

Listen—Christy Moore’s Old and New, *Glocal* Ireland

Bent Sørensen, Aalborg University, Denmark

Abstract

This article examines the role of popular music in the construction of communal belonging and cultural memory in contemporary Ireland, focusing on a single case, namely that of the former lead singer of Planxty, Christy Moore—ever a politically active songwriter and performer, who was named as “Ireland’s greatest living musician” in RTE’s People of the Year Awards in 2007.¹ Moore’s solo album, *Listen* (2009), by its very title invites his audience to listen to a summation of his influences, his past and his diagnosis of the present. The album refers to history—personal, communal and national—in three different areas: Musical history (that of Ireland at large—“Rory’s Gone”), as well as Christy Moore’s personal role in it (“Barrowland”); Irish immigration and diaspora history (“Duffy’s Cut”); and world political history at large (“The Disappeared/Los Desaparacidos”), and yet it also emphasises the present cultural state and critiques it. The article examines this album as a glocal Irish artefact and cultural text.

Key words: music, song lyrics, cultural memory, globalisation, glocal, cultural texts

Christy Moore’s penultimate solo album, *Listen* (2009) is *glocal*—global as well as local—in its scope. The songs are collected from a number of different songwriters and describe events around the world, in places as diverse as Arctic Sweden, Great Britain, the USA and El Salvador—with notable local Irish interludes, such as “The Ballad of Ruby Walsh,” which takes us to the Galway races, and in the process sends up the Irish upper classes. The album also includes “Gortatagort,” which continues the tradition of limning the Irish countryside with very specific use of place names to create a nostalgic geography and historiography. Even songs that are not specific in their references to Irishness, however, take on Irish resonances from the very framing they are exposed to, through the song selection, as well as the performance aspects of the recording, including the choice of Irish instruments (including bodhran) and, not least, Moore’s Irish accent. I propose that this hybridity of new and old,

¹ Awarded for “decades of exceptional contribution to Irish music,” <http://www.rehab.ie/press/article.aspx?id=304>.

Sørensen, Bent. 2014. “*Listen*—Christy Moore’s Old and New *Glocal* Ireland.” *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 13(2):222-235.

foreign and national, might just be the most appropriate strategy for an updating of Irish identity through song.

Cultural geographers and theorists of postmodernism and globalisation have suggested that the last decades of the twentieth century were characterised by the twin phenomena of cultural acceleration and time-space compression. David Harvey proposes in his book, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, that “the general effect is for capitalist modernisation to be very much about speed-up and acceleration in the pace of economic processes and, hence, social life” (Harvey 1991: 230). Thus, he suggests that “innovations dedicated to the removal of spatial barriers [. . .] have been of immense significance in the history of capitalism, turning that history into a very geographical affair—the railroad and the telegraph, the automobile, radio and telephone, the jet aircraft and television, and the recent telecommunications revolution are cases in point” (Harvey 1991: 232).

This acceleration and compression, which—when felt in our social relations—may be perceived as a general speeding-up of all interactions, greatly helped by information technology and sharing, has also been theorised by Paul Virilio in his work on the emerging field he calls dromology, or the philosophy of speed. He states: “The reduction of distances has become a strategic reality bearing incalculable economic and political consequences, since it corresponds to the negation of space” (Virilio 1986: 133). An immediate effect of the acceleration and higher speed and ease of exchange is a perceived lessening of the distance between sites of production and sites of consumption when we think in terms of goods, and of a similar compression of space when it comes to our consumption of cultural products, such as music, originating from places far removed from our own listening position. This is an effect shadowed by the similar compression happening in the production of music across large distances between musicians and writers/composers—physical distance being made irrelevant by the ease of file sharing via the Internet, or simply the global access to Internet radio and music libraries. This means that a global listening position is indeed possible, but as listening always takes place in one’s immediate and therefore local site, listening as well as production can be conceptualised as a glocal process. Therefore, my purchasing of Moore’s album in CD form in Dublin is less important than the fact that its consisting of portable digital files has allowed me to listen to it and write about it in locales as relatively

diverse and far-flung as Falun, Turku, Roskilde and Skagen—all non-Irish, of course.

Globalisation has a number of repercussions for our identity formation, even leading theorists such as Zygmunt Bauman to suggest that we no longer create firm identity structures or holisms, but rather that we instead resort to scattered, local identification points. He writes: “Perhaps instead of talking about identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of the globalising world to speak of *identification*, a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged” (Bauman 2001: 129). The advantage of such a view is, among other things, that identity is regarded as a process rather than as an end product. This opens up for a dynamic analysis of identity work where the individual as well as the social framework can be seen as possessing agency in identity, or identification formation. Furthermore, it emphasises the connection between existing in what Bauman elsewhere has dubbed “liquid modernity,” and having liquid identification structures that can constantly be revised to fit with the subject position most relevant for the individual, whether as cultural producer or consumer—another distinction that is under erasure in the digital age of self-production and publication.

In addition to acceleration and time-space compression, the phenomenon most often proposed, as a necessary precondition for globalisation, is deterritorialisation. A leading scholar of globalisation and cultural identity is John Tomlinson, who in his article “Globalization and Cultural Identity” remarks: “The very dynamic which established national identity as the most powerful cultural-political binding force of modernity may now be unravelling some of the skeins that tie us in securely to our national “home.” The kernel of truth in the claim that national identity is threatened by globalisation lies in the fact that the proliferation of identity positions may be producing challenges to the dominance of national identity” (Tomlinson 2003: 274). For Tomlinson, deterritorialisation is first felt on the national level, as our identity construction no longer relies on belonging to a national entity, but rather to alternative spatialities, whether regional or strictly local. It is exactly this insistence on locality that can be regarded as a positive side-effect of globalisation with regards to identity formation. One can indeed propose with Tomlinson that there is no deterritorialisation without subsequent

reterritorialisation within what he calls “projects of cultural ‘reterritorialization’—the claiming and reclaiming of localities—which don’t inevitably involve claims to state power” (275). While Tomlinson in this connection discusses movements looking to reclaim a traditional “homeland” (usually ethnically as well as territorially defined), his argument is also valid for the glocal identity formulations of Irishness, as for instance seen in the case of Christy Moore. In Tomlinson’s words: “What is interesting about such projects is that, again, they exemplify a particularly modern cultural sensibility: the very notion of a juridical contestation of rights linked to identity seems understandable only within the sort of global-modern institutional form of identity which we have identified” (275). While Tomlinson eschews the use of the term glocal for these “global-modern institutional form[s] of identity,” it seems apt to apply it to processes of identity work, for instance those involved in music production, even in territories not directly embroiled in “hot” contestations of rights (especially as in Ireland the “cooling” of such issues never seems permanent anyway).

Irish music has been a major export commodity since the late 1960s and the emergence of global names such as Van Morrison (1970s onward) and U2 (1980s onward) has sped the process along. In the last two decades the process of globalisation has fed back into Irish music itself and enriched its flavours with elements of other national music traditions or of world music, as the recordings of Sinéad O’Connor and other neo-traditionalists testify. In other articles, I have examined aspects of the global status which the music of Morrison and O’Connor has achieved, focusing on how the Irishness of their music has been mediated, for instance by its use in films and music videos. Likewise, I have described the relationship between the maintenance of tradition and innovation of this Irishness as a global/glocal interchange. Christy Moore’s album *Listen* is a further example of this development, and gives me a welcome opportunity to revisit these issues through the lens of globalisation.

Moore, by his own statement, listened to nothing but traditional Irish folk in the early part of his career as a singer and performer (or as he puts it, more memorably in an interview with Niall Stokes, 2011: “I was a pure finger-in-the-ear-head-up-me-arse folkie until 1972”). The seventies and eighties, however, saw him begin to take an interest in contemporary songwriters from a wider, international folk scene, and eventually the

rock music-related field. By the 2000s Moore had reached a state in his four decade long career where he could record pretty much anything he saw fit. He earned this right by constantly innovating his musical and lyrical expression, moving in his first two decades of recording, both solo and with Planxty, from traditional ballads from the long Irish musical history, via contemporary songs by travellers such as John “Jacko” Reilly, to political songs taking a stand in favour of the IRA, especially Bobby Sands and the H Block prisoners. In the 1980s, with his new band “Moving Hearts,” Moore began experimenting with an instrumentation drawing more heavily on rock traditions, following which he again went solo and started accumulating a varied new repertoire of his own songs, as well as songs by other Irish and British songwriters.

The 2009 album *Listen* came after a fairly long studio recording hiatus for Moore, four years after his previous effort. The album is credited to “Christy Moore with Declan Sinnott” in the accompanying booklet, but on the cover it is simply listed as a Christy Moore album. Sinnott is however an essential part of the album, performing most of the distinctive guitar and mandola work on the recording, and singing lead vocals on one song, “I Will,” and harmony on most of the others. The inside sleeve photograph by John Coffey, appropriately shows Moore and Sinnott performing as a duo act in 2008 in Dublin. Moore’s career had been scaled back since the 1990s on doctor’s orders, after years of drinking and hard touring had taken a severe toll on his health. It is entirely possible that the new album was intended as taking a moment to sum up a career, and to reminisce on the state of a world Moore might be about to leave. One song, “China Waltz,” which is specifically about old age and dying: “The hard release / That steals the peaceful dream / Might take this breath away.” This is referred to by Moore as a song he was not ready for, until this album was recorded although he had “tried to record it” in the 1980s. As he puts it: “It has never left me and came back loud and clear last year” (Moore 2009). And certainly songs about road casualties, such as the Pink Floyd modern classic “Shine On You Crazy Diamond,” written in 1975 about Syd Barrett (died 2006), and Moore’s own “Rory’s Gone,” obviously dedicated to the legacy of Irish blues legend Rory Gallagher (died 1995), would seem to indicate as much.

An “English” song, such as “Shine On You Crazy Diamond,” is made locally “Irish” and personal, through a circumscription performed

by the liner, or sleeve notes on the album. Moore labels this number “an old Séan-Nos song” (Moore 2009), and explicitly compares it to songs such as “The Yellow Bittern,” putting it into the tradition of old Irish balladry. One sees the obvious thematic similarities between the two ballads in striking lines from “The Yellow Bittern,” such as these: “His bones are thrown on a naked stone / Where he lived alone like a hermit monk,”² which could easily be read as descriptive of the reclusive life Syd Barrett was reduced to, as LSD use brought out his dormant psychoses, and left him unable to perform or even communicate coherently with others. Barrett’s condition is cast in words in “Shine On,” in lines such as these: “There’s a look in your eye / Like black holes in the sky”—and: “Nobody knows where you are / How near or how far” (Waters and Gilmour 1975). It is obvious that Moore identifies with a fallen fellow-traveller such as Barrett, and he continues his note: “It evokes memories of old friends past whose stars burned brightly, whose flames were quenched too soon”—words that also echo this line from “The Yellow Bittern”: “I was sober a while, but I’ll drink and be wise,”³ signifying how many of the “old friends past” knowingly chose the road of excess as a shortcut to wisdom, and consequently settled for a short earthly life in exchange.

The Waters/Gilmour song is, however, not the only one to reference England’s geography and culture. Liverpoolian songwriter Ian Prowse’s “Does This Train Stop on Merseyside” would seem the most obvious example of this, judging by its title alone, but in fact this track turns out to be the most global of all on the album. The lyrics effortlessly bridge British colonial history and its darkest, bloodiest aspects, such as the slave trade and transported Irish labour (“the blood of Africa on every wharf”; “the Famine boats are anchored in the bay”), to contemporary ills emanating from the old British enemy: Yorkshire policemen stand by impassively as Liverpool football fans are crushed in the Hillsborough stadium disaster in 1989, and above everything Easy Jet hovers aimlessly, “flying everybody everywhere.” This song is not only an instance of time-space compression, it is, in fact, *about* the very phenomenon of time-space compression and globalisation as postmodern

² <http://www.celticlyricscorner.net/ryan/yellow.htm>.

³ <http://www.celticlyricscorner.net/ryan/yellow.htm>.

colonisation. The pun of the name of Merseyside rings throughout the refrain—when will there ever be mercy found on Merseyside?

Other aspects of the lyrics introduce the listener to British eccentrics of the past, such as William McKenzie, whose soul, we are informed, “lies above the ground / in that pyramid near Maryland”—lines which both refer to McKenzie’s bizarre final resting place in the graveyard of St. Andrew’s Church, off Maryland Street in Liverpool. This is a bona-fide 15-foot pyramid in which McKenzie was interred, sitting upright holding a winning poker hand, in case the Devil should come by looking for a game, and to the fact that McKenzie’s soul reportedly never found rest in the grave but walks down Maryland Street, seeking redemption for the many other souls who perished working in McKenzie’s railroad and canal construction sites and steelworks. In contrast, Alan Williams, the first manager of The Beatles, is mentioned as a still living source of tall tales of Liverpool’s glorious past, and the home of the Merseybeat. Another example on the album paying tribute to this style and era is found in the song “I Will,” which was a hit for Merseybeat act Billy Fury in 1964. The Fab Four are further limned as having tapped into a “lay-line [that] runs down Mathew Street,” the site of The Cavern Club where The Beatles first honed their performance skills (Prowse 2010).

Prowse’s lyrics thus mirror Moore’s split feelings concerning Britain and its colonial and cultural history. The music and storytelling that came out of Liverpool is subtly weighed against, and counterbalanced by, the city’s role in the violent history of capitalist exploitation, and state sanctioned violence against the working class and common folk of many races and nationalities. It is worth noting that in a remarkable exchange of respect after Moore’s exposure of this song to a large audience, Prowse decided to write his 2010 Master’s thesis in Irish Studies on the topic of “Locating the role of Christy Moore in Irish folk and traditional music.”⁴

Most of the songs on the album are, however, written by Irish songwriters Moore has known for decades, and in many cases he refers in his liner notes to having wanted to record their work for years. It is thus clear that Moore is working on updating and modernising the tradition and canon of Irish song via his selection of songs and

⁴ <http://www.pledgemusic.com/blog/851-ian-prowse-on-fatherhood-irish-folk-and-being-an-other>.

songwriters included on *Listen*. An artist such as Dublin-born songwriter Wally Page has no less than three cuts on the record, one written in collaboration with Moore, and these two artists in fact have a long history of collaborating on material for Moore's records.⁵ "Duffy's Cut" is a prime example of a number that looks both to the old and to the new Irish reality, being a story song of suffering and injustice of the Irish diaspora, which has a timeless quality in its treatment of a dark episode in the history of pressed emigration and labour, not least because the story of the dead at Duffy's Cut is as yet an unsolved mystery. The lyrics capture the hope and aspirations of Irish labourers who seek their fortune crossing the Atlantic to work on the Philadelphia and Columbia (later Pennsylvania) Railroad in 1832, only to graphically describe the illness and death of "57 Irish Navvies," who first "suffered like the weeping Christ," only to end up in an unmarked grave, obviously meant to cover up the real circumstances of their demise. This violence is depicted in the text as an Irish on Irish crime, as Duffy, the contractor luring the workers to America, is quoted speaking Gaelic: "Dia is Muire Dhuit agus Failte romhat / Duffy is my name, I cut through stone / work for me. I'm one of your own." This adds sting to the betrayal of the workers in the name of protection of the railroad's profits, and Moore's note to the song in the lyrics booklet plays up the as yet unclarified aspects of the events: "Was it cholera or was it murder?" he asks, referring to findings in recent years indicating that some of the workers may have been murdered to prevent the spread of the cholera epidemic to other communities in the Malvern Valley.⁶

"Duffy's Cut" is therefore a parallel to the one of the other Wally Page selections, "The Disappeared/Los Desaparacidos," which extends the space described in the songs to another part of the world. This time, it is not as an Irish diasporic space, but as part of an international solidarity sphere, highlighting as it does the disappeared individuals in El Salvador during the civil war (1979-1992), and the dictatorship in that country. Reading "Duffy's Cut" and "The Disappeared/Los Desaparacidos" together, as the album itself urges us to do, as they follow each other in the running order of the disc, thus shows a connection across time and

⁵ http://www.peermusic.com/peermusic/index.cfm/artist-writer/artist-details/?artist_id=353.

⁶ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/6958216.stm.

space. This connection is formed by exploitation in the name of capitalism, murder and subsequent cover-up at all costs, on the part of the authorities that stand to lose, if the truth be told in these matters. The songs are of course also a pair in that they serve as part of art's function as a potential whistle-blower against such conspiracies of silence, and ultimately as raiser of the listeners' consciousness of such injustices. "The Disappeared/Los Desaparacidos" sketches out a potential utopian paradise in El Salvador: "This could be Paradise free of the spell / of the Yankee dollar bills from Hell." In his note to the song, Moore explicitly calls for remembrance of those who "*were* 'disappeared,'" rather than those who merely *have* disappeared (Moore 2009; my emphases).

The third Wally Page contribution (which actually is a Page/Moore collaboration) is a more personal and musical memoir, waxing nostalgic about the Glasgow club Barrowland the song is named after, which must have functioned as a home away from home during Moore's touring and drinking days. Barrowland, the club, is described as an ideal space for Moore and his peers to master and to use as a "church," in which to spread the gospel of their songs and stories. The song "Barrowland" ("A ballroom of remembrance") constructs a clear feeling of a shared Celtic space reaching across from Ireland to Scotland and—in the two songs on the album referencing Merseyside—down into Northern England. The lyrics are more than a little nostalgic, as the "I" persona remembers nights of performing in the club ending with a trip to "dreamland," in which he was uncertain (or too drunk to care) whether going to bed would be tantamount to him going "to Hell or to heaven." The song, however, also describes the history of Glasgow and some of its rarely sung heroes and heroines, notably "Mags McIvor" (Margaret McIver), who was the founding mother of the street market ("The Barras"), formerly located where Barrowland now stands.⁷ Likewise, legendary performers such as Billy McGregor and the Gaybirds, who were the house band at Barrowland throughout the 1930s and 1940s, are remembered for their showmanship as much as their choice in musical styles, although jitterbug (one of their specialties) is specifically mentioned as one of the music forms played under the whirling disco lights, referred to in the lyrics as "the carrousel of healing." Ladies of the night appear: "the lassies of The Broomielaw / on their Cuban heels,"

⁷ <http://www.glasgow-barrowland.com/market/history.htm>.

along with footballers such as Jimmy “Jinky” Johnstone, the Celtic winger of 1960s fame,⁸ and their heroics add to the power of “remembrance” housed within the club’s four walls.

The Page selections thus neatly create three concentric circles of interest for Moore (by proxy through his friend’s song-writing)—first of a personal Celtic space (with a dominant nostalgic tone), then a diasporic Irish space (the tone is political, historical), and finally a global space of solidarity between oppressed, underprivileged peoples. Obviously again, the tone is political and militant, sharpened by the events being more contemporary. Time-space compression renders the three songs not just parallel, but a seamless sequence of nostalgia, sentiment and anger.

Yet the album is in equal measure new in its musical and lyrical direction. Moore’s own solo song-writing contributions are both humorous and contemporary personal anecdotes. Of “Riding the High Stool” he says in the record notes: “I knew a fellow like this once” (Moore 2009), and we immediately understand he is talking about his own good self throughout the lyrics of this song of overweening drunken pride and its inevitable fall. The “I” of the lyrics is, to put it mildly, not a very sympathetic person who maintains a public “Mr. Know-it-all” persona, always “expanding and expounding” on issues he really knows very little about—whereas in the deep dark night of the soul, he is sentimental, torn by self-doubt, but too proud to ask for help. Through what amounts to a miracle, he is picked up by a “lightship,” minutes before “I went under for the very last time.” The nature of the lightship is never specified in the lyrics, but we note the religious overtones of his “being caught in its beam” and being led to safety. The song actually exists in two different versions, and one which has somewhat more elaborate lyrics is found on Moore’s own website.⁹ In this expanded version, the message of salvation is the same, but the topics which the “I” persona was expounding upon are spelled out more fully. Jack “The Gorgeous Gael” Doyle, a famous Irish-born boxer and actor, is referenced as a real historical persona, as by now has become an established practice in the songs on the album. Here, he is part of the unlikely range of topics Moore’s alter ego was an “expert” on, which also includes Aga Khan’s wives, and “the price of rice in Sierra Leone.”

⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/mar/14/guardianobituaries.football>.

⁹ <http://www.christymoore.com/lyrics/riding-the-high-stool/>.

Fellow drunkards are also mentioned by (nick)name in this set of lyrics, and certainly not spared the rod of ridicule, although the “I” still reserves his most scathing critique for himself.

By contrast, “The Ballad of Ruby Walsh” is an exuberant observation of the mores of the *nouveau riche* of Tiger Economy Ireland: “You can see the Liposuction, the Botox and the Augmentation, Brazilian haircuts and Colonic irrigation,” at whom Moore thumbs his nose, as the narrating persona, against the odds and with the help of jockey Ruby Walsh, cleans up at the Galway races. The controlling metaphor of the song is an extended comparison between pilgrimages to known holy places and places of miraculous healing (Bethlehem, Lourdes and Croagh Patrick, to cite but a few) on one side, and the *faux* “pilgrimage” involving genuine “agony and ecstasy” to the Galway races on the other. Both types of pilgrimages are for the despicable rich and unscrupulous, such as those “Soldiers of destiny / in a feedin’ frenzy / Them boys would eat the Lamb of God / and come back for the gravy”—but also for the ones who “have seen better days / lookin’ to take our chances”—yet another *memento mori* being issued to himself. Thus, the races have the potential to become a site of greater equality than the “Smurfits and O’Reillys” would really care for, and the Galway races become a glocal event of significance to both high and low.

Counterbalancing the portraits of modern Ireland are two songs that reference the ballad past, and in one case a mythical figure. The Irish heartland is praised in a sincere hymn to the green jewel of Gortatagort, “where the Angels bleed over Bantry Bay,” and “I sing the House my Mother was born.” This song carves out an extremely local patch of Irish ground, using hyperspecific references with remarkable capitalisation of local sites, such as “The South Rey Grass and the North Rey Grass.” But as all geographically specific Irish songs, the private Ireland of the individual songwriter stands as a metonymic representation of the whole of the island, which again is a metonym for home, origin, birthplace and birthright. The song underscores this Irishness by alternating English and Gaelic place names: “Through The Longmeadow The Cnocan Rua / The Fortfield The Pairc na Claise.” Moore annotates this John Spillane song: “John wrote this song about his mother’s home place. When I sing it, it transports me back to Barronstown, between the Hill of Allen and The Yellow Bog” (Moore 2009). There is, in other words, a Gortatagort for and inside every Irish person. The song explicitly performs a specific

type of time-space compression by stating in its lyrics that the singer sees Gortatagort simultaneously “in this time now and in another,” making manifest its nostalgic gaze back to childhood days and conflating the two times as one, both being equally real to his mind, in cultural memory. This is as local as Moore's selection gets, yet the lyrics are so universal in their longing for a Mother's house that one can share in their emotional contents, no matter from where on the globe one originates.

In “John O' Dreams,” this Irish version of the Sandman is described as the great equaliser, as “Both man and master in the night are one / all things are equal when the day is done / the prince and the ploughman, the slave and the freeman / all find their comfort in John O' Dreams.” Once more a dream of an Edenic state of equality recurs in Moore's song selection, but this paradise cannot be attained in the waking world, in life, as the sleep John O'Dreams creates is a metaphor for death. The song's heavy nostalgia for rest, and ultimately death, is underlined by Moore's laconic note that he first heard Bill Caddick perform this song in 1969, 40 years earlier. Though the note here does not spell it out as it did in the case of “China Waltz,” we are left in no doubt that it is not until now that Moore was ready to record it. The melody, carried by a solo cello in the arrangement on this record, is strongly reminiscent of one found in Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, known as the *Pathétique*, which enhances the association with death, as this symphony was the last work the composer finished, conducting it a week before his death (the second performance of it was given a memorial for the composer three weeks later). The lyrics about the impending night (“home comes the rover, his journey's over”) take on a clear personal significance for Moore here, at career and possibly life's eventide (“sleep is a river, flow on forever, and for your boatman choose old John O'Dreams”). This is by far the most moving song on the album, and again this effect is achieved by the song's universal appeal to rest and peace in death. We are at once at the heart of the Irish qualities of the album and at the heart of Moore's personal hopes and fears.

“John O'Dreams” is the penultimate selection on the recording, and obviously sets up the refrain of the album closer: “Rory's gone to Heaven to play the blues.” One already senses Moore's readiness to follow suit in “John O'Dreams,” but it is not until “Rory Is Gone” that we begin to glimpse what sort of hereafter Moore might envision will open for him as well, after he is “gone.” Paradoxically, this cut is the

only live concert selection on the album, thereby offering a tongue-in-cheek meta-pun on the song's list of bluesmen who have "died too young and much too premature" (a pleonasm if ever there was one). The Moorean vision of heaven turns out to be a variation on the "Great Choir in the Sky," and it is not far-fetched at all to say that Christy Moore easily can picture himself joining this heavenly jam band, as Gallagher did in 1995. This, the final image of Utopia offered on the album, is not surprisingly also somewhat political in nature, as it offers, "all the colours mixed together," in a manner not often found in earthly life. Rory's contribution may well have been the Irish Green in this cocktail: "Blacks Whites Blues and Greens and Reds"—and Moore's contribution to come when he joins Rory and the other bluesmen in Heaven may well be the Red, considering his socialist political viewpoints.

It is useful in conclusion to contemplate the full arc the album *Listen* inscribes, from the opening invocation in the Hank Wedell song "Listen," which celebrates the community one can be part of both as performer of and listener to music: "listen to the heartbeat of harmony in unison." This is a feeling echoed in the Glasgow club Barrowland, described as "the church of ceili," to the final description in the album's only live track (aptly enough recorded in the very same "church of ceili," Barrowland) of the great rainbow-coloured blues band in Heaven, counting everyone from "Mississippi Fred and Muddy Waters" to the local boy, the singer himself.

The album thus has a wistful optimism built into it, suggesting, in effect, that despite the fact that individuals pass on, the tradition remains. The stories still go on being told. New generations will come to worship at the "church of ceili," and take the strange communion of "Fidel Castros," a "mighty cocktail" invented by another fallen hero, Hamish Imlach—dead since 1996—consisting of Bacardi Rum, Russian Vodka and American Coke (Moore 2009).

The album is unambiguously glocal in its ability to absorb musical influences from South America, the USA, Scandinavia and Great Britain, and turn the often undesired, marginal inhabitants of those places into honorary Irish Séan-Nos—on the strength of their stories, both guardians of the tradition and engines of innovation at the same time.

References

- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2001. "Identity in the Globalizing World." *Social Anthropology* 9.02: 121-29.
- Harvey, David. 1991. *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Moore, Christy. 2009. *Listen*. Los Angeles: Columbia/Sony Music (CD w. liner notes booklet).
- Prowse, Ian. 2010. "Does This Train Stop on Merseyside?" *Nerve* 16. http://www.catalystmedia.org.uk/issues/nerve16/amsterdam_train.php.
- Stokes, Niall. 2011. "The Kildare Boy: The Christy Moore Story." Hotpress.com <http://www.hotpress.com/music/interviews/THE-KILDARE-BOY-The-Christy-Moore-Story/7463015.html>.
- Sørensen, Bent. 2013. "True Gods of Sound and Stone—Patrick Kavanagh's Anti-Reverdie and *In Bruges* as Ekphrasis in Reverse." *The Crossings of Art: Aesthetics and Culture in Ireland*. Eds. Charles Armstrong, Ruben Moi and Brynhildur Boyce. Bern: Peter Lang. 65-79
- . 2014 (forthcoming). "Sean-nós, Sean-nua—Sean-nós-nua?" *Wisdom and Authority*. Eds. Carmen Zamorano Llena and Billy Gray. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Tomlinson, John. 2003. "Globalization and Cultural Identity." *The Global Transformations Reader*. Ed. David Held. Cambridge: Polity Press. 269-77.
- Virilio, Paul. 1986. *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Waters, Roger and David Gilmour. 1975. "Shine On You Crazy Diamond." *Wish You Were Here*. Los Angeles: Columbia/CBS.