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Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, Irish and Colonial Melodist: Her Songs for Music and Collaborations with Isaac Nathan

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More than any other single factor, Eliza Dunlop's collaboration with the composer Isaac Nathan on a series of "Australian Melodies" has ensured that she is a figure of intense literary interest today. Of course, this is principally because of her most widely discussed and anthologised song lyric, "The Aboriginal Mother". Written and first published in 1838 in the wake of the Myall Creek massacre, it appears to have generated no documented response at the time. Yet, three years later, when she offered it to Nathan, and he chose to reset it to original music, its public reappearance sparked controversy, and made the poet and her Aboriginal subject targets of misogynistic and racist ridicule in Sydney's Tory and satirical newspapers.

But Dunlop is, and should be, also a figure of musical interest. Nathan only reset "The Aboriginal Mother". It was already, as Dunlop conceived it, a musical artefact. She told him that she originally "wrote" the song "for" a pre-existing tune.¹ Nor was it an isolated case. As a matter of creative preference as well as technique, Dunlop regularly chose to fit new words and images to the metrical and melodic formats of traditional and popular tunes, and deserves to be considered, in her own right, as one of the generation of "national melodists" that patterned itself on Thomas Moore and his *Irish Melodies* (with John Stevenson as musical collaborator for the first seven volumes).² And, as she was well aware, Nathan's own Hebrew Melodies to new lyrics by Byron also formed part of that tradition. Altogether, there are over a dozen identifiable instances where Dunlop either wrote "for" a pre-existing tune, or (and we cannot always be sure which was the case) where she later selected a tune that would allow her new "song" to be sung (see Table 1).³ And we can reasonably assume there are other unidentified cases (see Table 2). In the full title of her manuscript compendium, "The Vase", Dunlop distinguished "songs

1 See her letter to Nathan, Appendix, Document 1.

2 For a comprehensive recent account of Moore's tune selections, see Una Hunt, *Sources and Style in Moore's Irish Melodies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017).

3 Tables 1–3 are summaries only; full sources appear in the text proper.

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Table 1 Eliza Dunlop – 13 songs written for or fitted to specified tunes.

Year	Title / incipit	Tune	Source
1838	“She was – yet have I oft denied”	“I stood amid the glittering throng”	Bishop
1838	“The Aboriginal Mother” (“Oh! hush thee – hush my baby”)	“’Twas when the seas were roaring”	Handel
1839	“The Irish Mother” (“Your eyes have the twin-star’s light”)	“The foggy dew”	Irish
1840	“I bless thy shores, my native land”	“Peggy Ban”	Irish
c.1841	“Oh star of my hope in thy beauty appear” (in “The Cousins of Aledo”)	“The guaracha”	-
c.1841	“I would not tell a heart so dear” (in “The Cousins of Aledo”)	“How oft Louisa hast thou said” [“The birks of Invermay”]	Scottish
1841	“The Eagle Chief” (for Nathan)	“French air”	French
1842-43	“The Aboriginal Father” (for Nathan)	“Kongi kawelgo”	Aboriginal
1843	“The Irish Volunteers” (“For the golden harp on field of green”)	“March of the Irish volunteers” [Lord Charlemont’s march]	Elfort
1853-57	“The Helleborus niger: The Christmas Rose” (“Stern winter hath no power”)	“Eveleen’s Bower” [“The pretty girl of Derby O”]	? Irish
1865	“Erin Dheelish” (“The bell birds ring their silvery call”)	Unidentified melody from one of Bunting’s collections	Irish
Undated	“Echo of ‘My ain kind dearie O’” (“Say what avails dim memory’s form”)	“My ain kind dearie O”	Scottish
Undated	“The Royal Pilosus” (“When the hour of departure is o’er”)	“Far, far at sea”	Florio
Undated	“The Evening Star” (“Now Hesper weeps her glistening tears”)	“The girl I left behind me”	? Irish

Table 2 Eliza Dunlop – six songs and likely songs without identified tunes.

Year	Title / incipit
1835/45	“Morning on Rostrevor Mountain(s)” (“’Tis Morning! from their heather bed”)
1840	“Oh! the limpid streams of my own green land” (“for music”)
1847	“To the Memory of ... Mary Fitzroy” (“Trembling in agony! faint with amaze!”)
1848	“Our home is the gibber-gunyah”
1867	“The spindrift bursts high oer the cliffs of Clonara”
Undated	“Mo Varia Astore” (“Yes I have wept, to see thus faded”)

for music” from her “other poems”, and identifying and restoring the “original” music to as many of these as can easily be done (and thus also restoring music to the critical discussion of them) is the main purpose of the first half of this chapter. Moreover, tracing the earlier transmission history of some of the tunes throws up a few cases where earlier lyrics may also have influenced Dunlop’s literary decisions.⁴

In a couple of instances, we know from Dunlop’s own comments that she relied directly or indirectly on Irish tunes in Moore and Stevenson’s widely disseminated volumes, and in the influential but less well-known collections of Edward Bunting (as she put it herself: “Mr. Bunting, although so eminent, was less talented than our great composer, Sir John Stevenson”).⁵ Probably, given her class and education, most of the tunes she used – and the lyrics she occasionally parodied – originally came her way in print editions, or manuscript copies of print editions.⁶ Which is not necessarily to say she still had these copies to hand in Emu Plains or Wollombi; sometimes, her memory alone probably had to serve. At least once, Dunlop called for a tune that had not yet appeared in print anywhere. And yet, in naming it on first publication of her new lyric in Sydney in 1840, she clearly expected that some of her readers would know the tune anyway; if not necessarily in a version with exactly the same melodic details, then still close enough to fit her new lyrics. The printed forms of tunes given

4 For more comprehensive documentation on Dunlop’s songs with music, along with musical concordances, see Graeme Skinner, “Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, Songwriter”, *Australharmony* (an online resource towards the history of music and musicians in colonial and early Federation Australia), <https://sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/dunlop-eliza-hamilton.php>.

5 Footnote to “Erin Dheelish”, *Empire*, 8 July 1865, 5, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article64140758>.

6 Another collection she may well have known or even owned was Sidney Owenson’s *Twelve Original Hibernian Melodies, with English Words, Imitated and Translated, from the Works of the Ancient Irish Bards* (London: Preston, [1805]), <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=VuvZ714xkNcC>.

Table 3 Isaac Nathan’s published “Australian and Aboriginal Melodies” series 1841–43; those with lyrics by Eliza Dunlop in bold.

No.	Title / incipit	Words	Performances	Published
1	“The Aboriginal Mother” (“Oh! hush thee, hush, my baby”)	Dunlop (1838)	27 Oct 1841 8 July 1842	Jan 1842
2	“The Eagle Chief” (“Hark to the sound! along the green hill side”)	Dunlop	27 May 1842	Feb 1842
3	“Mable Macmahon” (“Your eyes have the blackberry’s lustre”)	Dunlop	27 May 1842 8 July 1842	July 1842
4	“Koorinda Braai”	Aboriginal	27 May 1842	July 1842
5	“Star of the South” (“Hail, star of the south! Australasia advance”)	Dunlop	-	Aug 1842
6	“Australia the Wide and the Free”	W.A. Duncan	21 Dec 1842	Dec 1842
7	“The Aboriginal Father” (“The shadow on thy brow, my child”)	Aboriginal/ Dunlop	-	Jan 1843

below should be approached in the same spirit: they fit the words closely enough, but there is no guarantee they are identical to the versions Dunlop or her colonial readers remembered, or – perhaps as often as not – slightly misremembered.

The second half of the chapter looks in closer detail at the creation and reception of the five Dunlop songs in Nathan’s “Australian Melodies” series (see Table 3).⁷ It is entirely possible that, with “The Aboriginal Mother”, Dunlop seeded the original idea for the series, which Nathan enthusiastically pursued by asking her for another Aboriginal lyric for its successor. In due course, he actively promoted the series, variously as “Australian Melodies”, and “Australian and Aboriginal Melodies”, not only inviting comparisons with, but also suggesting they were worthy successors to, his Hebrew Melodies. The negative as well as the positive press coverage surrounding “The Aboriginal Mother” and its similarly contested successor, “The Eagle Chief”, is reconsidered in the context of responses, pro and con, to two later songs, and, in the end, the surprisingly unanimous praise of the fifth song, “The Aboriginal Father”, even in the pages of Dunlop’s erstwhile antagonist, the *Sydney Morning Herald*.⁸ A brief consideration of the genesis of Dunlop’s two Nathan poems (not for music), and her three lyrics in his miscellany *The Southern Euphrosyne* brings the chapter to a close. The appendix presents newly corrected editions of two pieces of important correspondence between the two.

7 On Nathan, see Graeme Skinner, “Isaac Nathan and Family in Australia”, *Australharmony*, <https://sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/nathan-isaac-and-family.php>.

8 See also Graeme Skinner, “Whiggings and Tories: David and Eliza Dunlop, Colonial Press Culture and the Contested Reception of Isaac Nathan’s ‘Australian Melodies’ Reconsidered”, forthcoming.

Dunlop's Songs with Music

Dunlop's active interest in Irish national music can be traced back to 28 April 1818, when, at the age of around twenty-one, a verse prologue she wrote was read from the stage at a Belfast benefit concert for an elderly invalid harper named Patrick Carolan.⁹ She later told Nathan that "a few of my songs" had appeared among the half-dozen characteristic set-piece ballads and love lyrics in *The Dark Lady of Doona*, an Irish gothic novel by her cousin William Hamilton Maxwell, published in 1833/34.¹⁰ But it was not until she arrived in Australia in 1838 that she began to identify tunes and songs together. The earliest of these, in the "Songs of an Exile" series, will be considered separately below, as immediate precursors of her Nathan songs, while her mainly later songs will be considered first here.

Surprisingly, perhaps, there is only one instance of a song where Dunlop nominated a tune that she can only have sourced – directly or indirectly – from one of Moore's collections. This is "The *Helleborus niger*: The Christmas Rose" ("Stern winter hath no power"), fitted to a tune that appeared in the second number of 1807.¹¹ Dunlop did not mention a tune on publishing her lyric in 1857. But in her earlier manuscript version of 1853, she named her source as "Eveleen's Bower", using the title of Moore's lyric rather than that of the tune itself, which was known in English as "The pretty girl of Derby, O! or The Irish dragoons".¹² Moore acknowledged that its national origins were disputed, but, taking the opinion of those "best acquainted with National Melodies", chose to believe it was Irish nevertheless. The composer Samuel Arnold, arranging it for the ballad opera *Two to One* (London, 1784), marked his setting *Vivace*. Moore and Stevenson, however, opted for *Plaintively*, and, given the melancholy turn of her lyric, Dunlop would probably have done likewise (Figure 7.1).

Likewise, there is only a single late instance of her identifying a tune from Bunting's collections – for "Erin Dheelish" ("The bell birds ring their silvery call"), which she sent to the *Empire* in 1865. Unfortunately, she stopped short of naming the tune, merely explaining that her lyric was "written for an old and somewhat plaintive air" that Bunting had published.¹³ Bunting's second collection of 1809

9 "Address by Mrs. E.H. Dunlop ...", *Atlas*, 3 May 1845, 269, <https://www.nla.gov.au/ferguson/1440365x/18450503/00010023/5-6.pdf>; "The Vase", https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=FL9674364; Roy Johnston with Declan Plummer, *The Musical Life of Nineteenth-Century Belfast* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 83.

10 Appendix, Document 1; for a discussion of the songs in the novel, see Skinner, "Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, Songwriter".

11 *A Selection of Irish Melodies, with Symphonies and Accompaniments by Sir John Stevenson Mus.Doc. and Characteristic Words by Thomas Moore esq., number 2* (London: J. Power, [1807]), 91–97, <https://archive.org/details/MooreIrishMelodies17/page/n129>.

12 Papers Mainly Relating to the Raine Family and Eliza Dunlop, 1821–1870; State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 10156, <https://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/Details/archive/110621176>; "Helleborus niger", *Empire*, 11 April 1857, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60277324>.

13 "Erin Dheelish", *Empire*, 8 July 1865, 5, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article64140758>.

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Stern win - ter hath no pow'r_ O'er thine "or - der" gen - tle flow'r,
 Im - pas - sive thy smile 'mid the sea - son's de - cay
 While scat - ter'd from thy side Sweep the au - tumn's syl - van pride, _
 And_ life with Sum - mer sun_ is_ hast - ing a - way.

Figure 7.1: Musical example “The Helleborus niger” (Dunlop 1857, 1st verse); tune: “Eveleen’s Bower” (Moore and Stevenson 2, 1807).

is the volume that Dunlop is most likely to have known well, and perhaps even owned, and there are at least three tunes in it that can be made to fit her lyric. One, “Planxty Maguire”, can probably be ruled out for being insufficiently “plaintive” (a *planxty* is, generically, a fairly animated Irish harp tune, and Bunting marked his arrangement of this one *Allegretto spiritoso*). The most promising is “The Dawning of the Day” (“Eirghidhe an lae”), which Bunting presented, moreover, with new lyrics written “from a literal translation of the original Irish” by a Belfast poet, Mary Balfour (c.1778–1819):¹⁴

The blush or morn at length appears,
 The hawthorn weeps in dewy tears;
 Emerging from the shades of night,
 The distant hills are tipp’d with light . . .

So that, if Dunlop did indeed set her new lyrics to Bunting’s 1809 version of this tune, they can perhaps also be read as a Wollombi bush parody of Balfour’s earlier text (see Figure 7.2).

14 *A General Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland, Arranged for the Piano Forte, Some of the Most Admired Melodies are Adapted for the Voice to Poetry Chiefly Translated from the Original Irish Songs by Thomas Campbell Esq. and Other Eminent Poets, to which is Prefixed a Historical & Critical Dissertation on the Egyptian, British and Irish Harp by Edward Bunting, vol. 1st* [sic] (London: Engraved by Williamson, n.d. [1809]) (hereafter “Bunting 1809”), 53, https://archive.org/stream/generalcollectio00bunt_0#page/53/mode/2up.

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The bell - birds ring their sil - v'ry call, Clear tink - ling 'midst the myr - tle glades;
 The ci - ca - da hath cast its pall, And my - riads through the ce - dar shades;
 The sul - len Mul - la mur - murs bye, Re - flect - ing moun - tain, crag, and tree,
 En - chant - ing scene! then whence the sigh? Mo E - rin dhee - lish gra ma - chree.
 E - rin mo cush - la'a - vour - neen dhee - lish! A yea yee - lish gra ma - chree.
 En - chant - ing scene! then whence the sigh? Mo E - rin dhee - lish gra ma - chree.

Figure 7.2: Musical example “Erin Dheelish” (Dunlop 1865, 1st verse); tune: “The dawning of the day” (Bunting 1809).

If Dunlop had likely recourse once to Bunting’s 1809 collection, perhaps we might usefully look there for tunes to other undesignated songs. One case is the ballad-like “Morning on Rostrevor Mountain” (“’Tis morning! from their heather bed / The curling mists arise”), originally published in George Petrie’s *Dublin Penny Journal* in 1835, and reworked with some not-quite-despairing Australian allusions for its reappearance in *the Atlas* in April 1845:¹⁵

... Where the wild Emu leads her brood
 Across the trackless plains,
 And lord of nature’s solitude –
 The stately cedar, reigns;

15 “Morning on Rostrevor Mountains [sic]”, *Dublin Penny Journal*, 8 August 1835, 42, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30003439>; “Morning on Rostrevor Mountain . . .”, *Atlas*, 26 April 1845, 257, <https://www.nla.gov.au/ferguson/1440365x/18450426/00010022/5-6.pdf>.

Even there, through exile's cheerless hours,
Lighted by Austral skies,
I've linger'd amid orange flowers,
To catch thy scented sighs . . .

Bunting's tune of "The song of sorrow" fits it well, and appropriately too, given the words he identifies as traditionally belonging to it are – like Dunlop's original version – a prospective exile's brooding farewell to her native land. Mary Balfour's singing translation begins:¹⁶

Adieu! my native wilds, adieu!
In Spring's green robe array'd,
Where days of bliss like moments flew
Beneath the woodland shade.
Now banish'd from sweet Erin's shore,
O'er trackless seas forlorn I go,
In distant climates to deplore
My Ulican dubh, Oh! . . .

Of all Dunlop's later lyrics without nominated tunes, probably the most likely to carry hidden music is "A Phase of Ireland in the 16th Century" ("The spindrift bursts high o'er the cliffs of Clonara") (1867), a thoroughly bardic ballad, whose opening lines toll resonantly with a litany of Irish placenames:

The spindrift bursts high o'er the cliffs of Clonara,
The breakers surge madly around Craignabe;
Storms hurstle [sic] and howl in the clefts of Knockbara
And snow-wreaths lie deep in the gorge of Dunro . . .

Dunlop's subject is the disastrous Battle of Kinsale, in 1601, in which the Irish chieftains were finally defeated by the English invaders.¹⁷ Irish ballad tunes fitting the lyric's elaborate structure are few and far between, yet one was reasonably widely known. Moore wrote "The Parallel" ("Yes, sad one of Sion") in his eighth number of 1821 to the tune of "I Would Rather Than Ireland", as previously given by Bunting in 1809 (with the lyric "O lov'd maid of Broka").¹⁸ Dunlop may well have

16 Bunting 1809, 4–5, https://archive.org/details/generalcollectio00bunt_0/page/4.

17 Dunlop's notes referred to Leland's *History*, but the passages quoted actually derived directly from John Lawless, *A Compendium of the History of Ireland . . . second edition* (Belfast: Joseph Smyth, 1815), 268–69, <https://archive.org/details/compendiumofhist00lawl/page/268>.

18 *The Works of Thomas Moore . . . vol. 4* (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1823), 202–4, <https://archive.org/details/worksthomasmoor08moorgoog/page/n218>; Bunting 1809, 28–29, https://archive.org/details/generalcollectio00bunt_0/page/29.

Now He - sper weeps her glist - 'ning tears, high o'er the At-lan - tic o - cean
 And its high hea-ving breast ap-pears to sigh with soft e - mo - tion,
 The mur - murs of its cold blue wave With rest - less whi - spers mind me;
 That hope is laid in mem' - ry's grave With "the girl I left be - hind me".

Figure 7.3: Musical example “The Evening Star” (Dunlop undated, 1st verse); tune: “The Girl I Left Behind Me” (Moore 1818).

known it in one or other version, but, even if not, it is clearly the type of musical vehicle she had in mind.

Dunlop parodied the popular song “The Girl I Left Behind Me” in “The Evening Star” (“Now Hesper weeps her glistening tears”), one of her undated lyrics in “The Vase”.¹⁹ The tune was so universally known in the Anglosphere that neither she nor her prospective readers/singers would have needed a printed source.²⁰ Moore had included it in his seventh number in 1818 (with a minor ending), and Bunting, although he did not print it until 1840 (with a major ending), claimed to have collected it from the harper Arthur O’Neill, as early as 1800 (see Figure 7.3).²¹

“Mo Varia Astore” (“Yes I have wept, to see thus faded”) (“The Vase”, undated) is almost certainly another song, and given Dunlop’s title (“Varia” being “Mary”, as she elsewhere explained), it is possible she had in mind the tune “O Mary Asthore”, which, moreover, fits. If so, it may have reached her by purely oral transmission, as

19 “The Vase”,

https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=FL9674337.

20 The epigraph is from Samuel Laman Blanchard’s *Stanzas for Evening*, in his *Lyric Offerings* (London: William Harrison Ainsworth, 1828), 75,

<https://books.google.com.au/books?id=UlkjTkmNst8C&pg=PA75>.

21 Moore and Stevenson, *A Selection of Irish Melodies ... 7* (1818), 7, <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=PwBfAAAacAAJ&pg=PA7>; *The Ancient Music of Ireland, Arranged for the Piano Forte, to Which Is Prefixed a Dissertation on the Irish Harp and Harpers, Including an Account of the Old Melodies of Ireland by Edward Bunting* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1840), index, and 42, <https://archive.org/details/ancientmusicofir00bunt/page/42>.

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Say, what a - vails, dim me - m'ry's form That haunts me late and ear - ly O!

Can it sub - due my bo - som-storm Or bid its pulse beat chee - r'ly O!

Can it u - pon the wi - th'ring briar Bid fa - ded ro - ses, bloom, my Jo!

Or string with joys my bro - ken lyre My ain kind dea - rie O!

Figure 7.4: Musical example “Echo of ‘My ain kind dearie O’” (Dunlop undated, 1st verse); tune: “My ain kind deary-O” (Johnson 1787).

there was no printed source until after her death. The earliest identified manuscript transcription is that by George Petrie, who first printed Dunlop’s “Morning on Rostrevor Mountain” in Dublin in 1835.²²

On at least two occasions, Dunlop also had recourse to Scottish melodies. The “Echo of ‘My ain kind dearie O’” (“Say what avails dim memory’s form”), in “The Vase”, uses the tune and the original chorus line of the song also known as “The Lea-Rig”, anthologised in the 1787 first volume of James Johnson’s *The Scots Musical Museum*, a series to which Robert Burns was a major contributor (Figure 7.4).²³

One final undated song “The Royal Pilosus” (“When the hour of departure is o’er”) is fitted to the tune “Far, Far at Sea”.²⁴ The well-known setting, popularised in Britain by the vocalist Charles Incedon (1763–1826), was composed at the turn of

22 “The Vase”, https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=FL9674404; Charles Villiers Stanford (ed.), *The Complete Collection of Irish Music as Noted by George Petrie* (London: Boosey and Co., 1903/04), no. 636, 159, <https://archive.org/stream/imslp-complete-collection-of-irish-music-petrie-george/SIBLEY1802.6228.15976.7c20-39087012503696pp127-267#page/n31/mode/2up>.

23 “The Vase”, https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=FL9674336; *The Scots Musical Museum* (Edinburgh: Johnson & Co., 1787), 50, <https://archive.org/details/scotsmusicalmuse12john/page/50/mode/2up>.

24 “The Vase”, https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=FL9674375; *Far Far at Sea, a Favorite Ballad Sung by Mr. Incedon* (New York: J. & M. Paff, [n.d.]), <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014568420>.

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When the hour of de-par-ture us o'er, And each ten-der fare-well hath been spo-ken;
 The Pi - lo - sus, a - far from our shores; Shall the love links of mem - 'ry be bro-ken;
 The Pi - lo - sus, a-far from our shores; Shall the love links of mem - 'ry be bro-ken.
 Far, far at sea. ___

Figure 7.5: Musical example “The Royal Pilosus” (Dunlop undated, 1st verse); tune: “Far, Far at Sea” (Florio).

the century by Charles Florio, who fitted the anonymous text’s verses of four-lines and refrain to seven phrases of melody by repeating lines 3 and 4.

’Twas at night, when the bell had toll’d twelve,
 And poor Susan was laid on her pillow,
 In her ear whisper’d some flitting elve,
 Your love is now toss’d on a billow,
In her ear whisper’d some flitting elve,
Your love is now toss’d on a billow,
 Far, far at sea!

Dunlop probably envisaged a similar repeat for her lyric; unless, by some chance, she knew a shortened four-line and refrain version of the melody (for instance, omitting phrases 4 and 5 – that is: 1, 2, 3, 6 and refrain). This is not impossible or implausible; by the time Dunlop encountered it, Florio’s tune had long since passed from being circulated and consumed mainly in print and manuscript, to being transmitted orally, and therefore constantly at risk of being creatively reinterpreted (Figure 7.5).

Music in the “Songs of an Exile” Series (1838–40) and “The Cousins of Aledo”

Dunlop assumed the mantle of colonial poet and song writer with the first four numbers of the “Songs of an Exile” series in the *Australian* in November and December 1838. She indicated no tunes for the first and third songs, although,

because of their common metrical and rhyming schemes, any of her readers inspired to sing them could easily have found any number of suitable tunes among traditional national songs and composed settings.

Number 2, “She Was – Yet Have I Oft Denied”, which appeared on 22 November, is Dunlop’s earliest datable song with its musical source indicated, “adapted to the music” of the concert ballad “I Stood amid the Glittering Throng” (1831) by Henry Bishop, originally with words by F.W.N. Bayley.²⁵ Dunlop’s terminology here – “music” rather than “air” or “tune” – perhaps suggests that she had in mind not just the melody, but also Bishop’s piano accompaniment, performed ideally, or actually, from printed sheet music or a manuscript copy that she had access to or some recollection of. Perhaps manuscript or memory are slightly more likely, given she mistook the title slightly: “among” for “amid”. The source ballad, popularised in Britain by leading actor-singers Lucia Vestris and Harriet Waylett, is a generic women’s song, in which the female vocalist ventriloquises a smitten male, recalling a vision of delicate (female) loveliness on the sidelines at a ball, and reaching its apotheosis with the singer dreaming of leading the lovely girl onto the dance floor. Though Dunlop’s new verses are not a direct parody of Bayley’s original words, readers and singers would probably have been struck by the parallel trajectory of her post-mortem remembrances of a (female) beloved, finally reposing on (and note the unexpected indefinite article) “a Saviour’s breast”.

The fourth of the series, and Dunlop’s best known and most discussed lyric is, of course, “The Aboriginal Mother” (“Oh! hush thee – hush my baby”). Her response to the Myall Creek massacre of June 1838, it was published in the immediate wake of the two November trials, on 13 December, only five days before seven of the perpetrators were executed.²⁶ No tune was indicated on this first appearance, but Dunlop later informed Nathan privately that she wrote the verses to the tune of “’Twas When the Seas Were Roaring”.²⁷ The well-known melody was probably associated with the original lyrics from their first documented outing in John Gay’s farce, *The What d’ye Call It?*, in London, 1715, although only somewhat later were they first published together (1740) and attributed to Handel (1746), the setting also known as “The Melancholly Nymph”, or “The Faithful Maid”. The tune meanwhile also reappeared, fitted out with new words (“How cruel are the traitors”), in Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*.

However much, or little, Dunlop knew of this pre-history, she was almost certainly aware of the original ballad’s melancholic association with a

25 “Songs of an Exile (No. 2)”, *Australian*, 22 November 1838, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36860702>; *I Stood amid the Glittering Throng, a Ballad, the Poetry by F.W.H. Bayley esq., the Music by H.R. Bishop . . .* 4th ed. (London: Goulding and D’Almaine, [1831]), <https://archive.org/stream/hartley00535542#page/n78/mode/1up>.

26 “Songs of an Exile (No. 4)”, *Australian*, 13 December 1838, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36861275>.

27 See Appendix, Document 1.

woman-in-distress. There is nothing in her new verses to suggest a direct parody of Gay's lyrics, although there is a likely indirect influence by way of an intermediate ballad written for the same tune, called "The Forsaken Damsel" ("It was a Winter's evening"), the third verse of which, somewhat clumsily fitted to the melody, reads:²⁸

Hush, hush, my lovely baby, and warm thee in my breast;
 Ah little thinks thy father how sadly we're distrest;
 For cruel as he is, did he know but how we fare,
 He'd shield us in his arms from this bitter piercing air.

Dunlop can be excused for opting not to identify her original source tune on its first print appearance, or later in "The Vase". Clearly, on other occasions, and for other pieces of verse, she was happy not only to name tunes, but also to be seen to draw on lyric traditions attached to them. However, doing so amid the unfolding public drama of late 1838 might have risked diluting the song's impact, by conjuring exotic and other unintended associations, and setting readers off in a vain search for parodies. In this, it was not the tune itself that was the potential distraction, but – from the author's point of view (and perhaps also that of the *Australian's* editor) – its uncontrollable associations.²⁹ On the other hand, the tune deserves consideration alongside the other poetic inputs in Dunlop's compositional process. And, if imagining ourselves in her shoes is of any critical use at all, trying to sing it is probably a useful analytical tool. By comparison, Nathan's later, very different setting – however earnestly Dunlop invited it and came to value it – should probably be seen as an authorial after-thought (Figure 7.6).

The fifth of the series, "The Irish Mother" ("Your eyes have the twin-star's light, ma croidhe"), followed closely on the previous four.³⁰ It is one of two lyrics in the set for which Dunlop nominated melodies anthologised by Bunting. However, in the case of this tune, "Foggy Dew", Bunting did not publish his version – the first in print – until 1840. In fact, when Dunlop's new lyric for it appeared in Sydney on 12 January 1839, Bunting was yet even to collect the melody, doing so in Belfast, that very year, from J. McKnight, probably Dr James McKnight (1801–1876), the Protestant nationalist leader and newspaper editor, who presumably knew the song from childhood in rural County Down. Bunting anyway concluded that it

28 James Plumtre, ed., *A Collection of Songs, Moral, Sentimental, Instructive, and Amusing . . . vol. 2* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1806), 133, <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=NYBEAAAACAAJ&pg=PA133>; it was also later widely anthologised (usually without reference to the tune) as "A Winter Piece".

29 Another well-known lyric composed to be sung to the tune was Reginald Heber's hymn "From Greenland's Icy Mountains", of 1817; compare, also, a typical satirical parody "'Twas When a New Election" [from the *Morning Chronicle*, 6 August 1811], *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1811* (London: James Ridgway, 1812), 297, <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=StsXAQAAlAAJ&pg=PA297>.

30 "Songs of an Exile (No. 5)", *Australian*, 12 January 1839, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36862585>.

Eliza Hamilton Dunlop

Oh! hush thee, hush my ba - by, I may not tend thee yet.
 Our fo - rest home is dis - tant far And mid - night's star is set.
 Now, hush thee, or — the pale - faced men Will hear thy pier - cing wail,
 And what would then thy mo - ther's tears Or — fee - ble strength a - vail.

Figure 7.6: Musical example “The Aboriginal Mother” (Dunlop 1838, 1st verse): tune: “The Melancholy Nymph” (Handel, HWV 228:19).

was “Very ancient, author and date unknown”. McKnight’s rather elaborate melody (printed by Bunting without any words) is probably close, though not necessarily identical in every detail, to the tune that Dunlop knew, either from a manuscript copy, or – perhaps more likely – from memory (Figure 7.7).³¹

Dunlop mentioned in her 1841 letter of introduction to Nathan that she had been intending to use the last two “Songs of an Exile” series in a verse drama, “The Cousins of Aledo”, based on Mary Russell Mitford’s *Blanch, a Poem in Four Cantos*.³² This certainly makes sense of the nostalgic subject matter and romantic style of the songs, in the context both evidently to be sung by the medieval heroine herself, Blanch of Murcia, during her enforced exile further south in Spain’s drier “Austral lands” towards Granada, notwithstanding that their first newspaper readers – knowing nothing of this scenario – probably imagined that the singer was the author herself, exiled in Emu Plains. The fact that, on its 1840 first publication, “Oh! the Limpid Streams of My Own Green Land” was designated as “stanzas for music”, perhaps indicates that Dunlop had not yet discovered a pre-existing tune that suited her, and was actively canvassing musical assistance in anticipation of her play being published or produced.³³ But finding or devising a strophic tune to

31 Bunting 1840, x (note), 109, <https://archive.org/stream/ancientmusicofir00bunt#page/109/mode/1up>.

32 See Appendix, Document 1.

33 “Songs of an Exile (No. 7)”, *Australian*, 11 April 1840, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36862149>; “Song of an Exile”, *Empire*, 24 December 1862, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article60520671>.

Your eyes have the twin-star's light, *ma croi-dhe, Mo Cui - sle — ING-HEAN ban;*
 And your swan-like neck is dear to me, *Mo Cai - lin — og a - lain:*
 And dear is your fai - ry — foot so light, And your daz - zling milk - white hand,
 And your hair! it's a thread of the gol - den light That was spun — in the rain-bow's band.

Figure 7.7: Musical example “The Irish Mother” (Dunlop 1839, 1st verse); tune: “The Foggy-Dew” (Bunting 1840, down a minor third).

fit her lyric would not have been a straightforward task. The rhetorical repeat of the first line as the second (a blemish Dunlop slightly masked on republishing it much later), and the irregular scansion (feet variably of two, three or four syllables) would most likely have confused all but the most intrepid composers or arrangers, of whom there were few in the Colony anyway.

Meanwhile, for no. 8, “I bless thy shores, my native land”, she had already found a tune. The new lyrics are a stylish, if doleful, fit for the old melody “Peggy Ban (barn/bawn)”, as Bunting gave it in his 1809 volume, probably anyway the printed iteration of the tune that Dunlop was most likely either to have had in mind, or even in hand at Emu Plains (Figure 7.8).³⁴

But neither of these songs appears in the mid twentieth-century typescript copy of “The Cousins of Aledo” preserved in the State Library of New South Wales. Rather, there are two entirely different songs, both (as dramatised) for the singer accompanying him/herself on the guitar, and both for named tunes. That for “Oh star of my hope in thy beauty appear” (for Almanzor, in act 1 scene 2) is “the Juaracha”, probably the “guaracha” (a “Moorish” or “Spanish dance”) widely known in the Anglosphere in the arrangement in John Baptist Cramer’s popular piano method, that, directly or indirectly, was also plausibly Dunlop’s source.³⁵ For “I would not tell a

34 “Songs of an Exile No. 8”, *Australian*, 7 May 1840, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36862754>; Bunting 1809, 56, https://archive.org/stream/generalcollectio00bunt_0#page/56/mode/2up.

35 State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 6011/4/2, typescript of “The Cousins of Aledo”, 5, https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=FL8980873; *J.B. Cramer’s*

I — bless — thy shores, my na - tive land, 'Mid par - ting na - ture's strife;
 I — hail — thee of the pow'r - ful — wand, Which moves — the pulse of life.
 A - las! the sha-dows of thy hills Are — thrown ac - cross my heart, —
 And the gur - gle of their gush - ing — rills Doth ne - ver thence de - part.

Figure 7.8: Musical Example “I Bless Thy Shores, My Native Land” (Dunlop 1840, 1st verse); tune: “Peggy Ban” (Bunting 1809).

heart so dear” (for Blanch, act 4 scene 2), the tune is that of “How oft Louisa hast thou said”. In the context, this probably seemed a suitable national choice, since the original lyric also comes from a Spanish play, Sheridan’s comic opera *The Duenna* (London, 1775). However, the dramatist’s father-in-law and brother-in-law, composers Thomas Linley senior and junior, fitted it to a Scottish tune, “The Birks of Invermay”.³⁶ Dunlop evidently chose to play up the geographical dissonance by introducing a Burnsian “sair” into the second line of her new lyric, the result an effective – if unexpected – “Scottish melody” in the wilds of southern Spain.³⁷

“The Aboriginal Mother” (1841–42)³⁸

Isaac Nathan was close to the age of fifty when he arrived in Sydney in April 1841. He was still, and would remain, best known as a composer for his early

Instructions for the Piano Forte (London: Chappell, 1812), 24, https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN84855101X&PHYSID=PHYS_0032&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001.

36 “The Cousins of Aledo”, 20, https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=FL8980888; *The Duenna; or, The Double Elopement, a Comic Opera as Performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden for the Voice, Harpsichord, or Violin* (London: Printed for C. and C. Thompson, [1776]), 50, <https://archive.org/details/duennaordoubleleel00linl/page/50>.

37 Notably, Burns’ well-known lyric “My heart is sair”.

38 *The Aboriginal Mother, an Australian Melody Respectfully Inscribed to Lady Gipps, the Poetry by Mrs. E.H. Dunlop, the Music by I. Nathan* (Sydney: published for the composer, Ada Cottage, Prince Street, [1842]), <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/24305488>.

collaboration with the poet Byron on the series Hebrew Melodies, which the pair originally published in two numbers in 1815–16, emulating the format, and hoping to share in some of the success, of Moore and Stevenson’s *Irish Melodies*. Nathan was generally well received by the Sydney press, with high hopes expressed for the benefits that might accrue to the Colony by the leading role he seemed so eager to take in its musical affairs. But by early September, he also had a few vocal detractors, who were accusing him – as was all too usual for recent arrivals with public reputations at “Home” – of overreaching with his plans and for allowing himself to be too ardently promoted by his admirers. His troubles crystallised in a fawning editorial, on 7 September, in which the *Australian’s* Wickham Hesketh claimed that Nathan was a direct descendant of the late king Stanislaus of Poland.³⁹ “God protect us from our friends”, the *Gazette* counselled in response, hoping (but evidently not fully trusting) that Nathan himself had no “part in this superlative piece of puffery”.⁴⁰

It is unlikely that Dunlop was yet aware of these last developments when she first wrote to Nathan, introducing herself, probably no later than the beginning of September, and enclosing the texts of at least one, and possibly three lyrics for his consideration.⁴¹ Evidently, of these, Nathan chose to set “The Aboriginal Mother”, for already, on 25 September, one of his closest confidants, William Augustine Duncan, editor of the Catholic newspaper the *Australasian Chronicle*, reported that it was to be on the program of Nathan’s forthcoming concert.⁴² To publicise both the event and his new setting itself, Nathan arranged for Dunlop’s lyric to be printed by the *Herald* on 15 October, the *Chronicle* a day later, the *Gazette* on the 19th, and the *Monitor* on the day of the concert itself, the 27th.⁴³ Only the *Herald*, in an editorial footnote, probably added by the leader writer Ralph Mansfield, distanced itself from Dunlop’s sympathetic characterisation:

The words are pathetic, and display much poetic feeling, but they ascribe to the aboriginal woman words that might have been used by a North American Indian, but which our very slight acquaintance with the natives of this colony would enable

39 [Editorial], *Australian*, 7 September 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36852702>.

40 [Editorial], *Sydney Gazette*, 9 September 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2554422>; the *Gazette* was in the last stages of the management of Robert Howe, junior (1820–1875); he sold it to Patrick Grant in October.

41 Appendix, Document 1.

42 “Nathan’s Subscription Concerts”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 25 September 1841, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31732969>; “Select Poetry”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 16 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31733155>; “The Aboriginal Mother”, *Sydney Gazette*, 19 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2554757>; “The Aboriginal Mother”, *Sydney Monitor*, 27 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32191166>.

43 “The Aboriginal Mother”, *Sydney Herald*, 15 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12871688>; in 1838, Mansfield had told the committee of inquiry in the wake of the massacre that he had no knowledge “of the Aborigines” from direct personal contact; “Extracts from the Minutes of Evidence on the Aborigines Question”, *Colonist*, 29 December 1838, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31722278>.

any one to say never issued from the mouth of the woman who escaped from the New England massacre for which, we may remark, seven men were executed in Sydney. The lines will no doubt be copied in England where they are almost sure to be popular.

The *Herald* had taken a strong editorial position back in 1838 opposing the execution of the Myall Creek perpetrators, and as late as 1844, Duncan, one of the paper's most strident critics, accused it of continuing to abuse the Governor, George Gipps, "because he would not allow the Squatters to shoot the blacks".⁴⁴ In October 1841, however, the paper's new owners, Kemp and Fairfax, with Mansfield as leader writer, had been in charge for only nine months, and were still inclined to be, as the editorial collective, more circumspect. Nevertheless, the judicious pairing of the massacre and the executions was a polite warning shot across Dunlop's bows, and having made its point, the *Herald's* own generally supportive review of the 27 October concert made no further mention of the song at all.⁴⁵ But this omission was instantly remedied – too conveniently for it to be by mere chance – in a second "review", run directly below it, from a "correspondent". Signing himself as "P.P." (Paul Pry, a generic satirical commentator of the day), the plain-speaking author regretted that, as sung by Nathan's daughter Rosetta, the song had appeared to create so little interest with the audience:

Perhaps some excuse may be said for the song itself. And it will serve Mr. Nathan as a hint for the future, not to attempt putting into music what is unintelligible in verse: that, having no meaning in itself, not Handel himself could have made any thing of it . . . had this been got up in the character of a *black Gin* with a ghastly, toad-like looking brat, gnawing a raw opossum – the house would have been in a roar of applause, and no end of *encore* . . . truly it is utterly impossible that out of "nature's own" the pretty Rosetta could have undertaken the part.⁴⁶

Dunlop and her "mother" were not the only targets of this Tory satirist, however. Clearly, he also intended to take down Nathan a peg or two, not least by gloating that the Whiggish Governor's non-attendance (Gipps was visiting Melbourne) resulted in "the absence from the concert of 'follow-my-leader clique' and the cabbage-tree *oi polloi*"; thus, presumably, curtailing Nathan's takings. The *Herald's* editors themselves would never have adopted the insinuating tone towards the seventeen-year-old Rosetta, yet were evidently not deterred from facilitating, and

44 "The Aborigines", *Weekly Register*, 12 October 1844, 183, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228134802>; "The Squatters, the Governor, and the Blacks", *Weekly Register*, 19 October 1844, 193, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228135328>.

45 "Nathan's Grand Concert", *Sydney Herald*, 29 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12871965>.

46 "Mr. Nathan's Concert (From a Correspondent)", *Sydney Herald*, 29 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12871963>.

perhaps even commissioning, this nasty, but strategically effective piece of journalistic overreach.

The *Herald*, as the town's only daily news sheet, almost inevitably influenced, one way or another, the content of its nearest competitor, the thrice-weekly *Gazette*, as of October under the new editorship of Patrick Grant.⁴⁷ On this occasion its review, which appeared a day later, chimed in neatly with the *Herald's*, though its ostensibly fulsome praise of the music and Rosetta's performance now only further underlined the incongruity it, too, alleged:

We had seen the verses in the public prints; we had also seen Gins, and from our acquaintance with the gynocracy of Australia, we could but regret that these thrillingly touching lines should have been so misplaced. Disconnect them however, from their present black heroine – fancy her any one else, and a treat awaits you. By the time the few first bars of the symphony were played, we were totally absorbed in the composition. The song was sung by Miss R. Nathan with a simplicity, chastity, and pathos truly thrilling – never was poetry recited to greater advantage, the accompaniments were most appropriate – the melody touching and effective. We were in spite of ourselves affected even to tears, and most of our neighbours from a similar state, were prevented observing our weakness. Since *Jeptha's Daughter* [sic], we have not had such a treat, and we shall conceive no concert complete for months to come without a repetition of the “Aboriginal Mother.” In England the song *must* become a favorite.⁴⁸

The well-observed comparison with “Jeptha's Daughter”, one of the best known of Nathan's Hebrew Melodies and warmly applauded at his recent concerts, probably seemed genuine enough, and construed as such by disinterested readers. Yet others, remembering the *Gazette's* hard line a month earlier, under its previous editor, on Nathan's penchant for self-promotion, may have been a little more suspicious. And was it the music that the *Gazette* felt would appeal back in homeland England? Or – as the *Herald* had first suggested – the misplaced sympathy of the lyrics?

A fourth salvo appeared in a letter to the *Herald*, signed “Thorough Bass”, on 3 November, although, in the context of yet another complaint against the continued “puffing” of Nathan's reputation, the composer, not the lyricist, was the immediate target:

47 A Scot, who married into the family of Charles Grant, Lord Glenelg (1788–1866), Patrick Grant had edited several incarnations of the radical paper, the *Sun*, in London in the early 1830s. In Australia he was police magistrate at Maitland 1837–40; see Andrew Messner, “Contesting Chartism from Afar: Edward Hawksley and the *People's Advocate*”, *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 1, no. 1 (April 1999): 77–78, <https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=200009595;res=IELAPA>.

48 “Mr. Nathan's Concert”, *Sydney Gazette*, 30 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2554858>; the review mentions an instrumental introduction (“symphony”), not included in Nathan's published version.

the Aboriginal Mother (*proh pudor!*) is a very – very indifferent song – “another failure” in fact – is praised as equal to the sublime, superhuman pathos of Jephtha’s Daughter. How much farther than this could absurdity go? “From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step.” I do sincerely wish Nathan every success.⁴⁹

As he later intimated to Dunlop, Nathan was almost certainly right in believing that the author of this diatribe was the polymathic “professor” James Rennie (1787–1867) – like Nathan, another recent arrival and, by the Colony’s exacting standards, also too ardent a self-promoter, and very briefly editor of the *Herald* in the months before the Fairfax and Kemp takeover.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, as might be expected, Duncan in the *Chronicle* warmly greeted the work itself (“equal to any thing that Mr. Nathan has yet written”), and Hesketh’s *Australian*, likewise, the performance:⁵¹

Miss Rosetta, though evidently wanting a due share of confidence, imparted to the *Aboriginal Mother* a peculiar degree of pathos – indeed, her very tremulousness harmonised most happily with the subject.

Reviews in the lower-circulation papers, Robert McEachern’s *Free Press* (30 October) and James Noble’s double-sheet weekly *Observer* (4 November), were also positive as to the song and Rosetta’s singing.⁵² However, one other informal “review” sent in to the *Free Press* by “a Bushman”, fortuitously in town for the concert, might have led seasoned readers to suspect it was another strategic journalistic plant:

The “Aboriginal Mother” no doubt is very good music, but the young lady must have been timid at the first starting off, as I could easily see she could have sung it *ten times as well at home*; and the House, not much understanding these matters ... never encored her, so that they are in perfect ignorance *what the song is* after all.⁵³

Musically, Nathan’s setting of “The Aboriginal Mother” is as distinct from Dunlop’s “original” – with Handel’s tune – as he could possibly have reimagined it. He

49 “Original Correspondence”, *Sydney Herald*, 3 November 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12872050>; the other target was the painter Maurice Appleby Felton (1803–1842).

50 Appendix, Document 2.

51 “Nathan’s Grand Concert”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 28 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31733245>; “Concert”, *Australian*, 30 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article36849358>.

52 “Mr. Nathan’s Concert”, *Sydney Free Press*, 30 October 1841, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article226356910>; “Mr. Nathan’s Concert”, *Colonial Observer*, 4 November 1841, 6, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article226359780>.

53 “Original Correspondence”, *Sydney Free Press*, 30 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article226356914>.

Oh, hush thee, hush my ba - by, I may not tend thee yet,
 Our fo - rest home is di - stant far, And mid - night - star is ___ set;
 Now hush thee, or the pale - faced men Will hear thy pier - cing wail,
 And what would then thy mo - ther's tears Or fee - ble strength a - vail.

Figure 7.9: Musical Example “The Aboriginal Mother” (Dunlop and Nathan, published January 1842), words and melody of first stanza only.

was a dab hand at pastiches of Arne, Shield, Handel and even Purcell; indeed, his first Australian opera, *Merry Freaks in Troublous Times*, composed a couple of years later, would be generously supplied with them. Yet Nathan lit here upon a modern melody of disarming simplicity, naturally pathetic rather than theatrically lachrymose, and original enough to defy easy stylistic categorisation or comparison. In his own large output, the two early settings composed, thirty years earlier, for insertion into Caroline Lamb’s novel *Glenarvon* (1816), perhaps come closest to a family resemblance to this song, and its immediate successor.⁵⁴ As we shall see, the melody he used in “The Eagle Chief” was borrowed, as he claimed were most of his Hebrew Melodies (tunes commonly sung in Hebrew ceremonies, if not all originally Jewish). And it is not impossible that here Nathan also inaugurated what he later dubbed the “Australian Melodies” with an appropriation that may yet be identified. The simple accompaniment is virtually unchanged in each of the three stanzas (of Dunlop’s nine) underlaid with music in the print edition, and three of its four phrases harmonically static apart from piquant chromatic inflections (see Figure 7.9).

For all that they were unwelcome and unfortunate, the negative reviews and letters had appeared in only two of the four major Sydney newspapers, the *Herald* and *Gazette*, and in one also-ran, over no more than three weeks surrounding the 27 October first performance.⁵⁵ And there the matter probably would have

54 For instance, the song “Farewell”, see *Glenarvon . . . volume 2* (London: Printed for Henry Colburn, 1816), page following 192 (the other song on page following 170), <https://archive.org/stream/glenarvon02lambc#page/192/mode/2up>.

55 Dunlop’s lyric was also published in Melbourne, with a note that dismissed the *Herald*’s: “It has been said that the words as ascribed to an aboriginal woman are somewhat overdone, although they might be used by a Mingo or a Delaware, but that is taking by far a too matter-of-fact view of the question”; see “The Aboriginal Mother”, *Port Phillip Patriot*, 29 October 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article226510582>.

rested, had not Dunlop claimed right of reply, in the *Herald*, late in November. She admitted having been captive to the forlorn hope:

that, even in Australia, the time was past, when the public press would lend its countenance to debase the native character, or support an attempt to shade with ridicule, ties stronger than death, which bind the heart of woman, be she Christian or savage.⁵⁶

And defending herself from the charge of “deficiency in poetical imagery”, she allowed the *Herald* further opportunity to clarify its position:

We complained of her having by means of poetical talent, of no mean order, given an entirely false idea of the native character, and that opinion we see no cause to alter.

Yet when the sheet music appeared in January 1842, the *Herald* refined this to a simpler regret “that the words are not more worthy of the music”.⁵⁷ Understandably keen to be associated professionally with the Colony’s Crown representatives, Nathan had previously dedicated his first colonial publication, a “new national air”, “Long Live Victoria” (to words by W.A. Duncan), to George Gipps.⁵⁸ And, aware that Dunlop also counted the Governor’s wife as a confidant, he dedicated the print of the “Mother” to Elizabeth Gipps.

The *Gazette* had predicted many further public performances, but it was wrong. Only one more outing was advertised, at the first of Nathan’s many charity concerts (this one for the Benevolent Asylum, this time with the Gipps in attendance), on 8 July 1842, when it attracted no further critical comment, positive or negative. Both the *Gazette* and the *Herald* were correct, however, that the song would be picked up by a homeland English press sympathetic to its subject matter. Evidently copied directly from the Sydney papers, Dunlop’s lyrics were reprinted by the anti-transportation, pro-emigration lobbyist Henry Capper, in his *Australian and New Zealand Monthly Magazine* in May 1842, immediately following an article on the treatment of “the Aborigines”, critical of the lack in the colonies of systematic action towards “communicating with and preserving the aborigines of Australia ... from aggression”.⁵⁹ Nathan continued to advertise the original sheet music edition

56 “Original Correspondence”, *Sydney Herald*, 29 November 1841, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12872517>.

57 “New Music”, *Sydney Herald*, 22 January 1842, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12873433>; but see also “New Music”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 22 January 1842, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31734813>.

58 In fact, Duncan, who was also a leading member of Nathan’s choir at St. Mary’s, wrote new words for existing music, Nathan having previously published it, in 1831, as *Long Live Our Monarch*, with words by W. Montague addressed to William IV.

59 “Australian Lays”, *Australian and New Zealand Monthly Magazine* (May 1842): 296; [Henry Capper], “The Aborigines, and Their Treatment Considered”, [same issue], 294.

of the song until mid-September 1842, but thereafter it disappeared almost entirely from record.⁶⁰

“The Eagle Chief” (1842)⁶¹

Neither collaborator appears to have been cowed by their critics, who may, rather have egged them on. When Nathan wrote to Dunlop in December, he reported that his printer, Thomas Rolfe, was still being tardy with the sheet music of “The Aboriginal Mother”, and took the opportunity to ask her, meanwhile, for a second set of lyrics, for:

a simple French air which I would like to have sung at my next concert, to English words ... I would rather make it an aboriginal subject, an Australian subject connected with native dance or festival

and promised,

I shall not set a line of my music to any words of the Sydney writers whilst I may calculate on receiving productions from your powerful pen.⁶²

In the manuscript copy that Nathan evidently sent her, the “simple French air” was probably even simpler than it appeared in his final arrangement. Dunlop would have imagined her lyrics fitted to a melody identical in each stanza, without divisions between solo and chorus singers, and the transpositions in and out of the dominant that Nathan so effectively imposed upon it.⁶³ The end result, “The Eagle Chief”, is an attractive song with chorus, with majestically rolling verses and more exuberant tolling refrains, European in sound and style, but exotic enough in the

60 Dunlop’s lyrics, on the other hand, did not entirely disappear. Charles Harpur closely reworked the theme as “A Wail from the Bush”, *Weekly Register*, 26 July 1845, 41, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228135712>, later reused as “An Aboriginal Mother’s Lament” in *The Bushrangers* (1853). And a shortened version of Dunlop’s original, otherwise largely intact, much later reappeared attributed John Connell Laycock (1818–1897), as “Aboriginal Mother’s Lament”, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner*, 14 February 1891, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article61236615>.

61 *The Eagle Chief, an Australian Melody, Respectfully Inscribed to Lady O’Connell, the Poetry by Mrs. E. H. Dunlop, the Music (From a French Subject) Composed Expressly for the Cecilian Society, by I. Nathan* (Sydney: published for the Composer, Ada Cottage, Prince Street [1842]), <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/29359459> (lacks title-page).

62 For full text, see Appendix, Document 2.

63 I have not yet been able to find the melody, which probably dates from the eighteenth century, among the smattering of French melodies in likely English printed sources; nor, to give an idea of the immense territory in France itself, is it among the 891 in Capelle’s *La clé du Caveau, à l’usage de tous les chansonniers français* (Paris, 1811), <https://archive.org/details/laclducaveau00cape/page/n7>, or the many hundred in Doche’s *La musette du vaudeville, ou, Recueil complet des airs* (Paris, 1822), <https://archive.org/details/lamusette-duvaude00doch/page/n7>.

Eliza Hamilton Dunlop

Hark! hark! to the sound, a - long the green hill side, — Yon glad - some step now in — the du - sky glen —

He comes! he comes! my brave! my pride, My Hun - ter comes a - gain! —

[CHORUS]

Light, light the pine! let ce - dars burn, — To greet Ma - li - yan's glad re - turn! —

Light, light the pine! let ce - dars burn, To greet Ma - li - yan's glad re - turn! —

Figure 7.10: Musical Example “The Eagle Chief” (Dunlop and Nathan, April 1842); words and melody, first stanza only.

British colonial context to appeal to its first hearers on its musical merits, free of its original national attachments. Of the reviewers, only Duncan reported that the melody was a “popular French air” – in this case, “popular” in the generic sense, without necessarily implying that the tune was well known (see Figure 7.10).⁶⁴

Nathan first advertised “The Eagle Chief” in early February, but it did not come off Rolf’s press until mid-April. Nathan dedicated it to Mary O’Connell (1783–1863), daughter of William Bligh, and wife of the commander of troops in the Colony, Maurice O’Connell, to whom Dunlop dedicated her song “The Irish Volunteers” the following year. Reviews referred to the inferior quality of the engraving and printing, a problem with the series from first to last, which must have discouraged some buyers and affected the long-term survival of copies sold, contributing to the extreme rarity of all the Dunlop-Nathan prints today. According to the cover, which survives uniquely with the State Library of New South Wales exemplar, Nathan composed it for the Cecilian Society, a club of amateur professional vocalists and instrumentalists that opened its rehearsals to visitors once a month. The society probably gave at least one unadvertised performance, in addition to the fully public premiere at Nathan’s concert on 27 May 1842, in the hall of Sydney College (now Sydney Grammar School). Nathan again advertised copies for sale, along with the rest of the “Australian and Aboriginal Melodies”, later in the year. But there were no further reported performances, even in Nathan’s own concerts in future years, so that the impact of the song on the

64 “New Music”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 16 April 1842, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31735630>.

historical record rests almost solely on the April reviews of the sheet music, and follow-up mentions in the concert reviews in May.

Noticing the print, Grant's *Gazette*, surprisingly, seemed to have overcome its earlier scruples over Dunlop's characterisation, and greeted both the poetry and the music enthusiastically; the latter combining "the rare desiderata of beauty – simplicity, and learning", and the former:

what an Australian melody should be, characteristic of the aborigines, it is therefore free from the objections we made against No. 1 of these Australian melodies – the "Aboriginal Mother" ... We hope that our fair and gifted poet will continue her labours, and that Mr. Nathan will give us a set of Australian Melodies not unworthy the composer of the Hebrew Melodies.⁶⁵

In a longish review, the low-circulation *Examiner* regretted that "such a trifle as this can give us no very exalted notion" of Nathan's gifts as a composer, nor were they convinced of the collaborators' claims to have produced "an *Australian* melody":

The Irish melodies, as all the world knows, are a series of songs, written by one THOMAS MOORE and adapted to airs which had existed in the country for a long time anterior to the birth and reputation of the Irish poet. But in the present case, Mrs. DUNLOP writes some very pretty verses – which are without a single local association – and Mr. NATHAN makes a tune for them, and forthwith they are exalted, under distinguished patronage, into the style and title of *Australian Melodies!* The Public have had quite enough of this sort of pretension and quackery, and we say reform it altogether.⁶⁶

But the *Herald's* response no doubt captured the widest attention. Praising Nathan's music (the melody "simple, pretty, and appropriate", the harmonies "rich and classical"), it yet again regretted that Dunlop's poetry was:

entirely out of character, and instead of giving any idea of the habits of the black natives of this Colony, it is calculated to mislead, indeed did we not know that Mrs. Dunlop resides at the Wollombi, where she has every opportunity of studying the habits and characters of the natives, we should imagine from her poetry that she was a cockney, and that her only knowledge of the aboriginal natives, was acquired by reading the *Last of the Mohicans*.⁶⁷

65 "New Music", *Sydney Gazette*, 16 April 1842, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2556255>.

66 "New Music", *New South Wales Examiner*, 20 April 1842, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228247845>.

67 In 1838, Mansfield told a committee of inquiry in the wake of the Myall Creek massacre that he had no knowledge "of the Aborigines" from direct personal contact, unlike the writer in this case, who appeared well informed of traditional customs of the people in the Wollombi area; see

After demonstrating at length that some of Dunlop's ethnographic details were misobserved, the writer (in this instance, probably not Mansfield) concluded:

We should not have taken the trouble to show the folly of this second attempt of Mrs. Dunlop's to make the blacks appear a different race of people from what they really are, were it to be circulated in this Colony only, but Mr. Nathan's music is likely to make it known in England, and therefore we thought it a duty to shew the real character of the verse. Mrs. Dunlop appears to have a poetic turn of mind, and we should be glad to see her attempting some subject unconnected with the blacks.

But the sadder reality is that the *Herald's* fears of the "melodies" influencing public opinion in Britain were almost certainly unfulfilled. Apart from the words of "The Aboriginal Mother" appearing in Capper's journal, there is no evidence that any of them came to the attention of the British or Irish press.

Did Dunlop reply to the *Herald's* criticism a second time? No letter from her was printed, and perhaps she hadn't bothered to write one. This left the *Herald* to take a bet each way in its review of the 27 May performance ("sweetly sung by a young lady, and the effect of the chorus and accompaniments was very rich"), supportive of Nathan, but directing readers back to its earlier takedown of Dunlop.⁶⁸ The *Australian* did not run a review of its own, but printed one from a "correspondent" eager to appear even-handed:

A new Australian Melody by Mrs. Dunlop followed, which was very well sung by a Young Lady, and as it would seem, her first appearance in public. Without a book of the words, much of a song is lost, and the "Eagle Chief" might have been an excellent subject, but without this concomitant, it was not to be discovered; the melody was pretty, but reminded us of certain symphonies in Macbeth . . .⁶⁹

"Evidence ... on the Aborigines Question", *Colonist*, 29 December 1838, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31722278>.

68 "Mr. Nathan's Concert", *Sydney Herald*, 30 May 1842, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12875453>.

69 "Concert. To the Editor", *Australian*, 31 May 1842, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article37115169>. Though then attributed to Matthew Locke, the standard setting of the witches' music used in productions of Shakespeare's play ("Locke's music in Macbeth") was composed by Richard Leveridge (1670/71–1758); the "symphony" (instrumental movement) referred to is that at the opening; see *The Introductory Symphony, Airs, Recitatives, Dance, and Choruses in the Tragedy of Macbeth* ... (London: Goulding and D'Almaine, [1829]), 2–4, <https://archive.org/details/lockesmacbethand00addi/page/n11>.

“Mable Macmahon” (1842)⁷⁰

The third of the Dunlop-Nathan series, “Mable Macmahon”, perhaps seemed an unlikely successor to the previous “Australian Melodies”, for the lack of any local reference in the lyrics. However, if Dunlop had wanted to avoid further animosity from the *Herald*, she could hardly have done better than by addressing her lyric, instead, to the “bold and beautiful” beloved of a seventeenth-century northern Irish chieftain. The fact that it was written and composed by Australians was probably enough, and if not, in “The Vase” Dunlop recalled that Nathan, “with good taste”, had dedicated it “to one of the most worthy and most esteemed Irishmen in Australia”, Roger Therry. A native of Cork in the deep south, and a leading Catholic, Therry was then acting Attorney General, while the incumbent, his co-religionist J.H. Plunkett, was back in Ireland on leave. But four years earlier, Therry had been Plunkett’s junior prosecuting the Myall Creek perpetrators, and so, as Dunlop herself might have added, doubly worthy of a dedication in a series begun with “The Aboriginal Mother”.⁷¹

As to precedence, it is hard to imagine that Dunlop’s lyric did not come first, and that Nathan’s appropriately lovely treatment was composed specifically for it. Unless, as for “The Eagle Chief”, Nathan again borrowed the tune; for it certainly sounds little like any other melody of his colonial years, and little like anything at all in his earlier output. Where “The Eagle Chief” does indeed sound French, “Mable Macmahon” sounds like a cross between a genuine Irish original and one of Bellini’s opera tunes, or a “sin” of Rossini’s old age. If it was borrowed, again, no one went on record saying so at the time. Duncan, in the *Chronicle*, thought that this easy, catchy, almost infectious song was “of the Australian Melodies, and, so far as respects the melody itself ... perhaps the best of the series” (see Figure 7.11).⁷²

Had a song like this appeared a few years later, Nathan’s vocalist friends at Sydney’s Victoria Theatre might have helped it achieve popularity and a modest circulation in print. As it was, after its first outing on 27 May there was only one other advertised concert performance (8 July), neither of which merited more than a simple mention in the mostly supportive reviews. The sheet music of “Mable”, drawn and printed by the ex- convict lithographer Thomas Liley in July 1842, is as unattractive physically as Rolfe’s two previous prints, and no more likely to have appealed to those Sydneysiders used to more elegant imported sheet music.⁷³ As

70 *Mable Macmahon, an Australian Melody, Respectfully Dedicated to Roger Therry, Esq., Attorney General, Written by Mrs. E.H. Dunlop, Composed by I. Nathan* (Sydney: published for the composer, Ada Cottage, Prince Street, [1842]), <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/16497075>.

71 For Therry’s recollections of the case, see his *Reminiscences of Thirty Years’ Residence in New South Wales and Victoria* (London: Sampson, Low, Son, and Co., 1863), 282, <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=rFJZAAAACAAJ&pg=PA282>.

72 “New Music”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 21 July 1842, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31736598>.

73 From similarities in the hands, it is possible that Liley or his colleague Thomas Bluett may also have drawn the music and text for the two earlier prints.

Eliza Hamilton Dunlop

Your eyes have the black-ber-ry's lu - stre, ___ Your lip the ripe rasp-ber-ry's bloom; ___

Your cheek shames the ap - ple bough's clu - ster, ___ Ma cu - shla, my Ma - ble mo run. ___
My Ma - ble, mo cuis - le, mo run. ___

Sweet drop of my life's trea-sured foun - tain, ___ Soft pulse of my heart's in-most core, ___

Oh! pure as the breath of the moun - tain ___ Is Ma - ble Mac - ma - hon as - tore. ___

Is Ma - ble Mac - ma - hon as - tore, ___ Is Ma - ble Mac - ma - hon as - tore, ___

Oh! pure as the breath of the moun - tain Is Ma - ble Mac - ma - hon as - tore. ___

Figure 7.11: Musical Example “Mable Macmahon” (Dunlop and Nathan 1842); words and melody of first stanza only.

with the rest of the series, the song’s preservation would have been doubtful, were it not for a couple of strategic copies in public collections.

“Star of the South” (1843)⁷⁴

The fourth Dunlop-Nathan joint production was also lithographed and printed by Liley in August 1843. “Star of the South” (“Hail, star of the south! Australasia, advance”) had the added commercial drawback of not being a solo song, but a less saleable “glee” or part-song. Nathan registered the patriotic tone of both lyrics and music by calling it not just an “Australian Melody”, but an “Australian National

74 *Star of the South, an Australian National Melody, Written by Mrs. E.H. Dunlop, the Music Composed and as a Small Token of Grateful Recollection of the Hospitality Experienced on His First Landing in Australia Felix, Respectfully Inscribed to his Honor Mr. La Trobe, and the Inhabitants of the District, by I. Nathan* (Sydney: Printed by Thos. Liley, Litho. &c. &c., Brougham Place, [1842]), <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/15080814>.

Melody”. He dedicated it to Charles Latrobe, superintendent of the Port Phillip district, whose hospitality he and his family enjoyed during their first two months on Australian soil at Melbourne in February and March 1841. Dunlop’s immediate inspiration, however, was the prospect of the first Sydney municipal election, which finally came off on 1 November 1842 (those for Melbourne’s municipality followed shortly afterwards), and, in devising her lyrics, had freer rein, Nathan’s music almost certainly being composed for them, rather than the other way around.

Nathan’s setting is a choral march that probably reminded some of its first hearers of similar examples in Bellini’s and Donizetti’s operas; though it was nothing he could not have dreamt up unassisted, as evidenced by its audible kinship to “Warriors and chiefs” from the Hebrew Melodies, and to the second act finale (“Hail to the star that in glory appears”) of his 1847 Sydney opera *Don John of Austria*. Nathan separated off Dunlop’s first two lines to create an opening chorus, and set the remaining two lines of the first stanza as a short first verse. The other two stanzas he kept intact, set to different melodies, with the opening chorus recurring after each. Duncan, less enthusiastic than previously, described the result aptly as “rather a bundle of melodies” with a chorus “in the Maestoso style”. Nevertheless, he predicted “a hearty encore on whatever occasion it shall be well performed”.⁷⁵ No such performance, however, is known to have taken place; which is a pity, because the words and music – separately and in combination – are more interesting and attractive than those of Duncan and Nathan’s resoundingly conventional attempt, a few months later, at a “national song” celebrating the newly elected city council, “Australia the Wide and the Free” (number 6 of the series).⁷⁶

Again, the music struck entirely the right note for the *Herald*:

the composition pleases us much, and we allow it to possess no small amount of beauty and merit in pronouncing it to be one of Mr. Nathan’s best. The air is what a national air should be – Majestic, but it is at the same time flowing and pleasing, and is enriched throughout with most effective communications.⁷⁷

Yet despite having “nought but delight, as far as the composer is concerned”, and no Aboriginal allusions to dispute, the columnist still could not summon the gallantry to compliment Dunlop’s lyrics, or:

75 “New Music”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 11 August 1842, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31736838>.

76 *Australia the Wide and the Free! A National Song Written by W.A. Duncan, esqr., as Sung at the Great Civic Dinner, December 21st, 1842, Composed and Respectfully Inscribed to the Right Worshipful John Hosking, Mayor of Sydney, by I. Nathan* (Sydney: published by the composer, Elizabeth St. Sth.; T. Bluett, lithographer, Brougham Place, n.d. [1842/43]), <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/16495344>.

77 “New Music”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 1842, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12419051>.

even in our most allegorical mood, imagine what the “Star of the South” has to do with either “Soft flowing tresses,” or “Proud eagle glance.” It is not polite of us, but we do wish that the new “National Melody” had been set to better words.⁷⁸

Having held her peace over “The Eagle Chief”, Dunlop now let off a spirited reply, complaining that, contrary to the new democratic spirit, the *Herald* had not:

faithfully discharged its duty to the reading public or to its numerous patrons. The song, an offering to the people of New South Wales, should have been published by the *Critic* to enable the many to form their own judgment of its fitness for the period when we can for the first time be truly designated A PEOPLE ... But has not the author added to a former offence, against a formidable clique, by saying that Australia possesses “happy homes and altars free?”⁷⁹

Since Dunlop appeared “to wish that her song should have a place in the columns of the *Herald*”, it happily obliged her by doing so, immediately under her letter, confident that:

most of our readers will concur in the judgment we passed on its merits when it was first published. We admire, as much as Mrs. Dunlop can possibly do, “happy homes and free altars,” but it does not follow that we should admire bad poetry written in their praise.

“The Aboriginal Father” (1843)⁸⁰

Between numbers 3 and 5 of the “Australian Melodies” – “Mable Macmahon” and “Star of the South” – in mid-1842 Nathan published number 4, “Koorinda Braai”, to which Dunlop made no contribution. It was based on an Aboriginal song fragment, originally sourced from speakers of the Ngarigu language in the Monaro area near present-day Canberra by Henry Tingcombe (1810–1874), a pastoralist and musical amateur (later an Anglican clergyman) who had worked on the Monaro in the late 1830s.

The seventh and last of what Nathan was now billing as the “Australian and Aboriginal Melodies”, “The Aboriginal Father” was also sourced from Ngarigu speakers. The Aboriginal melody and words had been transcribed and printed previously by Polish naturalist and explorer John Lhotsky in 1834, under the title

78 “New Music”.

79 “The Star of the South. To the Editors”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 August 1842, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12426027>.

80 *The Aboriginal Father, a Native Song of the Maneroo Tribe ... Versified From the Original Words ... by Mrs. E.H. Dunlop, the Melody, as Sung by the Aborigines, Put Into Rhythm & Harmonized with Appropriate Symphonies & Accompaniments, Respectfully Inscribed to the Lady Mayoress, by I. Nathan* (Sydney: [Nathan], Elizabeth Street; T. Bluett, Litho., Brougham Place, [1843]), <https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/16497064>.

“A Song of the Women of the Menero Tribe”⁸¹ But Nathan justified the need for a second edition in a long introductory note:

On my arrival in Australia, I felt anxious for the honor, pride and glory of musical tradition, to make myself acquainted with the characteristic peculiarities of the native Aboriginal airs. I was favored with a lithographic copy of this beautiful pathetic melody, so deformed and mutilated by false rhyme, so disguised in complete masquerade, by false basses and false harmony, that I cast it from me with no small share of regret at the poor chance thus afforded me of adding any thing in favor of the claim of the Aborigines to the pages of musical history. My astonishment, however, a short time afterwards, was only equalled by the delight I experienced at hearing the same melody sung in all its genuine purity and simplicity, by one of the Maneroo tribe. I at once discovered the key to its latent rhyme and excellent scope for good basses and rich transitions and progressions of harmony.⁸²

Lhotsky's edition is certainly unusual, a rare example of a transcription of a non-European melody that falls conspicuously outside the diatonic system. Its three phrases end successively on D, G and C, closing a note shy of the upper octave D. To Nathan, who believed that the octatonic system applied universally, Lhotsky's ending on C can only have been an error, which he, Nathan, had a responsibility anyway to correct to D. Having since, he claimed, heard for himself the melody sung “by one of the Maneroo tribe”, he also felt justified in extending Lhotsky's first phrase, correcting the “false rhyme” by making three regular 8-bars phrases. The song thus restored, Nathan claimed:

There is in the first four bars of this melody, so striking an affinity to one of Handel's compositions, that those who are acquainted with the works of that great master might find difficulty in divesting themselves of the belief, that the Aborigines had been guilty of piracy.⁸³

Rather, he argued, “no stronger proof of the musical powers of these beings, nor of the nature of Handel's compositions” was required than the affinity itself, evidence that the music of all cultures derived ultimately from a common source.⁸⁴

81 *A Song of the Women of the Menero Tribe Arranged with the Assistance of Several Musical Gentlemen for the Voice and Pianoforte, Most Humbly Inscribed as the First Specimen of Australian Music, to Her Most Gracious Majesty Adelaide, Queen of Great Britain & Hanover, by Dr. J. Lhotsky, Colonist N.S. Wales* (Sydney: Sold by John Innes, [1834]), https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE3727874.

82 *The Aboriginal Father*.

83 *The Aboriginal Father*.

84 *The Aboriginal Father*. Duncan was also reminded of a melody by the composer Sigismund Neukomm; and, in 1834, Lhotsky had to assert that the melody was not “(as some of my enemies say) a Portuguese air, nor any thing else than a wild air, carrying however a great depth

Whether Nathan's new version satisfied the "honour, pride and glory" of musical tradition remains open to question. But we can certainly question its merits on a practical level. The fortuitous first-hand confirmation of his corrections "by one of the Maneroo tribe" sounds almost too good to be true, unless someone like Tingcombe organised the encounter for him (and if so, we might ask: with whom, where and when?). And even if we accept that the performance took place, and that the song Nathan heard was substantially the same song Lhotsky had transcribed, is Nathan's version necessarily to be preferred? Might not the irregularities of Lhotsky's original merely reflect a different performance? Or another way of attempting to notate a melodic feature difficult to interpret in European musical syntax? Especially in the final phrase, might not Lhotsky's version better represent a phrase that seemed to end up high, but not on the key note? Figure 7.12 compares Lhotsky's version of the melody (in grey on the upper staff), with that of the first stanza of Nathan's setting, below.⁸⁵

According to Nathan's title-page, Dunlop's English lyrics ("The shadow on thy brow, my child") were "versified from the original words". But Jim Wafer argues elsewhere in this volume that her only likely access to the original was through Lhotsky's English version, there being no evidence that Dunlop had a working knowledge of the Ngarigu language. Dunlop and Nathan also altered the gender of the singers artificially, from Lhotsky's women, to their Aboriginal father. The obvious and only reason for this was to pair it with "The Aboriginal Mother".

Nathan released the lithographed sheet music of "The Aboriginal Father" in January 1843.⁸⁶ He dedicated it to Martha Hosking, wife of the first Mayor of Sydney, making it a pair of another sort with the previous number of the series, "Australia the Wide and the Free", dedicated to her husband John, on the occasion of his election as first Mayor of Sydney. Nathan himself had sung John's song (to Duncan's words) at the inaugural mayoral dinner, on 21 December. However, there does not appear to have been any public performance of Martha's song, and there is no record of its private reception, even by its dedicatee. Victims of the colonial financial crisis of the 1840s, the Hoskings withdrew from public life in mid-1843, and thereafter also largely from public record.

Whether gallantry finally won out, or perhaps for the Hoskings' sake (they were, like Ralph Mansfield, also Methodists), the *Herald* review avoided any

of feeling", [Advertisement], *Sydney Monitor*, 29 November 1834, 1, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32147713>.

85 For more on colonial transcriptions of Aboriginal melodies, see Graeme Skinner, "Recovering Musical Data from Colonial Era Transcriptions of Indigenous Songs: Some Practical Considerations", in Jim Wafer and Myfany Turpin, eds, *Recirculating Songs: Revitalising the Singing Practices of Indigenous Australia* (Canberra: Asia-Pacific Linguistics, 2017), <https://hdl.handle.net/1885/132161>.

86 The cover named Thomas Bluett as lithographer. Bluett appears to have worked out of the same Brougham Place premises as Liley; they produced at least one map together, and a common text hand appears in some of the Nathan (and other) prints bearing one or other of their names.

7 Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, Irish and Colonial Melodist

The image shows a musical score with two main sections. The upper section, 'Kongi kawelgo' (Lhotsky 1834), consists of two staves of music. The first staff is a treble clef with a 3/8 time signature, containing the melody. The second staff is a bass clef with a 3/8 time signature, containing the lyrics. The lower section, 'The Aboriginal Father' (Dunlop and Nathan 1843), also consists of two staves of music. The first staff is a treble clef with a 3/8 time signature, containing the melody. The second staff is a bass clef with a 3/8 time signature, containing the lyrics. The lyrics for 'The Aboriginal Father' are: 'The sha - dow on thy brow my child, like a mist o'er the clear la - goon'. The lyrics for 'Kongi kawelgo' are: 'Kon - gi ka - wel - go yu - e - re con - gi ka - wel - go yu - e - re', 'Koo - ma - gi ko - ko ka - wel - go ku - ma - gi ka - ba ko - ma - gi ko - ko', and 'Steals on with pre - sage dim and wild, of the death clouds' dire - ful gloom,'.

Kon - gi ka - wel - go yu - e - re con - gi ka - wel - go yu - e - re

The sha - dow on thy brow my child, like a mist o'er the clear la - goon

Koo - ma - gi ko - ko ka - wel - go ku - ma - gi ka - ba ko - ma - gi ko - ko

Steals on with pre - sage dim and wild, of the death clouds' dire - ful gloom,

Koo - ma - gi ko - ko ka - wel - gho koo - ma - gi ka - ba koo - ma - gi ko - ko

ku - ma - gi ko - ko ka - bel - go Ko - ma - gi ka - ba ko - ma - gi yu - e - re.

steals on with pre - sage dim and wild, of the death clouds' dire - ful gloom.

koo - ma - gi ko - ko ka - bel - gho koo - ma - gi ka - ba koo - ma - gi yue - ree.

Figure 7.12: Musical Example “Kongi kawelgo” (Lhotsky 1834), words and melody, on upper stave; “The Aboriginal Father” (Dunlop and Nathan 1843), first stanza, words and melody, on lower stave.

comment at all, negative or positive, on Dunlop’s versification. And, now apparently running counter to the prejudices of the “clique”, the paper judged that, of all Nathan’s Australian compositions, “none has pleased us more than the above song: it is in every respect worthy of the composer of the Hebrew Melodies”. If the melody was as worthy of Handel, Nathan’s arrangement was “no less so”, and even casual comparison, it felt, bore out its superiority to Lhotsky’s original: “We hope to see the ‘Aboriginal Father’ an universal favourite, as the study of music of this sort must beget a correct taste for the science”.⁸⁷

How many copies Nathan printed or sold is unknown, but, as with all the preceding “Australian Melodies”, almost certainly far fewer than he had hoped. Nathan evidently decided by early 1843 against giving any further public concerts for the time being, probably for financial reasons – the newly proclaimed city was

87 “New Music”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 January 1843, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12411279>; see also “New Publication”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 19 January 1843, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31738598>.

in the depths of a depression – and, as a result of this, the piece did not receive even a single advertised performance. Still a year away from his first colonial insolvency, Nathan refocused his professional attention on teaching, and was in the last stages of composing an opera, *Merry Freaks in Troublous Times*, that he hoped would be staged, lucratively, at the Royal Victoria Theatre in the second half of 1843.

If the *Herald's* unqualified support for “The Aboriginal Father” suggested that the mainstream press had decided, judiciously, to give no further oxygen to the past controversies, the anti-*Melodies* “clique” quickly found an alternative outlet in a scabrous new weekly, the *Satirist and Sporting Chronicle*. In February and March, the editor, Thomas Revel Johnson, let off a series of squibs against Nathan and his daughter Rosetta. One lampooned the “Old music master” for straining the young throats of his singing class “in the attempt to give effective deliverance to ‘Koorinda Braia,’ or some other equally fine national song or melody”, which “unutterable nonsense”, by contrast, even “Rosy”, it claimed, could no longer be prevailed upon to sing. There was another pointedly obscene reference to Rosy two pages later, and a third piece of “gossip”, only slightly less salacious, in the next week’s issue.⁸⁸

Tragically, the morning the last of these appeared, 1 April 1843, Rosetta Nathan died. Inexplicably, according to the family’s death notice she was only in “her sixteenth year”.⁸⁹ In fact, she was over nineteen, and admired enough to attract heartfelt eulogies in the next week’s press from at least five amateur poets, including John Rae (the town clerk) and Henry Halloran, both in the *Herald*, and Samuel Prout Hill.⁹⁰ To these, also in the *Herald* – and without the slightest editorial demur – Dunlop later added her own “Rosetta Nathan’s Dirge”.⁹¹

Another Dunlop song was, coincidentally, already in the press, and appeared the same month. The sheet music of “The Irish Volunteers” (“For the golden harp on field of green”) was her only known solo venture into music publishing, and was dedicated to Maurice O’Connell (1768–1848), the Irish-born commander of the colonial troops. No copy of the edition itself has yet been identified, but Dunlop’s words (printed in the *Chronicle*) and the original march tune (published as *Lord*

88 “Elizabeth Street”, *Satirist*, 25 March 1843, 1, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228065539>; “Sayings and Doings”, *Satirist*, 25 March 1843, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228065543>; “Get Along Rosy”, *Satirist*, 1 April 1843, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228065415>.

89 “Deaths”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 April 1843, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12413592>; her mother, the novelist Eliza Nathan, died as a result of giving birth to Rosetta early in January 1824.

90 [John Rae], “Stanzas Suggested By the Recent Death of a Beautiful Girl”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 April 1843, 3, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12412062>;

“Lament on the Untimely Death of a Young, Beautiful, and Accomplished Girl . . . [by] T. C.”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 4 April 1843, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31739378>;

[Samuel Prout Hill] “Stanzas. On the recent sudden death of a beautiful and accomplished Young Lady”, *Colonial Observer*, 5 April 1843, 5, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article226361300>;

“Original Poetry. Rosette, by H.H. [Henry Halloran]”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 April 1843, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12419641>; “Lines on Hearing of the Untimely Death of Miss R. Nathan”, *Australian*, 7 April 1843, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article37118078>.

91 “Rosetta Nathan’s Dirge”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1843, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12417841>.

Charlemont's March, in Dublin c.1782) both survive separately, allowing a fairly reliable reconstruction to be made.⁹²

After “The Irish Volunteers”, neither Dunlop nor Nathan – together or separately – published anything further for the remainder of 1843 and all of 1844. This did not entirely end the commentary on their joint enterprise, however. The *Herald*, in April 1844, allowed one of poor Rosetta’s eulogists, Samuel Prout Hill, to add a postscript to the controversy, with his own “Song of the Aborigines”. Cleverly fitted to the tune of “Tambourgi” (besides the Hebrew Melodies, Nathan’s best-known Byron setting), it was an elaborate riposte to the views of the “clique”, in the format of an imagined Indigenous warrior’s song. As Hill wryly explained:

The following song has been written out of sheer compassion for the narrowed intellects of the blacks: the “EAGLE CHIEF,” “ABORIGINAL MOTHER,” &c., being considered of too flighty and exalted a nature to be comprehended by the dark and benighted understandings of our brethren of the woods: *Damnant quod non intelligunt*.⁹³

Nathan’s last public dealings with Dunlop’s work were in his literary and musical “ladies’ miscellany”, *The Southern Euphrosyne*. He initially hoped to publish it in the new year of 1848, but did not finish printing it until early 1849. Dunlop’s Aboriginal lyric “Pialla Wollombi” (“Our home is the *gibber-gunyah*”) appears at the beginning of over forty pages dedicated to Aboriginal music and culture.⁹⁴ She published the same lyric in the *Herald* on 11 October 1848 and later copied it into “The Vase”, both of which also include her transcriptions of original Aboriginal song words. But none of the three sources indicates whether or not she anticipated her verse translation being set to music. No transcription of a corresponding Aboriginal melody has been identified (or, at this remove, is ever likely to be), and, even had there been one, it is doubtful that Dunlop’s metrical versification can have followed it closely.⁹⁵ She may instead have imagined it sung to a suitable European tune,

92 The *Chronicle* gave the full title, *The Irish Volunteers, Dedicated to Captain M.C. O’Connell, H. M. 28th Regt., the Poetry by Mrs. E.H. Dunlop; The Music Composed by a Professor in Dublin, in 1780*; “New Music – An Irish Melody”, *Australasian Chronicle*, 13 April 1843, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31739492>; see also [Review], *Australian*, 10 April 1843, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article37115124>.

93 “Original Poetry”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 1844, 4, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12409847>; a month after Rosetta’s death, in May 1843 for the Sydney Debating Society, Hill spoke for the affirmative to the question “Have the Aboriginal Blacks of this Colony an indefeasible right to the soil of Australia?”; see “Sydney Debating Society”, *Australian*, 12 May 1843, 2, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article37115312>.

94 Nathan, *The Southern Euphrosyne*, 94, <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=ziwieom4lBQC&pg=PA194>.

95 The melody of “The Aboriginal Father” is exceptional among colonial transcriptions of Aboriginal songs for the metrical regularity that was, almost certainly, imposed upon the original, and it is unlikely that a traditional singer would have recognised it, unprompted, from a performance of either Lhotsky’s or Nathan’s arrangements.

pre-existing or newly composed. But providing one is unlikely to have appealed to Nathan, who used this section of the *Euphrosyne* to print as many arrangements of “genuine” Aboriginal melodies as he could. Nathan also reprinted Dunlop’s versified text for “The Aboriginal Father”, substantially as it appeared in 1843, though adding another page and a half of commentary.⁹⁶ However, time and an insufficient supply of type, he said, prevented him from including a new edition of the music itself, or of several other “beautiful native melodies” that he had collected, and which he hoped to publish later. But, alas, after the *Euphrosyne*, nothing more was heard of them.

Dunlop’s third contribution was her elegy “To the memory of ... Mary Fitzroy” (“Trembling in agony! faint with amaze!”), who died in a carriage accident on the Domain at Parramatta on 8 December 1847.⁹⁷ Nathan also printed Dunlop’s short covering letter, written from Wollombi on 20 December, in which she hoped that he “could create a melancholy melody to embody the sad thoughts I offer you”. But, again, Nathan was unable to comply, probably because, when he received her letter, he was still hoping to issue the *Euphrosyne* early in 1848 and had simply run out of time. When the collection did finally come off the press a year later, the moment for such a musical memorial had long since passed. At least, the *Euphrosyne* ensured that a few more pieces of Dunlop’s work were seen in Britain. A copy that belonged to the English musician Edwin Matthew Lott (1836–1902) is now in the British Library and digitised by Google.

There is no record yet identified of any later contact or correspondence between Dunlop and Nathan. Her unpublished ode, “Nathan” (“Sweet voice of song! Australia’s shores / Have hailed thee as, a newborn gladness! . . .”), in “The Vase”, almost certainly dates from the time of their close association in the 1840s, when her idealised description of him there bore most resemblance to reality, and the colonial renown she imagined for him still seemed within his grasp.

... Be this thy country “Son of Song”
 Australian pearls shall gem thy name
 On Time’s bright current wafted on
 Blending with Byron’s waves of fame.⁹⁸

96 Nathan, *The Southern Euphrosyne*, 104–5.

97 Nathan, *The Southern Euphrosyne*, 136.

98 “The Vase”, https://digital.sl.nsw.gov.au/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=FL9674377T; the epigraph is from John Bowring’s 1828 translation of the Hungarian ballad “Lovely Lenka” (*Szép Lenka vár a’ part fellet*), by Ferenc Kölcsey.

APPENDIX

Document 1

Letter draft or sender's copy, Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, undated (Wollombi, NSW, before October 1841) to Isaac Nathan, Sydney; unidentified original, transcribed in Margaret De Salis papers, State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 5745; incomplete ed. in Margaret De Salis, *Two Early Colonials* (Sydney: printed by the author, 1967), 101–2.⁹⁹

Isaac Nathan, Esq.
Ada Cottage, Prince Street
Sydney

It is not I feel assured that to a mind so gifted as Mr. Nathan's I need to make apologies that without formal introduction present myself to his notice – if my poetry lines have merit they will require no other usher, and I who am in the Forest far from human habitation of civilized beings, may well be forgiven the want of due observance in this matter, should my poetry be honored by your acceptance, pray do me the favor of a reply addressed Wollombi.

The Dark Lady of Doona, written by a relative, has a few of my songs published in it. A lady, a stranger in this land, but one to whom your eminent universal fame as an author and composer has long been known, thus begs permission to offer the accompanying poetry for your kind consideration. They are my favourites of a Collection which I hope to get published by Bentley of Broad St., but were I so honored as to find those few worthy of acceptance to go forth into the world, – [with] the seal of your genius, it would be to me a source of pride and pleasure greater than I can say. I wrote

the Aboriginal Mother for the air, “When the seas were roaring”. [*]

“I bless thy shores my native land” and “Oh the limpid streams” [+]

[*] The massacre it commemorates took place a short period after my arrival in the Colony.

[+] Were intended to be introduced in a Drama (the Cousins of Aledo) which I have arranged for the stage from Mary Mitford's “Blanch”, and which as it has not been seen by any individual with the exception of Lady Gipps, I will if you give permission submit for your opinion.

My publications at home were confined to the magazines, but altered circumstances in this country where my husband has only £250 as Police Magistrate, induces my attempt to make my pen an aid for my numerous family, but more than this it would aid my way to future favor with the public. If my poetry be honoured by your acceptance pray do me the favor of a reply, addressed Wollombi.

⁹⁹ In *The Southern Euphrosyne*, 136, Nathan published the short text of a second letter from Dunlop, dated 20 December 1847, which she wrote as a covering note with her elegy for Mary Fitzroy.

I am sir respectfully
Eliza Hamilton Dunlop.

Document 2

Letter, Isaac Nathan, Sydney, NSW, 3 December 1841, to Eliza Hamilton Dunlop; unidentified original, transcribed in De Salis papers; incomplete ed. in De Salis, *Two Early Colonials*, 104–5.¹⁰⁰

Sydney, Ada Cottage
3rd Dec^rbr 1841

I fear my dear Madam my long silence will not place me at no. 1 in your estimation. The truth therefore must out. The same day that I did myself the honour to forward you the music of your beautiful aboriginal mother, I gave a copy to an engraver here, that I might testify by its immediate publication the delight I really felt in connecting my humble music with the words, & it was my intention to surprise you with a copy – unfortunately the engraver (who is infected I imagine with the gross air of Sydney), has not yet done his work, & puts me off from day to day, & I fear will do so for some months to come.

I now take leave to hand to your notice a simple French air which I should like to have sung at my next concert, to English words, so that it may be published – if you can spare the time & will write on any subject you please, I shall feel highly flattered; do not confine yourself to French words – I would rather make it an aboriginal subject, an Australian subject connected with native dance or festival. My object is to publish all I can in England as well as in Sydney and you may be certain that I shall not set a line of my music to any words of the Sydney writers whilst I may calculate on receiving productions from your powerful pen.

I have not forgotten your wish to have set to music
[blank]

but I have been much harassed with an approaching law suit – & other worldly affairs so that I have had no musical sounds to command. You may however depend on my setting the words to music the first moment that I can command for melody.

I will lose no time in forwarding your “aboriginal mother” as soon as the engraver brings her home.

Dear Madam,

Yours respectfully & obliged,

I. Nathan.

Private I suppose you know that Professor Rennie [&] “Thorough Bass” to be one & the same – I have no doubt on the subject.

100 De Salis also noted that she saw a second original letter from Nathan to Dunlop, dated 10 January 1843 (nine days before the first review of “The Aboriginal Father”); however, she did not transcribe it or summarise its contents.