Christopher Smith aptly term "Anglo-Celtic" traditional music, Nathan's analysis in support of his claims is not entirely convincing.⁸ Mere similarities between examples of music do not necessarily imply direct musical relationships. Furthermore, every source Nathan uses for English, Scottish, and Irish music was published after the minstrel songs he analyzes, calling into question the

⁵ Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 111–112; Robert Toll, *Blackening Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 27; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft*, 97; Christopher Smith, *The Creolization of American Culture: William Sidney Mount and the Roots of Blackface Minstrelsy*, *Music in American Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 164–166.

⁶ Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 1962).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁸ For the term "Anglo-Celtic:" Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 174; Smith, *Creolization of American Culture*, 2.

notion that the minstrel songs originated in the Anglo-Celtic sources. In the case of the minstrel tune “Sich a Gitting Up Stairs,” popularized in the United States in the 1830s, he cites a 1942 source—a collection of “Virginia Dance Tunes” published in the United States—for the English Morris dance from which he claims the minstrel song descended.⁹ However, a traditional tune “Such Getting Up Stairs” was published far earlier, in the American *Howe’s 1000 Jigs and Reels*, from the 1860s. In that collection, intended for folk instrumentalists, the tune is labeled an “Ethiopian melody.”¹⁰ By my reading of these sources, “Getting Upstairs” is more likely to have emerged in traditional repertoires in the United States as an adapted form of “Sich a Gitting Up Stairs” and then migrated to Britain.¹¹ Nathan’s work usefully points to the close relationship between blackface minstrelsy and Anglo-Celtic musical traditions, but it does not prove the sources of the minstrel tunes.

Widening Nathan’s mode of analysis to include more general musical, performance, and contextual frameworks yields more helpful results. As an oral tradition, folk music of the British Isles constantly adapts to emerging musical contexts. The idiom remains recognizable and consistent because of formal conventions and performance practices. I examine the structures and rhythms of

⁹ For the 1942 source: Winston Wilkinson, “Virginia Dance Tunes,” *Southern Folklore Quarterly* (March 1942); cited in Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 166.

¹⁰ Elias Howe, *Howe’s 1,000 Jigs and Reels: Clog Dances, Contra Dances, Fancy Dances, Hornpipes, Strathspeys, Breakdowns, Irish Dances, Scotch Dances, and more*, edited by Patrick Sky (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay, 2001), 40.

¹¹ Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith suggest that we generally undervalue tune relationships that flow from the New World to the Old in: Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith, “Irish Music and Musicians in the United States: An Introduction,” in “Special Issue on Irish Music in the United States,” edited by Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith, *Journal of the Society for American Music* 4, no. 4 (November 2010): 395.

Irish music more broadly than Nathan to show how minstrel tunes, whether newly written or derived from unknown antecedents, align with Irish practice in substantial and meaningful ways. In that regard, I take some cues from Charles Hamm's 1979 *Yesterdays*.¹² Though his analysis occupies a brief section of a much broader study on American popular song, Hamm's arguments for what he understands as Irish and Scottish origins of minstrelsy address general formal structure and melodic characteristics, rather than direct tune relationships. For instance, he attributes pentatonicism and Scotch snaps in Stephen Storace's "Poor Black Boy" to Scottish influence without claiming a direct relationship between the minstrel song and a particular Scottish tune.¹³

Nathan, Hamm, and more recent writers, including Christopher Smith, consider music of the British Isles together in their readings of minstrelsy, without ruminating on the contributions of one tradition within that category.¹⁴ The issue of the role of the Irish, as opposed to the English, Scottish, etc. is challenging because of the interrelatedness of Anglo-Celtic traditions. Reels and hornpipes are central to each tradition and stylistic variations between national traditions are often not distinct enough to quantify or analyze. Furthermore, notation as a source for orally-based traditional music poses problems; many distinctions between national and regional styles of traditional music in the British Isles manifest in various aspects of performance practice that include ornamentation, instrumentation, bowing style, and tempo choices.

¹² Charles, *Yesterdays*, 112.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴ Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 174; Smith, *Creolization of American Culture*, 37–39.

I acknowledge that the traditional music of England, Wales, Scotland, and the United States also contributed to the genesis of blackface minstrelsy, but my research reveals several ways in which the music of Ireland and, by extension, Irish America were a crucial and particularly significant part of the creolization process. I ground my work in early nineteenth-century dynamics, in which the Irish occupied a unique social space. This includes the long history of stage Irishman characters in Britain that influenced the portrayal of blackface characters on American stages, the prevalence of Irish-Americans among working-class communities during minstrelsy's genesis, and the liminal social and racial status of the Irish that influenced and enabled many early minstrel practices. All of these issues will be addressed in the course of this chapter. Once the significance of the Irish to the socio-cultural mix in minstrelsy is illuminated, elements of Anglo-Celtic traditional music that made their way into minstrelsy can also be understood as emanating from Ireland.

Eric Lott's approach to the social history of minstrelsy has deeply influenced my thinking about the intersections among class, race, and Irishness in the genre. In *Love and Theft*, he explains that one factor in the establishment of minstrelsy was the formation of the American working class from a diverse mix of groups in the Antebellum north whose racial status was sometimes called into question. The black mask affirmed the non-blackness of performers. In the process, blackface artists asserted their superiority to those they represented on stage, regardless of class status. As Lott writes, minstrel shows "ultimately assuaged an acute sense of class

insecurity by indulging feelings of racial superiority.”¹⁵ The distinctions between black and non-black allowed racially questionable groups, the Irish in particular, to assert dominance. Lott also notes financial instability during the late thirties and early forties and the growing industrialization that marginalized the working class, many of whom were immigrants. He writes:

Sandwiched between bourgeois above and black below, respectable artisans feared they were becoming ‘blacker’ with every increment of industrial advance, and countered with the language and violence of white supremacy. But the very vehemence of their response indicated the increasing functional and discursive interchangeability of blacks and working-class whites.¹⁶

In his work, Lott argues that part of donning the blackface mask is an adamant proclamation of position that belies the ambiguity of lived experiences among the working classes. For members of the white working class, including many Irish Americans, unskilled, industrial, factory jobs replaced more skilled professions. With little training or education needed for work, groups such as Irish Americans competed for jobs with African Americans as never before. This brought their racial status into question as well. In this chapter, I explore how this manifested musically.

Christopher Smith’s recent study directly addresses the racial, national, and social encounters that characterized early minstrelsy, providing a wealth of information on black-white mixing that supports my work by contextualizing the role of Irish-Americans in a larger socio-cultural mix. He reveals a strikingly longstanding “creole synthesis” of music and dance styles that flourished particularly among riverine and maritime communities.¹⁷ “Virtually from the first

¹⁵ Lott, *Love and Theft*, 67.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁷ Smith, *Creolization of American Culture*, 28–78.

encounters of Anglo-Europeans and Africans in the New World,” racially mixed environments near bodies of water provided the context for a mixing of African-American and Anglo-Celtic musical styles.¹⁸ Smith posits that early minstrels, including George Washington Dixon, T. D. Rice, Dan Emmett, and Joel Walker Sweeney, learned music within these environments and drew on such knowledge in constructing their minstrel routines.¹⁹ My work explores the Irish as one component part of this synthesis. Smith’s work focuses overwhelmingly on the African-American side of the equation, and for good reason; he works to recover African-American contributions that have been neglected in recent literature. My work, in part, takes much from Smith and clarifies the part he terms “Anglo-Celtic.” In contrast to Smith and Nathan, I argue that the Irish played a unique and vital role within the mix of European influences on blackface minstrelsy.

The Stage Irishman and the Blackface Minstrel

British methods of stock character formation, especially stage Irishmen, contributed significantly to blackface minstrelsy. During the long eighteenth century, theatrical styles emanating from Britain explored encounters with difference through characters that embodied and enacted stereotypes. The Irish were the quintessential Others of the time, due to geographic proximity and political conflict between the two islands. In theatrical depictions of British life, the Irish occupied the lowest social space, much like blackface characters on later American stages. Indeed, as David Hayton states, eighteenth century stage Irishmen were

¹⁸ Ibid., 28.

¹⁹ Ibid., 30.

often a “proverb for all that was inferior or ridiculous.”²⁰ Early nineteenth century American stages served to a great extent as transatlantic extensions of British stage culture, and theatrical works involving stage Irishmen traversed the Atlantic Ocean frequently. Scholars have noted the significance of British stage traditions to blackface minstrelsy, but thus far their attentions have focused on blackface representations of black characters.²¹ While some British plays included blackface characters, particularly from the middle of the eighteenth century, Irish characters were established earlier and were more central to British theatrical traditions. Many shared traits were transferred from stage Irishmen to blackface characters through blackface architects like T. D. Rice, who specialized in comic characters with touring theatrical troupes before he developed his blackface routine that included “Jump Jim Crow.”

Though stereotyped Irish characters known as stage Irishmen have appeared in British theaters since before the time of Shakespeare, many longstanding traits of stage Irishmen developed in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, in the aftermath of the English Civil War (1642–1651) and Glorious Revolution (1688).²² These conflicts, pitting Protestants against Catholics, gave rise across the

²⁰ David Hayton, *The Anglo-Irish Experience, 1680–1730: Religion, Identity, and Patriotism*, Irish Historical Monographs (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2012), 22.

²¹ Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 13–29; Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, 20–49; Toll, *Blacking Up*, 26.

²² Bruce Nelson, *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 23–29; Anelise Truninger, *Paddy and the Paycock: A Study of the Stage Irishman from Shakespeare to O’Casey*, The Cooper Monographs, Theatrical Physignomy Series 24 (Berlin: Franke Verlag, 1976), 38–39; William H. A. Williams, *’Twas Only an Irishman’s Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800–1920*, Music in American Life (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 59–60.

British Isles to severe anti-Catholic sentiments and stereotypes that shaped stage Irish characters. As a result of the seventeenth-century conflicts, British domination of Ireland rose to its height in the eighteenth century. The prohibitive Penal Laws that discriminated against Catholic Irish warrant some comparison with American Jim Crow laws. The harshest of the Penal Laws, in place by 1714, prevented Catholic Irish from holding public office, voting, intermarrying with Protestants, or attending university. Complicated laws regarding the rights of Catholics to purchase, lease, or inherit land frequently disenfranchised Irish Catholics from their livelihood or enticed them to convert to the Church of Ireland. The situation also engendered a flood of Irish refugees to England, creating opportunities for the British to encounter unprecedented numbers of Irish people, particularly in English urban spaces where theaters flourished. The English theatrical tradition that relied heavily on stereotyping and stock characters became a way to explore and negotiate the conflicted relationship between the British and the Irish, just as blackface minstrelsy would later provide space for urban white populations to explore blackness in the United States.

While acknowledging the fundamental difference between the realities of physically enslaved African Americans and the Catholic Irish who were free at least to emigrate, stage Irishmen and blackface minstrel characters contain many similarities. In his study of Irish playwright John Millington Synge (1871-1909), Maurice Bourgeois describes the stock qualities of the stage Irishman, including the names, dialect, misuse of language, dependence on alcohol, physical markers, and degenerate characteristics:

The stage Irishman habitually bears the generic name of Pat, Paddy or Teague. He has an atrocious Irish brogue, makes perpetual jokes, blunders and bulls in speaking, and never fails to utter, by way of Hibernian seasoning, some wild screech or oath of Gaelic origin at every third word; he has an unsurpassable gift of “blarney” and cadges for tips and free drinks. His hair is of a fiery red; he is rosy-cheeked, massive and whiskey loving. His face is one of simian bestiality with an expression of diabolical archness written all over it. . . . In his right hand he brandishes a stout blackthorn or a sprig of shillelagh, and threatens to belabor therewith the daring person who will “tread on the tails of his coat.”²³

For almost every salient point in Bourgeois’ description, there is an analogous practice in blackface minstrelsy’s depictions of African Americans. In minstrelsy, stock characters with names such as Zip Coon and Jim Crow speak in thick dialect and misunderstandings of language further mark difference and dysfunction. Neither stage Irishmen nor minstrel characters provide productive labor, and both types carry physical markers of primitivism or degeneracy. As British theater was popular in the United States in the early nineteenth century, and principal architects of minstrelsy likely participated as comic actors, ample evidence suggests that the similarities reflect influence.

Among the numerous traits common among eighteenth-century stage Irishmen that eventually emerged in later blackface characters, I have developed four major categories for analysis. These include the use of language to highlight difference; the sense that characters originate in distant places and do not belong in their current context, particularly in contemporaneous work spaces; a fixation on mouth-related activities of speaking, singing, eating, and drinking; and a profusion

²³ Maurice Bourgeois, *John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1913), 109–110.

of degenerate characteristics including belligerence, promiscuity, and ape-like bodies.

As one of the most immediate and common methods of marking difference in performance, language became a primary method of establishing stock characters and played a major role in both stage Irish and blackface characters. Jonathan Swift wrote in 1728 that the brogue of the stage Irishman generated immediate bias in audience members: "What we call the Irish Brogue is no sooner discovered, than it makes the deliverer, in the last degree, ridiculous and despised."²⁴ In *The Twin Rivals*, a comic play produced in London's Drury Lane in 1702, the Irish character, Teague, begins many lines including his first with the exclamation "Beme shoule [By my soul]."²⁵ All three words in the expression differ from British pronunciations, marking Teague quickly and repeatedly as Other. On minstrel stages, dialect was also one of the primary markers of blackness. The published lyrics for the minstrel song "Clare de Kitchen," performed by T. D. Rice and George Washington Dixon as early as 1832, contain many words spelled in dialect (noted in italics):

In old *Kentuck* in *de arter noon*,
We sweep *de floor wid a bran* new broom,
And *arter dat* we form a ring,
And *dis de song dat* we do sing.²⁶

In some examples, dialect is employed for many common words, but terminology that conveys difference by the very meaning of the word, such as stock

²⁴ Jonathan Swift, "On Barbarous Denominations in Ireland," in *The Works of Jonathan Swift, D. D.* 7 (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1814), 360.

²⁵ George Farquhar, *The Twin Rivals* (London: Bernard Lintot, 1736), 49, 52, 67, 82, 92.

²⁶ "Clare de Kitchen" was published as early as 1832 by New York-based Dubois & Stodart. Publication announcement, *Evening Post* (24 May 1832), p. 1. For performance history: Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 49.

names, distant places, and material markers of blackness or Irishness, are spelled correctly. In “Coal Black Rose,” one of the first minstrel songs popularized by George Washington Dixon in 1829, dialect and onomatopoeic vocables are used alongside standard spellings of stock character names and the word “banjo” (dialect noted in italics):

*Lubly Rosa, Sambo cum
Dont you hearde Banjo tum, tum, tum,
Oh Rose, der coal black Rose*²⁷

Both stage Irish and blackface traditions also feature the semantic misunderstandings common in much comedic theater. The Irish “bull” and the minstrel “malapropism,” as they are known, share certain similarities that suggest a relationship between the two. Characters often confuse meanings of words in ways that display wit and ingenuity, if also a lack of certain other intellectual faculties. The characters thereby subvert established order or defy logic. For instance, in *The Irishman in London*, produced in London’s Covent Garden in 1793, the stage Irish character Murtock describes his impression of Ireland’s attributes to two young English women.²⁸ He describes poorly maintained roads in positive terms, inverting established rationale that roads facilitating faster travel are desirable:

You know the roads are a thousand times better in Ireland; Ladies, the miles there are three times as long as they are here; and then the divil a half mile can you go, but there’s a beautiful wooden mile stone [referring to logs in the road].²⁹

²⁷ “Coal Black Rose” (New York: J. L. Frederick, 1829).

²⁸ William Macready, *Irishman in London, or, The Happy African* (London: T. N. Longman, 1796).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

Likewise in minstrelsy, misunderstandings that subvert logic or order formed one of the most powerful tools for disrupting social structures. William Mahar examines such language in his chapter on blackface parodies of speech and rhetoric. The minstrel lecture or stump speech, according to Mahar, was itself an import from British stages.³⁰ It involved a parody or burlesque of popular opinions on issues of the day that might include technological changes, scientific or pseudoscientific disciplines like magnetism and phrenology, and political issues like women's rights. In one of the more popular lectures, the blackface character finds himself among the company of white people, subverting established order by positioning himself as the person deigning to associate with them:

I'be joyed de company ob de white folks; but since I'be got use'd to um, I don't mind it much; besides dat, a white man is jis as good a nigger if he only behabes himself.³¹

In both traditions, such interruptions of expected logic can reflect poorly on the characters, marking them as intellectually inferior. The characters also, in their persistent inversions of order, reflect the ability of both traditions to work as a counterweight to established orders. This often promotes a worldview that empowers the disempowered, as explored by such minstrelsy scholars as Cockrell, Lhamon, and Lott.³²

³⁰ William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture*, Music in American Life (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 59.

³¹ "A Negro Lecture on Locomotion," quoted in Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask*, 66.

³² Cockrell, 82; W. T. Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics, and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1–92; Lott, *Love and Theft*, 18.

Among stage Irishmen and blackface characters, another shared characteristic is exotic, often rural, origins. The notion of belonging to distant spaces in American images of the Irish, pervasive in both the Romantic and Comic types, is explored in the introduction to this dissertation. In eighteenth-century British theatricals, Irish landscapes were commonly described and interpreted as dysfunctional. The island's bogs, which posed challenges for Irish agricultural and industrial interests, were frequently cited by eighteenth-century British characters. For instance, one early and significant contribution to stereotypes of the Irish was a joke book that used bogs in its title as the primary referent to the book's Irish subject: *Bog Witticisms* (c. 1690).³³ Reference to bogs also signaled Irishness on the stage. In the one-act *The Brave Irishman, or, Captain O'Blunder*, produced in Dublin's Smock Alley in the early 1740s, an English suitor for the hand of a young woman hopes to "drive" a rival Irishman "back to his native Bogs as fast as possible."³⁴ Likewise in minstrelsy, songs often begin with a description of the singer's distant origins, often in the non-industrialized south. Jim Crow, the blackface character popularized by T. D. Rice around 1830, pronounces in the first line of the famous song "Come, listen all you gals and boys, Ise just from Tuckyhoe." The second verse of a popular version references Virginia, the fourth verse alludes to river travel, and

³³ *Teagueland Jests, or, Bogg-Witticisms* (London, 1690).

³⁴ This play, written for Irish audiences and premiered at the Abbey Theatre, creates a more positive Irish character than many English examples cited here. Thomas Sheridan, *The Brave Irishman, or, Captain O'Blunder* (Dublin: Richard Watts, 1759), 6.

by the fifth, Jim Crow has arrived in New Orleans, where he is promptly arrested.³⁵ Alternately, Dixon's Zip Coon presented an urban black dandy. Though this character is placed in the city, the humor arises from the implication that he does not belong there, connecting the character with distant origins even as he is placed in a context familiar to theater patrons. In one version, Zip Coon's pretensions of middle-class standing are mocked by dubbing him a "larned skolar" and then by installing him as President.³⁶ True to his character type, Zip Coon does not prove equipped for the responsibilities of Commander in Chief. His time is occupied with encouraging "all de little Coons" to sing along with him. Even when blackface characters were in the city, they were not of it.

As both blackface characters and stage Irish were associated with bucolic societies, reliant on increasingly anachronistic forms of labor, they were dysfunctional in contemporary working environments. In the T. D. Rice's one-act play *Virginia Mummy*, produced for a benefit in Mobile, Alabama, and then at Wemyss's Walnut Street Theatre in 1835, the blackface Ginger Blue, a waiter, is hired by the white Captain Rifle initially for an errand to the post office.³⁷ Ginger misunderstands Rifle at every opportunity, and the confusion prevents efficient completion of work:

Rifle: Well, you are an original.

Ginger: No, I'm a Wirginian.

Rifle: Ha! ha! ha! Come here. Can you go on an errand for me?

Ginger: If you isn't sent nobody else.

³⁵ In the 1830s, many versions of "Jump Jim Crow" circulated in print, some with dozens of verses on broadsides, resembling ballad traditions of the time. This was a particularly popular version. "The Original Jim Crow" (New York: E. Riley, c. 1832).

³⁶ "Zip Coon" (New York: Thos. Birch, 1834).

³⁷ Production information: Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow*, 416, fn. 94.

Rifle: What do you ask me that for?

Ginger: 'Cause if dere's two, we'll be sure to quarrel about de pay when we come back.³⁸

The exchange continues apace until Rifle loses his temper and sends Ginger to the post office. After an overlong wait, Ginger returns without a letter (there were none for Rifle). Instead, he used Rifle's money to purchase wrapping paper.³⁹

In a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing society, the perceived potential for such populations as African Americans and Irish to engage in modern labor practice was hotly debated. The issue often emerged in stock characters. Ginger's lack of discipline as Rifle's employee drives *Virginia Mummy's* main narrative. Rifle, in love with a ward of the Egyptologist Dr. Galen, wants Ginger to impersonate a mummy in order to gain access to his beloved. They disguise Ginger and fool the occupants of the household, but Ginger continuously breaks character and eventually gives himself away. He eats Dr. Galen's breakfast, drinks whiskey, and in becoming intoxicated he is recognized.⁴⁰

Ginger's failure to ably play a mummy because of his appetite hinges on another trope among stage Irish and blackface characters alike: a fixation on mouth-related activities including speaking, eating, drinking, and singing. As literary scholar and Irish American David Lloyd writes of his Irish subjects: "With the remarkable consistency that suggests that they are distorted forms of knowledge, stereotypes of the Irish cluster around the things we do with a single orifice, the

³⁸ T. D. Rice, *Virginia Mummy*, British Library Add MSS 42940, ff. 822–867. Reprinted in Lhamon, *Jump Jim Crow*, 159.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 159–177.

mouth.”⁴¹ In the aforementioned British comedy *The Twin Rivals*, Teague and his English employer Wou’dbe arrive in London after a long journey. Wou’dbe asks Teague his impression of the city, and after praising it as “the bravest Plaace I have sheen in my Peregrinations,” Teague notices a “fragrant Shmell” of food and poses the question: “Maister, shall I run to that Paishtery-Cook’s for shix Pennyworths of boil’d Beef?” Wou’dbe responds with a complaint about Teague’s constant hunger: “Tho’ this Fellow travell’d the World over, he would never lose his Brogue nor his Stomach.” He declines Teague’s suggestion.⁴²

Likewise are certain stereotyped foods, such as hoe cake among African Americans and potatoes among the Irish, frequently invoked in minstrel characters and stage Irishmen. Joel Walker Sweeney’s minstrel song “Jenny Get Your Hoe Cake Done,” published 1840, immortalizes the humble staple of southern African-American diets in the very title of the song, as well as the refrain.⁴³ In the aforementioned *The Brave Irishman*, the English woman Lucy, betrothed to an Irishman she’s never met, exclaims to her maid “I never so much as saw his Potato Face in all my born Days.”⁴⁴ Also, the popularity of stage dialects and semantic misunderstandings can fall into this category, making the focus on difference in speech patterns a mouth-oriented practice.

Such a biological component of identity grounds theatrical Irishness and blackness in the body. In the context of the eighteenth and early nineteenth

⁴¹ David Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Colonial Modernity, 1800–2000: The Transformation of Oral Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), ix.

⁴² Farquhar, *The Twin Rivals*, 49.

⁴³ Joel Walker Sweeney, “Jenny Get Your Hoe Cake Done” (New York: Firth and Hall, 1840).

⁴⁴ Sheridan, *Brave Irishman*, 5.

centuries, theories of mind-body dualism imply that such impolite, uncultivated, and deeply embodied behaviors as overeating, binge drinking, and poor speaking invoke notions of the primitive or dysfunctional. Thus, such focus on speaking and food supports notions that African-Americans and Irish were not intellectually inclined.

The focus on the mouth extends to song, making the very mode of performance part of the construction of identity for both stage Irishmen and blackface characters. Stereotypes about the Irish and African Americans alike suggested that both groups were particularly talented singers, and such perceptions emerged in their stock theatrical counterparts. Mythology surrounding the blackface tradition suggested performers were supplying white audiences with accurate representations of southern black people, and the main attraction of those performances was hearing black music. An 1843 playbill for the Virginia Minstrels in Worcester, Massachusetts, claims the group “truly” delineates:

the Sports and Pastimes of the Virginia Colored Race, through the medium of Songs, Refrain and Ditties, as sung by the Southern Slaves, at all their Merry Meetings, such as the gathering in of the Cotton and Sugar Crops, Corn Huskings, Slave Weddings and Junketings.⁴⁵

Likewise, the Irish were associated with bardic traditions and ballad singing. British theater in the eighteenth century became more focused on folk music, in particular balladry, demonstrated by the popularity of ballad operas like *The Beggar's Opera*.⁴⁶

In otherwise spoken plays, stage Irish characters often sang long and dramatic

⁴⁵ Virginia Minstrels, Playbill, folder 607, American Minstrel Show Collection, 1823–1947, MS Thr 556, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library.

⁴⁶ For more information on the role of folk music in ballad opera: Vanessa Rogers, “The Audience as Poet: Traditional Tunes and Contemporary Satire in Eighteenth Century Ballad Opera,” *Ars Lyrica: Journal of the Lyrica Society for Word-Music Relations* 18 (2009): 62–83.

ballads. In *The Irishman in London*, for instance, the stage Irish character Murtock makes several entrances while singing.⁴⁷

One final category of similarities between earlier stage Irishmen and the later minstrel tradition is, if the most obvious, perhaps also the most important. In both traditions, the Irish and black characters on the stage were depicted as degenerate and dysfunctional. They often occupied the lowest intellectual and social space in any given theatrical piece. Outside of the theater, both the Irish in England and African-Americans similarly filled society's lowest echelon. Indeed, a number of scholars, including David Roediger, Matthew Frye Jacobson, and Noel Ignatiev, have shown that in the nineteenth century United States, African Americans and the Irish were considered biologically and racially similar. The theories held particular weight in the 1830s, as the American nativist movement took hold, supporting anti-Irish political platforms and ideas about blackness and the Irish. Theories varied; at times the Irish were considered "a 'nigger', inside and out," and sometimes their whiteness was called into question in more subtle ways, by emphasizing such supposed biological markers of primitivism as low brow lines.⁴⁸ Figure 2.1

illustrates one way of approaching whiteness, blackness, and the Irish. A cover of *Harper's Weekly* Magazine contains an image of an African American, signified by the color of his skin, and an Irishman, signified by his top hat, tails, and apish facial features. They are literally equal, balancing each other out on a scale. A caption

⁴⁷ Macready, *Irishman in London*, 14, 36, 39.

⁴⁸ For the quote: David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), 133. For more information about the subtleties of racial perceptions and the Irish in the nineteenth century: Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

reads “The Ignorant Vote.” Though the Irishman’s skin is of a lighter hue than that of the black man, he is not considered more functional, more welcome, or more included in what the creator might consider the “non-ignorant” vote than the black man.

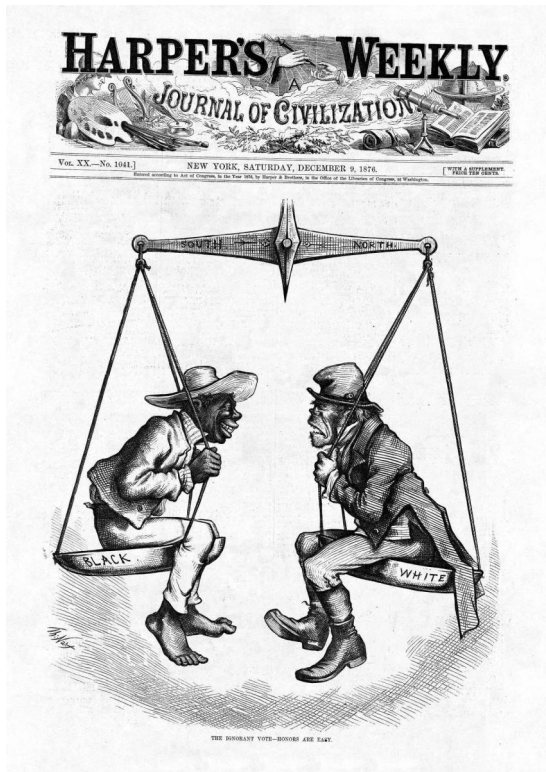


Figure 2.1: “The Ignorant Vote—Honors Are Easy,” by Thomas Nast, on the cover of *Harper’s Weekly*, volume 20, number 1041, from 9 December 1876.

Stage Irish and blackface minstrel characters consistently supply the intellectually and socially lowest characters of comic theater of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This includes a number of aforementioned examples such as Teague in *The Twin Rivals* and Ginger Blue in *Virginia Mummy*. In a few plays, Irish and black characters appear in the same piece. This is true of the aforementioned *Irishman in London*, where the stage Irishman, Murtock, meets the African Cubba, a female servant. In a scene together, Murtock and Cubba confess feelings for each

other, in a way. Murtock's feelings seem rather insincere and opportunistic. He first flatters himself that Cubba has developed feelings, declaring in an aside: "Och, honey, what's this? Sure the crater wou'd'nt be in love with me—She is, she is! And I am sorry for her." He forgets her name, needing to ask it again, before he makes his feelings known to her. Cubba expresses reciprocal sentiments, but ultimately fends off Murtock, citing the inappropriateness of cross-racial relationships: "Me love a you dearly—but me no want you love me—dat be very wrong—Your face white, me poor negro."⁴⁹ The scene resonates with a complex social and racial world in eighteenth-century England, in which the Irish man and black woman are close enough in status to propel this scene in the first place, even if social constraints prevent them from developing an intimate relationship.⁵⁰

In another example that includes an Irish character and a blackface character, Rice's *Virginia Mummy*, there is no such complication to the relationship between the characters; they merely coexist as buffoonish, comedic servant types to different white employers. In Rice's work, then, the Irish were more similar to blackface characters than they were in *The Irishman in London*. In *Virginia Mummy*,

⁴⁹ Macready, *The Irishman in London*, 37–38.

⁵⁰ The plot here is similar to the wildly popular *Inkle and Yarico*, in which an Englishman, lost in the West Indies, marries a native woman and brings her back to England, only to sell her into slavery. As a melodrama and not comic theater, the play addresses different aspects of race than what is at issue in comedic representations of Irish and African-Americans. The Native American Yarico instead displays aspects of the idealized noble savage. For more: Carl Niekerk, "Violence, Gender, and the Construction of the Other in the Story of Inkle and Yarico," *Gender Matters: Discourses of Violence in Early Modern Literature and the Arts*, ed. Mara R. Wade (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B. V., 2013), 367–380. For a detailed analysis of its music, see: Joice Waterhouse Gibson, "A Musical and Cultural Analysis of *Inkle and Yarico* from England to America, 1787–1844" (PhD diss., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2011).

Ginger Blue is the blackface servant of Captain Rifle, while the stage Irish character O'Leary is a servant for the Egyptologist, Dr. Galen. As Ginger has trouble understanding spoken language and following the directions of his employer, so too does O'Leary. Upon the announcement that a Persian has arrived "in full dress, the original costume of his native country," O'Leary muses mistakenly: "Isn't a full dress the costume of all countries . . . and would you have a man go half-naked?"⁵¹ Then, when left alone with Ginger disguised as a mummy, O'Leary attempts to cut off Ginger's toe as a souvenir.⁵²

Such similarities between stage Irish in England and blackface characters in the United States might seem circumstantial, as products of a theatrical life embedded within similar social worlds and tendencies toward exoticism and prejudice among the working classes. Evidence reveals, however, that at least one crucial blackface architect knew British comic theater well. T. D. Rice specialized in comic roles in a British company based in Kentucky that toured the American south during the late 1820s, immediately preceding development of "Jump Jim Crow."⁵³ Moreover, several of his plays, which include the aforementioned *Virginia Mummy*, include both black and Irish comic characters. The stage Irishman he himself created, O'Leary, reveals an intimate familiarity with the character type.

⁵¹ Rice, *Virginia Mummy*, reprinted in Lhamon, 168.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 170.

⁵³ Cockrell cites a biographical article in the *New York Herald* by its editor, a friend of Rice. The article recounts Rice's early career, when he specialized in comic theatrical roles with a theatrical troupe. *New York Herald*, 27 April 1837. Cited in Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 62–63. Theatrical manager Noah Ludlow writes of Rice's time with his troupe in: Noah Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It: A Record of Personal Experience* (St. Louis, MO: G. I. Jones, 1880).

T.D. Rice learned his craft in touring British theater companies within a transatlantic culture in which British theatre dominated American dramatic life. English immigrants first began to establish professional theater troupes in the United States in the middle of the eighteenth century. Productions were overwhelmingly English in origin. Homegrown productions such as Andrew Barton's ballad opera *The Disappointment* were by far the exception rather than the rule. In the process, theater patrons and performers alike familiarized themselves with the stock characters of English comic stages, principal among which was the stage Irishman.⁵⁴

Furthermore, the stage Irishman tradition and blackface minstrelsy were linked in public consciousness. An 1867 article in *The Atlantic Monthly* suggests that readers conceived such a relationship in its description of the often-told origin myth of the minstrel song and dance "Jump Jim Crow." According to the article, T.D. Rice observed a black stable hand with a disability that caused a curious gait. Rice's imitation of that stable hand supposedly originated one of the most popular and influential dances in the nineteenth-century United States. In the article, Rice ruminates on his idea for a new routine. He links the centuries-old theatrical tradition of stock Irish characters with blackface minstrelsy: "as a national or 'race' illustration, behind the footlights, might not 'Jim Crow' and a black face tickle the

⁵⁴ For more on the history of music in the early American theater: Julian Mates, *America's Musical Stage: Two Hundred Years of Musical Theatre* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985); and Michael Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theatre in Nineteenth-Century London and New York*, Studies in Theatre and Culture (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2014).

fancy of pit and circle, as well as the ‘Sprig of Shillalah’ [*sic*] and a red nose?”⁵⁵

According to this writer, Rice’s work grew directly from his understanding of stage Irish traditions. Whether or not this account is authentic, Rice’s representation of blackness emerged from a culture where representations of the Irish were already established, and his idea was intimately shaped by stage Irishmen. But this was not the only way, or even the most direct way, that the Irish shaped minstrelsy.

The Green behind the Burnt Cork: Irish Americans in Blackface

Minstrelsy was influenced by a profusion of Irish Americans who populated the lower strata of society in the 1830s and 1840s. A remarkably high quotient of blackface minstrel performers were themselves Irish American. The Irish also populated maritime and riverine communities that practiced a creolized style of music making that was influential in early minstrelsy.⁵⁶ After noting the high quotient of Irish Americans involved in early minstrelsy, this section focuses on what such profusion means by investigating one particularly significant Irish-American figure, Dan Emmett. The inquiry demonstrates that the Irishness of minstrelsy’s progenitors infused the genre itself with aspects of Irish musical practice.

Eric Lott notes that the ranks of both early minstrel performers and their audiences were predominantly Irish-American. He writes that acknowledging the role of the Irish in minstrelsy is as critically important to understanding minstrelsy

⁵⁵ Robert P. Nevin, “Stephen C. Foster and Negro Minstrelsy,” *Atlantic Monthly* 20, no. 121 (November 1867), p. 608.

⁵⁶ Smith, “The Creole Synthesis in the New World: Cultures in Contact,” in *The Creolization of American Culture*, 28–78.

as other component identity parts illuminated in his study, including gender, race, and class.⁵⁷ Indeed, many crucial figures in early minstrelsy—Bob Farrell, Dan Emmett, Dan Bryant, Joel Walker Sweeney, and George Christy—descended from Irish immigrants.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Christopher Smith’s work has illuminated “Afro-Celtic Synthesis” in working-class neighborhoods across the country, including those in New Orleans, Cincinnati, and New York, where Irish laborers mixed with African Americans. “In such proximity,” writes Smith, “musicians of diverse ethnic backgrounds crossed class and race boundaries.”⁵⁹ He describes how early minstrels, including Dixon, Rice, and Emmett, learned their craft in these communities from folk musicians who synthesized elements of white and black styles. Indeed, these very places—New York’s Lower East Side in particular—were crucial sites for early performances including those of T. D. Rice and the Virginia Minstrels.

While Smith seeks to understand the relationships between white minstrels and the black musicians from whom they learned, another question arises from his work: what does it mean that so many Irish people, both named minstrels like Dan

⁵⁷ Lott, *Love and Theft*, 36.

⁵⁸ Cockrell notes that many of the aforementioned names, oft cited by scholars as prominent Irish-Americans in minstrelsy, are in fact not thought as the earliest of the blackface architects like George Washington Dixon and T. D. Rice. His observation is correct, but we have more recently learned from Smith about creolized environments with a high quotient of Irish-Americans that played a significant role in the development of minstrelsy. I would add that Joel Walker Sweeney, while more recognized for his work in the 1840s, emerged earlier in the 1830s and can be counted among the earlier generation. Also, Rice, born into poverty in New York City, originated in precisely one of the creolized neighborhoods that were heavily infused with Irish practice addressed by Smith in his recent study. Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 199n43.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Creolization of American Culture*, 46–47.

Emmett and unnamed Irish-Americans who participated in the creole synthesis as musicians and listeners, played a role in the genesis of such an important American genre? Consideration of this question helps clarify dynamics within the category of “Anglo-Celtic” music, as described by Nathan and Smith. Examining what Irish heritage meant for the musical and social worlds in which Irish-American blackface performers lived reveals another way that Irishness impacted minstrelsy. We need to understand which musical practices transferred to Irish-American spheres. Here, the relative wealth of extant primary source documents concerning Dan Emmett helps clarify his relationship to Irishness.

Emmett learned Irish or Irish-American musical styles early. He was born in the small riverfront community of Mount Vernon, Ohio, on 29 October 1815, to his Scots-Irish father Abraham and his mother, nee Sarah (Sally) Zerrick, whose heritage is unknown. He learned the flute and fiddle as a child, playing popular and traditional music.⁶⁰ As most of the residents of Mount Vernon, founded in 1805, were Scots-Irish and had recently migrated from Virginia and Maryland, the music Emmett learned was that of the Appalachian Mountains. That tradition was shaped by Irish music, along with other traditions of the British Isles.

Although many have speculated about Emmett’s experience with African-American music in Mount Vernon, existing materials do not support the notion that he had much early contact with African-Americans in his hometown. Mount Vernon was overwhelmingly white; in 1830 only two black households existed in all of Knox

⁶⁰ Lorle Porter, *The Great Dan Emmett: Burnt-Cork Artist Extraordinaire* (Nashport, OH: New Concord Press, 2006), 48.

county.⁶¹ Howard L. and Judith Rose Sacks have explored a possible relationship between Emmett and the Snowden family band, a local, black string group.⁶² The chronologies of Emmett's and the Snowdens' biographies however, make it unlikely that the Snowdens significantly impacted Emmett's early career. The patriarch of the family, Thomas Snowden, moved to the area in 1825, when Emmett was already ten years old. Thomas was a reputable whistler, but it was his children, not born until after Thomas's 1834 marriage, who comprised the band.⁶³ Indeed, the Snowden family band gained popularity in the 1850s, long after Emmett had left for good in 1837 and become famous in 1843 for his work in the Virginia Minstrels. He may well have had contact with the Snowdens via correspondence and occasional visits, but in the meantime Emmett had far greater opportunities for more meaningful contact with the Afro-Celtic synthesis elsewhere.

Emmett's wanderlust emerged early, and in travels around the interior of the country he likely encountered diverse styles of music making that included African-American music. In 1827, when Dan was twelve, the family moved to Norwalk, Ohio, sixty miles north, before returning to Mount Vernon in 1831. Dan ran away in 1834, lying about his age to join the military in Kentucky. He was stationed in St. Louis as a fifer, but his lie was discovered in 1835 and he returned to Mount Vernon again.

Emmett reported studying with John "Juba" Clark, an African-American percussionist, at his barracks in St. Louis. By late 1837, he had left Mount Vernon

⁶¹ Howard L. and Judith Rose Sacks, *Way Up North in Dixie: A Black Family's Claim to the Confederate Anthem* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 137.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ For more on African-American whistling, see: Dena J. Esptein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* second edition, *Music in American Life* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 29.

once again, this time to join the circus in Cincinnati.⁶⁴ That city's riverine community was one of the most highly creolized environments in the United States.

Concentrated numbers of free blacks—over 2,200 by 1840—mixed with English and Irish populations.⁶⁵ It is far more likely that Emmett developed the creolized style that contributed to the success of his music in St. Louis and Cincinnati than in Mount Vernon.

The Emmett Papers at the Ohio Historical Society make clear that Emmett was well-versed in Irish traditional repertoires. The archive contains numerous manuscript tune compendiums in his own hand. Poetically for this dissertation, Emmett wrote the title of one, "Irish Tunes," over a "Method of tuning the Banjo in the Key of C," which had been erased, combining the banjo with Irish music on the material object.⁶⁶ In this collection, tunes are grouped into sets. This is typical of Irish music performance contexts, in which instrumental musicians combine several tunes together to create longer sets of music that can build excitement and progress through several keys. Emmett's sets progress from 6/8 double jigs, 9/8 triple or slip jigs (which he terms "cross jigs"), and 2/4 reels. In one, Emmett combined the jig "Connaughtman's Rambles" in C major, the slip jig "Rocky Road to Dublin" in A dorian, and then, unpictured, the reel "Bogs of Tralee," more commonly known as

⁶⁴ Porter, *The Great Dan Emmett*, 58.

⁶⁵ Henry Louis Taylor, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," in *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820–1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Greater Cincinnati Bicentennial History Series (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 32.

⁶⁶ Box 2, Folder 4, Daniel Decatur Emmett Papers, MSS 355, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH.

“The Blackhaired Lass,” also in A dorian. All three tunes are staples of the Irish repertory.

In addition to the impressive amount of Irish music in Emmett’s papers, the collection contains a number of examples of popular music shaped by Irish or Irish-American people and their traditional musical styles. He owned scores for songs by David Braham and Edward Harrigan (discussed in Chapter 3) and Samuel Lover, as well as the music hall favorite “Finnegan’s Wake.” For instance, he owned a manuscript of Harrigan and Braham’s “Patrick’s Day Parade,” a song addressed in Chapter 3.⁶⁷ The profusion of such examples in Emmett’s papers reveals that he was aware of several ways in which Irish traditional styles were synthesized or combined with popular styles. Emmett’s own music, then, became another site for an ongoing synthesis of Irish music and popular styles that was happening around Emmett in many contexts.

Among early minstrels, the ways in which Emmett engaged with Irishness is particularly clear because of the wealth of extant sources. However, other early and influential minstrel performers were of Irish descent or spent a great deal of time in areas where the Irish-American population was concentrated and creolized musical styles developed. A list of such performers includes T. D. Rice, who grew up in New York’s East Side, and Irish-Americans Joel Walker Sweeny, Bob Farrell, and George Christy. But what does this mean for minstrelsy? What was the relationship between the Irish heritage and musical practices of blackface’s progenitors and early minstrel

⁶⁷ Box 1, Daniel Decatur Emmett Papers, MSS 355, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH.

music? The remainder of the chapter considers how the Irish musical practices of early blackface practitioners shaped the genre.

Irishness in Early Minstrel Music

In early blackface minstrel tunes—those published before 1843—elements of traditional music emerge with remarkable frequency and clarity though not all in the same way or to the same degree. A small body of minstrel songs directly paraphrases Irish tunes. The majority, however, are not borrowed tunes but do exhibit certain elements of Irish traditional practice. Many songs from this era adopt the formal structures of Irish dance music. Still others utilize rhythmic markers of Irish music. The section analyzes a collation of sheet music published before 1843. While I acknowledge the limitations of sheet music in a theatrical genre, it provides valuable musical information, particularly about formal structure and rhythm.

The first category of songs, featuring new text written for pre-existing Irish tunes, includes the influential “Backside Albany” (figure 2.2). It was originally performed in Micah Hawkins’s play *The Battle of Lake Champlain*, first produced in Albany in 1815.⁶⁸ Also known as “The Siege of Plattsburgh,” the song features a comic blackface character telling the story of the Battle of Plattsburgh, which signaled the end of major fighting in the War of 1812. Mahar notes that the song was an early example of blackface and it endured for decades, through the 1840s.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ The play’s text can be found in: *The Columbian Harmonist; or, Songster’s Repository, Being a Selection of the Most Approved Sentimental, Patriotic, and Other Songs* (Albany: G. Loomis and Co., 1815).

⁶⁹ William J. Mahar, “‘Backside Albany’ and Early Blackface Minstrelsy: A Contextual Study of America’s First Blackface Song,” *American Music* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 2.

Voice

Back-side Al-ban-y dar Lake_ Sham - plain, One_ ket-tle pan half_ full a wat - er,

5 Platt - burg dar_ too_ close u - pon da main, Town_ small he grow big - ger doe here af - ter On

9 Lake Sham - plain Un - cle Sam_ set he boat, An Mas - sa Mac-don-ough he sail 'em, While_

13 Gen' ral Mac-comb, Make Platt - burg be home, Wid he ar-my whose cour-age neb-ber fail 'em.

Figure 2.2: “Backside Albany,” from *The Battle of Lake Champlain*, by Micah Hawkins.

“Backside Albany” is not only a borrowed Irish tune, “Boyne Water,” but the American song draws on the Irish tune’s themes to construct its own meaning. As “Boyne Water” was one of the most popular ballads at the time, contemporaneous audiences would have been aware of the source, facilitating dissemination through broadsides and songsters. The ballad describes a decisive battle in Ireland: the Battle of the Boyne, a 1690 event that signaled the end of rivalry for the British crown between the Protestant King William and the Catholic King James. The two songs share themes of decisive battles, suggesting there was also semiotic value in the use of this particular ballad. “Backside Albany” also draws on the stage Irish tradition. William Mahar notes a similarity between the character in “The Siege of Plattsburgh” and stage Irishmen on British stages, writing: “The illiterate or marginally literate Irish sailor stereotype provided the model for Hawkins’s comic seaman.”⁷⁰ Mahar suggests that Hawkins modeled his black character on the Irish characters he saw in theaters on the Lower East Side of New York, where he lived.

⁷⁰ Mahar, “Backside Albany,” 16.

The song, then, uses both theatrically- and musically-constructed Irishness to convey its version of blackness.

In the early nineteenth century, the application of new words to borrowed melodies was common. “Zip Coon” is another example, as is *Irish Melodies* of Thomas Moore, discussed in Chapter 1. That the practice arises in minstrel repertoire is not surprising, but the fact that two prominent examples are contrafacta on traditional, Irish-influenced tunes, reveals deep connections between early minstrelsy and Irish musical styles. It suggests that early minstrels were familiar with Irish music, looked to Irish traditional music as a model when developing their music, and could safely assume that a significant portion of their audience would be familiar with Irish repertory as well.

The practice of direct musical borrowing, however, formed a relatively small part of minstrel practice. More often, early minstrels wrote new songs with the musical techniques they had acquired, some of which emanated from Ireland. One way to understand this is to investigate component parts of Irish musical practice and how they emerged in minstrel repertoire. The body of Irish music that most influenced minstrelsy was the dance music tradition. Irish dance music’s role in the genesis of blackface minstrel music makes sense for several reasons. Minstrelsy itself involved dancing, and the conventions of Irish dance music might have assisted and supported movement on minstrel stages just as they did in Irish contexts. Furthermore, the familiarity of minstrelsy’s predominantly Irish-American performing forces and audiences with Irish dance styles may have helped them make sense of the emerging genre.

Dance practice developed a number of formal conventions to assist oral transmission and dance accompaniment. Irish dances, like many European dances, generally involve binary form, with two related sections, each of which repeat. The sections are usually partitioned into 4-measure phrases. Subtypes are differentiated and defined by rhythm, for the most important function of the genre was to accompany and articulate dance movements that followed their own set of conventions. Three dance forms—reels, jigs, and hornpipes—are the most common and most recognizably Irish. Reels, the most common Irish dance form, are in simple meter with an even pulse at the eighth-note or sixteenth-note level. The first and third beats of the measure are emphasized and the pace is quick. Jigs are less common than reels, but they are more iconically Irish. They are characterized by compound time; the most common is the 6/8 double jig, such as “Connaughtman’s Rambles” in figure 2.2 though the 9/8 slip jig, like “Rocky Road to Dublin” in figure 2.2, is popular as well. Finally, the hornpipe is also a significant dance in the Irish repertoire. In simple time, it is characterized by uneven, dotted rhythms that are occasionally notated or sometimes achieved only in performance.

Minstrel repertoire from the 1820s through the emergence of the Virginia Minstrels in the early 1840s contains an abundance of Irish dance structures. Standard form for early minstrelsy is binary, with two repeated strains that include 4-measure phrases. Indeed, many tunes adopt specific forms popular in Irish music, including some of the best known examples. “Zip Coon” and “Jump Jim Crow,” for

a. "Zip Coon," a hornpipe.

Voice



5 O ole Zip Coon he is a larn-ed skol-er, O ole Zip Coon. he is a larn-ed skol-er, O

9 ole Zip Coon. he is a larn-ed skol-er Sings pos-sum up a gum tree and coon-y in a holl-er,

13 pos-um up a gum tree, coon-y on a stump pos-um up a gum tree, coon-y on a stump

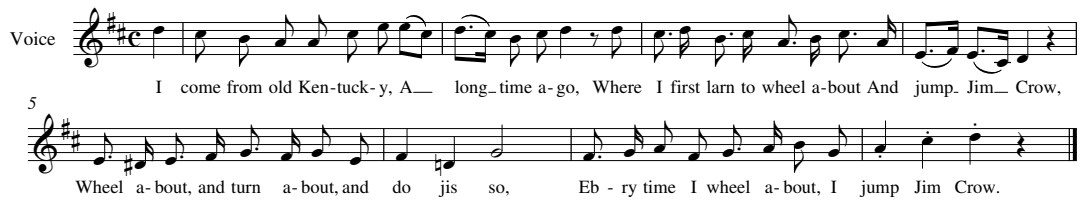
17 pos-um up a gum tree, coon-y on a stump. Den Ov-er dub-ble trub-ble, Zip Coon will jump, O

21 Zip a du-den du-den du-den zip a du-den day. O Zip a du-den du-den du-den du-den du-den day. O

Zip a du-den du-den du-den du-den du-den day. Zip a du-den du-den du-den zip a du-den day.

b. "Jim Crow," a hornpipe.

Voice

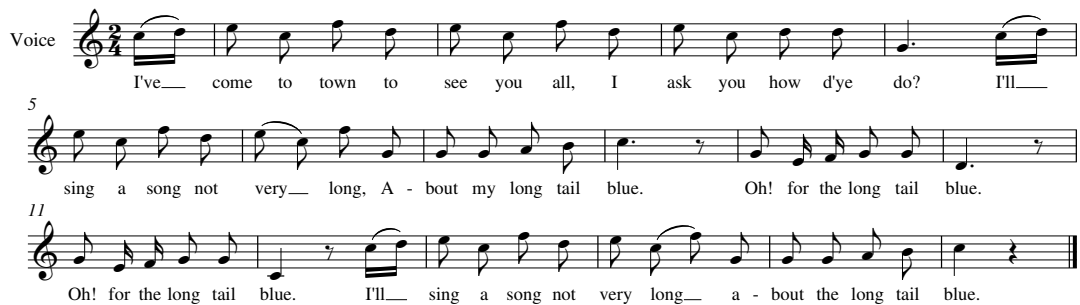


5 I come from old Ken-tuck-y, A long time a-go, Where I first larn to wheel a-bout And jump. Jim Crow,

Wheel a-bout, and turn a-bout, and do jis so, Eb-ry time I wheel a-bout, I jump Jim Crow.

c. "Long Tail Blue," a reel.

Voice



5 I've come to town to see you all, I ask you how d'ye do? I'll

11 sing a song not very long, A bout my long tail blue. Oh! for the long tail blue.

Oh! for the long tail blue. I'll sing a song not very long a bout the long tail blue.

Figure 2.3: Early minstrel tunes with Irish traditional dance structures.

instance, are hornpipes, identifiable by their uneven eighth-notes. “Long Tail Blue,” on the other hand, is a reel (figure 2.3).⁷¹

Within minstrel tunes, smaller segments of individual songs sometimes resemble Irish dance music. Published minstrel sheet music from the 1830s and early 1840s often contains sections without lyrics that allow the performers to focus on dance. Such sections are often explicitly labeled with dance types popular in Ireland. Dick Pelham’s 1841 “Ginger Blue” (figure 2.4), published two years before Pelham joined the Virginia Minstrels, contains such a section labeled “reel.”⁷² It consists of two 4-measure phrases, representing one part of a two-part reel. Additionally, the vocal section of “Ginger Blue” fits reel form, providing a second invocation of the reel type in the same musical example. Notated dance sections with such explicit labels show that Irish or Irish-derived dance music was important not only to song conventions, but also to the dancing that the music was intended to accompany. Minstrel performers were dancing reels, and performing such dances was important enough to minstrel practice that space was made for it in sheet music.

Other minstrel songs from the late 1820s through the early 1840s contain structural similarities to dance music popular in the Irish tradition, but they are often truncated, simplified, or cut in half. The 1832 “Gumbo Chaff” (figure 2.5) contains two 6-measure phrases, representing the first half of a reel.⁷³ Joel Walker Sweeney’s 1840 “Ole Tare River” (figure 2.6) contains a reel in 2/4 time, rather than

⁷¹ “Long Tail Blue” (New York: Atwill’s, c. 1827).

⁷² Dick Pelham, “Ginger Blue” (New York: Firth and Hall, 1841).

⁷³ “Gumbo Chaff” (New York: Firth and Hall, 1832).

the standard 4/4, and the second half of each phrase is instrumental.⁷⁴ The combination of shortened phrases and alternation between song and break creates a disjointed melody and overtly simplistic musical structure that resembles Irish traditional styles while also sounding more primitive than Irish traditional music. Likewise, “Do I Do I Don’t Do Nothing” (figure 2.7) contains two-measure phrases, the first two of which alternate between song and instrumental solo.⁷⁵ This song also features an extremely simple melody. The first section of this binary song contains six iterations of the same measure-long melody, four times in the vocal line and twice in piano solo. That repeated measure begins on the tonic, then merely outlines a dominant triad. The second half of the ten-measure song (excluding the six measures of piano introduction and codetta) contains two two-measure phrases that move in thirds from tonic to dominant again, before outlining a tonic chord and then a dominant triad. The range of the melody is compact, at an octave. The song still borrows much from the Irish dance tradition in its binary form and dotted rhythms, but the simplicity of the melody, harmonic movement, and compact range all suggest that perceived primitive or simple musical elements were applied to that tradition for the purpose of invoking blackness.

The dotted rhythms of “Do I Do I Don’t Do Nothing” show that structural analysis does not reveal every way in which Irishness shaped early minstrel music. Indeed, characteristic rhythms are fundamental to both Irish traditional styles and African-American music. Those rhythmic traditions differ in key ways; while African-American music often contains syncopation that works to offset or subvert

⁷⁴ Joel Walker Sweeney, “Ole Tare River” (Boston: Henry Prentiss, 1840).

⁷⁵ “Do I Do I Don’t Do Nothing” (Baltimore: G. Willig, 1825).

GINGER BLUE.

My name is ginger blue and wat I tell yous mity true I come from the Tennessee

moun-tains, My pa-ragraf is short and my words they are as true, As the

wa-ters what flows from the fountains, The first thing that I sed, when I could

The musical score consists of piano accompaniment and vocal lines. The piano part is written in a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The vocal part is written in a single staff with a treble clef. The lyrics are placed below the vocal line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into three systems, each with piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The lyrics are: "My name is ginger blue and wat I tell yous mity true I come from the Tennessee", "moun-tains, My pa-ragraf is short and my words they are as true, As the", and "wa-ters what flows from the fountains, The first thing that I sed, when I could". There is a triplet of eighth notes in the vocal line corresponding to the word "sed".

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1841, by Firth & Hall, in the Clerk's office of the District Court of Southern District of N. Y.

Chorus.

raise dis nigger head, To the dar-kies all on the plan-ta-tion, Was

walk chalk ginger blue get over double trouble old Vir-gi-nia ne-ber tier

Reel:

Figure 2.4: “Ginger Blue,” by R. W. (Dick) Pelham. Published in New York by Firth and Hall in 1841.

strong beats, Irish music usually features the uneven rhythms of jigs and hornpipes while maintaining steady emphasis on strong beats. The pre-1843 minstrel repertoire frequently adopts characteristic rhythms of Irish music, featuring dotted patterns that remain relatively steady while emphasizing strong beats. This is clear in the frequency of the hornpipe, with its characteristic lilt. Uneven rhythms also appear in a number of other contexts in this repertoire. “Do I Do I Don’t Do Nothing” begins with triplets in the right-hand piano part, before offering the first section of melody that alternates between dotted and straight rhythms. “Jim Brown,” another hornpipe, has a number of rhythmic snaps that emphasize the downbeats, another characteristic of Irish dance music that commonly appears in early minstrel repertoire (figure 2.8).

Blackface minstrel music before the shifts that accompanied the 1843 work of the Virginia Minstrels contained significant and clear similarities with Irish traditional styles that emerged in the genre in part because of the Irishness of the genre's practitioners and audiences. Elements of Irish music were adapted for early minstrelsy to create music that sounded more simple or primitive, communicating that the characters being depicted were of a lower order than the Irish themselves. In the 1840s, the Virginia Minstrels and their star performer, the Irish-American

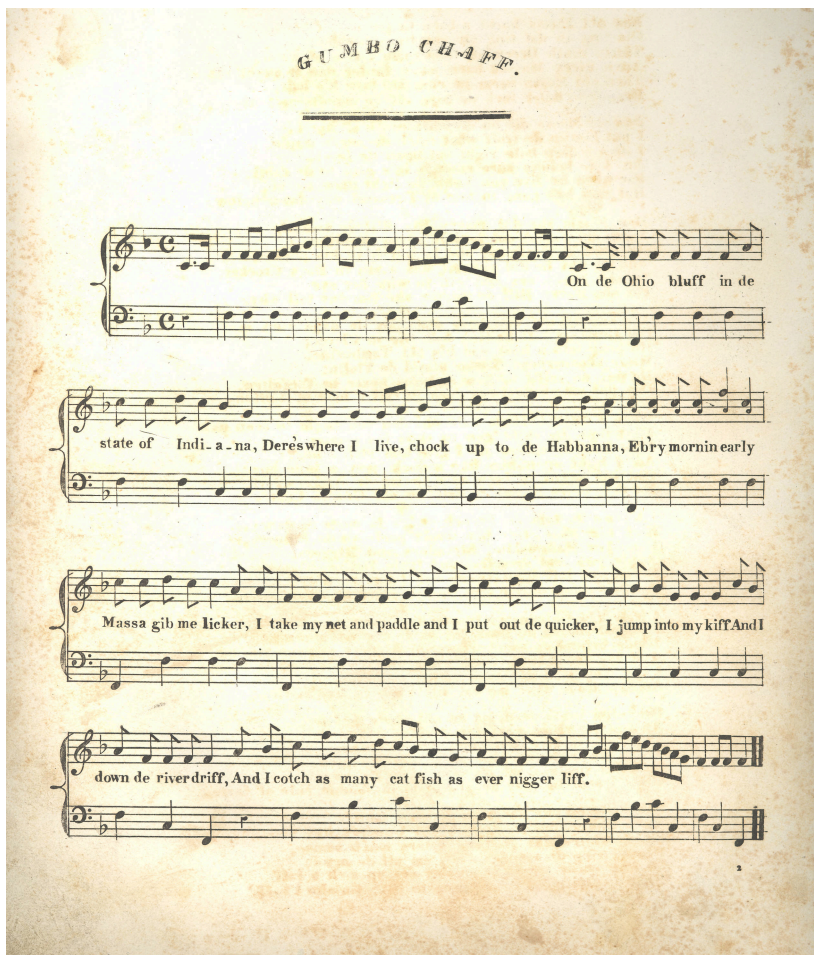


Figure 2.5: "Gumbo Chaff," published in New York by Firth and Hall in 1832.

OLE TARE RIVER.

Way down in North Carolina

On de banks of Ole Tare River. I go from dar to

Al-a-bama For to see my ole Aunt Hannah.

134

Figure 2.6: "Ole Tare River," by Joel Walker Sweeney. Published in Boston by Henry Prentiss in 1840.

DO I DO I DON'T DO NOTHING.
 NEGRO SONG.

Arranged by an
 AMATEUR.

BALTIMORE. Published and Sold by G. WILLIG.

STACCATO.

Do I do I don't do nothing

Do I do I don't do nothing Master say I don't do nothing

Master say I don't do nothing Work all night work all day Master say you don't do nothing Work all night

work all day Master say you don't do nothing

2	3
[:Do I do I don't do nothing:]	[:Do I do I don't do nothing:]
[:Mistress say I don't do nothing:]	[:Lasy dog I don't do nothing:]
[:Work all day work all night	[:Work all night work all day
Morning come I don't do nothing:]	Lasy dog I don't do nothing:]

Entered according to act of Congress the 15th day of November 1825 by G Willig of the state of Maryland

Figure 2.7: "Do I Do I Don't Do Nothing," published in Baltimore by George Willig in 1825.

I am de sas. sy nigger, An dey call me Jim Brown, I plays upon de
 Bon. jo all about de town, I hate de common nigger, I no shake dem by de
 hau, O shaw, I am de leader ob de famus nigger ban, I plays upon de
 fife, an I plays upon de drum, I am de bes musi. an dat now or ebber
 swum lalle doodle lalle doodle lalle doodle laddle la, lalle doodle lal.le

Figure 2.8: "Jim Brown," by William Clifton. Published in New York by George Endicott in 1836.

Dan Emmett, popularized a new musical style that adopted more rhythmic intricacy and expanded the role of the refrain. Their music engendered shifts in structure and rhythmic style within the genre. In the process, the relationship between blackface minstrel music and Irishness shifted as well.

Elevation through Syncopation: The Irish and Minstrelsy After 1843

In 1843, four blackface performers devised a new format for their act. At the time, blackface routines generally involved a single performer who appeared during a segment of a longer show such as a circus or, as in the case of T. D. Rice, as an individual performer in a one-act play. The quartet that became the Virginia Minstrels, including frontman Dan Emmett, had noticed a contemporary fashion for four-part harmony in more respectable entertainment spheres, exemplified by the successes of the Tyrolese Minstrels and the Hutchinson Family Singers. They also noticed their dwindling pocketbooks; lingering economic hardship on the heels of the 1837 financial crisis continued to have an impact on theatrical ventures' bottom lines. They arrived at a new solution: to perform together as an ensemble for an entire evening and to present cleaner, more family-friendly material. The quartet did not need to split the receipts with other acts, and they could appeal to the middle classes instead of the lowest strata of society, charging more for tickets. The new format was economically more viable, if they could keep an audience entertained for the full length of the evening with just four people. That they did; the Virginia Minstrels sparked a craze that stretched across national boundaries and contributed to minstrelsy's status as the most popular theatrical genre of the

nineteenth century. Their act achieved great renown in part because of their new, infectious style of music.

The Virginia Minstrels' repertoire, some of it written or adapted by Dan Emmett, was incredibly catchy. A contemporaneous newspaper article claims that "Old Dan Tucker," the Virginia Minstrels' breakout hit, was "the best of . . . the ancient negro ballads. The melody was far superior to anything that had preceded it."⁷⁶ Such memorability derives from a new approach to rhythm that blackface architects like Dan Emmett and Joel Walker Sweeney had learned in creolized environments, laid over top of the structures and rhythmic elements of Irish music present in the earlier repertoire.⁷⁷

Examples of such practice abound. In the refrain of "Old Dan Tucker" (figure 2.9), rhythms serve to obscure strong beats or move emphasis off of the downbeat of the measure. The dotted rhythm that accompanies the lyric "Get out de way!," for instance, creates brief syncopation that is rare in earlier minstrel repertoire. Rhythmic snaps on the second, weaker beat of the measure further offset the traditional emphasis on the downbeat. Other songs reveal still more approaches to rhythm that make the pulse ambiguous. In "De Boatman Dance," another 1843 Virginia Minstrels hit, a dotted eighth–sixteenth rhythmic device moves between the first beat and the second beat of the 2/4 measures (figure 2.10). Even more dramatic is "My Old Aunt Sally," which in the refrain contains groupings of three

⁷⁶ *Worcester National Aegis*, 22 March 1843; quoted in Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 156.

⁷⁷ Cockrell, *Creolization of American Culture*, 157.

sixteenth notes and one sixteenth rest that are, in the very next phrase, offset from themselves by a sixteenth note, creating ambiguity in pulse (figure 2.11).

Figure 2.9 shows the musical score for "Old Dan Tucker" by Dan Emmett. The score is in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a voice line and a piano accompaniment. The voice line has lyrics: "So get out de way! get out de way!" and "get out de way, Ole Dan Tuck - er! you're too late to come to sup - per". The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

Figure 2.9: "Old Dan Tucker," by Dan Emmett.

Figure 2.10 shows the musical score for "De Boatman Dance" by Dan Emmett. The score is in 2/4 time with a key signature of two flats (Bb). It features a voice line with lyrics: "Dance de Boat - man dance Oh dance de boat - man dance We dance all night Till broad day - light Go home wid de gals in de morn - in Hi ho de Boat - man row Float - in down de Rib - er ob de O - hi - o Hi ho de Boat - man row." The score is written on a single staff with a treble clef.

Figure 2.10: "De Boatman Dance," by Dan Emmett.

Voice

O Sal - ly, O Sal - ly, my old__ aunt__ Sal - ly, I'll tell you ob a scrape I had,

4

wid my lub-ly Sal- ly. Sal- ly, Sal- ly, my old aunt Sal- ly, Ra re ri ro roun de cor-ner Sal- ly.

Figure 2.11: “My Old Aunt Sally,” with lyrics by Dan Emmett.

The shifts in the music of blackface minstrelsy coincided with shifting immigration dynamics and changes in Irish-American experiences that engendered newfound group identity. Before 1820, Irish immigrants were largely Scots-Irish, and they often shared Protestant religion and middle-class sensibilities with their new American neighbors. The need for unskilled labor in the United States for construction projects created a wave of immigration in which unskilled, impoverished, and largely Catholic laborers settled in maritime and riverine communities where racial mixing led to creolized forms of music-making.⁷⁸ These Irish Americans had plenty of work in the great canal projects in New York, Louisiana, and Ohio, where blackface practice emerged. The formation of the first working men’s parties in Philadelphia and New York in 1828 and 1829 coincide with the emergence of the first blackface sensation, “Jump Jim Crow.” This reflects dynamics described by Lott and Lhamon, in which a growing sense of working-class cohesion shaped early minstrel productions.

Over the course of the next 15 years, as early minstrelsy took root across the country, dramatic numbers of Irish Catholic immigrants entered the United States.

⁷⁸ Timothy Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History*, Columbia Guides to American History and Cultures (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 55.

David Noel Doyle writes that so many Irish immigrants entered the country in the 1830s that this decade experienced “the real shift to mass migration,” rather than the following one.⁷⁹ As poor, Catholic Irish immigrants overwhelmed American infrastructure, notions of Irishness in the United States aligned with Catholicism and unskilled laborers. For the first time, Catholic Irish outnumbered Scots- and Anglo-Irish. Gradually, the Irish in America began to look different than the Protestant middle class that conceived itself as the norm in the United States. Irishness began to feel more like difference, and concerns about increased Irish presence in the New World fueled one of the first nativist movements. During the 1830s, the Catholic population of the United States more than doubled from 300,000 to 660,000.⁸⁰ The enormity of the demographic shift combined with growing bias on the part of non-Irish fostered a sense of Irish, and specifically Catholic Irish, identity. This coincided with economic depression in 1837, which lasted until 1843, the very year of the Virginia Minstrels’ formation. Doyle notes that this was one of the few times before the Great Famine in which the American labor market could not support the country’s immigrant population.⁸¹ Catholic Irish Americans, growing more numerous, with strained financial resources, began to more forcefully separate themselves from African-Americans, sometimes espousing racist opinions.

⁷⁹ David Noel Doyle, “The Irish in North America, 1776–1845,” in *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States*, edited by J. J. Lee and Marion R. Casey (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 185.

⁸⁰ For the 1830 statistic: James M. O’Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 54. For the 1840 statistic: Gerald Shaughnessy, *Has the Immigrant Kept the Faith? A Study of Immigration and Catholic Growth in the United States, 1790–1920* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 134.

⁸¹ David Noel Doyle, “The Irish in North America,” 185.

Historians have noted the early 1840s as a critical moment for the formation of many modern concepts of Irish-American identity, particularly in matters of race. In the germinal study of Irish-Americans and race, *How the Irish Became White*, Noel Ignatiev notes that the Irish articulated their whiteness by distancing themselves from expressions of unity with African Americans. The Irish revolutionary Daniel O'Connell disastrously misjudged Irish-American attitudes toward slavery during those years. An 1841 address to Irish-Americans in which he compared Catholic emancipation and the abolition movement drew opprobrium and skepticism. The Irish in the United States were almost uniformly supportive of slavery, or at least hesitant to act to abolish it. Reasons were multiple; many groups who were perceived enemies of the Irish on religious and political matters were associated with abolition. Northern Protestant groups and the British, who had abolished slavery in the empire in 1833, were suspect to many Catholic Irish. Irish Americans also resisted being aligned with blackness; in order to express whiteness, the Irish became anti-black. Ignatiev writes: "instead of the Irish love of liberty warming America, the winds of republican slavery blew. . . The Irish had faded from Green to white."⁸²

Just as Noel Ignatiev has noted Irish Americans distancing themselves from African Americans in other areas, minstrels distanced their depictions of blackness from Irish practice. In doing so, they separated concepts of themselves from their perceptions of African Americans. The music of the Virginia Minstrels disrupted rhythmic traditions that emanated from Ireland. 1840s minstrel music thus

⁸² Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 31.

presents a unique example in this dissertation; though Irish musical characteristics diminished over time, Irishness continued to shape the genre. The social dynamics of the 1840s that involved the Irish defining themselves in opposition to African Americans suggest that the shifts in musical style were still intimately connected to Irishness, though in different ways. The introduction illuminated three significant channels through which Irishness emerged in American musical life: Irish people, musical influence, and concepts of the Irish. In the Virginia Minstrels, the musical category diminished, but because Irish people continued to play a significant role in the genre, the significance of Irish influence remained intact.

Indeed, the various modes by which the Irish came to shape blackface minstrelsy over such a long period of time is striking. In order to understand the extent of influence, we must acknowledge the significance of all three methods. In the performed stereotypes on display, minstrelsy drew deeply on established stage Irishman characters; performers and audiences alike were largely of Irish descent; and, the music of early minstrelsy reflects the influence of Irish musical practices. Brought together, the connections between the Irish and minstrelsy vividly demonstrate a profound relationship between the two. Only by acknowledging the different ways in which the Irish influenced minstrelsy can we understand how and why the genre emerged in the first place.

Chapter 3

“We Crave Your Condescension”: Negotiating Irishness in Harrigan and Hart’s Mulligan Series

Mulligan: Get a row of American flags on the right hand wid a row of
Irish flags on the left blending.
McSweeney: Blending.
Mulligan: Yes, blending. Dovetailing intertwining[.]
McSweeney: I understand.

-Edward Harrigan, *The Mulligan Guard Ball*¹

“The Mulligan Guard” was one of the most popular songs of 1873. Indeed, it sparked a craze that crossed American class divides.² In February 1874, a Chicago journalist remarked on the ubiquity of the song:

Now the “Mulligan Guards” hold all negro minstrel-dom, and a good deal of otherdom, spellbound. . . You may hear it high and low in New York today and to-night. At the Academy of Music, where velvets, laces and diamonds flutter and glisten and many stringed instruments thrill the soul with melody, there you have your “Mulligan Guards.” At the “varieties” where only men and women of vulgar or vicious tastes and habits congregate, they require the band to play that tune. In Barter Street the newsboys have a theatre where the damages are five cents. The veritable “Mulligan Guards” pays them a visit, only not dressed in its best flourishes and embellishments. They take just the plain tune and call it heavenly.

The “Mulligan Guards” have not been to prayer-meeting yet; but they

¹ David Braham and Edward Harrigan, *Irish American Theater: The Mulligan Guard Ball (1879) and Reilly and the 400 (1891)*, ed. Katherine Preston. *Nineteenth-Century American Musical Theater* 10 (New York: Garland, 1994), 28.

² The best description of the Mulligan craze can be found in: Jon Finson, “Realism in Late Nineteenth-Century American Musical Theater: The Songs of Edward Harrigan and David Braham,” in *Edward Harrigan and David Braham: Collected Songs 1, 1873–1882*, *Recent Researches in American Music* 27, *Music of the United States of America* 7 (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1997), xv–xxiii.

have been everywhere else. The sexton whistles the refrain of the “Mulligan Guards” while he builds the fires in the church, and the deacon passes around the plate humming a line of it without stopping to know what tune is in his head, other than that it is an awful good one. Three cheers for the “Mulligan Guards” . . . !³

Central to “The Mulligan Guard” was the combination of older, negative Irish stereotypes and a new, changing image of Irish Americans that positioned them as successful and upstanding residents of New York City.

In this chapter, I examine Irishness in the Mulligan series, which encompasses the original song, a series of related sketches that followed, later full-length musical plays, and corresponding musical materials, all set in the imaginary world of “The Mulligan Guard.” The Irish characters in the Mulligan series are related to the stage Irishmen discussed in Chapter 2, but differ in several significant ways. The characters inhabit surroundings familiar to many among Harrigan and Hart’s New York audiences: a working-class neighborhood in their own city. They also present an array of ideas about Irish Americans that include positive, idealistic interpretations, and representations that resemble earlier disparaging examples of stage Irishman. In presenting different images of Irishness, the entertainments could appeal to audiences with numerous ideas about Irish Americans. In the 1870s United States, Reconstruction, African-American migrations, and new immigration waves of non-English-speaking populations including Italian and Jewish people challenged old notions of American identities. Irish Americans continued to gain social and economic status in the New World and concepts of Irishness in the United States became massively and increasingly diversified. The quote that opens this

³ *Pomeroy’s Democrat* (Chicago), 14 Feb. 1874, p. 5.

chapter alludes to a blending of Americanness and Irishness. Indeed, the most socially and financially successful Irish characters in the Mulligan series define not only what it means to be a successful Irish person in their world, but in the absence of significant Anglo-American characters, they define Americanness for themselves and their black, German, Italian, and Jewish neighbors. This is depicted in the music as well as lyrics and dialogue, making music a critical site for promoting such emerging ideas about Irishness in American theatrical culture of the 1870s and 1880s.

Genesis of “The Mulligan Guard”

The Mulligans’ creators had much experience with both the diverse working-class urban neighborhoods in which the Mulligan series is set and theatrical entertainments that explored racial and national differences. The initial song was written by lyricist Edward Harrigan (1844–1911) and composer David Braham (1834–1905) for the comedic duo of Harrigan and “Tony Hart,” whose real name was Anthony Cannon (1855–1891). Harrigan, a third-generation Irish-American from Corlear’s Hook on the Lower East Side of New York City, grew up in a situation similar to that which he depicted in the Mulligan series.⁴ Prior to entering theatrical

⁴ Some debate has emerged over Harrigan’s own Irish identity. His paternal grandfather, born in Cork before immigrating to Newfoundland, Canada, is the only forebear mentioned as Irish in the literature. Richard Moody, Harrigan’s biographer, questioned Harrigan’s claim to Irishness, noting that he “saw Ireland only once, late in life,” and suggesting that those who saw Harrigan as Irish ignored evidence to the contrary and were “stuck to the myth.” Subsequent writers, including Katherine Preston and James H. Dormon, have likewise raised doubts. Harrigan’s ties to Ireland were more removed than many of those in New York’s slums in the 1870s, which were largely populated by immigrants from the years of the Great Famine

life, Harrigan learned his father's trade of ship caulking. For that work, he went to San Francisco in 1867. There, he became an Irish comic singer at a local melodeon and then a minstrel end man. He traveled with a troupe known as the California Comedians, and by 1871 he had arrived in Chicago, where he met Hart. A juvenile-delinquent-turned-minstrel-funnyman, Hart grew up in Worcester, Massachusetts, as the son of Irish famine immigrants.⁵ He was known in particular for his female impersonations. The pair began traveling together and met Braham later the same year in New York. Braham, an English émigré of more distant German Jewish extraction, was a composer and musician who often performed at Tony Pastor's Opera House.⁶

Harrigan and Braham wrote "The Mulligan Guard," a comedic take on a New York-based Irish paramilitary organization, in 1872. It represents a fond reminiscence by former members of the guard, now defunct. Lyrics describe marching out to an open space where target practice takes place, then marching home and subsequent revelry. Harrigan and Braham incorporated the song into a

(1845–1851) and its aftermath. However, as Kerby Miller demonstrated in *Emigrants and Exiles*, Irish-Americans commonly identify as Irish after many generations of living in North America, and it would not be unusual for Harrigan to identify as Irish American, particularly as he grew up in a predominantly Irish-American neighborhood on the Lower East Side. Richard Moody, *Ned Harrigan: From Corlear's Hook to Herald Square* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980), 7; Katherine Preston, "Introduction," in Braham and Harrigan, *Irish American Theater*, xiii; James H. Dorman, "Ethnic Cultures of the Mind: The Harrigan-Hart Mosaic," *American Studies* 33, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 24; Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁵ Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 279.

⁶ For more on Braham's Jewishness: John Charles Franceschina, *David Braham: The American Offenbach*, *Forgotten Stars of the Musical Theatre*, ed. Kurt Gänzl (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3.

variety sketch, premiering it in Chicago in August 1873.⁷ In the sketch, three people occupied the stage: Hart, who played captain Jack Hussey, Harrigan, who represented the rest of the company, and Morgan Benson, an African American boy whom Harrigan and Hart hired to carry the target after they observed him performing the task for a real company.⁸ As can be seen in figure 3.2, Harrigan and Hart wore flamboyant and ill-fitted clothing. Hart's costume, on the left, included an oversized busby hat with a coat so small that his white undershirt showed beneath, and Harrigan carried a sword so long that it scraped the ground when he moved.

Contemporaneous cultural ephemera leave us clues to the depth of the international Mulligan craze. Its success led to a wide variety of commercial spin-offs. The song "Ten Little Indian Boys" became "Ten Little Mulligan Guards." A book by that name, published in 1874, provides new, child-oriented lyrics for the song and instructions for a game.⁹ In one illustration for the book (figure 3.1), two of the miniature guardsmen are modeled on characters from the sketch. The African-American child holding the target and the child in the oversized busby hat, coat with tails, and a broom are modeled on Morgan Benson's and Hart's characters, respectively. Along the bottom is the notated melody of the chorus. Two books were

⁷ Deane Root, *American Popular Stage Music, 1860–1880*, Studies in Musicology, ed. George Buelow (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981), 56.

⁸ The real Jack Hussey was a celebrity in New York for saving people who had fallen into New York's waterways. He averaged at least one life saved per year during most of his adult life. Ironically, he was shot and killed in 1887 by a drunk and belligerent man who had, earlier in the day, been on a target excursion. "Capt. Jack Hussey Shot: By Officer Hahn, of the Twelfth Precinct," *New York Times*, 3 June 1887. Regarding Morgan Benson, see E. J. Kahn, Jr., *The Merry Partners: The Age and Stage of Harrigan and Hart* (New York: Random House, 1955), 85.

⁹ David Braham and Edward Harrigan, *The Ten Little Mulligan Guards* (New York: McLoughlin Bros., 1874).

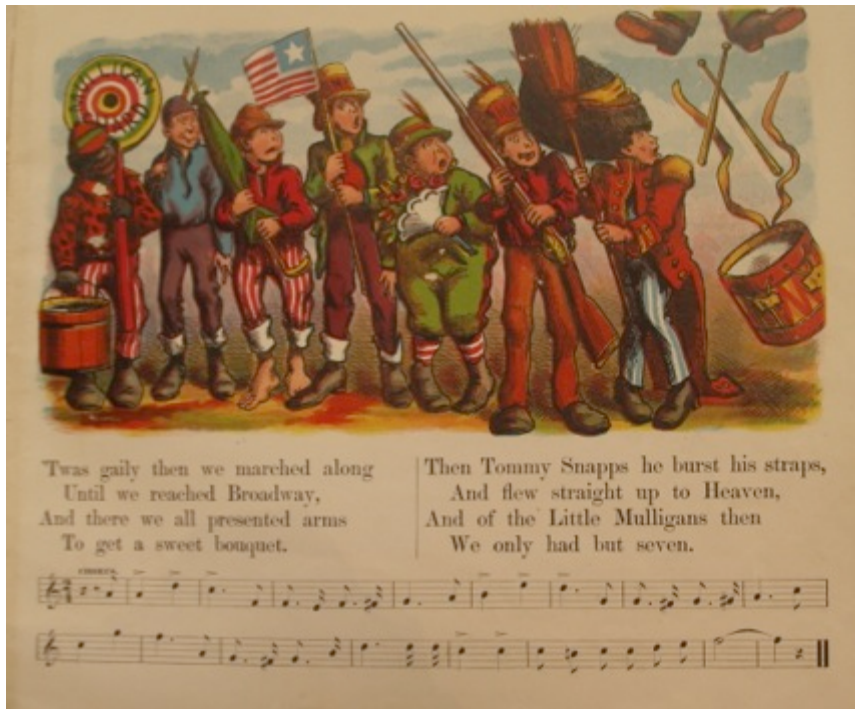


Figure 3.1: *The Ten Little Mulligan Guards* by David Braham and Edward Harrigan, excerpt. Published 1874 in New York by McLoughlin Bros. In this game, the African-American boy holding the target is counted among the Guard, which was not the case in the related theatrical works.

published on the fictional history of the Guard: one anonymously authored in 1874 and the other by Harrigan in 1901.¹⁰ Patrick Gilmore, an Irish-American bandleader, regularly played a version of the song with his touring band. John Philip Sousa, as late as 1917, included a drawing of *The Mulligan Guard* sketch on the cover of a St. Patrick's Day concert program (figure 3.2). The popularity of "The Mulligan Guard" was not even limited to North America; sources suggest the song was known in Europe and beyond. A French translation was popular in Paris, and in Rudyard Kipling's 1901 novel, *Kim*, an Irish regiment stationed in India sings a version of the

¹⁰ *History of the Mulligan Guard* (New York: Collin and Small, 1874); Edward Harrigan, *The Mulligans* (New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1901).



Figure 3.2: Sousa Band concert program, cover (New York: 1917).

song adapted for the British colonial military.¹¹ Rather than marching from New York City's "Sligo Ward," presumably an area of the city inhabited by immigrants from the Irish town of Sligo, the soldiers march from "Sligo Port" in Ireland itself.¹²

¹¹ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, and Co. 1922), 128.

¹² Some thirty-thousand people fled from the town of Sligo during the famine. For more information, see John C. McTernan, *Memory Harbour: The Port of Sligo, an Outline of its Growth and Decline and its Role as an Emigration Port* (Sligo: Avena Publications, 1992); For accounts of emigration practices in Sligo during the famine and scholarly discourse over controversial issues, see Tyler Anbinder, "Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration," *Historical Journal* 41, no. 2 (June 2001): 441–69; and Desmond Norton, "Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration: A Rejoinder," *Historical Journal* 46, no. 1 (March 2003): 155–65.

While the Chicago journalist above may have embellished the point, reception of the song is remarkable for its appeal across social, economic, and geographic boundaries.

Privately organized militias like that depicted in “The Mulligan Guard,” known as target companies, were common in 1870s New York. The groups were typically assembled according to members of a group, often defined by race or national origin, including German, African-American, and Irish. The groups’ membership criteria provided a theatrical vehicle for focused consideration of Irish-American men. Target excursion companies originated in the 1830s as a result of immigrants’ exclusion from New York’s state-financed militias. By the 1870s, however, immigrants could participate in the American military, and indeed they played a vital role in the Civil War. Target companies had lost their original function, but remained active for purposes of communal celebration—festive expressions of group unity, often supported with politicians’ private funds and characterized by flamboyant displays and much alcohol. Harrigan described his inspiration to write the lyrics:

In the different wards of New York the young men form military organizations which they name after some prominent ward politician. These companies arrange a target excursion, engage a band, and after marching to the residences of the leading politicians and paying their compliments . . . the companies march to the depot or steamer landing for the picnic ground where the target firing takes place. . . . these excursions sometimes end in a terrible riot, in which some people are killed or wounded.¹³

¹³ Edward Harrigan, Letter, *Dexter Smith’s Paper*, September 1894, Robinson Locke Scrapbook, MS-332, Bowling Green State University; cited in Alicia Kae Koger, “A Critical Analysis of Edward Harrigan’s Comedy,” Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1984, 40.

The combination of firearms and alcohol consumption in target excursions surely contributed to the violence.

The characters of the Mulligan Guard, while not without faults such as overdrinking and belligerence, were more positively portrayed than earlier examples of stage Irishmen in the United States. Discussed in Chapter 2, the stage Irishman was imported from Britain in the seventeenth century. He was a stereotyped representation of an Irish male that reflected the longstanding political conflicts between the British Empire and Ireland, as well as socio-political challenges that resulted from waves of Irish immigration to England. According to author and Irish literary scholar Robert Welch, the stage Irishman's "chief identifying marks were disorderly manners and insalubrious habits," which included heavy drinking, belligerence, an Irish brogue, and a penchant for wordplay known as the Irish bull.¹⁴ Songs about stage Irishmen belong to a category of stereotypes of the Irish that Williams terms "comic," discussed in the introduction and Chapter 2. Imported to American theater, the stage Irishman responded to its new contexts. Chapter 2 addressed theater pieces by Thomas "Daddy" Rice, a progenitor of blackface minstrelsy who popularized "Jump Jim Crow." His work incorporated stage Irish characters into New World environments. These Irish characters took their place in a social hierarchy that included Anglo-Americans at the top. They were often at or closer to the bottom, sharing social space with African

¹⁴ Robert Welch, "stage-Irishman," in *The Concise Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2000).
<http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800800.001.0001/acref-9780192800800-e-2230>. Accessed 20 May 2014.

American characters. With their “Mulligan Guard,” Harrigan and Hart also placed Irish stage characters in the United States and had them navigate distinctly American social milieus, as had T. D. Rice before them.

Changing the location from Old World to the New World was not the only shift in the stage Irish characters presented on nineteenth-century American stages. Over the course of several decades, American theatrical entertainment featured increasingly more complex images of the Irish. Such changes accompanied an increased role by Irish and Irish-Americans themselves in character creation that resulted in healthier, less pigeonholed iterations of the type. Actors and playwrights including Tyrone Power (1795–1841), John Brougham (1814–1880), Barney Williams (1824–1876), Samuel Lover (1797–1868), and Dion Bouccicault (1820–1890) presented more functional Irish characters.¹⁵

For instance, *Rory O'More* depicted an honest, hardworking, upstanding Irish man. It began as an 1826 song by Lover. The ballad inspired a novel in 1837, which in turn was adapted for a theatre piece on American stages.¹⁶ The title character in the play, popularized by Power, is an Irish peasant who becomes involved in the failed United Irishmen rebellion when he shelters the messenger of a French general in 1797.¹⁷ In the play, he displays loyalty to Ireland and to his family, and a courageous adherence to republican values that likely resonated with American

¹⁵ William H. A. Williams, *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800–1920*, Music in American Life (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 63–77.

¹⁶ For the song: Samuel Lover, “Rory O'Moore” (Boston: Oliver Ditson, n.d.); for the novel: Samuel Lover, *Rory O'More: A National Romance*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Carey Lea and Blanchard, 1837); for the play: Samuel Lover, *Rory O'More: A Comic Drama in Three Acts* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1837).

¹⁷ Samuel Lover, *Rory O'More: A Comic Drama*.

audiences. He does not exhibit many of the damaging characteristics of the earlier stage Irishman. Indeed, placed in a distant, historical version of Ireland and reflecting a bucolic way of life, he is more in line with the Romantic stereotype of the Irish, discussed in the introduction and Chapter 1. Such Irish characters were rarely seen in American theater of the eighteenth century.¹⁸

While more positive images emerged on American stages, the older, more disparaging stage Irishman also continued in New World contexts, making the ways that the Irish were characterized on stage immensely diverse. Power often played more traditional and derogatory Irish characters. His most popular role, in *O'Flannigan and the Fairies* (1836), even drew public criticism from the Irish-American community on account of his problematic depiction of an Irish character.¹⁹

The most disparaging Irish characters in the New World appeared most often on the blackface minstrel stage. Significantly, Harrigan and Hart entered the entertainment business as blackface performers, learning the complex methods of Othering at the center of minstrelsy before creating the Mulligans. Indeed, the Chicago journalist cited at the beginning of this chapter suggests that “The Mulligan Guard” is part of “negro minstrelism.”²⁰ Though the sketch was not performed in blackface, it takes much from the minstrel tradition. Quite often, blackface performers presented Paddy characters in the same burnt cork masks they displayed for African American characters. For instance, the Harvard Theatre

¹⁸ One notable exception is: Thomas Sheridan, *Captain O'Blunder, or, The Brave Irishman* (Dublin: R. Watts, 1754).

¹⁹ Williams, *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream*, 68.

²⁰ *Pomeroy's Democrat* (Chicago), 14 Feb. 1874, p. 5.

Collection contains a playbill of a Virginia Minstrels (likely a knock off and not the ensemble that included Frank Brower, Dan Emmett, Dick Pelham, and Billy Whitlock) that includes the music hall favorite, “Finnegan’s Wake”—a comedic take on Irish drinking and violence set at an Irish Catholic wake—programmed alongside songs with racist titles of “Tapioca,” “Monkeys Wedding,” and “Jumbo Jum’s College,” that suggest the songs lampooned African Americans.²¹ Paddy featured similar buffoonish and grotesque qualities as black minstrel characters like Jim Crow and Zip Coon, drawing deeply on earlier incarnations of stage Irishmen. Indeed, contrafacta on the same tune were sometimes used to portray African Americans and Irish.

Comparing one such example illuminates the similarities in treatment that African Americans and the Irish sometimes garnered on minstrel stages. The song

²¹ Virginia Minstrels Playbill, folder 607, series II, American Minstrel Show Collection (MS Thr 556), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. “Finnegan’s Wake” belongs to a category of Irish and Irish-American songs I term wake songs. In this popular plot, a sudden death occurs, generally as the result of a fall or other accident spurred by consumption of alcohol. Attendees of the subsequent wake drink, become belligerent, and begin to fight. In the course of the brawl, whiskey is spilled into the corpse’s mouth. The drop of the “creature” revives the “corpse,” and the resurrection brings an end to the fighting and gives new cause for celebration. Wake songs rely on two double entendres. In the first, “whiskey,” is commonly believed to have derived from the Gaelic *uisce beatha*, or “water of life”—literally, a drink that can bestow life. Second, “wake” is taken both as the Catholic ceremony of bringing a body into a church for funeral rites, and awakening, as Finnegan ultimately does. “Finnegan’s Wake,” first documented as an anonymously authored folk song in the British Isles in the 1850s, became the most popular wake song. Its popularity has continued; the song served as inspiration for James Joyce’s 1939 novel, *Finnegans Wake*, and Irish bands frequently perform the tune as part of their traditional canon, including The Dubliners and the Dropkick Murphys. In the United States, Dan Bryant performed the song in the 1860s, and William Pond published it in 1864. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939); The Dubliners, *Finnegan Wakes*, 2003, Castle Music, B0007SL3I8, compact disc; Dropkick Murphys, *Do or Die*, 1998, Hellcat Records, B000001INI, compact disc.

“Fine Old English Gentleman” often served as the basis for minstrel parodies.²²

There was both a “Fine Old Color’d Gentleman” and a “Fine Old Irish Gentleman.”

The lyrics of the “Fine Old Color’d Gentleman” depict a belligerent problem drinker:

His temper was very mild
When he was let alone,
But when you get him dander up
He spunk to de backbone;

He wail de sugar off you
By double rule of three
And whip his weight in wildcats
When he got on a spree.²³

Similarly, a verse in “Fine Old Irish Gentleman,” here in a version called “Raal Ould Irish Gintelman” (multiple versions of both African-American and Irish parodies circulated widely) references stereotypes of the Irish as belligerent and prone to drinking:

His walls so cold, were cover’d wid the divil a thing for show,
Except an ould shillelah, which had knocked down many a foe,
And there ould Barney sat at ease, without shoes or hose;
And quaff’d his noggin of poteen to warm his big red nose.²⁴

The most disparaging theatrical stereotypes of the Irish were found in minstrel shows, but even more damaging ideas about the Irish were expressed in political commentary. Some viewed growing Irish-American communities as

²² Attributed to Henry Russell. “Fine Old English Gentleman” (New York: James Hewitt, 1836).

²³ “Fine Old Colored Gentleman, as Sung by the Virginia Minstrels,” (Boston: Chas H. Keith, c. 1843). This was a favorite of Dan Emmett and the Virginia Minstrels, who are examined in Chapter 2. Robert B. Winans, “Early Minstrel Show Music, 1843–1852,” in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 155–56.

²⁴ “The Raal Ould Irish Gintelman,” in *Barney Brallaghan’s Songster* (c. 1852). American Antiquarian Society.

harmful to the security of the country. In such a climate, the work of Harrigan and Braham offered a counterweight to critics of the Irish presence in the New World. Political cartoons sometimes depicted particularly damaging stereotypes that reflected Anglo-American fear. As in figure 3.3, an 1871 political cartoon by Thomas Nast, the character at times appeared menacing. The representation displays a remarkably apelike face, reflecting beliefs that the Irish were more primitive than their Anglo-American countrymen. His Irish patriotism and Catholicism were seen as a threat to the United States. He sits atop a powder keg representing the United States, with the labels "Uncle Sam's" and "Spirit of '76." He brandishes a bottle of rum as if it were a weapon. The use of rum, an iconic drink of the Americas, instead of the more stereotypical whiskey situates the Irishman in the New World. In the other hand, he holds a lit torch dangerously close to the gunpowder, capable of destroying the United States, himself included, in an instant. Under his arm is a shillelagh, the stereotypical Irish weapon. The conflict between Ireland and Britain also emerges as an example of a supposed propensity for violence. Writings on the wall such as "everything obnoxious to us shall be abolished" and reference to the Fenians, who violently agitated for Irish independence from Britain, suggest that those advocating for Irish independence were doing so aggressively and ham-handedly. Nast compares the conflict between Ireland and Britain to supposed conflict between Irish and Anglo Americans by supplying a caption with a vitriolic quote from *Irish People*, a New York-based weekly that supported Irish independence, implying that the Irish viewed Anglo Americans with similar resentment: "Shoot down the Orange dogs as you would the common vermin that

afflict your premises.”²⁵ Harrigan and Braham avoided the most derogatory incarnations of Irish stereotypes in their own work. However, the behaviors of the Mulligans share commonalities with such images, in their belligerence and loyalty to the Old World.

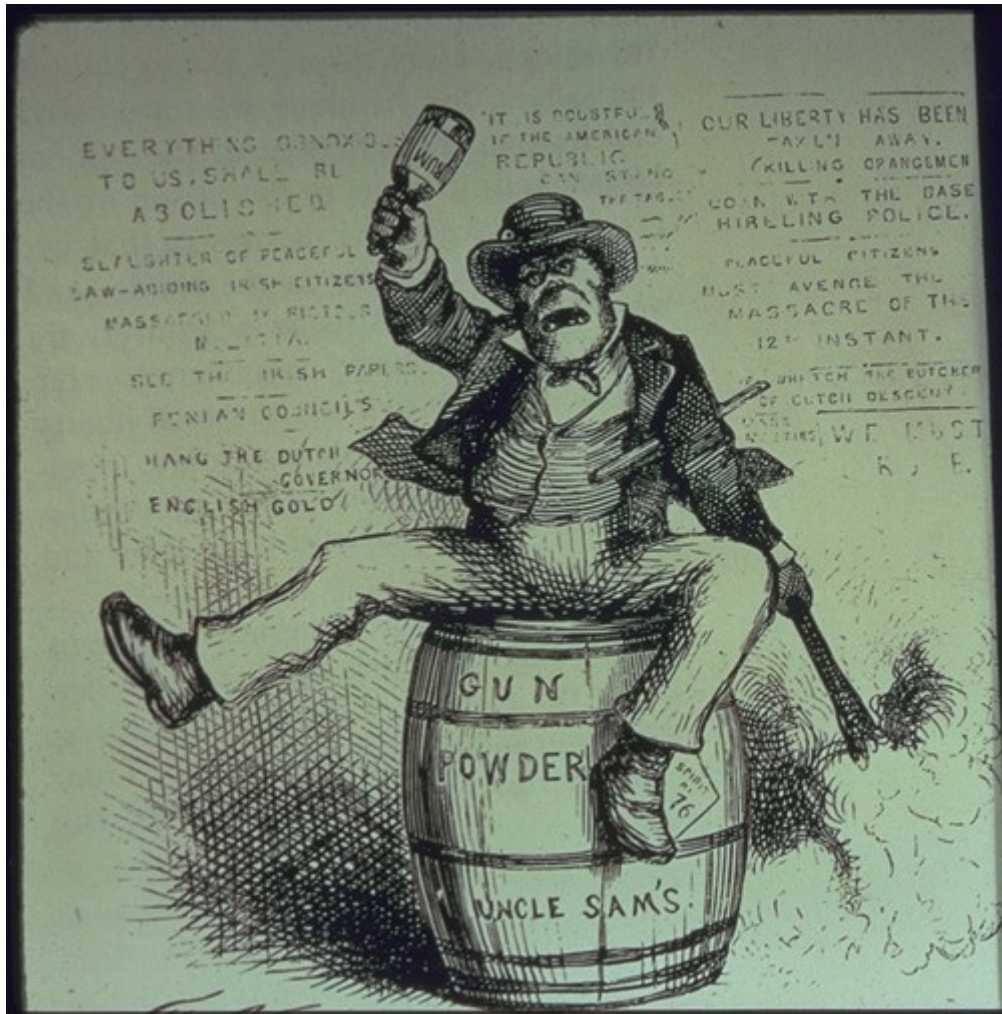


Figure 3.3: A political cartoon titled “The Usual Irish Way of Doing Things” by Thomas Nast, published in *Harper's Weekly* on 2 September 1871, p. 824.

²⁵ *Irish People*, 19 August 1871; cited in *Harper's Weekly*, 2 September 1871, p. 824.

More positive and functional representations of Irish men, including many of Harrigan and Braham's characters, also exhibited a violent streak and an unhealthy relationship with alcohol. Samuel Lover's 1826 song "Rory O'Moore" presents a different personality than does the later Rory of the novel and play. In the song, Rory is unable to express feelings of love for Kathleen and teases her relentlessly until another man courts her. Rory then drinks himself into a stupor and, belligerent, attacks two other men, giving no reason for it. He confesses his misery to Kathleen and proposes, and she accepts. In the song, Rory is no saint. He is belligerent and lacking in communication skills, but he is treated with a measure of love, and we are meant to root for him. The Mulligans, like Rory, are flawed. They are belligerent and they over drink. They act absurdly and lack discipline. But much as the Mulligans present mockable characteristics, they are functional members of society. They do not break the law. They lack the propensity for violence displayed in the Nast cartoon.

Unlike Lover's characters, however, the Mulligans were explicitly American. They do not reflect Anglo-American fear of Irish-American communities like Nast's cartoon so much as they reflect tensions that arise from diverse communities living and working together. Their emergence in the 1870s signals shifting ideas of the Irish that allowed them to be more included in the cultural fabric of the United States. The next section examines the nuances of the changes as they emerged in the Mulligan Series.

Changing Irish Identities in the Mulligan Series

More so than earlier entertainments, Harrigan and Hart productions emphasized the realities of life for most Irish immigrants to American cities and, without completely idealizing their characters, portrayed some of them favorably in ways that resonated with American audiences. Scholars of Harrigan and Braham, such as Carl Wittke, Charles Hamm, Deane Root, Jon Finson, and Katherine Preston, notice the team's sensitive, realistic portrayals of working-class New Yorkers, particularly the Irish.²⁶ They blended comic and Romantic images in familiar surroundings to American audiences. Though the initial sketch likely did not imitate life as much as later works in the Mulligan series, the focus on a target company reflects this concern for representing urban life.

The creative team that constructed the Mulligan series was concerned with realistic representations in their work.²⁷ The on-stage environment mimicked life outside as much as possible. Sets were often modeled on actual locations in working-class neighborhoods of New York City.²⁸ Costumes were purchased from second hand stores in the city and off the backs of some particularly characteristic pedestrians, and characters spoke in dialects specific to New York City's lower wards. Such realism extended to the characters, but, in an age when racial and

²⁶ Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 258; Hamm, *Yesterdays*, 279–81; Root, *American Popular Stage Music*, 59; Jon Finson, "Realism in Late Nineteenth-Century American Musical Theater: The Songs of Edward Harrigan and David Braham," in *Edward Harrigan and David Braham: Collected Songs 1, 1873–1882*, Recent Researches in American Music 27, Music of the United States of America 7 (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1997), XV; Katherine Preston, "Introduction," in *Irish American Theater*, xviii.

²⁷ Finson, "Realism in Late Nineteenth-Century American Musical Theater," in *Edward Harrigan and David Braham: Collected Songs 1*, xv–xxxv.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

national differences preoccupied so many intellectuals, the Mulligans were not free from exhibiting the stereotypes of their racial and national identities. Instead, the characters in the Mulligan series, especially Irish Americans, were made more functional within the imaginary world of the Mulligans while continuing to exhibit behaviors, speech, and appearances that were considered characteristic of their background and race.

“The Mulligan Guard” lyrics contain numerous textual references to the group’s Irish-American identity and stereotyped behavior (figure 3.4). Indeed, the Irish name in the title indicates the Irish themes of the song. Further references to Sligo, the port town in western Ireland that experienced mass emigration to the United States during the famine, along with Irish names and donning green to “show where we came from” reinforce their Irish-Americanness. The song also makes several references to alcohol, including description of the “slippery” trip home and the whiskey drunk thereafter.

We crave your condescension, we’ll tell you what we know,
Of marching in the Mulligan Guard from Sligo Ward below,
Our Captain’s name was Hussey, a Tipperary man,
He carried his sword like a Russian duke whenever he took command.

Chorus

We shouldered guns, and marched and marched away,
From Baxter Street, we marched to Avenue A,
With fife and drums, so sweetly they did play,
As we marched, marched, marched in the Mulligan Guards.

When the Band played Garry Owen, or the Connamara Pet,
With a rub a Dub, Dub we’d march in the mud to the military step
With the green above the red boys, to show where we come from,
Our guns we’d lift with the right shoulder shift as we’d march to the beat of the drum.

Whin we got home at night boys, the divel a bit we'd ate,
We'd all set up and drunk a sup of whiskey strong and nate,
Thin we'd all march home together, as slippery as lard,
The solid min would all fall in and march in the Mulligan Guards.

Figure 3.4: Lyrics to "The Mulligan Guard" by Edward Harrigan, published by William A. Pond in New York in 1873.

Harrigan and Braham heighten the sentimentality of the experience by setting a retrospective, nostalgic scene. The temporal distance between the characters and the events in the song allows for otherwise negatively-framed behavior to appear more acceptable, because there is no threat that such behavior will result in loss. Their lack of discipline can more safely become endearing, their overdrinking can be quaint. That the characters reminisce fondly implies personal acceptability of their behavior. In this way, Harrigan and Braham constructed a positive interpretation of what would have been a much more negative stereotype. This in turn appealed to those whom the sketch represented.

Critics and historians suggest that urban Irish-American communities responded to such rebranding with enthusiasm. Theater critic Lawrence Hutton noted: "no class of theatre-goers enjoys [Harrigan's] productions more than do the living men and women whom his company, with real art, represent."²⁹ Others described immigrant and working-class communities, especially those of New York City's lower wards, as especially fond of the song. Writing in 1955, E. J. Kahn noted:

In New York, the song could be heard everywhere. Newsboys, policemen, hot-corn vendors, the oyster sellers at their street-corner stalls, and the hokey-pokey men, who sold ice cream, whistled it as they went about their

²⁹ Lawrence Hutton, *Curiosities of the American Stage* (New York: Harper, 1891), 52–53.

various chores. It was wafted across the harbor from the decks of the moonlight-excursion boats that plies between the Battery and Coney Island.³⁰

However, all the components of earlier, more mocking, Irish characters are present in “The Mulligan Guard.” They are drunken, idiotic, clumsy, and belligerent. Most of all, members the guard are utterly incapable of serving in a functional military, which, during the Reconstruction era in particular, was seen as a fundamental role of young men in the United States. Harrigan biographer Richard Moody cites dialogue from the sketch, now apparently lost, that reveals a lack of ability to carry out instructions and respect authority.³¹ This resonates with aspects of earlier stage Irishmen, discussed in Chapter 2, who lacked the discipline necessary to perform modern work, often misunderstanding instructions from their employers. The confusion is compounded by the fact that the Irish captain also lacks necessary skills to give instruction:

Hart: (taking sword) Aisy sir, aisy.

Harrigan: I’m as aisy as you are.

Hart: Salute me when you spake to me.

Harrigan: It breaks my heart to call ye captain.

Hart: I’ll break your head if you don’t

....

Hart: Attention, by the left, no, no, I mane by the right. (Pulls out book.) What the divil does the manual say about it. Shoulder arms. (Harrigan drills awkward.) You haven’t it. You haven’t it. Put it down, put it down. No put it up on your shoulder.

Harrigan: It’s not the way we drilled last year.

Hart: It’s the new style.³²

³⁰ Kahn, *The Merry Partners*, 4–5.

³¹ Moody, *Ned Harrigan*, 46–47.

³² Edward Harrigan, “Miscellaneous Plays and Songs,” Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library. Missing, but cited in Moody, *Ned Harrigan*, 46–47.

In the Mulligans' thick brogue, lack of respect for authority, and confusion over how to perform simple drills, consumers who sought to confirm biases against the Irish would have found much justification here.

Braham's music also supports diverse ideas of the Irish in "The Mulligan Guard" by literally underscoring the characters with degrees of Irish sounds at various points in the plot. Indeed, Braham seems to have understood better than other composers the identity politics that underscored much comic song of the time. Present in the song to varying extents are musical markers of Irishness that had long accompanied comic and sentimental songs about the Irish. Braham's usage of such markers suggests that the characters shift the allegiance of their national identity within their most famous song, at times leaning Irish and at times American. The sense of Irishness conveyed then shifted throughout the course of the song. Before further analyzing "The Mulligan Guard," however, some musical contextualization is necessary. By the 1870s, American theatrical entertainments had long rested on racial and national stereotypes, and portrayals of the Irish had often been accompanied by musical markers of their Irishness. In order to show how Braham reimagined conventional musical tropes in more sophisticated ways, a brief review of the typical use of these markers is needed.

Marking the Irish in Popular American Song

Within the body of nineteenth-century American popular song on Irish themes, the vast majority that utilize musical markers of Irishness are not nearly so nuanced in their application as Braham's work. Jon Finson lists several musical

traits that could signal the Irish in nineteenth century popular song, including rhythmic snaps, ascending leaps of a seventh or more (especially at the beginning of a phrase), pedal tones, dotted rhythms (especially a dotted eighth-sixteenth-eighth note rhythm in compound time), pentatonicism, and irregular phrase lengths.³³ To this list, I append compound time, especially 6/8, as it appears frequently in songs about stage Irishmen and carries associations with Irish traditional dances, particularly jigs and hornpipes. Such devices are, according to Finson, a manifestation of “characteristic” Irishness. They appear in American songs with Irish themes as signs of the “irregular,” implying that Irishness was imagined differently than normative Anglo Americanness in music.³⁴ The markers are especially prevalent in comic song, as the genre “dealt with the peculiarities of human behavior and therefore [fell] naturally into considerations of ethnic color.”³⁵

This efficient, if shallow, method of presenting Irish identities had been central to American popular music traditions long before Harrigan and Hart took to the stage. Deploying such markers was not a consciously developed, contemporaneously articulated compositional method. That is, it is doubtful that any songwriter had such a list as Finson’s in mind while composing. The list is not fully comprehensive and the markers do not appear in every song about the Irish. But, songwriters surely had a general idea of which sonic qualities evoked a sense of Irishness, distilled through their own experiences with both Irish music they heard in everyday life and representations of Irishness in popular culture. This was often

³³ Jon Finson, *The Voices that Are Gone: Themes in 19th-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 275.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 271.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 274.

accompanied by a particular image and meaning of Irishness in the text or performance. Whether conscious or not, composers used these markers to convey not just Irishness, but particular identity traits of the Irish subjects of the song.

Another song, published the same year as “The Mulligan Guard,” illustrates more typical use of such markers. “Whiskey Toddy” (1873) was written by Giuseppe Operti, most known for contributing the *March of the Amazons* to *The Black Crook*.³⁶ The song is an homage to the warm drink. The lyrics reject the physical effects of various alcoholic beverages, including English beer, brandy, and French wine, in favor of the “comfort” of the Irish whiskey toddy. The sheet music cover depicts a stereotyped working-class Irishman, donning a top hat, vest, and breeches with stockings, styles that had been out of fashion for decades at the time of the song’s publication (figure 3.6).³⁷ His foolish clothing and raised glass signify the stage Irishman.

Operti represents Irishness in the music with a combination of markers, including the 6/8 time signature and numerous pedal tones (figure 3.7). Snaps, rhythmic motives with a quick downbeat followed by a longer note, also abound at the ends of phrases on critical words such as “toddy,” which Operti set to a snap four times in every verse. Words that rhyme, if sometimes obliquely, with “toddy,” such as “everybody,” and “melancholy,” are also snapped on the penultimate syllable,

³⁶ Giuseppe Operti, music, and Dan Maguinnis, lyrics, “Whiskey Toddy” (Boston: Russell, 1873).

³⁷ Breeches and stockings were in decline by the second decade of the nineteenth century. Fashions change slowly, however, and a significant amount of men wore breeches until mid-century. By 1850, they had almost completely disappeared. Elisabeth McClellan, *Historic Dress in America, 1607–1870*, 2nd ed. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1910). Reprint (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), 379–383.

which carries the spoken accent—a common rhythmic technique for songs about the Irish.

The musical score is divided into five systems. The first system (measures 1-6) features a piano accompaniment with a bass line and a treble line. The bass line includes a 'SIDE DRUM' part with rhythmic patterns and a 'BASS DRUM' part with a simple pulse. The second system (measures 7-12) is for 'DRUM AND FIFE', showing a melodic line in the treble and a rhythmic accompaniment in the bass with triplets. The third system (measures 13-18) is for 'ORCHESTRA', featuring a melodic line in the treble and a bass line with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The fourth system (measures 19-24) continues the piano accompaniment with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fifth system (measures 25-30) includes a vocal line (V.) with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'We crave your con - de - scen - sion, We'll tell you what we know Of'. The piano accompaniment in the fifth system features a bass line with chords and a treble line with a melodic line.

2

31

V. march-ing in the Mulli-gan Guard from Sli - go ward be - low. Our Cap-tain's name was Huss-ey, a

Pno.

37

V. Tipper - ra - ry— man, He carried his sword like a Russ-ian duke, where-ever he took com-mand.

Pno.

43

V. We shoul - der'd guns, and march'd, and march'd a - way, From

Pno. FORWARD MARCH

48

V. Bax - ter street, we march'd to Aven - ue A, With drums and fifes, how

Pno.

54

V. *sweet - ly they did play, As we march'd, march'd, march'd in the Mul-li-ganGuard. We*

Pno.

60

V. *Guard.*

Pno. *Dal segno* **f**

66

Pno. *SIDE DRUM*
PRESENT ARMS

72

Pno. *BASS DRUM*

4 77 TARGET EXCURSION BAND

Pno. *f*

83 CHORUS

V. We shoul - der'd guns, and march'd and march'd a -

Pno. FORWARD MARCH *f*

89

V. way, From Bax - ter street we march'd to Aven - ue A, With drums and

Pno.

95

V. fifes, how sweet - ly they did play, As we march'd, march'd, march'd in the Mul-li-gan Guard.

Pno.

Figure 3.5: “The Mulligan Guard” by Edward Harrigan and David Braham.



Figure 3.6: Cover of “Whiskey Toddy,” by Giuseppe Operti (music), and Dan Maguinnis (lyrics). Published in Boston by G. D. Russell in 1873.

Whis - ky tod - dy boys Will - ban - ish me - lan - cho - ly While

bit - ter beer is bit - ter cheer, Then give me whis - ky tod - dy, For

Whis - ky tod - dy boys, Will - com - fort ev' - ry - bo - dy While

bit - ter beer is bit - ter cheer, Then boys drink whis - ky tod - dy

The musical score is written in 6/8 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The vocal line is in the treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the bass clef. The piano part features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The lyrics are: "Whis - ky tod - dy boys Will - ban - ish me - lan - cho - ly While bit - ter beer is bit - ter cheer, Then give me whis - ky tod - dy, For Whis - ky tod - dy boys, Will - com - fort ev' - ry - bo - dy While bit - ter beer is bit - ter cheer, Then boys drink whis - ky tod - dy".

Figure 3.7: “Whiskey Toddy,” chorus.

“Whiskey Toddy” is representative of more functional stage Irish stereotypes in that it is a lighthearted comic song that endears overdrinkers to consumers. A presumed Irishman celebrates whiskey as a healthy component of his

life. In the “The Mulligan Guard,” alcohol serves to separate the guardsmen from their fellow New Yorkers and is an obvious flaw in otherwise appealing characters. In practice, there was as remarkable a diversity in characterization of drinking as there is in Irishness on the whole. Alcohol in contemporaneous song causes and quells violence, drives families apart and holds them together, and even raises the dead. While “Whiskey Toddy” is rather overt in the musical expression of Irishness in songs about drunk stage Irishmen, “The Mulligan Guard” contains more complex, at times subtler, use of the markers for Irish identity. They emerge at particular points in the narrative, to varying degrees, in order to articulate certain behaviors as Irish.

Alternating Musical Markers of the American and the Irish in “The Mulligan Guard”

In “The Mulligan Guard” (figure 3.5), David Braham used musical markers to adeptly reveal Irishness in his characters to greater and lesser degrees in the various parts of a song. In this early incarnation of the Mulligans, when they are at their most Irish, they exhibit typical characteristics of the stage Irishman, revealing further the debt of earlier stage Irish characters to the Mulligans. In later Mulligan plays, Irish characters became more diverse and nuanced, offering new interpretations of Irishness on stage.

Braham’s compositional style contributes to the construction of changing or multiple identities. In the early sketches, music is often sectional, with dramatic changes in time and melody between chorus, verse, and bridge. The verses contain relatively few of the markers, incorporated in such a way that the Irishness is

muted. Notated in measures 27 through 42, they contain only a brief snap on the name “Mulligan” and a few large ascending intervals. The section is in 2/4, with steady, pulsing eighth notes emphasizing the time signature. The chorus, which begins at measure 44, adopts a hint of compound time. The accompaniment pulses eighth-note triplets instead of straight eighth-notes. Such constancy in the accompaniment begs for the melody to settle in to compound time as well, despite notated dotted rhythms in simple time. Notable also are triplets in the melody that lead to the cadence at measure fifty-seven. The “Target Excursion Band,” the part of the song that presumably accompanies an enactment of the picnic and target practice, presents the strongest alternative to the initial 2/4 time in “The Mulligan Guard.” The tune is a borrowed Irish folk tune, “St. Patrick’s Day,” to which Thomas Moore added lyrics in the fourth volume of *Irish Melodies*, changing the title to “Tho’ Dark Are our Sorrows (The Prince’s Day).”³⁸ In “The Mulligan Guard,” the change of time signature to 6/8 signifies complete transformation, and dotted rhythms color the section with a deeper shade of emerald. Furthermore, the quotation of a jig, as opposed to an air, bespeaks a lowbrow, working-class identity. The Irishness invoked is one of the urban comic type, rather than the Romantic. As a result the “Target Excursion Band” is sonically descriptive of the characters’ particular circumstances and adopts more markers of Irishness than the chorus, which itself displays more markers than the verses.

In other places, the song suggests military marches to greater and lesser degrees. Some typical march instruments are noted in the sheet music. A six-bar

³⁸ Thomas Moore and Sir John Stevenson, “Tho’ Dark Are our Sorrows (The Prince’s Day),” in *Irish Melodies 4* (London: Power, 1811).

introduction was originally written for slide and bass drums, and the following eight bars were written for drum and fife. The same drum call introduces the section labeled “Target Excursion Band.” That instrumentation is denoted at all in the sheet music could mean that the orchestration of the stage version was particularly important to the meaning of the song. Also, marching accompanies most of the action. The three verses describe in succession the march out, target practice, and the “slippery” trip home. Finally, the word “march” is sung six times in the chorus. If the chorus is sung the proscribed four times, then the word is repeated twenty-four times. There are an additional three appearances of the word in the verses, and it is spoken twice, for a grand total of twenty-nine appearances of the word in a three-and-a-half minute song. With so many references to marching in the song, and given the subject matter, marching is of primary importance to meaning.

There are, however, several departures from march conventions that also shape the national affiliations of the characters. While marches generally maintain steady time, in groupings of either two or three, the time signature in “The Mulligan Guard” alternates in an indirect relationship to the previously considered Irishness. There is a persistent eighth-note pulse in the verses, but in the chorus, the left-hand accompaniment plays steady triplets. Such constancy in the accompaniment begs for the melody to settle in to compound time as well despite notated dotted rhythms in simple time. Notable also are melodic triplets that lead to the cadence at measure 57. The strongest alternative to the 2/4 march time in “The Mulligan Guard” is in the “Target Excursion Band,” the particularly Irish section. The eight-bar portion, in addition to containing a direct quote of an Irish tune, features a change in the time

signature to 6/8, signifying complete transformation. March style is characterized by a strong, repetitive rhythm. Compound time, especially 6/8, was normal in march form. Indeed some of John Philip Sousa's marches are in 6/8, but Braham's shift in time signature from 2/4 to 6/8 is unusual. The emphasis on steady rhythm in marches generally precludes such changing times.

Developments in character and plot from the score suggest reasons for these changes. The song begins as the two men reminisce about former days in the Mulligan Guard. At the first chorus, when the triplets are first heard, the characters describe the marching. The target practice itself has no text, but they drank the alcohol there, as the trip home was "slippery." In the final chorus, presumably on the march home, a new triplet figure in the bass accompanies them. There is a correlation between the amount of alcohol being consumed and the pulse, the 2/4 being the most sober and 6/8 being the most drunken, in addition to being coded the most Irish. Thus, as the members of the Mulligan Guard drink more, they also become more Irish. Indeed, this is also apparent in the speech patterns of the printed lyrics, as the quotient of Irish dialect increases in the final verse. During the march home, the characters substitute "whin" for "when," a word that was printed in its standard form only one verse before, and the brogue continues on for the duration of the verse. Alcohol in "The Mulligan Guard" is a conduit for these Irish Americans to increased Irishness.

Beyond injecting these markers, Braham used various compositional techniques to establish the characters as drunk. The opening vocal line outlines a disjunct triad. Each interval is a leap in the opposite direction of the previous leap,

with intervals of a third, fourth, fifth, and sixth in the first six notes. The music, as if intoxicated itself, stumbles around. Furthermore, the syllabic setting of the text, on steady eighth notes, sets a constant, punchy, lighthearted mood. Their musical staggering belies the military garb and tales of marching, revealing that, even during the moment in which they adopt more aspects of Americanness, they remain dysfunctional as Americans. Curiously, as the song progresses through the various sections, fewer musical elements seem to convey the inadequacies of the first section. The chorus is set high, likely requiring Harrigan and Hart to strain their voices, adding another subtle degree of absurdity. The “Target Excursion Band,” lacks anything that conveys the kind of staggering buffoonery of the verses. Thus the music conveys less of a direct sense of absurdity as it progresses through the various sections, in a directly divergent relationship to the amount of Irish markers.

For all of Braham’s sophistication in his mixture of Irish and American elements, the negative stereotypes of Irishness in “The Mulligan Guard” remain relatively intact, when the characters reflect Irishness. They overdrink, fail to follow orders, and cause a nuisance to the urban American environment in which they live. But in “The Mulligan Guard,” the characters also exhibit behaviors that reflect their location in the United States. Taking part in a target company that includes military drills and carrying firearms marks them, however briefly and incompletely, as American. As the Mulligan series developed, some characters became more functional and accepted in American contexts.

From Alternating to Blending: The Irish and the American in the Later Mulligan Series

Harrigan and Braham continued to construct entertainments in the imaginary world of the Mulligans for a decade, with the last premiering in 1884.³⁹ These years are indicated by many historians as critical for changing ideas of Irishness in the United States, as the Irish became more accepted in American society. Though the old stereotypes persisted to some degree, the financial and social success of some Irish-Americans increasingly challenged such old notions. As time went on, the Mulligan series presented some Irish-American characters as successful members of the middle class and increasingly functional in the lower wards. They were, in fact, the most nuanced and socially most powerful characters in the series and, without significant presence of Anglo-Americans, conceptualizations of Irishness and Americanness blended on the stage. Indeed, in the imaginary world of the Mulligans, the most successful Irish characters come to define Americanness to the rest of the characters—a significant shift in the characterization of the Irish in the New World who had so often been disparaged and isolated.

Such changes did not happen quickly, however, and Harrigan and Braham first capitalized on the success of “The Mulligan Guard” by producing a number of related sketches that contained similar changes in national identity. “Patrick’s Day Parade” (figure 3.8), one of the five most popular songs of 1874 in the United States, is overtly derived from “The Mulligan Guard” both in its textual and musical

³⁹ The last one is *Dan’s Tribulations*.

content.⁴⁰ The song's shifts between Americanness and Irishness, however, are even more overt. It too depicts a collective march through New York City by Irish Americans celebrating their group identity and drinking. This time, the celebration is explicitly about Irish identity. The song carries both semblances of marches and Irish markers, although different means are employed than in "The Mulligan Guard." The various parts differ in pulse, the 2/4 verses invoking a march far more than does the 6/8 chorus, which begins with a statement of allegiance to both the Old and New Worlds. The sudden switch to 6/8 evokes Irish music. Four bars later, on the words "Stars and Stripes," Braham included a V-vii°/iii-iii-V/V-V progression.⁴¹ Each chord occupies the length of a beat, with simple, beat-long note values in the bass line. This is a typical device of marches, as witnessed in many Sousa marches such as *El Capitan*.⁴² The sudden shift in rhythm and punching chord progression simultaneously call attention to the lyrics and invokes Americanness.

In "Patrick's Day Parade," the characters also shift their behaviors to align with American and Irish values. The singer downplays the role of alcohol in his life, with the exception of St. Patrick's Day celebrations, singing: "And though I'm not a drinking man, on that day I'd drink my beer." With this line, however, Harrigan once again created a character that alternated between American and Irish ways of life,

⁴⁰ David Braham, music, and Edward Harrigan, words, *Patrick's Day Parade* (New York: William Pond, 1874). Julius Mattfield, *Variety Music Cavalcade 1620–1969: A Chronology of Vocal and Instrumental Music Popular in the United States*, third edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 146.

⁴¹ John Philip Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever* was not written until 1896. Hence there is no reference to the famous march here.

⁴² John Philip Sousa, *El Capitan (1896), Later Operetta, Part I*, edited by Paul E. Bierley, *Nineteenth Century American Musical Theater* 14 (New York: Garland, 1994).

drinking when leaning Irish. With his moratorium on drinking at other times, the character balances the morals of both cultures, being a good Irishman on St. Patrick's Day, and otherwise exhibiting middle-class American values.

As the sketches developed into full-length musical plays at the end of the decade, Edward Harrigan would use this paradigm to create his most memorable role, who takes his name from Harrigan and Braham's most famous song. Dan Mulligan appeared as early as the *Mulligan Guard Picnic* sketch, which first appeared in 1878. The character himself developed over the course of the plays; Dan's original incarnation was more in keeping with minstrel Paddy characters and stage Irishmen than later versions.⁴³ A different Dan Mulligan appeared in one of the first full-length plays, *The Mulligan Guard Ball* of 1879.⁴⁴ This Dan Mulligan had grown up since youthful days in the Mulligan Guard to become a successful businessman and a well-respected social leader. Honest, loyal, and generous, he was a fully functional member of this urban American community, unlike so many earlier Irish stage characters. At the beginning of *The Mulligan Guards Ball*, Dan plans festivities to reunite the old Mulligan Guard, but it comes out that the Skidmore Guard, a black target company that often comes into conflict with the Mulligans, have booked the same venue. The Skidmores take the floor above the Mulligans, but the black company stomps so much that the floor caves in and they tumble down on top of the

⁴³ Alicia Kae Koger describes Mulligan in the *Mulligan Guard Picnic* sketch as "violent and humorless." Koger, "A Critical Analysis of Edward Harrigan's Comedy," p. 152.

⁴⁴ Braham and Harrigan, *Irish American Theater*.

* PATRICK'S DAY PARADE.

3

Words by ED. HARRIGAN.

Music by DAVE BRAHAM.

Allegro.

The musical score is arranged in four systems. The first system shows the piano introduction in 3/8 time, marked 'Allegro'. The second system continues the piano accompaniment. The third system introduces the vocal melody with the lyrics: "Saint Patrick was a gentle-man, Sure his name we ce-le-". The fourth system continues the vocal melody with the lyrics: "brate, And on the se-ven-teenth of March, The Ir-ish con-cen-trate: A". The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic bass line in the left hand.

5659

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1874 by Wm. A. Pond & Co. in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

* Permission for representation must be obtained from the Author. ED. HARRIGAN.

4

bran new hat on each man's head, And a green necktie that's new-ly made, The left foot first then

light-ly tread, In the Patrick's day pa - rade: Then two by two a - way we go,

cres *cen*

cres *cen*

Up Broad-way through rain or snow, We'd face the di - vel friend or foe, In the Patrick's day pa -

do. *do.* *p*

CHORUS.

rade. We shout hurrah for

ad libitum.

Er-in-go-bragh, And all the Yan-kee na - tion, Stars and Stripes and

8659

3

Shamrock bright ar - rayed The Ir - ish shout, the girls turn out To see the ce - le -

- bra - tion. We march stiff as starch, In the Patrick's day pa - rade.

2.

You should see the Marshall on his horse,
 Like Napoleon Bonyparte,
 And as he rides along the line,
 He'd break each lady's heart,
 And if the rain should fall down then,
 We hoist our umberellas high,
 For History states that Irishmen
 Are always warm and dry:
 Then two by two away we go,
 Up Broadway through rain or snow,
 We'd face the divel, friend or foe,
 In the Patrick's day parade.

3.

Then here's success to Patrick's day,
 Though it comes but once a year,
 And though I'm not a drinking man,
 On that day I'd drink my beer:
 I'll wear the shamrock in my hat,
 The green my boys 'twill never fade,
 And march along with Dan an Pat,
 In the Patrick's day parade:
 Then two by two away we go,
 Up Broadway through rain or snow,
 We'd face the divel, friend or foe,
 In the Patrick's day parade.

8659 CHORUS. CHORUS.

Figure 3.8: "Patrick's Day Parade," words by Edward Harrigan and music by David Braham. Published in 1876 in New York by William A. Pond. Courtesy of the Lester Levy Collection at Johns Hopkins University.

Irish festivities. Dan's son, Tommy, takes advantage of the confusion to elope with Kitty Lochmuller, who is half German, half Irish, and the daughter of Dan's nemesis, the German butcher Gustave Lochmuller. Throughout the play, Dan is not perfect—he loses his temper with Lochmuller and Simpson, captain of the Skidmore Guard, and his opposition to the coupling of Tommy and Kitty is bull-headed. But, he represents socially and financially ascendant Irish and behaves in ways befitting his rising class status. He is loyal to his wife, Cordelia, and he works hard while generally refraining from over drinking. This is a different kind of Irish American character than had been seen in the past, and it indicates changes in concepts of Irishness and the status of Irish-Americans in the New World that were underfoot.

The appearance of a more positively-framed Irish-American stage character in 1879 made sense in the context of New York's social climate at the time. During this period, debates raged concerning the ability of the Irish to succeed financially or politically in the United States. In general, the Irish had gained greater acceptance. Noel Ignatiev and Matthew Frye Jacobson, two leading scholars on whiteness in the nineteenth century, have both noted the 1870s as a significant time in the development of Irish status in the United States. Ignatiev focuses on the implications of Reconstruction, commonly thought to have ended with the Compromise of 1877, on the meaning of whiteness.⁴⁵ In particular, after enduring Civil War and over a decade of efforts to prevent the return of slavery and assist southern African Americans, northern white interest in the south and racial conflicts waned. By the late 1870s, attentions turned back to communities and issues in more immediate

⁴⁵ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 173–74.

surroundings. Northern populations, including Irish Americans, whose race was dubious earlier, were more often perceived as white in comparison to the elevated profile of American Americans. As Ignatiev writes, this was “how the Irish became white.” Jacobson, however, reminds us that the process of white racial formation did not happen overnight. Rather, it happened at various paces in differing contexts, and Irishness in the 1870s remained multivalent, fluid, and dependent on a number of other factors like location, class, and gender. An immigrant in 1877, according to him, “could be a despised Celt in Boston—a threat to the republic—and yet a solid member of The Order of Caucasians for the Extermination of the Chinaman in San Francisco, gallantly defending U.S. Shores from an invasion of ‘Mongolians.’”⁴⁶

In New York City, many Irish still occupied tenements in the lower wards, but some had also risen to prominence, particularly in entertainment, politics, and the police force. This is reflected as the Mulligan series progressed with Dan Mulligan—a saloon keeper who fulfills another stereotype of the ascendant Irish American when he becomes alderman. Simultaneously, immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe also increased steadily during this decade.⁴⁷ The Irish had advantages over these other groups because they often arrived speaking English and originated from a place so geographically close to England.⁴⁸ Thus, the Irish were often less Othered than their new Jewish and Italian neighbors. Questions

⁴⁶ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 5.

⁴⁷ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1113–1114 and 1121.

⁴⁸ A large amount of famine immigrants in particular were native Irish speakers, which is often overlooked in contemporaneous literature because most Irish speakers could also speak some English. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 297.

about biological inadequacies and religion of the Irish, however, remained. Such beliefs were exacerbated in New York by the Boss Tweed scandal, which had culminated in his 1876 imprisonment. Furthermore, the Draft riots of the Civil War, and the 1870 and 1871 Orange Riots, both of which involved Irish Catholics, were still fresh on the minds of New York City's residents who were entertained with Irish stage characters that displayed belligerence as a primary trait.

This resonated in the character of Dan Mulligan, as he climbed socially but still adhered to some of the old stereotypes. He rarely drank to the point of intoxication, despite the constant proximity of alcohol in his career as a saloon owner. His relationship with alcohol in the full-length plays became one of reverence, serving a social function to take care of other members of the New York community. This is epitomized in another one of Harrigan and Braham's most popular songs, "The Pitcher of Beer," from *The Mulligan Guards' Christmas* of 1879 (figure 3.9). It appears in subsequent Mulligan plays, including *The Mulligan Guard Ball*. In it, Dan, with a number of guests for Christmas dinner, finds his whiskey supply mysteriously depleted (the Skidmores having raided it) and thus he has only beer to offer his company. The song paints Mulligan as a responsible friend of the underprivileged, generously sharing his beer with those who need it. He also justifies the use of alcohol to attend emotional needs, singing in the third verse: "any poor creature the world far and wide, Ne'er begrudges the penny well spent; For a drop of the malt, he could not find fault, With that same which turns sorrow to cheer." He was not, however, drunk, nor does he refer to drunken behavior or use words descriptive of drunkenness, as appeared in "The Mulligan Guard."

MULLIGAN GUARD'S CHRISTMAS SERIES.

No. 3.

THE PITCHER OF BEER.

SONG AND CHORUS.

Words by ED. HARRIGAN.

Music by DAVE BRAHAM.

The piano introduction consists of two staves in 3/4 time, featuring a melody in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

The first system of the song features a vocal line on a single staff and piano accompaniment on two staves. The lyrics are:

1 I'm a friend to the poor man, Where-
2 Oh, the child in the cra - dle, The
3 Oh, good health and good na - ture, When
4 Oh, be so - cial and mer - ry, For

The second system of the song features a vocal line on a single staff and piano accompaniment on two staves. The lyrics are:

e'er I may roam, No mat - ter what coun - try - man'
dog at the door, The fire - side so cheer - ful and
brought side by side, Our cham - pions of real mer - ri -
life's but a day, You'll die and leave oth - ers be -

9969

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he; Oh, come share my loaf, and the
 bright; Old folks at the ta - ble with
 ment, Oh, a - ny poor crea - ture, the
 hind; To fret and to wor - ry, to

meat on the bone, I've a gram - a - cre wel - come for
 plen - ty ga - lore, For to wel - come you in with de -
 world far and wide, Ne'er be - grudg - es the pen - ny well
 sigh and to pray, When re - lief they could eas - i - ly

thee; Each night in the week, and
 light; Their bless - ing they give, it's
 spent; For a drop of the malt, he
 find; If they'd draw up a chair, and

9962

week in the year, With a heart and a con - science that's
 long may you live, And so mer - ri - ly glide o'er each
 could not find fault, With that same which turns sor - row to
 drive a - way care, Have a friend with his pipe sit - ting

clear; I've a friend and a glass for to let the toast
 year; Then they hand you a glass for to let the toast
 cheer; Get a friend and a glass for to let the toast
 near; Tell a stor - ry or two, let it be old or

pass, As we drink from our pitch - er of beer.
 pass, As we drink from our pitch - er of beer.
 pass, And drink from your pitch - er of beer.
 new, And drink from their pitch - er of beer.

0863

Figure 3.9: “The Pitcher of Beer,” words by Edward Harrigan and music by David Braham. Published in 1880 in New York by William A. Pond.

The music for “The Pitcher of Beer” does not evoke Irishness with tools used in earlier Harrigan and Braham songs. Indeed, the Irish qualities in the music and lyrics of the song reflect the Romantic image far more than comic images. It is not a comic song at all, but sentimental. Its most prominent features— $3/4$ time, and an “oom pah pah” bass—suggest a waltz. It also departs from the earlier, sectional Braham songs, with a more traditional structure of four verses and a chorus.

Melodic material is all related between the verse, chorus, and instrumental introduction and codetta. This is typical of Braham's music from this period, and makes sense as the theater pieces were longer, requiring the team to work more quickly to produce new works several times per year, while simultaneously opening a space to develop both characters and plots outside the confines of a single song. The newer style, however, precludes the meanings produced by earlier juxtapositions of different musical styles and character traits within one song.

Dan does, however, drink on occasion, generally as a consequence of someone else's behavior, but the alcohol consumption does not lead to the violence and dysfunction as it does in the earlier Mulligan series. In the final scene of the *Mulligan Silver Wedding*, he drinks to excess because of Cordelia's actions, adding a layer of gender analysis to the mix. In this play, Cordelia falsely believes that Dan is having an affair, just as she's preparing for the celebration of her twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Desperate with grief, she drinks from a bottle labeled as rat poison, which is really a bottle of brandy, Dan had attached the false label to keep the African-American help from drinking it.⁴⁹ To show her folly, Dan then finishes off the bottle, making himself drunk as well. Dan and Cordelia finish by entertaining their guests with the song "Wheel the Baby Out." The song is comic, but it does not reference drinking. On the contrary, it essentially describes Dan's virtuous hand in raising his children: "Then nobly, and proudly, happy as a lord, I wheel the baby

⁴⁹ Twice now we've seen references to African Americans stealing alcohol, one real in the world of the play (in *The Mulligans Christmas*) and one feared by Dan Mulligan (in *Mulligan's Silver Wedding*). This is in line with Harrigan and Braham's treatment of African American characters, which was famously harsh and pigeonholed, especially in comparison to their treatment of the Irish.

round the block the envy of the ward.” The song ends with entreatments for other young men to live responsibly, building a family and joining the military should a war arise. Humor appears in the first refrain, which alludes to various nursery rhymes. In the scene, alcohol provides atmosphere for the celebrations, rather than illuminating the concrete and dysfunctional attributes of earlier stage Irishman, such as belligerence and inability to work.

Other characters occupied lower social spaces and displayed more derogatory, stereotyped characteristics. *The Mulligan Guards' Christmas* includes a number sung by the now-aging members of the Mulligan Guard, “The Mulligan Braves” (figure 3.10). The guardsmen resemble earlier stage Irishmen. They drink to excess and exhibit buffoonish characteristics. They also describe belligerence and a lack of adherence to modern work schedules: “For New York lads where we dwell, Scalps we take in ev’ry fight, Sleep all day and scout all night.” The music, while containing a few Irish markers like occasional semblances of compound time and dotted rhythms, does not code Irish so much as it adopts the signifiers of Native Americanness common to stages at the time. This includes steady punching eighth-note melodies and accompaniment with many suspensions and leaps of a fourth.⁵⁰

Dan also sings songs about more derogatory types of drunken stage Irishmen when he entertains others with song, bringing the presence of derogatory types into the world of the Mulligans, even when the characters on stage do not exhibit such

⁵⁰ Like their treatment of African Americans, Harrigan and Braham’s depictions of Native Americans were superficial and demeaning.

characteristics.⁵¹ “John Riley’s Always Dry” is unrelated to the plot of *Mulligan’s Silver Wedding*, in which it first appeared. The song does not reference over drinking, though we can safely assume the protagonist, John Riley, is drunk. He is intensely thirsty and can only be satiated by alcohol. However, as his behavior does not affect anyone in the song, this is the drunken stage Irishman in perhaps his most

The image displays a musical score for the song "John Riley's Always Dry" in 2/4 time. It consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a steady eighth-note bass line and a treble line with chords and triplets. The lyrics are as follows:

Voice: Here comes the no - ble Mul-li-gan Braves,
 Piano: (Musical notation with triplets)
 Voice: From Man-hat-tan's wild-est caves, In red war paint, wild and loose, Big gas-soons and wee pa-poose.
 Piano: (Musical notation with triplets)
 Voice: 13 CHORUS
 Fill the beer, heap big Chief, Like old fi-ery Sit ting Bull; West-ward, oh, way we go,
 Piano: (Musical notation with triplets)

⁵¹ This happens frequently; it was a useful device for Harrigan and Braham to circumvent the need for narrative consistency.

Voice: Here comes the no - ble Mul-li-gan Braves,
 Piano:

7
 Voice: From Man-hat-tan's wild-est caves, In red war paint, wild and loose, Big gas-soons and wee pa-poose.
 Pno.:

13 CHORUS
 Voice: Fill the beer, heap big Chief, Like old fi-cry Sit ting Bull; West-ward, oh, way we go,
 Pno.:

Figure 3.10: “The Mulligan Braves,” words by Edward Harrigan and music by David Braham.

innocuous form. Indeed, by 1881 when *Mulligan’s Silver Wedding* premiered, Harrigan and Braham had almost completely expunged the overdrinking Irishman from their works, and when he did appear, it was often in this form, of a character quite removed from the plot.

The most derogatory portrayal of the Irish in the full-length Harrigan and Braham plays was, then, not Dan Mulligan, but characters who were less critical to the main plot and of a lower social class. These other characters, failing to attain the middle class professionally and financially, also fail to adopt behaviors and characteristics more suitable to American life. Their lack of characteristic middle-class lifestyles mean they are also coded less as American. They are not as adroit at American market economies and industrialism. One such example is “Locked Out After Nine” (figure 3.11) from *The Mulligan Guard Picnic*, which features a group of boarders at a house kept by a strict woman, Mrs. Doyle, who refuses to let anyone in after 9 pm. The song contains typical devices of comic songs about the stage Irishman. The text lists Irish names, informing the listener that four of the boarders were Irish (and presumable male). Additionally, a “Scandinavian fisherman, a Norwegian and Turk” also lived in the house along with two women and a child (their nationalities are not provided). The Irish set off on an outing, and because their watch stops, they arrive home after curfew. The next day, they get drunk, Mrs. Doyle throws their belongings on the street, and a fight ensues between the Irish and non-Irish. Within the plot are the traditional and derogatory traits of stage Irishmen: belligerence, propensity for alcohol, and inability to function in modern urban life (as witnessed by their failure to follow the house rules). They are also musically depicted as Irish; several musical markers of Irishness emerge, including compound time and ascending leaps (there are many leaps of a sixth in the song and, in the last phrase of both verse and chorus, one of a seventh and then an octave). Additionally, a jig is inserted to accompany dancing at the end.

As in *The Mulligan Guard Ball* and *The Mulligan Guard Picnic*, many plots of the Mulligan plays revolve around inter-group relations in New York City's working-class neighborhoods, providing a perspective on interactions between the Irish characters and their non-Irish neighbors. Frequently, groups that formed along national, racial, and religious lines—Irish, German, black, and later, Italian and Jewish—try to avoid each other. But they inevitably come crashing into contact and

CHORUS

Voice

There's Slat - ter - y Mc-Gon - ni - gle, Mc - Gil - li - gan, and Dan O' Burke, A Scan - an - da - vian

Piano

6

Voice

fish - er - man, a Nor - we - gian and Turk; Oh, two la - dies and a child, _____ that's

Pno.

11

Voice

chris - tened, Ba - by mine; _____ It's ev - 'ry - one in bed at eight, or locked out af - ter nine. _____

Pno.

17 DANCE

Pno.

23

Pno.

29

Pno.

35

Pno.

Figure 3.11: “Locked out after Nine,” words by Edward Harrigan and music by David Braham.

are pressed to navigate the conflicts that arise. What is noticeably lacking in the neighborhood is significant presence of Anglo Americans, or those whose whiteness and Americanness would be uncontested. One example is the climax of *The Mulligan*

Guard Ball, in which the Skidmores literally crashed down onto the Mulligans and suddenly needed to navigate an entirely unforeseen situation, as Germans such as Lochmuller and Kitty also intervened. The situation imitates those of New York's slums, in which diverse populations were crowded into tenements, forming social networks based on their country of origin and navigating challenging social situations with those from other groups.

In this world of the Mulligans, it is Dan who operates as not only the most normalized, but also the most successful American. In *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City*, James R. Barrett suggests that in the late-nineteenth century and early twentieth century, immigrants who settled into cities lived in a world where Irish Americans held positions of power. Through professions like the police force, politics, teaching, and entertainment, Irish-Americans defined what it was to be American to members of more recent or less numerous migration waves. In a similar manner, with his relatively high financial and social status, and in his well-developed character over the course of many theatrical pieces, Dan Mulligan defines not only Irishness, but also, in a way, Americanness in the Mulligan series. In the world the Mulligans, at least some of them not only became white, they became American as well.

But Dan's authority is confined to New York's lower wards. When he is removed from Mulligan Alley, the imaginary street he occupies, we see just how shallow was his toehold in concepts of Americanness. Dan and Cordelia rise so far that in *Cordelia's Aspirations* (1883), they make it out of Mulligan Alley, occupying a mansion in Murray Hill. The idea was Cordelia's, after a trip to Paris engendered the

desire to join the upper ten. The *New York Clipper* reported that, uptown, Dan declined in social position:

[In Murray Hill] Mulligan cuts no figure at all save to be awkward and blundering when his wife would have him fashionable in manner and Frenchy in speech; and the mishaps that come to him when he is dressed in fashionable and snugly-fitting clothes constitute no small share of the humorous situations with which the play abounds.⁵²

In the end, the Mulligans lose their money and their pretensions, returning to the lower wards in the final installment of the Mulligan series, *Dan's Tribulations* (1884). Dan's place, along with the rest of the Irish, remained in Mulligan Alley. He reassumes his social position at the apex of that community.

The later history of Dan Mulligan reveals that as fresh, more positive portrayals of Irish Americans emerged in the 1870s and 1880s, older and more negative ideas of what it meant to be Irish also continued, even in the characters who are portrayed as largely Americanized and relatively financially successful. There is much in Dan Mulligan that lingers from the stage Irishman of old. He is a drinker. There are limits to his ability to climb socially. He retains his brogue. Such representations of Irishness in theatrical entertainments were one aspect of larger discussions happening at the time around the meaning and status of Irishness in the United States. As a popular culture phenomenon, the Mulligan series became an active agent in those debates.

One stark difference between Dan Mulligan and earlier examples is how utterly American he, and indeed the rest of the Mulligans, are. Through his commercial success as a saloonkeeper, his political success as alderman, and his

⁵² *New York Clipper*, 10 November 1883.

experiences over the years navigating the diverse social world of New York's immigrant neighborhoods, Dan Mulligan is deeply shaped by uniquely American dynamics. The music of the Mulligan series, in blending aspects of Irish music, popular markers of Irishness, and American styles, supports this by blending aspects of Irish musical style, stereotypical markers of Irishness, and American popular style. Braham's music accomplishes this blending by deploying sonic codes of Irishness and Americanness that contribute to painting their characters in ways that illuminated aspects of their national allegiances at various moments. In doing so, Harrigan, Hart, and Braham created a uniquely American version of Irishness as never before.

Chapter 4

Rethinking the “Gaelic” Symphony: Boston, the Gaelic Revival, and Amy Beach

“These tunes . . . sprang from the common joys, sorrows, adventures and struggles of a primitive people. Their simple, rugged, unpretentious beauty led me to ‘take my pen in hand’ and try to develop their ideas in symphonic form.”
-Amy Beach¹

On 30 October 1896 the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s audience was treated to the highly anticipated premiere of a “Gaelic” Symphony by Amy Beach (1867–1944).² Excitement was, by all accounts, palpable. Boston audiences strongly supported hometown composers, and Beach’s gender added a degree of novelty to the whole affair. The event marked a significant point in Beach’s career, signaling that the twenty-nine-year-old had attained a prominent status among Boston’s musical elite. Composer George W. Chadwick summarized the sentiment when he famously wrote “I always feel a thrill of pride myself whenever I hear a fine new work by any one of us, and as such you will have to

¹ Caryl B. Storrs, “Program Notes,” publication unattributed (Minneapolis?), 13 December 1917. Uncataloged box, Milne Special Collections, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

² The woman we now call Amy Beach was born Amy Marcy Cheney and her married name, used professionally, was Mrs. H. H. A. Beach. After the death of her husband, she embarked on a European tour billed as Amy Beach, but she found it difficult to institute the change at that point in her career. For the sake of consistency I will use the name “Amy Beach,” shortened to “Beach,” throughout the chapter, except when discussing her life prior to marriage, when I will use “Amy.” Adrienne Fried Block, *Amy Beach: Passionate Victorian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 198.

be counted in, whether you will or not—one of the boys.”³ Critical reception was generally positive, and it focused on two issues: Beach’s gender and potential reasons for the work’s title. Boston-based author and critic Howard Malcolm Ticknor, for instance, wrote that the symphony was “so considerable an achievement for a woman that at the moment of our writing we do not recall another” and speculated that the title originated in the general moods of the work, which he thought reflected the “land and life of the ideal Gael.”⁴

Almost a century later, the Brooklyn Philharmonic presented the “Gaelic” Symphony at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on 28 January 1994. Led by conductor Dennis Russell Davies and artistic director Joseph Horowitz, the performance was part of a festival titled “From the New World” that honored the centenary of Antonín Dvořák’s Symphony “From the New World” and the fiftieth anniversary of Beach’s death. The concert included the “Gaelic” and “New World” Symphonies, as well as the “Dirge” from Edward MacDowell’s “Indian” Suite. By this time, Beach’s work had become positioned as an explicit rebuttal to Dvořák’s, delivering a message about Beach’s putative ideas of musical nationalism in response to his prescriptions, illustrated in his symphony. Of this performance of the “Gaelic”, Allan Kozinn of the *New York Times* wrote:

Beach’s work is interesting as a response to Dvořák: she countered his assertion that spirituals were the ideal basis of an American style by using English, Scottish and Irish ballads instead. But in matters of gesture, coloration and effect, the work bears an uncanny resemblance to the

³ George W. Chadwick, Boston, to Mrs. Beach, 2 November 1896, box 1, folder 3, Amy Beach Collection, Milne Special Collections, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

⁴ Howard Malcolm Ticknor, review of a concert performance of Amy Beach’s “Gaelic” Symphony, *Boston Courier*, 1 November 1896.

'New World' and is far less innovative than Chadwick or Ives that might have been chosen.⁵

Peter G. Davis of *New York Magazine* followed suit, faulting the festival

organizers' choice to program the "Gaelic" due to supposed unoriginality:

As at most events of this sort, one encountered much that was new, fascinating, and revelatory, offset by just as much that seemed forced, unnecessary, and downright irritating. It was salutary to be reminded of Amy Beach, who was blessed with an extraordinary creative gift that remained largely imitative; one wonders what more she might have made of it had she been born later, into a less genteel, European-driven musical culture.

For these critics, the shadow of Dvořák loomed large over the "Gaelic"

Symphony, and Beach's work was far too derivative.

The 1990s were a critical time for the reception history of the "Gaelic" Symphony, when interest in the work was revived after a long period of latency following Beach's death. This renewal happened in part because connections between the "Gaelic" and "New World" Symphonies encouraged proponents of Amy Beach to add her name to celebrations of the centenary of Dvořák's visit to the United States.⁶ The Brooklyn festival is one example of that trend. But the link that was established between the "Gaelic" and the "New World" Symphonies was a double-edged sword, for critical understanding of the "Gaelic" has centered so much on Dvořák that Beach and her symphony have come to be pigeonholed, opening the door for critiques like those of Kozinn and Davies.

⁵ Kozinn neglects to list Native American themes as one of Dvořák's major interests and also incorrectly identifies the themes in the "Gaelic" Symphony as English and Scottish as well as Irish. Borrowed folk tunes in the "Gaelic" Symphony were all from an Irish publication. Allan Kozinn, "It's Dvorak's Turn in Brooklyn's Little Festivals," *New York Times*, 2 February 1994, C20.

⁶ The "Gaelic" Symphony also may have interested concert organizers because of diversity, as the 1990s saw an upswing of interest in women composers.

Beach's symphony clearly takes some of its musical content from the "New World" Symphony, and it was likely shaped by her participation in the dialogue about folk music engendered by Dvořák's work in the United States. The limitations of the Czech composer's influence, however, still need exploring. In fact, no extant sources suggest that American national style or Dvořák played a role in perceptions of the "Gaelic" Symphony during Beach's lifetime. No contemporary accounts of the "Gaelic" Symphony, by Beach or others, made reference to Dvořák or the "New World" Symphony, nor is there any record that anyone extracted ideas about musical nationalism that such a link would imply. Moreover, the Czech composer's influence was only one of many that shaped the symphony. In her time, Beach's work was valued for many reasons, none of which involved Dvořák or American national identity.

In this chapter, I suggest we consider other ways of understanding the "Gaelic" Symphony. First, I debunk notions that the "Gaelic" Symphony is overly derivative of the "New World" Symphony by showing that Dvořák was one of many sources of inspiration for Beach. Then, I consider Irishness in the "Gaelic" Symphony apart from Dvořák. Beach's own heritage was not Irish, but she lived in Boston, a city with unique ties to Ireland via immigration patterns. At the end of the nineteenth century, when the "Gaelic" Symphony was written, Boston's Irish community was gaining financial, political, and social traction. With newfound abilities to exert cultural influence, a revival of Irish language, art, and musical practice was underway. I suggest that with her symphony, Beach engaged with such emerging notions of Irishness around her in Boston.

Amy Beach: Child Prodigy and Trailblazing Symphonist

Beach was born Amy Marcy Cheney on 5 September 1867 to Clara and Charles Abbot Cheney in rural West Henniker, New Hampshire. Their roots were mostly English, not Irish.⁷ Signs of the child's prodigious talent appeared early; before she could say a word, Amy could hum forty tunes in the key in which she had first heard them, and she would cry if someone sang a variant of a song she had already learned.⁸ She also begged to play her mother's piano.

Even at such a young age, however, pressures to adhere to behavioral conventions limited Amy's musical options. Gender bias and religion led Clara and Charles to think of her musical precociousness as potentially dangerous; Calvinist childrearing beliefs of the day suggested that if a young child, particularly a girl, indulged in music too publicly, or too early, she stood to lose perceived womanly virtue and moral integrity. Rather than nurturing Amy's musical interests, Clara declared the piano off-limits until age four, when an aunt forced Clara's hand on the matter.⁹ The family moved to the Boston area in 1875. The city's vibrant musical life became available to Amy, yet the Cheneys continued to struggle with balancing Amy's musical interests and Victorian codes of conduct. She took private piano lessons, first with her mother and then Ernst Perabo, a local pianist who had studied at the Leipzig Conservatory. She

⁷ One ancestor who immigrated to the United States before 1685 might have been Anglo-Irish. Block, *Amy Beach*, 16.

⁸ Louis C. Elson, *The History of American Music* (New York: Macmillan, 1904), 294. Amy Laemmli has recently suggested that such behaviors are a sign of a possible autism spectrum disorder. Amy Laemmli, "Amy Beach: The Victorian Woman, the Autism Spectrum, and Compositional Style" (master's thesis, University of Missouri, Columbia, 2012).

⁹ Block, *Amy Beach*, 6-7.

occasionally gave private performances for Boston's musical and intellectual elite.¹⁰ However, except for a year of basic theory classes with Junis Hill, professor at the Boston Conservatory, she received no formal theory or composition instruction. Her education did not include private composition lessons. This did not stop her from composing, a pursuit she also began at four years old.¹¹

Amy gave a formal debut at 16—late for such a talented youth—on 24 October 1883, and after that, it was deemed acceptable for her to perform publicly. She embarked on the busy life of a touring artist, traveling frequently and chaperoned by her mother. This ended two years later when she married Henry Harris Aubrey Beach, a surgeon and professor at Harvard Medical School, on 2 December 1885. She was eighteen and he forty-two, older than her father. As a married woman, her public name changed to Mrs. H. H. A. Beach and behavioral restrictions increased. Married women did not perform frequently in public, nor could they earn sizable income. After that, she only performed in a few charity events per year.¹²

The limitations placed on Amy Beach shaped her musical development in extraordinary ways. Even more remarkably, however, she managed to craft a career that satisfied such strictures while operating in musical spheres that were

¹⁰ Ibid, 25, 27, 29.

¹¹ Ibid, 10.

¹² Beach earned some money during this time, at least through royalties on her published works. My research only uncovered financial records beginning some time in 1905. In 1906, she received \$573.16. Arthur Schmidt Papers, Library of Congress, Correspondence, Box 9.

so often closed to women.¹³ As a child, she was supported by Boston-based social networks that included some of the country's most important musical and cultural figures. Through private performances, she came to know such Boston-based luminaries as John Sullivan Dwight, Carl Zerrahn, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow long before her official debut. As a married woman, she was unable to perform regularly but her husband approved and encouraged her composing, particularly larger forms. Wealthy enough to pay for others to do the housework, she had time to focus on composition.

In lieu of formal lessons, Beach prepared to write large-scale works by rigorously studying treatises and scores on her own. She perused the *Traité général d'instrumentation* by François-Auguste Gevaert and *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* of Hector Berlioz.¹⁴ She also studied scores assiduously in anticipation of Boston Symphony performances. To ensure that she had absorbed works fully, Beach sometimes memorized and copied entire scores before attending performances.¹⁵ With this method, she claimed "to know each voice as intimately as I know the voices of my own family," gaining an exhaustive knowledge of concert music performed in

¹³ Kara Anne Gardner has shown that Amy's circumstances in childhood, while unusual and often dictated by her gender, were favorable for her musical pursuits: Kara Anne Gardner, "Living by the Ladies' Smiles: The Feminization of American Music and the Modernist Reaction" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1999), 43–46.

¹⁴ François-Auguste Gevaert, *Traité general d'instrumentation* (Ghent: Gevaert, 1863); Hector Berlioz, *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* (Paris: Schonenberger, 1855).

¹⁵ Block, *Amy Beach*, 55.

Boston.¹⁶ She took detailed notes at performances, often focusing on possibilities of orchestral color, reflecting her readings in orchestration. Beach approached large forms one-by-one, working systematically through the major genres of the day. First was the Mass, op. 5, which she began in 1886. The Handel and Haydn Society premiered the seventy-five-minute piece on 7 February 1892.¹⁷ Work on the “Gaelic” Symphony began two years later, around January 1894.¹⁸

At the end of the nineteenth century, no genre was so fraught with challenges, expectations, and anxieties of influence as the symphony. Writing one meant not only composing music that was pleasing to the ear, but also producing intellectually impressive material and engaging with the weighty history of the genre. Composers dealt with the inherited symphonic tradition in numerous ways. One of Beach’s favorite composers, Johannes Brahms, often incorporated pre-existing material in tribute to his musical heritage.¹⁹ Beach had developed a deep, encyclopedic knowledge of pre-existing musical works and, in her symphony, she looked to a number of these as models. This becomes clear upon analysis of one movement of the “Gaelic” Symphony. Understanding the extent of musical borrowing in the “Gaelic” Symphony not only allows Beach to

¹⁶ Harriet Brower, *Piano Mastery*, series 2 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1917), 186–187.

¹⁷ William Frothingham Bradbury, *History of the Handel and Haydn Society*, volume 2 (Cambridge, MA: Caustic Claflin, 1911), 16–19.

¹⁸ Block, *Amy Beach*, 86.

¹⁹ Some work on Brahms’s borrowing: Mark Evan Bonds, *After Beethoven: Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); J. Peter Burkholder, “Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music,” *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1984): 75–83; Kevin Korsyn, “Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence,” *Music Analysis* 10, nos. 1–2 (March–July 1991): 3–72; Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005).

be seen as a more autonomous figure than she appeared at the 1994 Brooklyn festival, but it also provides context in which to understand ways that Irishness functions in the work, for her musical borrowing extended to Irish folk tunes. Before we can reassess Beach's use of multiple pre-existing works, however, we need to better understand the extent of influence of the work that is often singularly associated with the "Gaelic" Symphony, Dvořák's "New World" Symphony.

The Czech and the Gael: Dvořák and the "Gaelic" Symphony

Scholars typically begin the story of the "Gaelic" Symphony with events concerning Dvořák in 1893.²⁰ That year, the Czech composer precipitated one of the largest publicity frenzies in the history of American concert music. He had come to the United States in 1892 to lead the National Conservatory in New York, with a mandate by the school's patron, Jeanette Thurber, to encourage an American national style of concert music. A year later, he had concluded that African-American music should be the basis for American national style. In May 1893, he laid out his ideas in an interview in the *New York Herald*, sparking a widely reported controversy.²¹ He claimed:

In the negro melodies of America I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music. They are pathetic, tender, passionate, melancholy, solemn, religious, bold, merry, gay, or what you will. . . . The

²⁰ Block, *Amy Beach*, 87; Michael B. Beckerman, *New Worlds of Dvořák: Searching in America for the Composer's Inner Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 98; John C. Tibbetts, ed., *Dvořák in America, 1892–1895* (Portland: Amadeus, 1993); Joseph Horowitz, "Dvořák and Boston," *American Music* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 3–17.

²¹ "The Real Value of Negro Melodies," *New York Herald*, 21 May 1893, p. 28.

American musician understands these tunes and they move sentiment in him. They appeal to his imagination because of their associations.²²

The premiere of his “New World” Symphony on 16 December of that year offered a demonstration of those ideas, which by then included Native American music as well. Beach likely attended one of the Boston Symphony performances on the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of that month.²³

Beach became involved in the controversy as one of several Boston respondents to the May interview. In a lengthy letter published in the *Boston Herald*, she used the occasion to consider American national style.²⁴ She disagreed with the Czech composer on the grounds that African Americans made up only one component part of the country’s population, and expressed concern that racially-based power imbalances made white northern composers’ use of southern black music highly problematic, writing: “Whatever success may accrue by [African-American music’s] employment cannot be justly claimed as American, but should be impartially laid at the feet of a people whose sufferings and sorrows gave them birth.”²⁵

In the course of the article, Beach referenced a number of groups whose music might be tapped by American composers, including African Americans, Native Americans, Italians, Swedes, Russians, English, Scottish, Irish, Germans,

²² Ibid., p. 28.

²³ We can assume that Beach attended the Boston premiere of the “New World” Symphony because she refers to an earlier hearing of the work when writing about the second run of Boston performances of the “New World” Symphony on 25 and 26 January 1895. Amy Beach, “Music Reviews Vol. 2,” Box 4, Folder 1, Beach Collection, University of New Hampshire Milne Special Collections, p. 27–34.

²⁴ “American Music,” *Boston Herald*, 28 May 1893.

²⁵ Ibid.

and Chinese. While Beach suggested that people from her own locality might be more prepared to use “English, Scotch, or Irish songs inherited with our literature from our ancestors,” she did not claim that any one group held cultural sovereignty over American music. Instead, she expressed resistance to limiting American composers’ palettes, adopting an inclusive approach to musical style tempered only by the composer’s individual heritage and experience. American pluralism, for her, prevented any single type of music from representing her nation.

After she expressed conflicted feelings about Dvořák’s ideas, scant evidence supports the notion that American national style was of much concern to Beach. Few records report her considering the matter, even in connection to the “New World” Symphony. In her music reviews notebook, in which she recorded her thoughts on hearing Dvořák’s Symphony, Beach did not ponder folk tunes as representations of American national identity.²⁶ After lengthy consideration of musical concerns, she again expressed concern for the plight of slaves. She worried that Dvořák had created too lighthearted a representation of African-Americans in his work, writing:

It seems to me light in caliber . . . and to represent only the peaceful, sunny side of the negro character and life. Not for a moment does it suggest their sufferings, heartbreaks, *slavery*. It is all active, bright, cheery and *domestic*, the slow movement especially suggesting the home life to me, with the baby being sung to sleep. From this point of view it is admirable, but there is much more that might have been added, of the dark, tragic side!!²⁷

²⁶ Amy Beach, Music reviews, vol. 2, October 1894, p. 34. Box 4, folder 1, Amy Beach Collection, Milne Special Collections, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

²⁷ Ibid.

Beach remained reticent on the matter of nationalism in music for some time. After Beach's 1893 response to Dvořák's "The Real Value of Negro Melodies," nothing was published by this high-profile public speaker on her opinions about nationalism until the advent of the First World War.²⁸ Neither did critics take up the issue; none mentioned the Irishness of the "Gaelic" Symphony as representative of American nationalism, nor did any review mention a connection with Dvořák, during Beach's lifetime. On this issue, my reading of one particular review differs from that of Block. She cites a 1916 Kansas City critic as a "lonely voice" who recognized "nationalist implications" of the "Gaelic" Symphony, citing the following: "It is a grievous mistake to assume that American writers must confine themselves to 'high-brow coon songs' or American Indian melodies in order to preserve their nationalism."²⁹ In the context of the rest of the article, however, that critic was deriding all composers who felt they needed to express their nationality in music. He argued instead for a cosmopolitan musical style that transcended political boundaries: "Music is a universal language and it might be contended that the sooner American composers lose their provincialism in the artistic cosmopolitanism which embraces the whole world of inspiration, the sooner there will be more real

²⁸ For nationalistic sentiments during World War I, see: Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, "America's Musical Assertion of Herself Has Come to Stay," *Musical America* 28 (19 October 1918): 5.

²⁹ "Great Success for Beach Symphony," *The Musical Leader*, 1916. Scrapbook, Amy Beach Collection, Milne Special Collections, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham. For Block's discussion: Block, *Amy Beach*, 101.

American music.”³⁰ To this critic, Beach’s use of Irish music did not represent her American identity so much as it signaled that she had transcended the perceived limitations of nationalism. American national identity in music was simply not a matter of discussion in the first century of the “Gaelic” Symphony’s existence.

Rather than connecting Dvořák, the “Gaelic” Symphony, and *nationalism*, it is perhaps better to consider Dvořák, the “Gaelic,” and *folk music* within the context of the nationalistic debates. The amount of attention given to the Czech composer’s ideas prompted extensive reflection by Beach on folk music in concert spheres. Beach’s musings in Dvořák’s wake certainly shaped her approach to writing a symphony using folk music. They might have guided her choice of tunes related to her own locality, particularly the music of an underprivileged minority whose struggles for inclusion in American society were a major political, social, and cultural issue at the end of the nineteenth century.

Significantly, however, the “Gaelic” Symphony is not the first work by Beach to use folk tunes, and her use of folk material predates the May 1893 “Real Value of Negro Melodies.” An 1892 *scena ed aria*, “Eilende Wolken, Segler der Lüfte,” uses a song by Robert Burns, “Auld Rob Morris.”³¹ Beach’s work is based on Friedrich Schiller’s *Maria Stuart*, a dramatic telling of the life of Mary, Queen of Scots. The Burns song, heard during an interlude, illustrates Mary’s unspoken

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Adrienne Block, “Amy Beach’s Quartet on Inuit Themes: Toward a Modernist Style,” introduction to *Quartet for Strings (In One Movement) Opus 89*, ed. Adrienne Fried Block, *Music of the United States of America 3*, ed. Richard Crawford (Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1994), xxiii.

thoughts of Scotland.³² The work uses Scottish music, then, in the programmatic tradition of composers such as Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, and Strauss as a narrative device, to convey Mary's internal experience.

Beach's interest in folk music prior to Dvořák's work is unsurprising, given the degree to which concert composers looked to folk sources and the discourse surrounding them. Indeed, in the 1890s, folk music was such a common focus of composers' attentions that we can interpret both Dvořák's and Beach's interest in folk music as part of a much larger cultural phenomenon. A number of confluent trends—Herderian nationalism, republican uprisings, the unifications of Germany and Italy, and European colonialism—had encouraged composers to look to folk music as source material for some time. Along with Dvořák and Beach, so very many composers of the day, including some of Beach's American cohort as well as some of her European favorites—Chadwick, MacDowell, Brahms, Liszt, Schumann, and Mendelssohn, to name but a few—based major works on folk music. In such an environment, we cannot reasonably credit Dvořák alone for motivating Beach to use folk music in her symphony. Rather, we can recognize her participation in the dialogue surrounding Dvořák as one of many outlets for her to explore folk music's many possibilities in classical spheres.

Nevertheless, the "New World" Symphony and the spectacle surrounding it clearly made an impression on the young Beach at a critical time in

³² Adrienne Fried Block, "Dvořák, Beach, and American Music," in *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music in Honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock*, edited by Richard Crawford, R. Allen Lott, and Carol Oja (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 263.

composition of her own symphony. A direct musical relationship between the “Gaelic” Symphony and the “New World” Symphony has been well-documented by Adrienne Fried Block and Michael Beckerman, among others.³³ The two works share the same key of e minor; themes in both are mostly pentatonic; the two symphonies also have similar instrumentation—ensembles could be described as early-romantic orchestras; and they both last around 40 minutes, though both works can vary in length depending on tempo choices. While Dvořák wrote new themes based on his impressions of African- and Native-American music, Beach used pre-existing Irish melodies. Yet in this discrepancy scholars also see a relationship; Block and Horowitz theorize that Beach’s choice was motivated by criticisms of the “New World” Symphony that claimed the work lacked any substantial influence of folk music because he did not use direct quotations.³⁴

The similarity between the symphonies is most often heard in their second movements (figures 4.1 and 4.2). Both begin with brass-dominated introductions that move slower than the thematic sections they introduce. Dvořák’s introduction serves as modulation to the D-flat major tonality of the second movement, from the first movement’s E minor. Beach’s, on the other hand, serves to introduce the F major tonality of the movement by more conventional means, by asserting the dominant of the new key. She might not have even noticed Dvořák’s modulatory introduction in her hearing of the

³³ Block, *Amy Beach*; Beckerman, *New Worlds of Dvořák*; John C. Tibbetts, ed., *Dvořák in America, 1892–1895* (Portland: Amadeus, 1993); Joseph Horowitz, “Dvořák and Boston,” *American Music* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 3–17.

³⁴ Block, *Amy Beach*, 89; Horowitz, “Dvořák and Boston.”

Alla Siciliana. (♩ = 40)

Flauto Piccolo.

Flauti.

Oboi.

Clarineti in B♭

Fagotti.

Corno Inglese.

Alla Siciliana. (♩ = 40)

Corni in F. *Solo* *p* *mf*

Triangolo.

Timpani F. G. C.

Alla Siciliana. (♩ = 40)

Violini I. *p* *mf*

Violini II. *p* *mf*

Viole. *p* *mf*

Violoncelli. *p* *mf*

Contrabassi. *p* *mf*

Ob. Solo *p*

Cl. *pp*

Fag. *pp*

Cor. *pp*

pp

pp

pp

pp

Ob. *cresc.* *mf*

Cl. *cresc.*

Fag. *cresc.*

F1.

Ob. *p*

Cl. *p*

Fag. *p*

Detailed description: This page of a musical score, numbered 79, features woodwind and string parts. The top system includes Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Cor Anglais (Cor.). The Oboe part is marked 'Solo' and begins with a dynamic of *p*. The Clarinet, Bassoon, and Cor parts are marked *pp*. The string section, consisting of five staves, also begins with *pp*. The middle system continues the woodwind parts, with the Oboe and Bassoon parts showing a *cresc.* (crescendo) leading to a dynamic of *mf*. The Clarinet part also shows a *cresc.*. The bottom system introduces the Flute I (F1.) part, which is initially silent. The Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon parts in this system are marked *p*.

Fl. *poco rall.* *a tempo*

Ob. *cresc.* *f* *poco rall.* *pp* *dolce* *a tempo*

Cl. *cresc.* *f* *poco rall.* *pp* *a tempo*

Fag. *cresc.* *f* *poco rall.* *pp* *a tempo*

Cor. *mf* *f* *poco rall.* *a tempo*

ob. *rall.* *dim.* *pp*

Cl. *dim.* *pp*

Fag. *dim.* *pp*

rall. *pp*

Allegro vivace. ($\text{♩} = 132$)

ob.

Cl.

Allegro vivace. ($\text{♩} = 132$)

div. pizz. *sempre pp*

pizz. *sempre pp*

pizz. *sempre pp*

pizz. *sempre pp*

F1. *mf*

Cl. *mf*

Cor. *mf*

non legato *cresc.* *mf* *un. arco*

cresc. *mf*

cresc. *mf*

cresc. *mf*

cresc. *mf*

cresc. *mf*

cresc. *mf*

cresc. *mf*

Figure 4.1: The second movement of the “Gaelic” Symphony, Op. 32, by Amy Beach. Published in 1897 by Arthur Schmidt in Boston.

II

Largo ♩ = 52

Flauti I. II.

Oboi I. II.

Corno inglese

Clarineti I. II, A

Fagotti I. II.

I. II. E
Corni

III. E, IV. C

Trombe I. II. E

I. II.
Tromboni

III. e Tuba

Timpano Des

I.
Violini

II.

Viole

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

5

Solo

a 2

pp

f dim.

ppp

f dim.

f dim.

IV. muta in E

muta in B

p

Largo ♩ = 52

con sord.

ppp

con sord.

ppp

con sord.

ppp

div.

ppp

con sord.

div.

ppp

con sord.

ppp

ppp

H 1115

The image displays a page of a musical score for the second movement of Antonín Dvořák's Symphony No. 9. The score is divided into two systems, each containing staves for various instruments.

System 1 (Measures 10-15):

- Cor. ingl.:** Measures 10-15, starting with a *p* dynamic and a *a 2* marking.
- Cl. I. II. B:** Measures 10-15, starting with a *p* dynamic.
- Viol. I. II.:** Measures 10-15, starting with a *pp* dynamic.
- Vle.:** Measures 10-15, starting with a *pp* dynamic.
- Vel.:** Measures 10-15, starting with a *pp* dynamic.
- Cb.:** Measures 10-15, starting with a *pp* dynamic.

System 2 (Measures 15-20):

- Cor. ingl.:** Measures 15-20, starting with a *pp* dynamic and ending with a *f* dynamic.
- Cl. I. II. B:** Measures 15-20, starting with a *a 2* marking and ending with a *pp* dynamic.
- Fag. I. II.:** Measures 15-20, starting with a *p* dynamic and ending with a *pp* dynamic.
- Viol. I. II.:** Measures 15-20, starting with a *ppp* dynamic and ending with a *f dim. > p* dynamic. Includes the instruction *molto cresc.*
- Vle.:** Measures 15-20, starting with a *ppp* dynamic and ending with a *f dim. > p* dynamic. Includes the instruction *molto cresc.*
- Vel.:** Measures 15-20, starting with a *ppp* dynamic and ending with a *f dim. > p* dynamic. Includes the instruction *molto cresc.*
- Cb.:** Measures 15-20, starting with a *ppp* dynamic and ending with a *f dim. > p* dynamic. Includes the instruction *molto cresc.*

H 1115

Figure 4.2: The second movement of the Symphony No. 9, "From The New World," op. 95, by Antonín Dvořák. Published in 1894 by N. Simrock in Berlin.

symphony, as she makes no mention of it in her listening journal.³⁵ Both movements then present first themes in double reed instruments. Those themes are both derived from folk music, and as such are mostly pentatonic with lilting rhythms. In both movements, a quicker middle section follows, which eventually gives way to a return of the first theme at the end.

The “Gaelic” Symphony’s Many Models

Amy Beach’s compositional process, however, did not only include the influence of a single work, but involved a combination of models. Indeed, the part of the “Gaelic” Symphony most often compared to the “New World,” the second movement, exhibits the influence of at least two other works. Beach left us one clue when she marked the movement “Alla Siciliana.” It is a curiously Italian choice for a symphony on Irish themes by an American composer. Block suggests this marking alludes to the movement’s 12/8 meter.³⁶ However, if Beach wanted to emphasize the movement’s meter in a marking, she could have done that in a number of other ways. Indeed, some form of the term “jig” can accomplish the same task and register Irishness. Additionally, mere allusion to a meter is a weak reason to add a descriptive marking to any movement. The whole issue suggests another Siciliana may have influenced Beach in composing the movement.

³⁵ Amy Beach, Music reviews, vol. 2, October 1894, p. 31. Box 4, folder 1, Amy Beach Collection, Milne Special Collections, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

³⁶ Block, *Amy Beach*, 89.

Indeed, one particular Siciliana, the second movement of Saint-Saëns's Violin Concerto No. 3, appears to serve that capacity.³⁷ Beach heard at least one of the Boston Symphony's performances of the concerto on 30 November and 1 December 1894, while she was working on the "Gaelic" Symphony. She recorded a positive review of the work in her notebook, writing: "the quaint old-fashioned character of the entire movement, with its *ingénue* sweetness, is simply fascinating."³⁸ Beach admired orchestral imitations of the violin line during the soloist's rests (figure 4.3) and praised the constantly varying melody that evokes earlier material without fully repeating, writing: "nothing is ever done twice exactly alike, hence the constant piquancy of effect."³⁹ She also admired the tonal relationships between the concerto's movements; the second movement is in B-flat major, a half step lower than the two outer movements' tonal centers of B minor.

³⁷ Nothing in the Saint-Saëns work officially carries the title "Siciliana." However, the program notes for the Boston performance refer to a "Siciliano rhythm" in the violin and at least one review refers to the term as well. Beach herself dubbed it a "Siciliana" in her music review notebook. W.F.A, "Concerto for Violin, No. 3, in B minor, Opus 61: Camille Saint-Saëns." Program Notes, Boston Symphony Orchestra, 30 November and 1 December 1894, p. 252; "The Symphony Concert," *Boston Post*, 2 December 1894; Amy Beach, Music reviews, vol. 2, October 1894. Box 4, folder 1 Beach Beach Collection, Milne Special Collections, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

³⁸ Amy Beach, Music reviews, vol. 2, October 1894. Box 4, folder 1 Amy Beach Collection, Milne Special Collections, Dimond Library, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the second movement of Violin Concerto No. 3 by Camille Saint-Saëns. The music is in 6/8 time and has a key signature of two flats. The first system (measures 1-10) features a Violin Solo starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by Violin I and Oboe I with a fortissimo (*dol.*) dynamic. The second system (measures 11-15) features a Violin Solo and Flute I with a fortissimo (*dol.*) dynamic. The third system (measures 16-20) features Flute I, Oboe I, and Clarinet I, all with a fortissimo (*dol.*) dynamic.

Figure 4.3: Violin solos and orchestral answers in Violin Concerto No. 3, movement 2, by Camille Saint-Saëns.

Traces of all three aspects of the Saint-Saëns movement that appealed to Beach appear in the second movement of her symphony. At the end of phrases in the beginning and closing trios, she inserted short orchestral imitations, none of which exactly repeat earlier material (figure 4.1). The theme also avoids direct repetition. Instead, a single

unifying theme transforms over the course of the movement. After initially hearing fragments of it around the dominant key of C major, the full theme is first presented in F major. For the scherzo, the theme is reconfigured into a busy, constant string of sixteenth notes in duple time. A section with unstable tonality follows, in which the theme further transforms, before the trio theme is heard in a D-flat major English horn solo. When it returns in the original F-major, the theme is truncated, before the cadence is delayed. While the melodic material in this section is related to the trio, it again avoids exact repetition. The movement ends with a brief return of the scherzo theme, still related to the trio. Additionally, in the “Gaelic” Symphony, the tonal center of Beach’s movement is a half step away from the outer movements, though it ascends instead of the downward movement of the Saint-Saëns concerto, to F major from the first movement’s e minor.

The similarities between the “Gaelic” and the Saint-Saëns concerto are richer and more nuanced than the similarities between the second movement of the “New World” Symphony and the “Gaelic.” This makes sense on practical levels. Beach likely did not have access to a score for the “New World” Symphony as the work was so new. Her analysis in her music reviews notebook seems aurally based. For instance, she wrote that the first movement’s themes: “do not seem to be very fully worked, or in most instances, to be combined with each other. Very little contrary

motion or kindred devices are noticeable at least *to the ear*.”⁴⁰

Contrastingly, she studied the Saint-Saëns concerto rigorously and may have even memorized it, as was her habit in preparing for Boston Symphony performances. Furthermore, many of the similarities between the second movements of the “Gaelic” and the “New World,” such as folk-based, pentatonic melodies and lilting rhythms, are also similar to the Saint-Saëns work.

Additionally, the movement’s unusual structure suggests that Beach used yet another model. It differs from typical examples of scherzos in that the scherzo and trio sections are reversed. The trio bookends the movement and the scherzo occurs in between. As Block describes, the form is turned “on its head.”⁴¹ The middle part of the movement is also in an uncommon duple meter. Block also names a probable model for Beach in the third movement of Brahms’s Symphony No. 2, op. 73, because it switches the scherzo and trio sections, and also contains a duple-meter midsection.⁴²

In the second movement of the “Gaelic” Symphony alone, then, at least three probable models exist, each contributing various component parts to the work. Still another kind of musical borrowing coexists in the second movement of the “Gaelic” Symphony. Its main theme is a direct quotation of an Irish folk tune. To examine this type of musical

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Block, *Amy Beach*, 89.

⁴² Ibid.

borrowing, a different set of questions emerges: why would Beach choose an Irish theme for such an important work? What did Irishness look like to her? How did she construct Irishness in the work? Was there a social group or political entity that Beach tapped in looking to Irish themes? What might her audiences think of Ireland and the Irish? As a resident of Boston, Beach's thoughts about Irishness were shaped by that city's prominent Irish-American community, and she likely even had contact with Irish Americans in her own home; servants and housekeepers of the time were frequently Irish.⁴³ Before examining Beach's choices in constructing Irishness in her symphony, then, we must understand more about Irish-American communities in late-nineteenth-century Boston.

Boston's Gaelic Revival

In the 1890s, Boston was the epicenter of a Gaelic cultural revival that emerged across Ireland and its diaspora. Irish-American communities in the United States were larger than ever and possessed increasing amounts of political, financial, social, and cultural clout. The first of the great waves of Irish immigration in the 1840s and 1850s was a half-century in the past and the ranks of second- and third-generation Irish-Americans swelled. A growing number were making inroads into the middle class. In political scientist Steven P. Erie's

⁴³ Records of the Beach household at 28 Commonwealth Ave. are not extant, so we cannot prove the national origins of their employees. Irish immigrant women were, however, prevalent in the domestic professions at the time and we can reasonably assume that at least a few of Beach's servants were Irish. Margaret Lynch-Brennan, *The Life of the Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840–1930* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009).

study of Irish Americans, he found that “between 1870 and 1900 the proportion of Irish in white-collar jobs . . . rose from 10 percent to 24 percent.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, a new generation of American-born political leaders with Irish roots came into office. Boston, for instance, elected its first Irish Catholic mayor in 1884. These newly empowered Americans fueled shifts in popular conceptions of Irishness. This Gaelic revival brought back older Irish cultural practices including traditional music and the Irish language. The movement sought to undo perceived damage to Irish life and Irish identities wrought by centuries of prejudice and colonization through promoting positive ideas about the Irish. Beach’s choices of Irish musical material reflect these images of the Irish and relate to Boston’s particular experience of the Gaelic revival.

Irish Americans who fueled the Gaelic revival fostered an image of the Irish that reflects the experiences of an immigrant community. Ireland was imagined as distant and idealized, in line with Williams’ Romantic character type, discussed in the introduction. Frequent song topics of the Gaelic revival included longing for a picturesque, agrarian home and relatives who lived far away.⁴⁵ For instance, the Tin Pan Alley ballads of Chauncey Olcott, a descendent of Irish immigrants, painted idealized pictures of a distant Ireland. The cover of “Ireland A! Gra Ma Chree” (figure 4.4), depicts a well-dressed, and assumably well-to-do, father and his daughter, literally peering through a harp with

⁴⁴ Steven P. Erie, *Rainbow’s End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840–1985*. California Series on Social Choice and Political Economy 15 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 63.

⁴⁵ William H.A. Williams has performed extensive analysis on Irish topics in popular song lyrics during this time period. William Williams, *’Twas Only an Irishman’s Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 179.



Figure 4.4: "Ireland A! Gra Ma Chree," by Chauncey Olcott. Published in 1901 by W. Witmark & Sons, New York.

shamrocks raining on it. The Irish harp, in the nineteenth century, was not a common instrument in practice, but was a ubiquitous symbol of Ireland, associated with the island's precolonial past. In the song, an immigrant sings of how much he misses home:

Back to the dear land of sunshine
And back to the land of his birth,
Which poor tho' it be 'tis ever to him
The dearest spot on earth.

This song, published in 1900, is created for people with a distant memory of Ireland, whether they were born on the island or their ancestors were. Olcott also uses the Gaelic term of endearment, “Gramachree.” The late-century Gaelic revival marks a moment of return for the Irish language, which had been virtually eliminated by legal procedures and immigration in the century prior. The tunes Beach chose to use in her symphony, several of which have Irish-language titles, reflect this Romantic Irish type. She chose a source that described the melodies as ancient and idealized the melodies’ origins.

As in earlier iterations of the Romantic Irish type, the images of the Irish associated with the Gaelic revival frequently expressed a profound sense of loss. “Ireland A! Gra Ma Chree” exudes sentiments of loss for the Irish homeland in a relatively lighthearted fashion, but other examples demonstrated intense grief over the loss of loved ones. Olcott’s most famous ballad, “My Wild Irish Rose,” expresses such grief in a subtle reference to Thomas Moore’s “’Tis the Last Rose of Summer”:

If you listen I’ll sing you a sweet little song
Of a flower that’s now dropped and dead
Yet dearer to me, yes than all of its mate,
Though each holds aloft its proud head.⁴⁶

In Boston, Beach, not herself Irish, experienced the Irish-American community’s rapid growth. There, the Gaelic revival reflected the idiosyncracies of that city. Boston’s Irish-American population was particularly concentrated. Mid-century famine immigration to Boston was enormous, such that by 1855

⁴⁶ Chauncey Olcott, “My Wild Irish Rose” (New York: W. Witmark & Sons, 1899).

more than 50,000 Irish immigrants lived there. The state census that year recorded a total of 160,490 in the city, so 31 percent of Boston's residents had been born in Ireland.⁴⁷ Of those Irish immigrants, some were remarkably upwardly mobile, particularly by the end of the nineteenth century. Erie notes increasing numbers of Boston-based Irish Americans in municipal jobs, a sign that many were entering the middle class. He writes: "the proportion of [Boston] city workers of Irish descent rose from a paltry 5 percent in 1870 to 32 percent in 1900."⁴⁸ The large Irish-American middle class held particular traction in the city's social, political, and cultural life.

As members of Boston's Irish-American community became financially successful, a tenuous relationship developed between the city's Irish Americans and the conservative, financially powerful, culturally invested, and often anti-Catholic Brahmin elite. The term "Brahmin," applied to Boston's upper class first by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., comes from the Indian caste system.⁴⁹ In India, Brahmins were the highest caste, and were often priests and artists as well as professional tradesmen. Boston's traditional upper class were often Anglo-American and Protestant. Like India's caste, Boston's Brahmins were typically devoutly religious and they took active roles in Boston's artistic life, supporting such historic institutions as the Handel and Haydn Society, the Boston Symphony, and Harvard University. Beach was herself supported by such

⁴⁷ 1855 Massachusetts State Census, cited in William E. Newman and Wilfred E. Holton, *Boston's Back Bay: The Story of America's Greatest Nineteenth-Century Landfill Project* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2006), 44.

⁴⁸ Erie, *Rainbow's End*, 59.

⁴⁹ Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., "The Professor's Story," *Atlantic Monthly* 5, no. 27 (January 1860): 93.

organizations, though her middle-class origins meant that she was not born into Brahmin society.

The relationship between Irish-Americans and Brahmins at the end of the century was often ambivalent. As historian Thomas O'Connor describes, Boston's elite resented and snubbed Irish Americans to a greater degree than the upper classes of other American cities.⁵⁰ Historian Lawrence McCaffrey describes Brahmins' fear that Boston's Irish-Americans were detrimental to their hometown, writing that they "despised [Irish Americans] for the social strain they inflicted on the city, and for their alien and subversive religion."⁵¹ Other scholars have noted that from this climate, a body of Irish-themed art and literature arose with a particularly idealized and distant image of Irishness, as if the adversity of prejudice that Boston's Irish-American community faced led them to construct identities that were as immune from deprecation as possible. Historian Charles Fanning notes that in Boston, the Gaelic revival image of Irishness, which he terms "Celticism," was particularly "pure . . . where the pressures of anti-Irish nativism and the weight of Anglo-Saxon literary establishment were particularly strong."⁵²

In writing a symphony on Irish themes, Beach entered into this polarized climate surrounding Irishness in Boston. She needed to navigate the expectations of both the Irish-American community and the upper-class

⁵⁰ Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 149–158.

⁵¹ McCaffrey, *Irish Catholic Diaspora*, 123.

⁵² Charles Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America: 250 Years of Irish-American Fiction*, 2nd edition (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 171.

Brahmins. In the “Gaelic” Symphony, Beach explored the principles of the Gaelic revival by tapping a particularly wholesome image of the Irish. They are of the idealized, Romantic category and suitably refined for Boston’s upper class. Beach also adhered to Brahmin ideals of refinement and learning by looking to respectable sources that provided historical information on the tunes.

Irish Tunes, the Gaelic Revival, and Brahmin Sensibilities in the “Gaelic” Symphony

Beach’s choice of Irish material in her symphony displays the ideals of the Gaelic revival. She invokes and explores the Romantic image of the Irish, choosing examples that were described as old and use the Irish language. Her process also reflects Brahmin culture—having gone to a library, she selected a source that seemed well-informed and academically oriented. In doing both, she demonstrated her position in Boston. Additionally, Beach’s concepts of the Irish seem not to only emerge in the borrowed Irish melodies, but also in form and other melodies in the symphony. Indeed, ideas about Irishness that were specific to Beach’s Boston pervade the entire work.

For the symphony, Beach borrowed four tunes printed in an 1841 volume of *The Citizen*, an Irish nationalist periodical published in Dublin that was available to her at the Boston Public Library.⁵³ The image of Irishness cultivated in *The Citizen* was shaped by midcentury movements for independence from the British crown. It celebrated the Irish countryside, separating the nation from the

⁵³ Block, *Amy Beach*, 88. For the magazine: *The Citizen: Dublin Monthly Magazine* 3 (Dublin: Samuel J. Machen, 1841).

industrialism associated with a modernizing Britain, and constructed older, idealized, pre-colonial ideas of Irishness. Its creators supported Irish independence openly and they eventually became members of Young Ireland, a revolutionary group active in the later 1840s. Thomas Davis, one of Young Ireland's leaders, regularly contributed to *The Citizen* before he founded *The Nation*, the publication for which he is better known.⁵⁴ Though *The Citizen* was not a music magazine, a few pages at the end of every monthly issue were devoted to examples of Irish music. Where possible, the publishers also offered information about the tune and composer, along with musical analysis and a few words on the arrangement. Music was included for several reasons, all nationalistic: to promote the music for which Ireland was known, to explain what was exceptional about the individual examples, and to encourage an idealized version of Ireland that was encoded in the tunes.

Beach's selection of *The Citizen* as a source seems relatively obscure, particularly given the surfeit of options at her disposal in Boston. Those options included several major collections of Irish music heavily circulated at the time, principally the works of Edward Bunting, Thomas Moore, and William Bradbury Ryan. Furthermore, any number of ballads printed in sheet music and traditional Irish music she might have heard performed in her vicinity were abundantly available. But Beach's choice makes sense, given the natures of Brahmin society and the Gaelic revival in Boston. Seeking a source printed in Ireland itself, with explanations on the origins of the music used, and whose characterizations of

⁵⁴ Helen F. Mulvey, *Thomas Davis and Ireland: A Biographical Study* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

Irish people and Irish life reflect those of the purest strains of the Gaelic revival around her. Moreover the 1841 date of this volume's publication, on the eve of the Great Famine that commenced in 1845, is also significant. Amid a movement that placed value on older incarnations of Irishness, Beach tapped a source from before the worst disaster in Ireland's history. The famine precipitated significant changes in Irish life, including immigration patterns that swelled Boston's ranks. Also, using such an academic source, with experts recording their knowledge of the tunes' origins, appealed to Brahmin intellectuality.

THE NATIVE MUSIC OF IRELAND.

No. X.

THE simplicity and purity of the structure of the air, named *Ḥοιρητιν Ορηαδ*, or "The Little Field of Barley," indicate its genuineness, and, although not in triple time, it may be classed amongst our ancient melodies. It is formed, as those very old airs usually are, of four strains of equal length, the first gentle and closing with the common cadence on the tonic; the second ascending in the scale, more impassioned, and closing upon the emphatic sixth; the third a repetition of the second; and the fourth of the first, with slight variation. We believe it was first reduced to writing very recently; when one of our fair friends in the county of Cork noted it down from the singing of a young woman, a native of Kerry. This was the song which it was her great delight to sing—as she milked her cow in the green fields, with her heart full of the innocence of her occupation and of her years. Some more learned antiquarian may say that there is no proof that this is an old air, and that some of the triplets are not of the antique character. Suppose it to be modern, what is the result? It shows that our population, in the sequestered parts of our island, retain the same indigenous musical disposition which belonged to our ancestors. There is no country in Europe, save Ireland, in which the imitative relations between the parts of airs ever assumed this peculiar form; and then, if you will, we have here an unstudied effusion in modern times, conceived in all the essential attributes of the ancient music—a living testimony of the identity of our people in times and in regions the most removed from each other.

The Irish words which are sung with it relate to the story of a young man, the son of a rich farmer, whose relations did not wish him to marry the girl he loved, and were very anxious to "make a match" for him with one that had "A field of Barley, Cows and Horses." We have not been able as yet to get a copy of the Irish words, which we are told are very beautiful, but the sense is given in the following rustic translation, as we have been informed by our fair and obliging correspondent, to whom we are indebted not only for the air itself, but for the information we have been able to acquire concerning it.

Figure 4.5: Description of "The Little Field of Barley" in *The Citizen: Dublin Monthly Magazine*, vol. 3, p. 260. Published in 1841 by Samuel J. Machen in Dublin.

Beach's selections of Irish melodies from *The Citizen* reflect these ideas about Irishness that adhere to Gaelic revival ideals. They are valued in the magazine because of their supposed age. They also feature agrarian characters and promote an idealized version of Ireland. For instance, the magazine's discussion of "The Little Field of Barley," the tune used in Beach's second movement, focuses on the agrarian setting of the text and an argument that it was written before modern times.⁵⁵ The text, in the Irish language with an English translation included, tells of a rich farmer's son whose parents did not approve his choice to marry a poor woman. He went ahead with the marriage and was happier, even after disownment.

Those who wrote about music in *The Citizen* were also preoccupied with the age of the tunes, even though the nature of orally transmitted folk traditions makes dating the origins of tunes difficult. The note on "The Little Field of Barley" seems fixated on the tune's age. According to *The Citizen*, it "may be classed amongst our ancient melodies," though the writer admits to scant evidence. He or she then looks to the tune itself for clues to its ancientness, claiming that the song's structure represents a very old tradition. If it is more recent, the writer claims, the "The Little Field of Barley" supports the notion that Ireland remains unsullied by modernity (figure 4.5). The writer then proposes that such examples of hypothetically older music, still performed, show "that our population, in the sequestered parts of our island, retain the same indigenous

⁵⁵ "The Native Music of Ireland," *The Citizen; or, Dublin Monthly Magazine* 3, no. 18 (April 1841): 260.

a. *Conchobhar ua Raghallaigh Cluann* (Connor O'Reilly of Clounish).

Brisk and lively
Maelz. Metron. ♩=84

Piano

b. *Goirtin Ornadh* (The Little Field of Barley)

Rather slow and with expression
Maelz. Metron. ♩=182

Voice

I dream'd, my love, of thee, In the first sweet sleep of night, When
winds, were breath - ing low, And the stars were shin - ing bright, I
rose from dreams of thee And a spi - rit in my feet has
led me Who knows how? To thy cham - ber win - dow, sweet!

c. *Paisdin Fuinne*

Andantino

Violin

d. *Cia an Bealach a Deachaidh Si* (Which Way Did She Go?)

Slow. Maelz. Metron. ♩=60

Voice

She was mild as the Sum-mer Air, Like the tim - id Dove's were her eyes, Oh my

5 Child!— Oh my Child!— So— gent - le, pure and fair! Thy heart would break to hear thy Moth-er's sighs.

10 When I saw thee smile I was glad, But my hours of joy a - las are o'er, She is gone, She is

15 gone,— And this ach - ing heart is sad. For I shall ne - ver, ne - ver see her more.

Figure 4.6: Irish tunes from *The Citizen* used in Amy Beach's "Gaelic" Symphony.

musical disposition which belonged to our ancestors."⁵⁶ Of the three remaining tunes borrowed from *The Citizen*, the magazine claimed that *Conchobhar ua Raghallaigh Cluann* was written by Turlogh O'Carolan, a famous Irish harper of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As an O'Carolan tune, it was considered part of the old tradition. One exception is the song *Paisdin Fuinne*, which the magazine claims was written more recently. However, its author is the Irish war hero Richard Fitzpatrick. The strength of the author's renown could have granted the song's relative youth special dispensation, but ancient qualities were still necessary; the writer for *The Citizen* commented: "people of old-fashioned tastes will think it a capital one."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ "The Little Field of Barley," *The Citizen: Dublin Monthly Magazine* 3 (Dublin: Samuel J. Machen, 1841): 260.

⁵⁷ *The Citizen*, 203.

The use of Irish melodic material was, however, only one way in which Amy Beach engaged with Irishness in her symphony. Other movements of the work suggest that Beach used her own previously composed material and even made decisions about form that expressed the ideals of the Gaelic revival. In the first movement, Beach used her own song “Dark is the Night.”⁵⁸ The song, with text by William Ernest Henley, depicts a tempestuous night at sea. The lyrics describe the narrator’s anxieties in the storm. The narrator is not necessarily Irish, nor do I think it was the poet’s intention to signify Irishness. However, his experience has much in common with the Romantic Irish character type: a strong male, facing a fearful, potentially dangerous situation in the present, nostalgic for an idealized past. The song also possesses some of the superficial markers of Irishness discussed in Chapter 3, including its compound time signature and large, ascending leaps at the beginnings of phrases. Thus, even in parts of the symphony that do not draw from Irish musical practices, Beach communicates the hardships of common Irish emigrant experiences—desperation, diaspora (in the narrator’s separation from the world), and nostalgia.

Beach’s music for “Dark is the Night” illustrates the experiences of a man at sea in a storm through ambiguous tonality. The piano’s chromatic whizzing at the beginning of the song serves to emphasize the song’s E minor tonality, but does not follow a clear harmonic progression, creating aural confusion. Thereafter, excepting a few moments of clarity, the frenetic piano part

⁵⁸ Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, “Dark is the Night,” in *Three Songs for Voice and Piano, Op. 11*, reprint (Boca Raton, FL: Master’s Music, 1999).

tempestuously pushes the boundaries of tonality in various ways. For instance, series of diminished and half-diminished seven chords in measures 8–10 and 15–16 lack a clear progression.

The symphony begins with the same chromatic figures, thus opening the work with music originally intended to illustrate a frightful sea voyage, an experience that opened many immigrant experiences as well. E minor is eventually strongly asserted at the beginning of the first theme at rehearsal A. The first theme of the symphony takes the first theme of the song, with quite a functional, even conservative, progression supporting it. A bar of cut time correlates to a common-time bar in the song, providing a strong cadential 6-4 as it does in the song (the only instance of a strong cadence in the song).

The middle part of the song's ternary form, in E major, contains a much more clear, less frenetic, tonal center. This makes sense, as the narrator's thoughts turn to nostalgic memory ("Where are the hours that came to me, so beautiful and bright"). That ends, however, on a series of major and minor III chords. Upon return of the A section, the key signature changes back to e minor, but the tonal center sinks from G to F-sharp diminished, resting there for several measures, then moving through several other chords. E minor finally appears at measure 49. The song finishes with an extremely quick V-I progression at measure 58, followed by an extended, nine-bar plagal progression.

This tonal ambiguity in the piano part contrasts with the vocal line, which is relatively simple and folk-derived. If the dominant is noticeably downplayed in the piano, the vocal line makes up for that by emphasizing B at several key

points. For instance, the ambiguity of the end is somewhat mitigated by a B-D sharp-E in the vocal line (supported by the quick V7-I cadence in the piano). The symphony's themes that are taken from the song are taken from the vocal line, and thus they follow this rubric and mimic folk song.

Another part of the "Gaelic" Symphony stands out as more consciously original. Unlike other parts of the "Gaelic" Symphony that follow more established models, the third movement has few precedents. The structure is curious. It contains a double ternary form, whereby one tune is presented, developed, and returned and then the process repeats itself for the second tune. The first tune, titled *Paisdin Fuinne* in *The Citizen*, is in e minor, and the second, *Cia an Bealach a Deachaidh Si*, is initially in the parallel major, but it switches to minor for the return. Beach achieves cohesion by including quotations of the second melody in the first half and vice versa. Though I am unaware of a direct model for double ternary form, a number of double forms exist, including Brahms' *Schicksalslied* and the finale of Schumann's Piano Quintet, Op. 44.⁵⁹

Curiously, critics at the 1896 premiere noticed that the movement was long and faulted Beach for it, noting that it sounded the most Gaelic. Philip Hale, a prominent Boston critic, described the movement as "eminently Gaelic, dull, and intolerably long-winded."⁶⁰ Louis Elson, another major Boston critic who later penned one of the first histories of American music, wrote condescendingly of the third movement: "the long, slow movement proved that the Gaels were a

⁵⁹ Many thanks here to Alan Gosman, who kindly allowed me to pick his brain for additional possible models.

⁶⁰ Philip Hale, "Music in Boston," *Musical Courier* 33, no. 20 (11 November 1896): 15.

very deceptive race as regards their cadences.”⁶¹ Perhaps there is another reason that the third movement is long and innovative that concerns the way that Beach constructed Irishness in the symphony. This movement is also the only one of the symphony to contain two Irish tunes (the first and second movements contain one each, while the fourth contains none). Moreover, it is by far the most morose in tone, expressing the loss that, as explored in the introduction and Chapter 1, attended Romantic images of the Irish. Like Thomas Moore before her, Beach explored loss as a central part of her construction of Irishness. Indeed, in Chapter 1, I claim that one hallmark of Moore’s *Irish Melodies* that was associated with loss and longing was a musical device I term the sentimental longing motive, a descending line that begins in the upper echelons of the voice range, often preceded with pitches set a sixth or more below.

The third movement of the “Gaelic” Symphony, particularly its opening (figure 4.7), seems to fixate on pseudo sentimental longing motives. It builds to a particularly prominent one that is a part of the first theme. The movement begins with a strong F in low-range instruments—cello, viola, and bassoon—that is followed by the other two pitches in a Neapolitan chord in this e minor movement in flutes, oboes, and clarinets, all in their high ranges, in addition to trombones that add weight. The high C’s descend to B. Then, the first theme’s

⁶¹ Elsewhere, Elson’s critique offered harsh and gendered language, suggesting she “write some further movements in the lighter and freer forms rather than exhaust her muse in such heavy self-imposed tasks as symphonic composition.” Louis C. Elson, “A Cosmopolitan Program at the Symphony Concert,” *Boston Evening Record*, 14 February 1898.

opening ascending fifth that is followed by a descending line becomes a defining part of the opening texture. Finally, a fully-developed sentimental longing motive is introduced at the denouement of the first theme (4.8). It contains an upward leap of a minor seventh, followed by a descending line that finishes with the theme's cadence. The return of this sentimental longing motive at the end of the movement serves as the apex of the entire movement.

The third movement, then, is not only the longest in duration, but also the most compositionally inventive, and it is the movement that embraces images of the Irish that were propagated by the Gaelic revival. Critics heard Irishness in this movement more than in other movements and some of those associated with Brahmin culture, including Hale and Elson, faulted the movement as they disparaged the Irish. None of this is happenstance; Beach constructed this movement to reflect the specific ideas of the Irish that were popular in the Gaelic revival. She imbued the movement with a pervasive sense of loss, using what she thought were very old melodies, to convey the idealized, Romantic image of the Irish.

By considering the Irishness of Amy Beach's Boston, we understand the "Gaelic" Symphony in many new ways. Ideas about Irishness guided not only her musical borrowing, but it also extended to other thematic material and her choices about form. And it wasn't just any image of the Irish on display, but a carefully crafted, strategically employed representation of the Irish that reflected Beach's location in Boston and her social position as a member of the upper class. The music of *The Citizen* and the emphasis on distant origins, loss, agrarian

lifestyles, and the use of the Irish language reflect the values of the socially and financially ascendant Irish-American community, while the use of academic materials is in line with Brahmin convention. We only truly understand the “Gaelic” Symphony, then, by acknowledging the context in which it was written, not only in the United States as a whole, but also within Irish-American communities and Amy Beach’s Boston.

Lento con molto espressione. (♩ = 72.)

Flauti.

Oboi.

Clarinetti in A.

Bass Clarinetto in A.

Fagotti.

Corni in F.

Trombe in F.

Tromboni e Tuba.

Timpani in Bu.E.

Lento con molto espressione. (♩ = 72.)

Violini I.

Violini II.

Viole.

Violoncelli.

Contrabassi.

Figure 4.7: “Gaelic” Symphony, by Amy Beach, movement 3, opening. Published in Boston by Arthur Schmidt in 1897.

This musical score page contains two systems of music. The first system consists of seven staves. The top two staves are in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The third staff is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb). The bottom three staves are in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *cresc.*, *mf*, *f*, and *mf cresc.*. The second system consists of seven staves. The top two staves are in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom three staves are in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Dynamics include *mf cresc.*, *ff*, *cresc.*, *f*, *mf*, *pizz.*, *cresc.*, *f*, and *arco*. The page is filled with complex musical notation, including slurs, ties, and various rhythmic patterns.

Figure 4.8: "Gaelic" Symphony, by Amy Beach, movement 3, end of first thematic area. Published in Boston by Arthur Schmidt in 1897.

Conclusion

Hearing the Irish in American Music

In 1947, Library of Congress folklorist George Korson (1899–1967) released an album featuring music of anthracite miners from the mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania, which were largely populated by Irish- and Welsh-Americans.¹ The album begins with the ballad “Down, Down, Down,” written and performed by William E. Keating (1886–1964). A third-generation Irish American, Keating had lived almost his entire life in Pennsylvania mine country.² In the ballad, a narrator lands his first job in a mine. He drinks too much the night before his first day and arrives with a hangover. As he assembles his tools for work, he also secures further moonshine to take “down, down, down.” The story preserves familiar aspects of comic Irishman narratives examined in Chapters 2 and 3, most notably overdrinking that interferes with productive labor. The ballad also reflects its origins in twentieth-century American mine country, referencing concomitant labor issues. Musically, Keating’s song reflects ways in which Irish balladry persisted in the United States while continuing to adapt to the needs of Americans well into the twentieth century.

¹ George Korson, *Songs and Ballads of the Anthracite Miners*, Archive of American Folk Song, Library of Congress AAFS L16, 1959, LP.

² Eric C. Nystrom, “Miner, Minstrel, Memory: Or, Why the Smithsonian Has Bill Keating’s Pants,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 131, no. 1: 83–85.

Keating adopted another, more striking aspect of Irish practice in his ballad; he sings with a distinct Irish brogue. The pronunciation is not the result of any direct experience in Ireland, for he never went to the Emerald Isle. Rather, Keating's community preserved Irish traditions brought by earlier immigrants to such a degree that he inherited an Irish dialect.³ At the heart of this dissertation lies a similar relationship between the Irish and American musical life. As Keating's roots in an Irish-American community facilitated his adoption of Irish musical practices, the four case studies in this dissertation show various ways in which Irish and Irish-American communities have shaped significant and longstanding musical practices in the United States. The scale of the phenomenon is remarkable; the dramatic number of Irish in the United States has had an enormous and multifaceted impact on many kinds of American music, over the course of the century.

This dissertation illuminates the relationship between the Irish and American music through three main channels: Irish people, Irish music, and conceptions of the Irish. Considering all three yields more productive results than considering any single stream. Keating's mining ballad demonstrates the point. Irishness represents an integral part of Keating himself as he was Irish-American. The song he sings is part of Irish musical tradition, and the imagined subject of his ballad inherits and propagates traits from historical comic Irish stereotypes. Just as these commonalities sharpen our understanding of the music of anthracite miners,

³ George Korson, *Minstrels of the Mine Patch: Songs and Stories of the Anthracite Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1938), 2.

so too does bringing all three channels together help us to apprehend the significance of the Irish in nineteenth-century American music.

This dissertation seeks to illustrate that while the identity of some agents for Irish-American synthesis are obvious, other figures influenced American music less directly, sometimes even inadvertently and from afar. Irish-Americans such as blackface minstrel Dan Emmett and variety theater star Edward Harrigan shaped such iconic American musical styles as blackface minstrelsy and musical theater. Others like Chauncey Olcott and Keating wrote music in traditions that were inherited from Ireland and adjusted for new contexts. Indeed, musicians from Ireland, some of whom never set foot in the United States, have emerged as major figures in this story. Thomas Moore, who only spent brief time in the United States as a tourist, made such an immense contribution to American sentimental song that his influence continues to resonate audibly today. Similar cross-cultural lines of inquiry can extend to include contributors to the Dublin-based magazine *The Citizen*, from whom Amy Beach borrowed melodies as well as concepts of the Irish used in her “Gaelic” Symphony. The journalists for *The Citizen* may never have imagined that the tunes they printed in the 1840s would be used by an important American symphonist 50 years later, yet they too played a vital role in American music history.

By considering only those who have written or published music, however, we may neglect the most important people in the larger story. Multitudes of Irish immigrants and their descendants in the United States underpin everything else. Without robust, constantly developing Irish-American communities that “always

brought their music with them,” none of the musical examples in this dissertation would have taken the same shape.⁴ Without appealing to a vigorous Irish-American community, Moore’s *Irish Melodies* could not have permeated American musical culture. Theatrical ventures like blackface minstrelsy and the Mulligan variety series would not have developed in the same form. Amy Beach might never have turned to Irish themes for her symphony, or used them for the same purpose.

If it were not for Irish immigrants and their descendants, nineteenth-century American music would have assumed a very different sound, considering the longstanding, far-reaching musical synthesis achieved by Irish and American music. The impact of Irish music tradition can most easily be identified by the direct transmission of Irish music to the United States, exemplified by Moore’s *Irish Melodies*. In other cases, Americans borrowed Irish melodies to construct new music, such as the minstrel tune “Backside Albany,” Harrigan and Hart’s incorporation of the Irish tune “St. Patrick’s Day,” and Beach’s inclusion of Irish music in her symphony. What has arguably proven even more influential is the adoption of Irish musical characteristics in music written in the United States. For instance, the sentimental longing motive persisted in American popular song across decades, to the extent that it even shaped the soundtrack to *Gone with the Wind*. Likewise, blackface minstrelsy holds a significant debt to Irish traditional styles, as early minstrel tunes followed the structures of Irish dance music to a remarkable degree. Along the same lines, musical techniques such as rhythmic snaps and

⁴ Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith, “Irish Music and Musicians in the United States: An Introduction,” in “Special Issue on Irish Music in the United States,” edited by Paul F. Wells and Sally K. Sommers Smith, *Journal of the Society for American Music* 4, no. 4 (November 2010): 396.

compound time, both of which derive from Irish musical practices, animate the variety works of Harrigan and Hart. Whether adopting an Irish style or adapting a technique, quoting directly or synthesizing various elements, all of these examples suggest how Irish musical practices touched American music in profound and formative ways, shaping the sound of the nation's music across multiple genres and casting an enduring influence, sometimes carrying up to the present.

The final major channel for comprehending the impact of Irishness in American music demonstrates how conceptions of a group of people have significant consequences for musical life. Both the dialogues about the historical position of the Irish in the United States and the stereotypes encoded in much nineteenth-century American music shaped music. Moreover, the case studies collectively reveal that conceptions of the Irish were not static, but incredibly fluid and highly dependent on particular contexts. Beyond simple arguments about whether the Irish were welcome arrivals or unwanted immigrants, debates about their religion, their ability to function in industrial economies, their liability in the Irish Great Famine of the 1840s, and their membership in the white race emerged in American musical life. Issues of the day are vitally important to each work discussed in this dissertation. Moore's *Irish Melodies*, for instance, was constructed partially in response to needs for idealized, precolonial concepts of the Irish. Reflecting their urban setting, Harrigan and Braham's Mulligan series presented Irish-Americans as successful members of New York's bustling lower wards. They disseminated concepts of the Irish that were directly related to the rising status of Irish-Americans in those neighborhoods. Beach's "Gaelic" Symphony also participated in

dialogues surrounding the Irish in her community of Boston, as the city was undergoing a Gaelic revival.

Stereotype negotiation occurs in a great deal of music discussed in this dissertation, often complementing other methods of stereotyping via iconography, text, and theatrical performance. For instance, David Braham's music for Harrigan and Hart directly employs musical markers of Irishness when Irish characters resemble comic, and often derogatory, Irish stereotypes. Yet such markers are conspicuously absent when Irish characters exhibit fewer stereotyped behaviors. In other cases, idealized and positive stereotypes emerge, as in the music associated with Moore and Beach that communicates a Romantic concept of the Irish. Thomas Moore's songs employ aspects of balladry that conjured images of the Irish that were idealized. Amy Beach's use of Irish tunes was part of a Gaelic revival that also promoted positive images of the Irish. In these examples, we can see that music works together with other processes of stereotype formation to promote ideas about the Irish.

We learn even more about the extent of Irish influence in American music when all three channels combine. For instance, my research on Amy Beach takes into account Irish-American communities in Boston who were extremely invested in promoting an idea of the Irish that is also reflected in the "Gaelic" Symphony (people). It also considers the tunes themselves, suggesting that her choice of melodies and her settings of them reflect the ideals of Boston's Gaelic revival (music). Finally, those portrayals included a specific image of the Irish as particularly idealized, financially successful, and speaking the Irish language

(conceptions). The other three chapters offer equally cross-disciplinary insights: the Irish people involved in the creation of *Irish Melodies* and Irish-American audiences helped establish the longstanding popularity of the Irish tunes in the collection, which contained ideas of the Irish as ancient, bucolic, idealized, and Romantic; the Irish-American performers and audiences of early blackface minstrelsy infused the genre with elements of Irish traditional music, drawing also on the construct of the comic stage Irishman to produce the stereotyped representations of African Americans; and the Irish-American Edward Harrigan produced his variety works for northern, urban Irish-American communities utilizing sonic markers of the Irish as well as occasional quotation to formulate new, sometimes more functional and often more nuanced representations of the Irish that responded to currents in the 1870s and 1880s.

Through such a combination of approaches, all four of the chapters have revealed moments in the nineteenth century in which the Irish were central to major developments in American music, even if these represent only four of the significant stories of music and Irishness in nineteenth-century American music. In the same time span, many Irish musicians were actively pursuing their craft in all corners of the United States. They had brought their music with them, remembering and refining elements of Irish music just as they were finding new ways to produce music in America. And by doing all of that, music emerged as an important method of participating in a broad dialogue about the place of the Irish in the New World. I am reminded again of the third-generation Irish-American William Keating and his Irish brogue. If we consider all of these connections between the Irish and American

music in the nineteenth century, perhaps that brogue can stand as a metaphor. Perhaps American music on the whole inherited a hint of an Irish accent in the nineteenth century. Perhaps that continues to shape our musical life today.

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