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Song and the Presence of Absent Communities

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Abstract

This essay is in two parts – the first an academic argument, the second a loosely woven presentation of song lyric fragments and images that parallels concerns expressed in the first. The aim is to indicate why certain types of old, quasi-pagan songs might help a particular section of the population develop another sense of place and community. Using a distinction between 'metropolitan locals' and the commitment of certain artists to an ethical identification with necessary limits inherent in community as understood by 'local cosmopolitans', I argue from greater attention to collective, communal, and social practices – typified here by walking and song – that are rooted in the lived realities and shared needs of ordinary people. I do so in the context of Edward S. Casey's claim that place, despite our assumption that it is a static entity, is best understood as 'an essay in experimental living within a changing culture'. Declining to side either with phenomenologically-inclined promoters of 'enchantment' or post-structural advocates of the primacy of absence, I seek to validate a particular and endless oscillation between these positions – an oscillation I find performed in exemplary fashion by certain songs in their capacity to simultaneously enchant and to remember absence in the context of the animistic values of a now absent indigenous community.

Keywords

song
walking
place
community
enchantment
absence

Introduction

> We do not simply disappear when we turn into ghosts, Jacques Derrida (1994) notes; rather we pass into and are incorporated by other states and forms. Against any phenomenological naturalism that would confine human perception and presence to living, breathing, organic flesh, Derrida argues that 'the body' and its sensibilities are always a matter of prosthetics, augmentations, displacements, substitutions – different 'appearances of flesh'.
>
> (Wylie forthcoming: 7)

As might be inferred from John Wylie's observation above, there are many 'different appearances' of community and, in consequence, we can be sustained by a sense of a community that is absent, is no longer 'living, breathing, organic'. My concern here with a particular group of old vernacular songs is in their ability to bring into a living, breathing present traces of the values of an absent community that, in its own particular cultural terms, understood that the living human body was subject to augmentations, displacements, and substitutions, as Derrida suggests.

These are what are known as the old 'supernatural' Borders ballads that originate – or so we are told – from the English/Scottish border region. I am not primarily interested in these songs in an ethnographic sense here – as being part of the oral heritage of specific groups of people with particular ethnic and geographical loyalties – but rather as a latent sonic *communal place* that can serve as a resource for what Richard Kearney calls the testimonial imagination (Kearney 1993). My interest in this communal place is both scholarly and creative and is animated by the hope that accessing it may contribute to the gradual embodying of a 'quasi-pagan' mentality I believe is necessary to our future well-being. The experience that informs this hope has been the long process by which the rhythms of walking in particular landscapes has enabled me to develop a certain empathy with, and insight into, traces of the absent world given in these ballads. This experience derives from having spent some six weeks of each of the last twenty years working in the particular, largely rural, region of the United Kingdom known as the Borders (Figure 1). This work forms the background to what is set down here.

My concern here is with the fundamental human need for community at a time when traditional identification with a single, primary, place-based community becomes increasingly problematic. The contention advanced is that 'we' – that is university-educated readers of journals such as this – need to reconsider how we meet our need for a sense of belonging, of community,[1] given that any sense of the primacy of place-based community is now present in our lives largely through its absence. This situation need not, however, be a cause for regret or nostalgia. It may rather be taken as a spur to develop a sustaining engagement with testimonial imagination so as to work towards a reorientation of the dominant cultural mentality. This leads to the question of how, if our sense of community is inextricably linked to 'feeling at home', do those of us who live between multiple communities to which we never entirely belong meet that need? And do so, moreover, while engaging with the

1. Any enlargement of this, admittedly generalized, position would need to explore Geraldine Finn's understanding of the development of postmodernist theory and practice as inseparable from the 'real conditions of existence of students and graduates of contemporary universities' as 'displaced'; as people 'uprooted from their past – the past of their parents and grandparents' and so 'ripe for new and transitory/transitional discourses like postmodernism with which to define the specificity and difference of their knowledge and experience, their leaning and lives, and fashion their always precarious and provisional community' (Finn 1996: 127).

Figure 1: The River Wear.

growing problems of environmental indifference too often bound up with a virtual, professionally derived solution to that need?

As I have argued elsewhere, where the ideal identity is that of a transnational professionalism, the problem of community is resolved by adopting a 'metropolitan localism'. This allows the professional to move freely and relatively comfortably across the globe and between a plurality of cultures and locations because he/she is insulated within a highly localized sense of 'at-home-ness' derived from specific professional practices, norms, discourse, and lifestyle choices. This 'at-home-ness' is physically grounded in those globally dispersed institutional networks and metropolitan environments where the transnational professional identity can be played out with maximum efficacy (Biggs 2001). While this characterization must always remain an oversimplification, it serves well enough to identify the underlying psychic parochialism (however intellectually sophisticated) that sustains those who, like Miwon Kwon and her peers in the art and academic communities, can speak of measuring 'the success and viability' of their work in terms of 'the accumulation of frequent flyer miles' (Kwon 2002: 156).

However admirable and necessary the critical detachment required to deny validity to what Kwon calls 'place-bound identities' may be in the context of conceptual discourse, on a lived day-to-day basis such detachment more often masks a lack of concern for the specifics of environmental problems, a disinterest that can only exacerbate the problem of community at a time of growing social instability linked to environmental change. Kwon's choice to ignore the environmental impact of her professional viability and success is consistent with her reading of Kenneth Frampton's ecologically oriented critical regionalism as 'dated', as 'out of sync with the prevalent description of contemporary life as a network of unanchored flows' (Kwon 2002: 164). Yet this ignores the fact that this 'prevalent description' is itself heavily loaded with projections that privilege the values and preoccupations of metropolitan locals, preoccupations that too often conform to Lucy Lippard's claim that: 'the urban ego' – I would rather say mentality – 'is in fact parochial; New Yorkers (like Parisians or Bostonians) are among the most provincial people in the world' (Lippard 1997: 196).

One of my concerns as a university teacher has been to consider how, drawing on an expanded version of Frampton's critical regionalism, student arts practitioners might be encouraged to adopt the values of a local cosmopolitanism rather than of a metropolitan localism. To orient themselves, that is, to an expanded critical regionalism informed by 'the primacy of grounded ethical practices which are ultimately concerned with "the way in which species-being conceives of its relation to nature, including its own nature"' (Frampton quoted in Biggs 2001: 19). However, I have had to accept that while this concern may be coherent at the level of theory, it runs counter to deep-seated cultural presuppositions that determine the lived experience of the vast majority of students. In order to address this problem I started to link my academic concerns with research into vernacular music. This approach was based on the understanding that we use songs, which have perhaps the most immediate affective force of all cultural artefacts, as a means to create (or recreate) 'homely'

imaginal landscapes with temporal depth; and that 'such landscapes can travel with people so as to give them a sense of "home" when they are not "at home"', just as a traveller may 'carry "home" around as a tangible point in fluidity' (Stewart and Strathern 2003: 5). The result of taking up aspects of this same approach here will be a move from academic argument to a juxtaposition of song lyric fragments and photographs.

Part one

My hope for the development of new senses of community is in part informed by the ways in which a number of artists whose work and orientation I admire – Christine Baeumler, Jane Bailey, Laura Denning, Ruth Jones, Daro Montag, Rowan O'Neill, Simon Read, Simon Whitehead, and Fiona Bannon and Stuart Andrews among others – have been quietly reconfiguring their practices in relation to questions thrown up by reconsiderations of culture, community and place. Rightly or wrongly, I have come to understand this process of reconfiguration as paralleling the expanded critical regionalism I have advocated as a theoretical position. That is, I understand these artists as trying to consciously embrace the ambiguities of living between multiple communities in ways predicated on an ethical commitment to the necessary limits that stem from a concerned commitment to a particular locality or region and its communities. A commitment that entails freely accepting physical, professional and economical limitations that most contemporary artists refuse to accept on professional grounds. At the heart of this commitment is, I believe, an acknowledgement of the ambiguous experience of presence and absence in relation to community. Consequently, I understand these artists as deliberately refusing to make categorical 'either/or' choices between the very different, often apparently contradictory values, memories, goals and understandings that underpin the different types of community and location to which they relate. For reasons that I have set out elsewhere (Biggs 2005, 2001) and will return to here in a somewhat different context, I understand them as adopting a position of psychological (as distinct from theological) 'polytheism'. It is this that links our mutual concerns to the old quasi-pagan Borders ballads.

A polytheistic psychological orientation is one particular response to our need to radically re-envisage how we dwell in the world given the social upheaval that will inevitably follow major environmental change. Like several other members of LAND2 (a national art practice-led research network of which I am a coordinator),[2] I have been increasingly drawn into the developing practicalities of this process through involvement in community-oriented projects such as Holly McLaren's *Bordering*[3] and Ruth Jones' *Holy Hiatus*.[4]

At this point a reflexive aside is in order. The process of reconfiguration referred to above raises questions of knowledge and authority that need explicitly acknowledging here. These challenge us to enlarge our conception of knowledge through reference to other, less obvious and more 'local' resources. In this case to a specific tradition of popular music that constitutes the major part of a long marginalized, but increasingly relevant, indigenous mode of alternative thinking. My purpose in taking up this challenge here is, in part, to remind us that we are, as Geraldine Finn puts it, 'always both

2. See HYPERLINK "http://www.land2.uwe.ac.uk" www.land2.uwe.ac.uk
3. See www.borderingart.org.uk
4. See HYPERLINK "http://www.holyhiatus.co.uk" www.holyhiatus.co.uk

more and less than the categories that name and divide us' (Finn 1996: 156), including the often highly exclusive categories on which the professional title of 'academic', 'artist', etc. are predicated – a challenge best met by introducing 'non-categorical' forms of understanding into exclusive professional discourses. In the context of thinking about community, this is intended to bring about greater acknowledgement that there are many practices that are 'skilled, systematic, repeatable, teachable, informed by understanding, and productive of truths that are objective by anyone's standards' (Finn 1996: 24); practices such as the singing of traditional vernacular music that are denied the authority attributed to academic and artistic work largely because 'they are not institutionalized, not hierarchical … but characteristically collective, communal, and social, and rooted in the lived realities and shared needs of ordinary people' (Finn 1996: 24).

Important related questions flow from these epistemological concerns. One is suggested by Edward S. Casey's distinction between 'position' and 'place'; by his claim that: 'If a position is a fixed posit of an established culture, a place, despite its frequently settled appearance, is *an essay in experimental living within a changing culture*' (Casey 1993: 31, emphasis mine). Is it the case, as some theorists suggest, that today any such genuine 'experimental essaying' requires us to engage ethically with a whole range of active agents – including perhaps non-human beings such as animals and trees – and not simply with our fellow human beings (Ingold 2000; Jones and Cloke 2002). If this is the case, what is the impact on our sense of community as traditionally understood and how might that impact be mediated? Clearly in the first instance our understanding of place – and more particularly of the sense of community that it has traditionally grounded – would need to be more loosely defined than we habitually assume. If, for example, we were to follow David Abram in aspiring to a greatly extended sense of community understood in relation to air as 'that most intimate absence from whence the present presences' (Abram 1996: 226); how are we then to relate to a community of all that breathes? As suggested by the quotation that introduces this essay, John Wylie very properly urges caution with respect to such phenomenologically based approaches.

The question here is how to understand the relationship between a sense of community grounded in a 'phenomenological naturalism that would confine human perception and presence to living, breathing, organic flesh' (Wylie forthcoming: 7) and its enchantments, however temporary, on one hand, and the demands of critical reflection predicated on an understanding of absence and distance on the other. While I agree with Jane Bennett's claim that: 'Without modes of enchantment, we might not have the energy and inspiration to enact ecological projects, or to contest ugly and unjust modes of commercialization, or to respond generously to humans and nonhumans that challenge our settled identities' (Bennett 2001: 174); such enchantment can only inform an ethical sense of community if it is recognized as part of an endless oscillation between amazement and criticality, between a radical openness to the appearance of phenomena and an equally radical commitment to ethical concern grounded in the inevitability of absence. My engagement with certain Borders ballads stems precisely from their uncanny

capacity to perform this oscillation, to enchant us while reminding us of absence, of the loss of an indigenous community grounded in animistic values. These ballads serve a similar function to that of the memorial benches John Wylie discovers at Mullion Cove – comparable audible reminders of the 'complex fashion' in which landscape, the 'visible and invisible, presence and absence, blindness and sight, love and loss' (Wylie forthcoming: 6) are interwoven. They do so, however, by reminding us that current high theory need not be thought in isolation from indigenous cultural memories that may be subject to recuperation through testimonial imagination.

Old songs and another thinking

As will be abundantly clear by now my particular point of entry into rethinking community has been through research into those Border ballads that retain the last active traces of an old polytheistic animism within British popular music culture (Biggs 2004a, 2004b). These relate to my concern with an expanded critical regionalism – a regionalism that adopts a vigorous critical solicitude to both global and local concerns and perspectives – because the polytheistic animism that permeates them 'is arguably not merely a religious preference but a distinct mode of thought and of universal organization', one that promotes the ability to manage uncertainty – an ability that is 'directly related to its ultimate division of power and its lack of a single, omniscient figure of authority' (Napier 1986: 4–5), and so to the acceptance of ambiguity identified earlier.

The lived evocation of another, quasi-pagan, animistic way of thinking constituted by these songs takes on a particular importance in the context indicated above. It offers an embodied potential point of resistance – activated through the shared community of singing and listening – to a social and cultural reductivism inseparable from the 'monotheistic individualism' presupposed by the forces that drive neo-liberal western market democracies. Seen in the context of Marina Warner's writing on the culture of folk tales – where she claims that the primacy of metamorphosis in polytheistic animism 'runs counter to the notions of unique, individual integrity of identity in the Judaeo-Christian tradition' (Warner 2002: 2) – such songs remind us that there is nothing 'inevitable' about that presupposition or the commodity-based community to which it belongs. Historically these old ballads have already served as a focus of resistance in the early modern period in relation to the advent of the Protestant revolution's rationalization of theology in England and Scotland. In that context, they became an aspect of popular resistance to a mentality that re-categorized men and women as 'witches' if they persisted in retaining the quasi-pagan, polytheistic, animistic worldview that these ballads perform, albeit often in a tacit form.

The 'supernatural' ballads are again particularly relevant given that a philosophical form of neo-animism has recently appeared, activated by the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari and Actor Network Theory (ANT). However, Hayden Lorimer, who draws selectively on these approaches, does so in the context of a recognition that this philosophical neo-animism needs grounding in the language of vernacular observation he associates with ethology and with a range of other subjugated, marginalized or forgotten cultural traditions and practices (Lorimer forthcoming). This argument

closely parallels my own. My engagement with Borders ballads seeks, among other things, to link the insights of high theory with a practice that has a wider currency in larger communities. Our interests might be said to coincide in this respect, both with Jane Bennett's concern with a 'quasi-pagan model of enchantment' (Bennett 2002: 12) as a necessary corrective to the disenchantment from which large sections of the academic and art communities derive legitimacy and authority, and with Wylie's argument that what he refers to as 'geographies of love' – those to which any real sense of community must refer – are predicated on 'a simultaneous opening-onto and distancing from' (Wylie forthcoming: 2). These various themes are brought together here with the aim of helping to re-imagine our roles with regard to a dominant worldview still predicated on late modern conceptions of nature, the individual, institutions, community and other societies.

In the context of considerations of song it should be said that the 'archaic' values played out in the Borders ballads are not isolated phenomena restricted to a 'local' music. They are being evoked in contemporary songs by singer/musicians as different as Alistair Roberts and Laura Veirs. This living song tradition puts in question the suppositions of the cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, namely that issues of 'world and self', the 'fuzzy area where geography overlaps with religion', is framed by an understanding of religion as 'the spiritual longing to be *elsewhere*' (Tuan 2004: 44, emphasis mine) where 'elsewhere' constitutes the 'unattainably far' community of an otherworldly heaven. The potential significance of this challenge is perhaps best understood in the context of Rebecca Solnit's stress on the degree to which many Americans still imagine 'home' and 'homeland' in terms of the Judeo-Christian Eden, an identification typified by Thoreau's linking of the American backwoodsman with the Biblical Adam (Solnit 2001). In consequence, while American visions of 'home' and 'moving on' remain inseparable from the mythos of Genesis and the Fall, the dualism predicated on notions of sin and expulsion from Paradise will continue to shadow the American Dream and, in consequence, global politics.

While Yi-Fu Tuan is correct in claiming that songs are 'virtual places', his emphasis on place in terms of pausing, resting, being nurtured is as questionable as his assumption that 'spirituality' is synonymous with the root presuppositions and tempo-spatial assumptions of the monotheism of the Religions of the Book. In this context the particular way old, quasi-pagan vernacular songs like the Borders ballads act as virtual places is suggestive – at least if they are seen for what they are: fluid, ongoing conversations between singers, a 'mutable text' and the telling of circumstances focused around a particular cluster of recurrent human concerns. They thus bear witness to a valuable alternative narrative within our cultural memories of absent communities, to a 'subjugated knowledge' regarded by the dominant instituted authorities as archaic, superseded, and irrelevant. They are suggestive because, as Jane Bennett's identification of a particular relationship between song, enchantment and our relationship to 'home' suggests, they model a conversational place for the 'self' that is closer to Casey's definition of place (referred to above) than that of Yi-Fu Tuan; a sense of place in which the past is not

only a shelter proffering a nostalgic sense of pause, rest, and nurture, but also a radical point of departure for experimental living within a changing culture.

As a second reflexive aside, it is necessary in the context of an essay published in an academic journal to add that the process of reconfiguration referred to above relates directly to Gemma Fiumara's critique of the academy's privileging of speaking over listening. This is particularly the case when listening is understood in her expanded sense of 'heeding', 'hearkening' or 'attending to' what is not captured by the disciplinary categories of academically sanctioned knowledge – in the present case specific musical examples of what Casey calls the 'unresolved remainders' of cultural memory (Casey 2000). To acknowledge this in practice requires not only that I reference Fiumara's critique of the 'ever-increasing formalization of specialist languages' that 'conceals the problem of reciprocity between different fields of research' (Fiumara 1990: 8) – and, indeed, types of knowledge more generally – but also that, as a writer/ artist located both within and outside the academy, I act on that acknowledgement.

In the present case this is attempted through the content and the form of the second part of this essay. My hope is that in helping to put in question 'the monotony of so-called theoretical contrasts which perhaps only represent an archaic warlike strategy transposed into the realm of epistemology' (Fiumara 1990: 8), I remind the reader of the limitations imposed by what Doreen Massey calls 'the elitist, exclusivist, enclosures within which so much of the production of what is defined as legitimate knowledge still goes on' (Massey 2005: 75). My aim is to promote a form of practice-led research that genuinely seeks to advance cultural and political engagements that move these engagements beyond claims to inter-disciplinarity within academia and, as a result, begin to demonstrate how we might develop more socially responsible research practices within contingent frameworks of engagement that are equally informed by scholarly and imaginal practices. While in this section I have 'spoken' as an academic, in the next I hope to share an experience of 'listening' in Fiumara's sense of that term.

Part two

Each year for the last twenty I have returned to the southernmost edge of what is, historically speaking, the Borders region. This region produced, out of an isolated, violent and to us unimaginably insecure way of life, some of the Isle's most enduring vernacular songs. Rookhope, the focus of an old ballad called the 'Rookhope Ryde', is just over the hill from where my family stays each year (Figure 2). I first came to walk in this place by an accident of marriage but, through time, a whole vanished sense of community as evoked in song has entered my mind, heart and the rhythm of my walking (Figure 3). A particular sense of community that, while it finally faded as a lived experience from this hill country over four hundred years ago, is remembered in old songs that have, at least for the most part, continued to mutate without losing all trace of the vales that underpin their vision of the world (Biggs et al 2007).

What are offered below are selected fragments of old song lyrics and images made while walking in the Borders region. Neither the fragments nor the images were chosen on the basis of any literal equivalence or

Figure 2

correlation to each other. Rather they are intended, in their juxtaposition, to invite a listening to absence in line with the concerns indicated above. The images were made either in or around Weardale or else in the woodland that has grown along Scots Dyke, the Elizabethan earthworks built in an attempt to finalize the border through the Debatable Land (Figure 4). There, during fieldwork in the summer of 2007, I made the observations that were eventually written up as follows: 'in 1607 King James of Scotland, while campaigning in the Borders to end its violent culture of raiding and blackmail, hired a girl from Carlisle to sing him the old Borders songs. Some would have told of magic, revenants, and the 'good neighbours' – matters not fit for the ears of a good Christian King. She was paid 28 shillings none the less. The past is not so easily made to conform

Figure 3

Figure 4: Scots Dyke

to its usual telling here. Even into the twentieth century a few Cumbrian hill farmers still counted their sheep in Welsh, the last remembrance for a Wales that once dominated the west of the Isles. Some old songs have a mind of their own. At Scott's Dyke I cross and re-cross the blurred border now shrouded in a thin line of trees. It is still patrolled day and night – by rooks, hares, roe deer, owls and a pair of buzzards'.

Eight song fragments

From 'Fair Margaret and Sweet William' (Figure 5)

Figure 5

Figure 6

Day was come, and night was gone
And all men waked from sleep,
Sweet William to his lady said.
My dear, I have cause to weep.

I dreamed a dream, my dear lady,
Such dreams are never good;
My bower was full of wild swine
And my bride-bed full of blood.

From ‘Cruel Mother’ (Figure 6)

Oh bonny babe pray tell to me
The sun shines down on Carlisle Wall
The sort of death I shall have to die
And the lion shall be lord of all.

Seven years a fish, fish in the flood
The sun shines down on Carlisle Wall
Seven years a bird, bird in the wood
And the lion shall be lord of all.

From ‘Tam Lin’ (Figure 7)

This night is Halloween, Janet,
The morn is Hallowday,
And if you’d dare your true love win,
You have no time to stay.

Figure 7

O tell me, tell me good Tam Lin
O tell me and tell me true;
Tell me this eve, an make no lie,

What way I'll borrow you?

The night it is good Halloween
When Elfish folk will ride,
And they that wad their true-love win
At Miles Cross they must bide.
From 'Twa Sisters' (Figure 8)

Then out of the woods came a fiddler fair/'Oh the wind and rain'/He plucked thirty strands of her long yellow hair/Crying 'oh the dreadful wind and rain'/And he made a fiddle bow of her long yellow hair/'Oh the wind and rain'/Made a fiddle bow from her long yellow hair/Crying 'oh the dreadful wind and rain'.

From 'Sweet William's Ghost' (Figure 9)

Oh sweet Margaret, O dear Margaret
I pray thee speak to me;
Give me my faith and troth Margaret
As I gave it to thee.

Thy faith and troth thou's never get,
Nor yet will I thee lend,

Figure 8

Figure 9

Till that thou come within my bower,
And kiss me cheek and chin.

If I should come within thy bower
I am no earthly man;

Figure 10

And should I kiss thy rosy lips,
Thy days will not be long.

From 'The Broomfield Hill' (Figure 10)

For if I go to the Broomfield Hill
My maidenhead is gone
And if I choose to stay at home
My love will call me foresworn.
Up then spoke a wise-woman
Out of a bush of broom
'O you may go to the Broomfield Hill
And yet a maid come home.'
'Take you the blossom of the broom
The blossom it smells sweet
And strew it at your true-love's head
And likewise at his feet.'

From 'In Our Lady's Name' (Figure 11)

Oh I shall go into a hare
With sorrow and sighing and mickle care
And I shall go in his good name
Yes, till I be fetched home.
Hare, take heed for a bitch greyhound
Will harry thee all these fells around
For here come I in Our Lady's name
All but for to fetch you home.

Figure 11

Cunning and art he did not lack
But always her whistle fetched him back.

Coda

Janet Wolff's comments on Tony Harrison's poetry-performance work *Bow Down*, which takes the 'Twa Sisters' as its starting point, raise the problem of taking the material of the Borders ballads literally. Not unreasonably, she objects to the 'horrendous fantasies of male violence', including the torture and death of the older sister that Harrison derives from the ballad (Wolff 1995: 32). There is no doubt that certain versions of the *Twa Sisters* conform to Wolff's reading of Harrison's use of it in his work, as being violently, even sadistically, misogynistic. However, I would suggest that it is a mistake to take these songs at face value by responding to them in this way. I suggest this not least because all exist in many versions, a good number of which actually subvert or counter the authority of a misogynistic orthodoxy, while simultaneously acknowledging its social force.

In most versions of the 'Twa Sisters' sung today (many of which are very old) the focus is on what, taken at face value, appears to be the ritual dismemberment of the body of the younger sister to provide materials for the construction of a stringed instrument, a harp or fiddle. To me this surreal passage is the crux of the song, located both within and somehow to one side of the main narrative. Rather than hearing it as a literal account of dismemberment (which renders it entirely absurd), I hear it as evoking the metamorphosis from corporality of the murdered girl, through the medium of the craft practices of the fiddler or harpist, into song as enchantment and remembrance of loss (Figure 12). A figuring of the continual transformation inherent in the performed patterning of remembrance that – like the old ballads themselves – is, as a

Figure 12

source of wonder and strange beauty, also a contribution to an understanding of community that concludes a finality in which only the wind and the rain remain.[5]

5. Illustrations to this article are from the author's personal archive. The author would like to express his gratitude to Hayden Lorimer and John Wylie for allowing him sight of their forthcoming papers.

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