

“The United Powers of Female Poesy and Music”

Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry*

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Seven years after the establishment of Grattan's Parliament in Ireland, and thirteen years after the appearance of Walker's *Historical Memoirs*, Charlotte Brooke, daughter of the Church of Ireland clergyman and author Henry Brooke, published the first translations of Irish Gaelic poetry and songs in English. In her *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789), Brooke inserts herself into the discourse of those attempting to imagine the Irish community through its music and literature. Joep Leerssen calls her “the first mediator of importance between the Irish-Gaelic and the Anglo-Irish literary traditions.”¹ Seamus Deane praises her for achieving three “firsts”: “the first extended translation of ‘polite literature’ from Irish into English; the first presentation of Irish and English enjoying ‘parity of esteem’ in a literary work; the first outspoken claim for literature to effect of conciliation that would prefigure and lead to political reconciliation.”² This chapter argues that with her translations of Irish poetry and songs and, more particularly, with her “original Irish tale,” a fictional poem based on authentic sources, Brooke attempts to fashion a role for women in the Irish nation of the past and the present. Her work is a direct reaction to Walker's alignment of Irish music with a male bardic community.

In her preface, Brooke presents herself as a handmaiden to both the male heroes and writers who have come before; her place, she suggests, is to “strew flowers in the paths of these laureled champions of my country.”³ She refers to her work with modesty, as she simultaneously introduces and excuses herself.⁴ Her justification for writing, she suggests, is to help gain England's respect for Ireland, its history and its people. What is significant, however, is the way she characterizes the Irish nation and the relationship between Ireland and England in the preface:

As yet, we are too little known to our noble neighbour of Britain; were we better acquainted, we should be better friends. The British Muse is not yet informed that she has an elder sister in this isle; let us then introduce them to each other! together let them walk abroad from their bowers, sweet ambassadors of cordial union between two countries that seem formed by nature to be joined by every bond of interest, and of amity. Let them entreat of Britain to cultivate a nearer acquaintance with her neighbouring isle. Let them conciliate for us her esteem, and her affection will follow of course.⁵

Like Walker, and in contrast to the sexualized dynamic of colonialism that Ashis Nandy discusses, Brooke presents both nations as female, as “sisters” rather than a male and female couple. What is striking, however, is the ambiguity surrounding the identity of the Irish muse. Brooke expresses her desire to let Britain know “[t]hat the portion of her blood which flows in our veins is rather ennobled than disgraced by the mingling tides that descended from our heroic ancestors.”⁶ Brooke’s muse of Ireland is a vessel for the mingling of British and Gaelic blood. But while Brooke can use this muse to claim a stake in Gaelic Ireland’s heroic ancestry, her key function in the preface is to mediate with a Britain with whom she is literally “joined by nature.” The two muses are identical, except that the Irish muse is the elder. This is a meeting of sisters who share the same characteristics and expectations, not of half-sisters who are unlike. “Let them come,” Brooke urges, invoking not one but two muses.⁷ She then checks herself with a hyphenated pause: “—but will they answer to a voice like mine? Will they not rather depute some favoured pen, to chide me back to the shade whence I have been allured, and where, perhaps, I ought to have remained, in respect to the memory, and superior genius of a Father—it avails not to say how dear!”⁸ This interjection expresses Brooke’s sense of the inappropriateness of a woman participating in such overt political and public activity, particularly in this case, where she is confronting the legacy of the male bardic tradition. In the rest of the *Reliques*, however, Brooke’s expressed confidence in her own powers is stronger. In particular, she becomes more “self-possessed” as she moves into the translations; neither of her immediate mentors, Henry Brooke, her father, and Joseph Cooper Walker, succeeded in learning Gaelic.⁹ And as Brooke’s powers of self-assertion change within the *Reliques*, the image she conveys of Ireland also changes. The Ireland she presents in the preface is a strange compound, mostly Anglo-Irish, but the Ireland that emerges from the rest of the text holds out against assimilation to English culture.

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Brooke uses her male mentors, particularly Walker, to legitimize her enterprise, but she also asserts her right to participate in the imagining of the nation by disputing their ideas. It was Walker who first provided a forum for Brooke's works, as he published three of her translations in his *Historical Memoirs*, attributing them to a young lady who wished to remain anonymous and commenting that, "with the modesty ever attendant on true merit, and with the sweet timidity natural to her sex, she shrinks from the public eye."¹⁰ Encouraged by Walker and by Thomas Percy, Brooke apparently overcame that timidity and published the *Reliques* under her own name. She acknowledges Walker's support in her preface, noting that he "afforded every assistance which zeal, judgment, and extensive knowledge, could give."¹¹ Brooke litters the *Reliques* with quotations from Walker—both his *Historical Memoirs* and his *Historical Essay on the Dress of the Ancient and Modern Irish* (1788)—inserting extensive passages from these works in her footnotes and in the "advertisements" to a number of her translations of the poems. Brooke stresses her own lack of expertise in comparison with the researches of Walker, Sylvester O'Halloran, and others.¹² She says, for example, that she is "unacquainted with the rules of translation"¹³ and refers to her work as "my feeble efforts."¹⁴ Nevertheless, although Brooke highlights her own lack of expertise, she gives the reader indirect proof to the contrary. She provides commentary that demonstrates her complete familiarity with the corpus of work that she translates, noting, for example, that "[h]air is a favourite object with all the Irish Poets."¹⁵ She delivers authoritative criticism on the poetry and songs that she translates, directing the reader on how to read the pieces correctly. And she indicates that she is engaged in active correspondence with the experts she praises. Throughout the text she is careful to note from where she has procured her copies of the original Irish texts. When Walker cannot furnish her with a complete original of "The Chase," for example, she turns to Maurice Gorman. While this meticulousness is understandable, given the accusations being leveled at James Macpherson at the time, it also generates an impression of her belonging to the circle of scholars whom she admires.¹⁶

Moreover, Brooke clearly indicates her differences with those belonging to this circle. In her footnotes, for example, she notes that in his *Historical Essay on the Dress and Armour of the Irish*, Walker claims that "the poets of the middle ages describe the heroes of Oisín, as shining in polished steel," but she politely corrects this: "The poet before us is, however, (as well as many others) an exception."¹⁷ Similarly, she disagrees with Walker's assessment that Carolan, who was blind, "remembered no impression of colours."¹⁸ Brooke states, "I cannot acquiesce in this opinion."¹⁹ She also asserts the accuracy of her

translation of Carolan's "Gracey Nugent" as compared to Walker's, noting that, "a friend to whom I shewed this Song, observed, that I had omitted a very lively thought in the conclusion, which they had seen in Mr. WALKER's Memoirs." To "vindicate my fidelity," Brooke includes a "literal translation of the Song."²⁰ Such an inclusion indirectly criticizes Walker. Brooke's version is very different from Walker's. Walker employs rollicking anapestic trimeters in his translation:

With delight I will sing of the maid
Who in beauty and wit doth excel;
My Gracey, the fairest, shall lead,
And from Beauties shall bear off the belle.²¹

Brooke's iambic pentameter lines, on the other hand, render her version of "Gracey Nugent" more of an art song. Brooke's language is also considerably loftier than Walker's:

Of Gracey's charms enraptur'd will I sing!
Fragrant and fair, as blossoms of the spring;
To her sweet manners, and accomplish'd mind,
Each rival Fair the palm of Love resign'd.²²

As well as taking issue with Walker on these points, Brooke parts ways with her mentor on larger issues such as the interpretations of Irish bardic culture and its relation to the present. Walker is fundamentally ambivalent about the cause of the disintegration of Ireland's superior musical and poetic culture. As was seen in chapter 2, he attributes it variously to foreign invasion, English invasion, internal strife, and a taste for Italian music. In his chronological account of Irish musical life from the invasion of the Milesians to the advent of the Hanoverian dynasty, Walker narrates a fundamental rift between the past superiority and the present failure of Irish culture. In contrast, Brooke attempts to build a seamless web between a past heroic age and the present. As she moves from the sections on "Heroic Poems," "Odes," and "Elegies" to a section on "Songs," she leaps from the age of the Fenii and Oisín to the early eighteenth century without indicating any fundamental difference between them. In fact, she says that the "songs of modern date" demonstrate "of what the native genius and language of this country even now, are capable, labouring, as they do, under every disadvantage."²³ In contrast to Walker, Brooke does not suggest a waning of Irish culture.

Moreover, Brooke offers a very different picture of Irish bardic culture in general from that found in Walker. In the *Historical Memoirs*, Walker's bardic culture in its most ancient form approximates a kind of Royal Academy. According to Walker, young bards attended a bardic seminary and, upon completing their studies, were assigned positions according to the rank of their families.²⁴ In contrast, Brooke's bards are learned chivalric knights. Drawing upon the questionable claims of Sylvester O'Halloran's *Introduction to the Study of the Histories and Antiquities of Ireland* (1771), a work that she notes is "fraught with learning, rich with the treasures of ages, and animated by the very soul of Patriotism, and genuine Honor," Brooke asserts that the custom of creating knights in Europe actually originated among the Celts. According to Brooke, Irish knights were instructed in "Philosophy, History, Poetry and Genealogy" along with morality and "a reverence and tender respect for the Fair."²⁵ Brooke is concerned with emphasizing the courtesy of Irish bardic culture, contending that "[w]ith us chivalry flourished from the remotest antiquity."²⁶

This is in fact the key to her disagreement with Walker's explanation of the "strain of tender pensiveness"²⁷ discernible throughout Irish music. As we have seen, Walker attributes the minor key that much Irish music was written in both to the oppression that the Irish labored under and, strangely, to "the remarkable susceptibility of the Irish of the passion of love,"²⁸ giving as his evidence for that conclusion the commentary of an anonymous traveler. Brooke corrects this view, distinguishing the heroic poetry from the songs: "[T]he heroic poetry of our countrymen was designed for the noblest purposes;—love indeed was still its object,—but it was the sublime love of country that those compositions inspired."²⁹ She continues: "I am not sufficiently conversant in the state of the antient [*sic*] music of this country, to say what that might once have been, or what degree of change it might have suffered; but it does not appear to me that the antient [*sic*] poetry of Ireland was ever composed in a very lively strain."³⁰ Walker's ambivalence about the melancholy nature of Irish music allows him to prevaricate about the specific nature of the relationship between Ireland and England, leaving unanswered the question of whether Irish musical melancholy was an effect of colonial domination or whether it existed prior to colonization. Brooke sidesteps this question, but she contests Walker's association of the ancient poetry with mundane concerns. She is determined first and foremost to assert ancient Irish poetry as a patriotic, chivalric, and noble activity.

In her commentary "The Nature of Irish Music," Brooke takes issue with the published ideas of another male mentor, the antiquarian Thomas Percy.³¹ By entitling her work *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, Brooke flatteringly alludes

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to Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, published in 1765. And she echoes his aesthetic concerns to present works of ancient poetry to the general public. Percy wanted to present his ballads "not as labours of art, but as effusions of nature, showing the first efforts of ancient genius, and exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages."³² But Brooke's project also directly opposes the politics of Percy's poetics, for where Percy makes his claim for the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, Brooke asserts the superiority of the Irish bards. In "An Essay on the Ancient Minstrels in England," Percy contends that the minstrels of Britain were the successors of the ancient bards, "who under different names were admired and revered, from the earliest ages, among the people of Gaul, Britain, Ireland and the North; and indeed by almost all the first inhabitants of Europe, whether of Celtic or Gothic race; but," he adds, revealing his own ethnic predispositions, "by none more than by our own Teutonic ancestors, particularly by all the Danish tribes."³³ He continues, enlarging on the connection between the English and the Danes, whom he describes as particularly admiring of bards: "The Jutes and Angles in particular, who composed two thirds of the conquerors of Britain, were a Danish people, and their country at this day belongs to the Crown of Denmark."³⁴ The *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* works to promote English national identity. The *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, however, presents the Irish bardic tradition as more authentic than the English, both because it is more ancient and because it includes works that outdo others in their ability to "interest the heart." Brooke implies that the Irish poems in their original forms are by nature more sublime than their English counterparts because they are "already Musick":

It is scarcely possible that any language can be more adapted to Lyric poetry than the Irish. The poetry of many of our Songs is indeed already Musick, without the aid of a tune; so great is the smoothness, and harmony of its cadences. . . . But it is not in sound alone that this language [of Lyric poetry] is so peculiarly adapted to the species of composition now under consideration; it is also possessed of a refined delicacy of descriptive power, and an exquisitely tender simplicity of expression.³⁵

Brooke claims that Irish poetry is characterized by more "enthusiasm" than English poetry. Because in Ireland poetry was "more universally in practice, and still more enthusiastically admired," than elsewhere, the Irish bards were able to practice their skill with the utmost freedom and to lose themselves "in the fine frenzy of exalted thought."³⁶ Such was not the case in England, where

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the poets had too long a tradition of playing with wit. Brooke takes aim at contemporary English poetry as well as the ancient varieties, observing that at least one-half of those "who bear the title of English Poets, are merely men of wit and rhyme; and I believe it will be acknowledged that those amongst them who possessed the sublimest genius, descended but seldom to sport with it."³⁷ While appearing to pay a compliment to Percy by imitating his project, Brooke actually sets herself up in direct opposition to his ideas and affirms the connection between music, poetry, and patriotism in Ireland.

In her commentary on the heroic poems, Brooke also emphasizes the idea of chivalry. She calls attention to the generous nature of the characters: "How exquisitely is the character of Fergus supported! He greets the enemy with courtesy: he is answered with insolence; yet still retains the same equal temper, for which he is every where distinguished. We see his noble spirit rise, but it is with something more noble than resentment."³⁸ The *Critical Review* explained this chivalric predisposition by suggesting that several of the poems, although "founded on, or framed from, traditionary tales of great antiquity," were actually "of later date." After all, the author reasons, "we cannot well suppose that . . . [the Irish bards] knew that knights bound themselves by 'the vow of chivalry.'"³⁹ But it is a particular kind of chivalry that Brooke portrays in the *Reliques*, one that is interpreted according to eighteenth-century ideas of sensibility, as is evident in her comments on Cucullin's lamentation over his son: "Here is one of those delicate strokes of nature and sentiment, that pass so directly to the heart, and so powerfully awaken its feelings!—Sympathy bleeds at every line of this passage."⁴⁰ In the *Reliques*, Cucullin and the other ancient characters are converted into "men of feeling."

Brooke employs the figure of Carolan to suggest a continuity between the ancient chivalric heroes and the present-day Irish. Where Walker placed his biography of Carolan in an appendix, relegating him to a footnote on the general narrative of deterioration, Brooke works the harper into her argument about the endurance of Irish culture, using him to demonstrate "of what the native genius and language of this country even now, are capable."⁴¹ She includes a short biography of Carolan and two of his songs in the general body of her text. Although he was primarily known for his musical skills, Carolan is featured in Brooke's *Reliques* as a poet; Brooke seems anxious to re-create him as a man of letters. Earlier collections containing Carolan's work merely recorded the tunes; Walker was the first to provide a number of translations of his songs. But whereas Walker included examples of the variety of themes Carolan addressed—from drinking songs to satires—Brooke selects only

two sentimental pieces: "Song for Gracey Nugent" and "Song for Mable Kelly." She interprets these songs with the same eye for sensibility that she had used in the earlier heroic poetry: "Every Reader of taste or feeling must surely be struck with the beauty of this passage.—Can anything be more elegant, or more pathetic, than the manner in which Carolan alludes to his want of sight!"⁴² Moreover, in her "Thoughts on Irish Song," Brooke takes pains to point out the serious nature of Irish love songs: they are not the mere products of fancy and wit but rather expressions of "the heart" and "the sublime conceptions of the soul."⁴³ Brooke comments that "Love and War were the two favourite objects of passion and pursuit, with our antient [*sic*] countrymen, and of course, became the constant inspirers of their muse."⁴⁴ In the *Reliques*, Carolan is fit into the role of this kind of chivalric bard, demonstrating a "tender respect for the Fair,"⁴⁵ and is as serious about love as his forebears were.

In "Virtue and Manners in Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*," Adam Potkay comments on the language of sensibility found in Macpherson's work, suggesting that the *Poems of Ossian* helped "bridge the gap separating the emerging 'feminism' of polite society from the male 'chauvinism' of both the ancient polis and its modern apologists."⁴⁶ I would suggest that in the *Reliques*, in addition to bridging the gap between eighteenth-century polite society and the ancient Irish polis, Brooke is attempting to bridge the gap that separates women from participating in the public discourse of the nation. While the poems in the *Reliques* deal with war and conquest, the paratext interprets the actions in terms of a discourse of sentiment, a discourse that feminizes the action of the poetry and also makes it more accessible to the commentary of women. For Brooke, translation and textual commentary are patriotic activities in which women can participate as much as men. In the preface she describes her literary endeavors as performing a "service to my country."⁴⁷ Later in the text, she again identifies the preservation of the ancient poetry with patriotism, as she exhorts: "*Irishmen*—all of them at least who would be thought to pride themselves in the name, or to reflect back any part of the honor they derive from it;—*they* are particularly called upon, in favour of their country, to rescue these little sparks from the ashes of her former glory."⁴⁸ Although she addresses her remarks to *Irishmen*, it would appear that she is also concerned with providing a means by which Irishwomen can participate in "the horizontal brotherhood" of the nation. By reinterpreting Irish culture through the lens of sensibility, Brooke carves out a place for women in the discussion of national identity.

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to write a new view of the nation, one that included women as patriots and writers of the nation, not just as passive sufferers in the achievement of national glory.

Brooke's concern to present women as participating actively in the imagining of the Irish nation is most evident in her creation of her own poem, "Máon: An Irish Tale," a poem independent of any Gaelic original. By including her own original among ancient Irish texts and by altering the plot to suit her purposes, Brooke directly links female authority and authorship with Irish identity. She begins the poem with conventional modesty about her talents. Addressing a Mr. and Mrs. Trant, she begs them to accept the dedication of her "simple lays." Her Muse, she notes, has "ne'er, on Pindus' mount, / Trod inspiration's ground" but remains, rather, connected to the scenes of earth, inspired by Nature.⁵³ She refers to a national Muse, one who would have inspired the kinds of poems Brooke included in the *Reliques*: epics, war songs, elegies, and love songs. But we find out that this Muse is not one of the traditional nine maidens—or the two national muses alluded to in the preface—but a male bard, Craftine, and he appears to the narrator in the author's dream, urging her to take up the challenge of relating a story of Ireland. Whereas Brooke begins the *Reliques* with a preface that detracts from her own capabilities, she ends by asserting her authority in a notable twist on an old theme. What Brooke describes is in effect an *aisling*, a traditional Gaelic dream-poem, but she reverses the gender roles so that the figure in the vision is a man and the dreamer is a woman: herself. Furthermore, the male Muse encourages the literary expression of patriotism by women:

For oft the Muse, a gentle guest,
Dwells in a female form,
And patriot fire, a female breast,
May sure unquestioned warm.⁵⁴

Brooke appropriates the role of a male authority figure and speaks with his voice.

Brooke's decision to write an original tale offers a counterperspective to Walker's comments regarding women's roles in ancient bardic times. Although he accords women some power to "soften the manners" of the people, Walker denies the existence of female poets: "We cannot find that the Irish had female Bards or BARDESSES, properly so called."⁵⁵ Nevertheless, soon after his comments regarding women's roles in bardic society, Walker makes the following statement: "Anno Mundi 3649, a great revolution was occa-

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sioned in Ireland by the united powers of female poesy and music."⁵⁶ The event he goes on to describe is the tale of Mäon. Brooke seized upon this tale as an invitation to write, appropriating and altering Walker's story so that it is a woman who performs the ultimate national activity and who serves as the national bard.

Brooke's tale of Mäon begins with the usurpation of the throne of Laoghaire Lork by his brother, Cobthach. In the ensuing slaughter in the palace, Craftine, the bard, manages to rescue Laoghaire's son, Mäon, by throwing himself between the boy and a dagger aimed at Mäon. Because bards are accorded such esteem in Irish society, the palace residents are outraged at the fact that the dagger wounds Craftine, and bard and boy are able to make their escape in the resulting chaos. Craftine transports Mäon to the kingdom of Munster, where he is trained in princely ways and becomes entangled in the inevitable love situation with the king's daughter, the "fair Moriat." But even as their love (still undeclared) grows and prospers in the bower of Munster's bliss, the long arm of Cobthach threatens to destroy their happiness. Mäon is forced to forego his Moriat and flee to France, or Gallia, as Brooke calls it:

He must; there are no other means
Of life or safety nigh;
Our only hope on Gallia leans,
And thither must he fly.⁵⁷

He swears to return, however, and he leaves Craftine behind, instructing him to remind Moriat of her exiled lover, if ever she should show need of reminding.

Moriat soon perceives that it is Mäon and not herself who needs reminding of the bonds of love, for along with bulletins informing her of his increasing military skill, she receives word that he is to marry the daughter of the King of France, Aide, thus cementing the alliance between Ireland and France. Upset by these tidings, Moriat swoons and bemoans the inconstancy of love. However, after sufficient lamentation she recovers herself—and here is where the deviation of Brooke's version of the tale from Walker's becomes most evident. In Walker's tale of Mäon, there is no mention of Mäon marrying the princess of France. In Brooke's tale, however, Moriat must wrestle with her private love for Mäon and her realization of the public importance of securing the help of France. The latter impulse wins out in her sensibilities and she relinquishes her love for Mäon for the greater good of the country:

Tell [Mäon]; he freely may espouse
 My happy rival's charms;
 Tell him, I give him back his vows,
 I yield him to her arms.

So may the strength of Gallia's throne
 Attend a filial prayer,
 And force our tyrant to atone
 For all the wrongs we bear.⁵⁸

Ascertaining that Mäon still may be in love with her, she orders him into a contractual obligation with the Princess of France:

Tell him his country claims him now.—
 To her his heart he owes;
 And shall a love-breath'd wish, or vow,
 That glorious claim oppose?—

Tell him to act the patriot part
 That Erin's woes demand;
 Tell him, would he secure my heart,
 He must resign my hand.—⁵⁹

Brooke is anxious not to sign away Ireland's independence through a marriage contract with France, however. Happily, the French princess, realizing that Mäon's affections lie elsewhere, frees him from his marital obligation. When Mäon regains his kingship, Mäon and Moriat are duly married with Aide's blessing, and the Irish kingdom remains solely in Irish hands.

Although the tale resolves with Mäon as ruler of the kingdom, in Brooke's retelling, it is Moriat who plays the role of the true patriot. She becomes a martyr to the national cause by sacrificing her personal interests for her country:

For me,—on duty I rely,
 My firm support to prove;
 And Erin shall the room supply
 Of Mäon and of love.⁶⁰

Further, in Brooke's version of the story of Mäon, writing becomes a key factor in saving the nation. Confirmed in her decision, Moriat composes a poem

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that she gives to Craftine to deliver to Mäon. The poem reveals to Mäon the truth regarding his family history and the murder of his father, information that Craftine had previously kept from Mäon, fearing he might do something rash. Brooke links Moriat's transformation into a patriot with the activity of writing that, by presenting the history of the nation, guarantees its future. It is Moriat's poem that ultimately effects the regaining of the kingdom. We note how, in turning from speaking to writing the poem, Moriat seemingly transcends earth as she transcends the limits of her gender:

While thus the sweet Enthusiast speaks,
 She seems o'er earth to rise;
 Sublime emotions flush her cheeks,
 And fill her radiant eyes!

In her soft hand the style she takes,
 And the beech tablet holds;
 And there the soul of glory wakes,
 And all her heart unfolds.⁶¹

Brooke alters her father's iconography of the passive and suffering woman as her heroine actively writes the nation.

The end of the tale provides further material for thought about assumptions concerning gender and patriotism. Brooke presents herself as uncertain of how to finish the poem: "How shall the Muse the Tale pursue? . . . Or paint to sympathy's fond view / What language fails to tell?"⁶² In response to this dilemma, she ends "Mäon: An Irish Tale" with an encomium on patriotism, exhorting the reader to

Think all that Glory can bestow!
 That Virtue's soul imparts!
 Conceive the nameless joys that flow
 From Love's selected hearts.

Conceive the Patriot's glowing breast
 Whom grateful nations crown!
 With virtue, love and empire blest,
 And honor's clear renown.⁶³

Knowing what we do of the story as Brooke has painted it, these stanzas actually confront us with an uncomfortable irony. "What language fails to

tell" can be very telling. We may assume that these stanzas are to remind us of the importance of Mäon's exploits, but "the Patriot" remains anonymous, and, more importantly, genderless, in Brooke's description. The stanzas might apply equally well to Moriat, leaving us to ponder who, in fact, was the greatest patriot: Mäon, who was, after all, just obeying a filial duty in avenging his father's murder; or Moriat, who was willing to renounce the traditional female domestic and romantic role for the good of her country. The end of the poem challenges us to see how "grateful nations" as a rule "crown" and "honor" male patriots. In the case of the tale of Mäon, however, the nation was "conceived" by a woman—and a writing woman at that. In writing the role of Moriat, Brooke is writing her own job description as a female poet of her nation, taking over the position of those like Carolan whose work she is anthologizing. She herself becomes the hero she asked for in the preface: "Why does not some *son of Anak* in genius step forward, and boldly throw his gauntlet to Prejudice, the avowed and approved champion of his country's lovely muse?"⁶⁴ As becomes apparent in the *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, the "son of Anak" is in fact the daughter of Henry Brooke, Charlotte Brooke herself. The nation in "Mäon: An Irish Tale" is created, not through action and death, as in the Gaelic poems and songs that she translates earlier in the book, but through the act of writing.

The Irish nation that Brooke represents is curious in its appeal to both purity and hybridity. Perhaps partly in response to the criticisms leveled at Macpherson, Brooke is at pains to establish the authenticity of the poems and songs that she presents in the *Reliques*; hence she includes transcriptions of the poems in Gaelic. The *Critical Review* for 1790 confirms the sense of authenticity that the originals provide, even though the reviewer probably did not read Irish and could not judge the translations' "faithfulness" to the originals: "Miss Brooke, whatever [Macpherson] might be, is, we doubt not, faithful to her original."⁶⁵ But the presence of the originals also suggests the essential hybridity that lies at the root of Brooke's Ireland. Merely by being present, the Gaelic originals point out the inevitable compromise of translation and the violence of the translating letter. Brooke herself directs our attention to the originals' recalcitrance, their refusal to be translated. She comments that "there are many complex words that could not be translated literally."⁶⁶ According to Brooke, Irish is a language of multiple possibilities, multiple synonyms that "no modern language is entirely prepared to express."⁶⁷ Translation weakens the "force and effect" of the thoughts, "just as that light which dazzles, when flashing swiftly on the eye, will be gazed at with indifference, if let in by degrees."⁶⁸ In his comments on the translating

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process in his *History of Verse Translation from the Irish*, Robert Welch comments that "the translator was performing a public service in contributing to the advance of understanding and mutual accord, by providing versions of Gaelic poetry. In acknowledging that there was such a thing as Gaelic verse he was signalling the existence of a separate Irish culture; by translating it he was demonstrating the capacity of the English language to receive into itself a very different quality of human awareness and perception."⁶⁹ I would argue that, far from using translation as a way of "overcoming differences that mark Ireland and England off one from the other,"⁷⁰ Brooke reinforces difference by including the original Gaelic poems. Moreover, in addition to confronting the reader with their linguistic difference, the Gaelic poems also represent a typographical disorientation. As E. W. Lynam points out, the *Reliques* was "the first purely literary work containing printing in the Irish character which was ever published in Dublin."⁷¹ The printer George Bonham used the Parker typeface for the *Reliques*, creating a text for the Gaelic poems that has closer affiliations to Irish script than to Roman type. In its content and its form, then, Brooke's *Reliques* holds up barriers that resist anglophone power because it resists anglophone knowledge. The book opens with a list of over three hundred subscribers drawn from the ranks of the Anglo-Irish gentry. Andrew Carpenter notes that "such a phalanx of Anglo-Irish respectability had never before been assembled in support of Irish culture."⁷² However, what this "phalanx" was subscribing to was a hybrid representation of their nation that both intrigued them with its heroic depiction of ancient heroes and resisted their knowledge in its very typography.

Charlotte Brooke died in 1793. Later republications of her work suggest the very different contexts that she and her *Reliques* came to serve. In 1795, three years after the Belfast Harp Festival, and a year before Bunting produced his first edition of the *Ancient Irish Music*, "The Chase" and "a collection of choice IRISH SONGS, translated by Miss Brooke" were published in the first Gaelic-language magazine, *Bolg an tSolair*. *Bolg an tSolair* ("Bag of Goods" or "Miscellany") was compiled by Patrick Lynch, a scholar and teacher of Irish living in Belfast, and published by the *Northern Star*, the newspaper of the United Irishmen in that city. An advertisement in the *Northern Star* on August, 27, 1793, announces the upcoming publication of the magazine: "The attempt which has been made by Mr. Lynch, to revive and preserve a knowledge and taste of the beauties of the Irish language, by his publication of the Gaelic Magazine, deserves, and we must trust will meet with every encouragement from his countrymen."⁷³ Instead of "conciliating" or developing "affection" between England and Ireland, like the *Reliques*, however, *Bolg an tSolair* is

designed to foster unity at home through the medium of Gaelic. As the *Northern Star* suggests, the learning of Gaelic "is particularly interesting, to all who wish for the Improvement and Union of this neglected and divided Kingdom. By our understanding and speaking it, we could more easily communicate our sentiments and instructions to all our Countrymen; and thus materially improve and conciliate each other's affections."⁷⁴ Speaking Irish would be useful to both "Merchant and Artist," as "[t]hey would be qualified for carrying on Trade and Manufactures in every part of their native country."⁷⁵ To fulfill this purpose, *Bolg an tSolair* featured an abbreviated grammar, a vocabulary (including useful phrases and words), and two "Dialogues" along with Brooke's poetry and songs. The dialogues concern a transaction between a merchant, a farmer who is trying to sell him some sheep, and a priest who is helping with the transaction. When the farmer notes that the merchant "speaks Irish tolerably well," the priest assures him that "[t]hat is a sign he is a [*sic*] Irishman."⁷⁶

Bolg an tSolair revised Brooke's work to make it suitable for United Irishmen propaganda. It discouraged Brooke's representation of the hybrid relationship between English and Gaelic and her notion that translating weakens the "force and effect" of the Gaelic. Instead, the grammar and vocabulary published in the magazine claim to make Gaelic accessible and usable to English speakers. The magazine implies that knowledge of the Gaelic language can grant everyone cultural ownership of the poems and songs of their nation. The typography of the text also works to lessen the essential difference of the Gaelic language. As Pat Muldowney and Brendan Clifford point out, a "Gothic type" was used in the original to give an "impression of Gaelic lettering."⁷⁷ This was no doubt an economic decision, the Parker type being very expensive, but the resulting text appears less like an Irish manuscript than Brooke's original text. In addition, *Bolg an tSolair* narrowed the definition of patriot that Brooke had attempted to widen. While the magazine publicized Brooke's name as the translator of the Gaelic material, it undid her efforts to refashion that material in such a way as to emphasize female agency. *Bolg an tSolair* published nothing from Brooke's story of Mäon. Moreover, it included none of the notes in which Brooke asserts her own opinion of the material.

In 1816, the *Reliques* was republished by James Christie, who would go on to republish Walker's *Memoirs of the Irish Bards* two years later. For the Gaelic poems, Christie used a special font which he had cut and cast himself. While Christie's version maintains the hybridity of the original text more closely than the *Bolg an tSolair* version, the "Memoir of Miss Brooke" of that is con-

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joined to the text works to contain that hybridity by representing Brooke as a model of female submission.⁷⁸ This "memoir," written by Aaron Crossley Seymour, a vicar's son and author of several works on evangelical Christianity, describes Brooke as intelligent but ultimately focused on "domestic life": "To the tenderness and elegance of genius, Miss Brooke joined the most amiable social virtues. Few enjoyed the softened pleasures of the society of 'Home,' or entered with greater feeling into its interests and concerns than she did. . . . Disinterested and self-denied, she had no worldly ambition to gratify, no sordid appetites to indulge."⁷⁹ Seymour's account remakes Brooke's life into a Christian story of temptation resisted. He notes that Brooke was interested in the theater as a young woman and that she asked her father to introduce her to some celebrated actors: "Under such dangerous influences, Miss Brooke courted the acquaintance of those mock monarchs of the stage, who had assumed the regal honours for an evening, and whose wonderful exploits reigned completely paramount in her vivid imaginations." But he represents her as being saved from these temptations by a careful father: "Her rage for the amusements of the theatre soon carried all before it, and would doubtless have proved her ruin, had not Mr. Brooke hurried her from a scene so destructive to the happiness, and so pernicious to the morals of the youthful mind."⁸⁰

Seymour is lavish in his praise for the *Reliques*, but only as a reflection of the author's modesty and struggles with life. He effuses: "To investigate the obsolete remains of other times, delivered in a language of which few have been hardy or inquisitive enough to attempt the acquisition; to elucidate those writings, and clothe them in the ungenial, I trust not ungraceful, vesture of modern rhyme, are achievements that might have staggered many a literary knight-errant and enterprising antiquary—yet all this has been attempted and accomplished by Miss Brooke, in her first poetical attempt, who stands forward 'the avowed champion of her country's lovely muse.'⁸¹ But he also comments that she went ahead with the endeavor only after she had duly asked Joseph Cooper Walker and other colleagues to help her with the project. Seymour notes that the work "abounds with many beauties" but that the "circumstances under which it was written" make it "especially" appealing: "a young lady in a state of ill health, the death of a tender mother, and an only brother, in a distant clime, with a father whom she tenderly loved, bending under a weight of years; without a single hand to guide her through an untrodden path, for she could scarce meet with any person that could read a word of the originals."⁸² In the "Memoir," the patriotic image of "strew[ing]

flowers in the paths of these laureled champions of my country"⁸³ is converted to a morality tale of a woman's individual "patient submission to the will of God."⁸⁴ Seymour includes an excerpt from an elegy on Joseph Cooper Walker by Eyles Irwin that praises the "female genius" of "BROOKE" who "revived the memory of the slain, / Who sleep in honour's bed, proud victors of the Dane." But it is the lines with which he concludes his account, lines written by a friend on her portrait, that define Charlotte Brooke for Seymour and for his readers:

Religious, fair, soft, innocent, and gay,
As ev'ning mild, bright as the morning ray,
Youthful and wise, in ev'ry grace mature,
What vestal ever led a life so pure!

The "Memoir" turns Charlotte Brooke into a character directly opposed to her Fenian heroes, who exert themselves in the challenges of battle, or to Moriat, who takes her place as a heroine of the nation. Where *Bolg an tSolair* erased female agency from national concerns, Seymour's "Memoir" actively confines that female agency to the domestic sphere.

In 1832, the *Dublin Penny Journal* featured an article on Brooke, asserting: "There are few writers, male or female, to whom we think Ireland owes a greater debt of gratitude than to Miss Charlotte Brooke, a lady whose patriotism led her to translate some of our most beautiful poetical remains, and whose talents enabled her to do them ample justice."⁸⁵ Despite the *Journal's* desire to "see her genius more fully appreciated," however, Charlotte Brooke was largely forgotten by the general Irish public. Republished in a politically radical and then a socially conservative context, the *Reliques* vanished from view. Despite her own personal disappearance, however, Brooke paved the way for another more visible female figure who was to champion the cause of Ireland, music, and female participation in the nation, Sydney Owenson. As we will see in chapter 5, Owenson's Glorvina of *The Wild Irish Girl* is in many ways a direct descendant of Brooke's female poet-patriot, Moriat.