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'Presencing' Imagined Worlds
Understanding the *Maysie*: a contemporary ethnomusicological enquiry into the embodied ballad singing experience

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UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
2012

Original Statement

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree at the University of Edinburgh or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others with whom I have worked is explicitly acknowledged. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

Mairi McFadyen

Date: 26-09-2011

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts a paradigmatic shift in the focus of ballad study towards embodiment, moving from 'representation' towards 'experience' and with an emphasis on 'process,' as opposed to 'product.' The originality lies in the development of a new approach which explores words, music and embodied aesthetic experience as they come together and create meaning in performance, conceived of as 'presence' (Porter 2009). Ideas from philosophy are connected with concepts from ethnomusicology and folklore and brought to bear upon broad issues in the study of expressive culture. While the focus here is on the ballad experience in a Scottish context, ultimately the questions asked attend to dimensions of experience that do not emphasise cultural-boundedness. The emphasis is not on my experience as a fieldworker, nor on fieldwork descriptions, but rather on the development of new theoretical methodologies that can be extended and applied to other cultural forms. To that end, I am little concerned with texts, variants and versions, transcriptions and collections which traditionally constitute the subject matter of ballad studies. What is presented is a convergence of contemporary disciplinary approaches, pushing the boundaries of the existing framework of ballad and folksong studies to include dimensions of cultural experience rarely considered in this field.

Working within the wider interpretative framework of hermeneutic phenomenology, theories of embodiment are used as a means to introduce ideas from embodied cognition. The development of ideas is concerned with describing how our embodied experience of the world informs the processes of meaning-making, how human cognitive capacities are at work in the experience of ballad singing and how the structure of the ballad reflects and shapes these capacities. Embodied philosophy and contemporary theories of metaphor are central in this endeavour. Ultimately, this work seeks to find a legitimate way of talking about the ephemeral, intangible yet real quality of embodied aesthetic experience—the shivers and chills of the *Maysie*—that avoids metaphysical explanations and that makes sense in a secular, humanistic framework. The aim is not to demystify experience in a reductionist sense, but to offer an interpretation that is less about 'transcendence' and more about the creative processes present.

Prologue: A 'Mindful Approach'

In the past, researchers were exposed to a restricted set of techniques that were the designated research methods of their discipline. This is no longer the case. Today's emerging research environment is characterised by plurality and diversity, where disciplines overlap and where postmodernism has broken down the traditional unitary model of research. The sheer diversity of approaches inevitably raises the question of what constitutes a legitimate and valid contribution to knowledge.

The climate of current research is uniquely confusing and disorientating. In the preliminary stages of this research, I found myself overwhelmed by the mass of available information. The internet provided access to more people, more words, and more facts that any one mind can fruitfully absorb. I was confronted with a vast array of different possible research methods, which made it difficult difficult to find both the confidence to decide which path to take. At the same, being faced with such freedom of choice was also thrilling and exciting because of the sheer potential and possibility for new ideas to emerge.

The need for understanding and the ability to justify what makes something count as valuable knowledge in such a pluralist context requires more than deep exploration of the paradigms underlying contemporary methods and inquiry. Choosing a research method necessarily requires a conscious choice, reflection and an awareness of possible limitations and constraints. It is a situation that demands the integration of personal and intellectual self-awareness and self-reflection. I soon discovered, for me, that the best way to overcome this challenge was through an approach that Bentz and Shapiro have called 'mindful inquiry' (1998). I found mindful inquiry to be an antidote to this very postmodern situation, in that it 'helps the researcher sustain his or her personal identity amid the onslaught of the information age' (36). My understanding of music and prior knowledge and training in literary theory and ethnographic methods did help me evaluate the quality of information I encountered—to make informed selections of quality material—but mindful inquiry enabled me to delimit my research and create boundaries so that I became in control of my work, rather than vice versa.

Mindful inquiry is not a research 'method' that one must adopt in order to engage in research, it is a choice. Taking responsibility not only for producing knowledge but for knowing why it is valuable has deepened my own experience of the meaning, value and richness of life. The emphasis placed here on theories of embodiment is a direct consequence of my own personal experience. Working in the purely intellectual arena leaves one feeling almost entirely alienated from oneself. While on a mindfulness mediation course, I realised that it is quite possible to comprehend a concept on an intellectual level, and yet not *understand* it, bodily. That is to say that there is often a disjunction between intellect and emotion, between body and mind. The clear problem with the purely theoretical is that explanations

for experience become overly intellectualised and at a remove from the actual lived reality we make attempts to understand. Theories and ideas presented here come from my own conviction and from the truth of my own experience.

In a philosophical sense, I chose to view this research not as a disembodied, programmed activity but rather as a part of the way in which I engage with the world. Mindful inquiry has resulted, for me, in a personally meaningful and rewarding experience; it suited my being-in-the-world as a researcher and at the same time facilitated my search for an answer to life questions. Mindful inquiry was certainly able to help me connect—in a meaningful way—myself as a researcher, my inner self, my research interests, the world in which I live, my philosophical convictions and my moral and political values, helping turn my project into a positive contribution to my personal development as a whole.

The *Maysie* is a phenomenon that captured my imagination and that continues to fascinate me. As I experience the ballads, my being is filled with beautiful and haunting melodies and powerful poetic imagery. In my attempt to understand the meanings that come out of the ballads, my experience of them has widened my horizons of understanding and their truths have deepened and enriched my experience not only of the tradition, but of my world as well.

CHAPTER ONE 1

Introduction:
"I had ta'en oot that heart o' flesh, Put in a heart o' stane"[1]

The thesis explores the ballad singing event in which 'sensation, memory and imagination coalesce in a memorable *experience*' (Rice 1994: 305, my italics). Following Lillis Ó Laoire's (2005: xiii) aspirations for the study of song in Ireland, it is my hope that this work will encourage others to explore approaches in the development of theoretical models for the analysis of the ballad as *song* in a Scottish context. This chapter will define and elucidate the terms used in the title, describing the remarkable fieldwork experience that inspired this research. The aims and objectives will be set in the context of the emerging paradigms in the study of expressive arts, ethnomusicology and folklore. The central research questions will be set out, with problems and concerns identified and addressed. The research design and chosen methods will be outlined briefly. It will be argued that in order to understand the *Maysie* and the 'ballad experience,' a shift in the traditional focus of ballad studies from representation towards an understanding of embodied experience is necessary. The final section presents a chapter by chapter summary.

Where studies of the ballad exist, they have tended, until very recently at least, to utilise literary, historical or folkloric approaches. Ballads are often regarded as de-contextualised products or artefacts; the lived embodied experience of singing receives little attention. This is evidenced in the long history of ballad and folksong scholarship, where questions of origin, transmission, variation, and repertoire tend

---

[1] This is a reference to my favourite Scottish ballad, 'Tam Lin' (Child #39). The Queen of the fairy folk is furious at Janet, who has taken Tam away from her. Here she rages and regrets not turning Tam's heart to stone.

to attract the most attention. Studies of popular ballads have conventionally focussed mainly on the features of the 'traditional' examples of the type collected and collated by Francis James Child in his classic edition of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882–98). To many ballad scholars, the task of ballad scholarship is still to illuminate these historical texts. I suggest here a paradigmatic shift in terms of the way in which the ballad is understood. What is presented is a convergence of contemporary disciplinary approaches, pushing the boundaries of the existing framework of ballad and folksong studies to include dimensions of cultural experience seldom considered in this field.

The ballad is folklore. With folklore defined as 'expressive culture,'[2] it is arguably the aesthetic, sensual, corporeal, ineffable dimension that endows cultural forms most powerfully with affective potential. Expressive culture has always attracted interdisciplinary attention, and while it has received the most focused attention from scholars in the fields of folklore and ethnology, this thesis takes the liberty of ignoring disciplinary boundaries and acknowledges instead that the theoretical basis from which scholars of expressive culture draw are located in disciplines such as anthropology, literary studies and the philosophy of language and art. Historically, a more accurate account would acknowledge that all of these fields and subfields have been inspired by an intellectual (and likely more than just intellectual) interest in the vernacular, which arguably *precedes* their disciplinary formation.

[2] The term 'expressive culture' is used by scholars in a wide range of disciplines to refer to any type of social behaviour with an aesthetic dimension. This includes genres traditionally studied in the humanities such as music, dance, theatre, and visual arts but also everyday forms of aesthetic practice like storytelling.

That said, this work contributes primarily to the field of ethnomusicology. In Cooley and Barz' view (2008: 3),

> Ethnomusicology today enjoys advantages of being an inherently interdisciplinary discipline, seemingly in a perpetual state of experimentation that gains strength from a diversity and plurality of approaches.

This is an intellectual arena in which scholars increasingly favour a multiplicity of explanatory possibilities, asking nearly every conceivable question about musical forms in culture (Rice 2003). Ruth Stone (2008) has argued that ethnomusicology in the twenty-first century, rather than constituting a discipline in itself, is really a platform for the development of different approaches to answering the questions of understanding music in culture. As a consequence of this multiplicity of explanatory possibilities, ethnomusicologists are in a unique position to question established methods and explore new perspectives, drawing on the convergence of insights from various different fields considered to bring the best understanding to the study at hand. These new perspectives are not just for ethnomusicologists but also for all ethnographic disciplines (Cooley & Barz 2008: 3).

This thesis hopes to raise the level of philosophical enquiry in ballad studies by presenting a more holistic analysis of this intense and complex traditional cultural experience, aiming for depth of perception in an attempt to reveal the phenomenological and cognitive underpinnings of the ballad as *song*. It is an attempt to take ideas from philosophy, connect them with concepts from ethnomusicology and folklore and make them speak to broad issues in the study of expressive culture. To that end, I am less concerned with texts, variants and versions, transcriptions and collections which traditionally constitute the subject matter of ballad studies. Ballads are not words on a page, but are embodied acts of musical and verbal

communication between people who have a visceral experience affecting both mind *and* body.

Following others who have taken a similar approach in other fields, I suggest that processes at work in the ballad experience can be understood on *two* levels: the phenomenological and the cognitive. Working within the wider interpretative framework of hermeneutic phenomenology, theories of embodiment are used as a means to introduce ideas from embodied cognition insofar as they help to elucidate the ballad experience. This is possible because embodiment is one of the hallmarks of contemporary phenomenology *and* cognitive science. Most crucially, the methodology, theoretical models and explanations developed here can be adapted and used by others to understand the ballad's modern counterparts and other sung genres to some extent. In this case, for reasons of scope and delimitation, the focus is on the Scottish traditional ballads. There is no particularly 'Scottish' slant to my explorations, however. Subject matter was acquired 'on the ground' in a Scottish context, but the questions asked about that material attend to 'dimensions of experience that do not emphasise cultural-boundedness' (Fatone 2010: 396).

The Ballad

The traditional ballad is one of the richest, most enduring expressions of Scottish culture, 'among the finest products of human creativity' (McKean 2003). Susanne Gilbert, in her article 'Scottish Ballads an Popular Culture' (2009: 1) writes,

> The ballad is rooted deeply in Scottish popular culture: in the hills of the Borders, the fishing villages of the northeast, the berry fields of Perthshire, the broadside collections of the national archives, and the venues of Glasgow's Celtic Connections folk festival. The ballad's significance for Scotland has been documented over centuries.

Perhaps surprisingly, ballads have survived 'through varying fashions and cultural changes…and maintain a fierce existence in the modern world, coming again into bloom when *sung*' (McKean 2003: 2, my emphasis). There has been a lot of speculation as to why the ballad has remained popular and part of life for so long. It is, of course, difficult to empirically substantiate the claim that ballads are in any way extraordinary; suffice to say that many people the world over continue to testify to their enduring power. In a BBC news report from 2008, the claim was made that, '[The ballads] are right at the cornerstone of major cultural influences, globally.'[3]

Scholars have long striven for a definition of the ballad since the early days of ballad scholarship.[4] It is not the case that the ballad is simply verse set to music or indeed vice-versa. Today, many ballad scholars admit that the term 'ballad' can mean many different types of sung verse.[5] The ballad is often defined simply as 'narrative song'; however, renowned ballad scholar and ethnomusicologist James Porter (2009: 15) warns us to be 'cautious about making any hard-and-fast stipulations as to where ballads with an explicit narrative begin and other styles of oral or sung poetry end.' As well as blurring the boundary between sung poetry and narrative song, the ballad straddles the realms of both song and story, partaking of both genres while remaining distinct. While the ballad is first and foremost a form of traditional narrative, it is unlike any other form of storytelling because it is carried by a melody.

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[3] BBC News Radio Broadcast. Friday, 27 June 2008

[4] The *Oxford English Dictionary* online defines the ballad as, 'a narrative poem in short stanzas, esp. one that tells a popular story'; the *Grove Dictionary of Music* as, 'a popular song that may contain a narrative element, that combines narrative, dramatic dialogue and lyrical passages in stanzaic form sung to a rounded tune, and often includes a recurrent refrain' (Porter).

[5] The *Kommission für Volksdichtung*—an international association of song scholars, founded in 1966 (in Freiburg, Germany)—offer a broader definition to deal with the range of subject matter and approach to the ballad genre across cultural lines. They suggest that 'a song that tells a story' is perhaps the simplest, most usable definition for their purposes.

This means that any attempts to elucidate the ballad must engage with theories concerning both narrative folklore and musical phenomena. Arguably, the very fact that the ballad escapes definition makes the study of it potentially challenging and necessary, and certainly ripe for academic enquiry.

Perhaps surprisingly, ballads remain meaningful in a context when they should be considered fundamentally anachronistic. They embody the fascinating quality of being at once ancient *and* immediately contemporary. In terms of their subject matter, ballads deal with fundamental human concerns. They dramatise the importance of human relationships and the transient nature of human life—the central themes are death and love in the context of gender and power relations. They speak to us not of a distant past, but of issues always present. As Tom McKean (2003: 3) notes, just looking at the news today confirms our enduring concern with such themes: the abuse of power; violent crime; injustice; gender rivalries; jealousy; betrayal; vengeance; family politics—the stark facts of human conflict. The ballad aesthetic seeks to make the harsh realities of human existence into a story, a song, a work of art. In the modern world, there is surely

> a need to examine the persistence of allegedly outmoded forms of particularism…that have not only proved resistant to the melting pot but continue to provide people with essential psychological and spiritual resources (Lasch 1981: 9).

Many events today provide singers with opportunities for performing, both formally on the stage and informally in singing sessions. Ballads are sung not only in the traditional unaccompanied style but also with modern accompanied arrangements by professional groups, who have brought them to international audiences across the world. While it is true to say that the occasions for ballad singing in the modern

day might not be quite as ubiquitous as they once were, this thesis rests on the knowledge that these transient moments of shared experience still do occur, existing with powerful effect. Ó Laoire (2006: 102) talks of 'the success of the heightened expression embarked upon in singing a song,' and the 'perfect, ineffable, moment of performance.' This is the moment where, he writes, 'the phrase "you could hear a pin drop" springs to mind.'

What is the 'Ballad Experience'?

> And they used to say, that in these waves, up here, floats yer melody, and down here floats yer words; so ye've got the melody and the words, and the *space that's in between* is where the *Maysie* lives—*Maysie* is the Traveller name for the muse. So if you invoke the muse, *you will have a ballad experience*. And people *listenin'* to you will have a ballad experience. And you'll get a shiver, a frisson comes doon your spine when the muse is present (Robertson 2008).

These words were spoken to me in a fieldwork encounter with Stanley Robertson—Scottish Traveller, storyteller and ballad singer—in June 2008. Sadly, Stanley passed away in August of 2009.[6] During this meeting, I myself had a particularly powerful 'ballad experience.' Half way through the interview, Stanley stood up, closed his eyes, took a few deep breaths and started to sing the ballad, 'The Dowie Dens of Yarrow' (Child # 214).When he sang he stood straight and tall, with his eyes closed, in a manner that was almost trancelike, almost ecstatic. I did not know quite what to think; I just sat and listened deeply and intently. The way in which he performed the song was haunting, verging on unpleasant, with the melody wavering. It was

[6] Stanley Robertson (8 June 1940 – 2 August 2009) was a Scottish storyteller and ballad singer. He was born in Aberdeenshire in 1940 into a Traveller family which had settled there. His family background was rich in tradition, and from his aunt, folk singer Jeannie Robertson, he inherited a huge repertoire of North East ballads.

excruciating—he was giving everything of a performance to me. I felt shivers on my spine. He sang slowly and deliberately. I followed his voice and listened to the story unfold; I felt completely hypnotised by it. He hooked me in so that I was completely in the ballad world, *inside* the story. I knew the story—I knew the ballad very well—I knew what was coming, but in this case, it felt like I had never heard it sung before. It was so intense—I felt pain, emotional pain, I almost cried. I think it was something to do with the really deliberate way in which Stanley was singing and communicating the ballad story to me. Even though I knew where I was and was aware of everything around me, it felt like I had been transported to the world of the ballad, connected to something beyond myself. I lost a sense of myself, and became certainly less aware of my immediate surroundings. It was a very intense, strange and overwhelming experience. It was altogether quite unnerving, because I certainly was not actively seeking out such an experience. When he finally finished, I realised I had no conception of time having passed. The song is long, but I could not tell you how long he was singing for. I felt myself return to the reality of the situation with a start and make an attempt to carry on with the interview.

I did not realise it at the time, but this experience, coupled with Stanley's explanations of the *Maysie*, had a profound effect on my thinking. I had experienced emotional instances of ballad singing before, but this encounter really forced me to reflect and wonder. '…So if you invoke the muse, you will have a *ballad experience*.' His words stayed with me and lead me to question what exactly characterises such a 'ballad experience,' and to ask questions about the power and magic of stories in song. What is the *Maysie*? How do we explain it?

Studying the Ballad as Experience

Historically, academic writing about the ballad often fails to engage the ballad as 'experience':

> Something ineffable is always missing [in the work of the ballad scholars] about the emotional or visual or aural *experience* of singing or hearing a ballad (Wilentz & Marcus 2004: x, my italics).

Scholars who are interested in what expressive culture means for its performers and audiences rarely account for ineffable experience seriously in research. It is dismissed as idiosyncratic, something opposed to the shared frameworks of culture that make the work of scholarly interpretation possible at all. Harris Berger (2009: x), by chance, uses the situation of a traditional singer performing ballads for a large group of people to illustrate the conventional approaches to understanding expressive arts at large:

> An English literature scholar may interpret the meaning of the ballad's words and place the performance in its social context. A music scholar might explore the melody of the compositions and the performer's treatment of timbre and ornamentation, and a performance studies scholar may attend to the performer's stage demeanour, or the larger meaning of the notion of performance in this culture.

For many scholars in these fields, 'experience'—that most difficult and subtle of key words—is not always a welcome theoretical concept. It is seen as such an amorphous and ephemeral substance that rigorously accounting for its role in meaning is viewed as either impossible or unnecessary (Berger 2009: ix–x).

That said, there are few ethnologists who would say they are *not* interested in experience. The anthropologist Donald Polkinghorne (1983: 280–1) makes the point that the problem is that experience is incredibly resistant to careful study:

> This realm is closest to us, yet it is most resistant to our attempt to grasp it with understanding…Serious and rigorous re-searching of the human realm is required.

It is incontrovertible that performed vernacular arts have the power to make the scalp tingle, the spine shiver and the pulse increase. The potential pitfalls of relying on tingling scalps and indefinable experiences notwithstanding, it is surely this very dimension of expressive culture that is central to the power and value of such expressive cultural forms. To turn away from these affective responses and elusive experiences, in my view, is to deny what gives cultural forms meaning, value and purpose.

The social scientists Braud and Anderson (1998: 2) believe that

> many of the most significant and exciting life events and extraordinary experiences—moments of clarity, illumination—have been systematically excluded from conventional research.

What seems to be behind this comment is not that such experiences have been 'systematically excluded,' but rather that some areas of human experience are thought by many scientists to be unsuitable topics of empirical study. Problems of measurement have often been the excuse offered for their exclusion. However, such excuses are becoming less valid, and we should begin to take notice of an expanding range of approaches now being made available. This thesis seeks not to *quantify* such experiences, but rather explore the creative processes of meaning-making that structure these experiences, looking to the role that the body plays in these processes.

Study Object

The highly elusive dimension of experience has been acknowledged in studies of the humanities at large, but the task of actually defining the object of analysis can be a challenge in itself. A large part of this thesis is devoted to exploring the phenomenon which Stanley calls the *Maysie*, and which I call 'presence,' appropriated from Porter's recent work on ballads, to be discussed shortly. These phenomena contribute to what is here called the total 'ballad experience.' Choosing the 'ballad experience' as the main object of study is justified following the anthropologists Valle and Mohs' (1998: 98) claim that

> Any meaningful human experience that can be articulated in our everyday language such that a reasonable number of individuals would recognize and acknowledge the experience described can form the basis of study.[7]

The ability to experience intense emotional feelings when listening to music in is a common experience among listeners. In the context of expressive arts in general, it would seem that many people encounter a kind of extra-ordinary experience (extra-ordinary being an experience that sets itself apart from the ordinary in some

[7] As a precursor to beginning my doctoral research, I created and distributed an online questionnaire, which was loosely based on a model developed for ground-breaking research into significant experiences of music more generally as part of a current project at the University of New South Wales (See Atkins, unpublished PhD thesis). I asked: 'Have you ever had an experience of ballad singing that was really emotional or powerful? Have you ever been deeply moved by a particular song or performance?' It was assumed that all respondents had experienced ballad singing and had an understanding of what the ballad as a cultural form actually is, without a need to impose unfamiliar categories of thought. The response was overwhelming. In less than three months I had over 50 responses, with ages ranging from 19 to 65 and an average age of 34. Just over half of the respondents were female. Participants came from the following countries of origin: Scotland, England, Ireland, USA, France, Australia and Canada. If anything, the results proved that the demographic of the ballad audience is hugely more varied than we might first imagine.

way.) Such experiences happen on a continuum, ranging from the subtle to the overwhelming. In extreme instances, people are moved to tears. Many of us have experienced something near to Stanley's description of a 'ballad experience,' or at least some of the characteristics in relation to musical listening or musical performing; or indeed other oral performances of expressive art forms. If not, such an experience is not so out of the ordinary that most of us cannot imagine what this experience might be like. As such, the 'ballad experience' is justifiably chosen as the object of this study.

The 'ballad experience' can be defined as the phenomenon of being 'deeply moved' in response to ballad singing. However, this description is itself fraught with complexities. The simplest part of the definition is the last: 'in response to the ballad.' This assumes that the ballad itself is at least strongly implicated in, if not entirely causative of, the experience being undergone. A major factor, of course, is the very powerful influence of the singer themselves:

> A song is not a song unless it is sung, without a voice it is just words on a page. The artists involved belong to that rare group of singers who are able to do full justice to a traditional song. These singers will challenge you to listen to the words and feel the emotions.[8]

Sometimes the singer has a particularly powerful personality which draws out the power of the words they are singing; sometimes it is their voice alone, sometimes they are the perfect channel for a particular song at a particular moment in time. Quite a lot has been written about particular singers, their personalities and their styles—a good example is McKean's (2007) article 'Getting the Way O a Sang: Creativity in Ballad Singing.' An outstanding book length text is the biographical

[8] See http://www.thetraditionbearers.co.uk/

work by Porter and Gower of the singer Jeannie Robertson, *Emergent Singer, Transformative Voice* (1995). While the singer still remains in my view the primary factor, this work looks to the role of the embodied cognitive response of the listening subject and the process of meaning-making that gives truth to experience in context.

Some people may say that they experience the *Maysie* from recordings. I do not doubt that they do, but it is argued here that the physical presence, shared space and active listening in the context of live performance makes for a more immediate and powerful experience of the *Maysie.* What makes the ballad experience distinctive is the performance: the immediacy of the actual singing event, the direct communication of a ballad by means of a particular time and place between singer and a live, receptive audience. While in many ways comparable to the event of live storytelling and even some forms of theatre performance, the ballad experience is fundamentally different for two main reasons. Firstly, storytelling lacks the musical dimension. Secondly, unlike other forms of traditional narrative, ballads are characterised by indeterminacy, incompleteness, and fragmentation; their aesthetic is one of impersonality and ambiguity (features that will be explored and explained later in this work). This means that in order to make sense of the ballad narratives, we are required to 'fill in the gaps' in order to create meaning for ourselves. It is this inherent indeterminacy that invites both ballad singer and audience to actively participate in the ballad experience—to re-create and becomes co-creators themselves. The workings of this process will be explored at length in the course of this thesis.

The musical experience of performers and listeners, of professionals and amateurs, doubtless differs in many important ways. However, they share crucial physiological responses, responses that suggest continuity or commonality between professional and amateur musical perception. In order to engage with the ballad to a deep level, it is likely that there will be a degree of familiarity with the genre. That said, it is perfectly possible that someone who is not well versed in ballad singing or performance may have a ballad experience on encountering the form for the very first time. Certainly our immediate subjective state will be an important contibuting factor; also significant is the context in which a ballad is both performed and heard. This said, we cannot write off the intrinsic qualities of the ballad itself as a major determining factor in the effectiveness of its affective quality. There is a continuum of experience, which is experienced to differing degrees and dependent on a number of variables. In each individual case, there will be a variety of factors that contribute to this process—for example, the contextual situation, a person's subjective complex of feelings and their personal history. That is to say that during the event of the ballad singing experience, each subject has an individual bodily experience completely separate from those around them. Paradoxically it would seem that the 'ballad experience' is at once a highly private affair and at the same time *always* a shared experience.

Research Questions

The very first questions asked at the creation and inception of this research project were: Why are ballads they so captivating? How do people engage with the sounds and images of a performance to make them come alive in sensuous, lived

experience? What actually happens when people experience a ballad in its lived reality, when it is being sung? What is involved in this process that thrills the body and transports and transforms our consciousness? How do the immediate situation and larger social contexts influence the meanings that people find in ballads as story songs? This research centres on the three following primary research questions:

- What elements coalesce to create a powerful 'ballad experience'?
- How is meaning created in the context of the ephemeral and intangible nature of the ballad performance?
- How do we explain the *Maysie*?

In an attempt to answer these questions, we necessarily touch upon what it is to be human, the relationship between culture and consciousness, between mind and body and a sense of humanity beyond the limitations of the self.

Problems and Concerns

A study of this nature is necessarily fraught with difficulties due to the ephemeral and deeply personal nature of the phenomena under study. In attending to these research questions, we need to find a way to talk about the ballad experience in a way that is not wholly disembodied, and to find a methodology for exploration appropriate for a somatic focus on such a seemingly non-rational topic.

The ballad experience takes place in irretrievable and ephemeral spaces and times. The intangible nature of performance cannot be captured, and will never manifest itself in the same way twice. The inherent problems in choosing such an ephemeral study object should be immediately apparent. There are huge obstacles in the way of any attempt to assess cultural experience, not least because of the high

degree of variability. However, this does not make the enquiry any less valid or worthwhile. Explanations certainly must not violate the importance we place on human emotion and interpretations, or undermine any sense of meaning (Becker 2004: 12). Such a study must be very careful—as many singers and ballad appreciators would agree—to 'save the phenomenon' (Taylor 1985).

Research Methods

Do we have ineffable knowledge of certain kinds of nuances in expressive forms that we cannot express in words? If we are to understand the transitions between the individual, cultural and transcultural dimensions of aesthetic experience, research methods are needed that are capable of grasping 'the most profound type of knowledge [which] is not spoken of at all and thus inaccessible to ethnographic observation or interview' (Bloch 1998: 46).

The chief value of fieldwork-generated data is to illustrate and emphasise the theoretical application and explanations of particular features of the ballad singing experience. Ethnography is concerned with capturing, interpreting, and explaining the way in which people live, experience and make sense of the world around them. Ethnographic inquiry is located on a continuum that extends from pure description at one end to the use of such description for theoretical models and explanations of features of cultural life at the other. Theoretical generalisations are usually exemplified by reference to the researcher's own fieldwork, data from ethnographic literature, or archival sources. In contrast, philosophers often construct hypothetical examples to make their arguments, or discuss observations

from their own lives. I have drawn on both approaches here, citing field data and archival resources as well as discussing my own experiences.

Examples from fieldwork can help to show the diversity of human experience and the wide range of ways in which expressive culture manifests itself in different social contexts. While personal examples might be limited by the culturally situated imagination of the researcher, they offer the advantage that they can be crafted and shaped to make clear exactly the point under discussion, and allow for more critical and philosophical questions to be asked. While interview techniques can help scholars and their research participants share the meaning of an experience, and while participant observation ethnography can provide profound insights, deeper understandings are possible if we attend to the culturally specific ways in which structures of experience contribute to the lived meanings of expressive culture.

Research Design

Choosing the 'ballad experience' as the focus of study made it very difficult to find the necessary solid ground for research. The first query any reader may have is, how is such a study possible? One of the major questions is, 'can the study of the ballad experience be approached in a formal way?'

It would appear that such an enquiry is not so impossibly obscure as it would first seem. Fortunately for this researcher, one of the world's most pre-eminent ballad scholars, James Porter, already mentioned, recently published the book *Genre, Conflict, Presence: Traditional ballads in a Modernising World* (2009) in which he advocates a direction of study 'that moves ballad study away from conventional

paths to awareness of ballads as a living voice, a dramatic, transforming "presence"'(54). After many years' experience of writing on the 'genre' of traditional song, Porter suggests a developing theory of 'presence' to explain the transient, magical and mysterious character of ballads.

In Porter's view, in order to reach new understanding, research requires a style open to exploration, and to be free from the need for specific answers. At the same time, it demands a consistency of analytical approach, but without becoming a rigid or closed system. A developing theory

> At the very least must involve the findings of more recent philosophical work by which *truth* and *meaning* as well as content and structure of a ballad singing event are negotiated among scholars, performers and active listeners…it must consider currents in both "practice anthropology" and literary theory. To effect all of these considerations, of course, might be thought a tall order (188, my italics).

To this end, this work is set within the framework of philosophical work of hermeneutic phenomenology, where truth and meaning are central concerns. I have negotiated with singers and listeners alike, participating in live singing sessions, workshops, festivals and events, serving to ground my research in real, lived experience. As well as taking into consideration new currents in literary theory and practice theory, the most recent and innovative methods for studying somatic aesthetic experience have also been considered. However, while theory is central to my endeavour, the clear problem with the purely theoretical is that explanations for experience become overly intellectualised and at a remove from the actual lived reality we make attempts to understand. In taking Porter's theory forward, there is a need to find a way to talk about presence in *embodied* terms. Porter's work will be further discussed in the following chapter.

The 'Space Between': The Hermeneutic Encounter and Liminality

In Stanley's explanations, the *Maysie* exists in the 'space between.' Theories of interstitality and 'liminality' are therefore central to the development of ideas in this thesis. The term 'liminality' gained currency in twentieth century anthropology by Victor Turner (1974), himself influenced by Arnold van Gennep. Turner was interested in the state experienced by persons as they pass over the threshold from one stage of life to another (*limen,* in Latin, means 'threshold'). During the liminal stage in ritual, for example, our status becomes ambiguous: we are 'neither here nor there,' we are 'betwixt and between all fixed points of classification' and thus the form and rules of both our earlier state and our state-to-come are suspended (Turner 1974: 232). A human being in the liminal stage or state has the potentialities of a human being but is suspended between, existing at the 'crack between the worlds.' During transitional periods we are an outsider: we are on the margins, in an indeterminate state.

The meaning of the word 'hermeneutic'—interpretation—is itself closely tied to the idea of the 'space between.' To exist hermeneutically as a human being is to participate in the endless chain of interpretation that makes up the history of understanding. The continental philosopher Martin Heidegger, in his work *On the Way to Langauge* (1971), believes that part of the destiny of man is precisely to stand in a hermeneutical relation to our being *here* and *now* and to our heritage, to our *past*. This is an interesting idea in relation to the process of research itself and the discovery of new ideas. In the view of Richard Palmer (1980: 3, my italics), a scholar of hermeneutics and Heidegger,

> The human being stands in this *gap* [between past and present], this zone of disclosure. One does not so much act as respond, does not so much speak as listen, does not so much interpret as understand the thing that is unveiled. The primary movement here is *understanding as an emergence of being.*

In my view, there is a parallel between this 'zone of disclosure' and Turner's state of liminality. The interstitial is a source of both creativity and critique of the prevailing forms of thought and being. Turner argues that it is from the standpoint of this marginal zone that the great artists, writers, and social critics have been able to look past the social forms in order to see society from the outside and to bring in a message from beyond it.

There is a wonderful myth-metaphor for this hermeneutic process in the Greek figure of Hermes, a sort of shaman—god of boundaries and roads, music, playful thought and a running imagination. The 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian' are the two central principles in Greek culture: Apollo, as the sun-god, represents light, clarity, rationality and form; Dionysus, the wine-god, is the anti-rational half-brother of Apollo, who represents enthusiasm, drunkenness and ecstasy. In a Dionysian state, man gives up his individuality and submerges himself in a greater whole.[9] Nietzsche, in the *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), argued that to offer a new philosophy, we need a way of thinking that is not an Apollonian, but Dionysian. In our own age, where the light of Apollo burns so brightly as to almost obliterate the night sky, Apollonian certainties have become forced into a science and technology that has created systems so complex that they are blind to their own growing shadow. The tools of the scientific mind are fast outpacing our ability to manage them, and much less comprehend them. It is in this shadow that Hermes is found, dancing with

[9] It is often argued that music is the most Dionysian of the arts, since it appeals directly to our instinctive, chaotic emotions and not to our formally reasoning mind.

Dionysius. The alternatives to Apollonian complexity are therefore either descending into an anti-rational chaos, or *thinking our way through* from the playful borderland of Hermes. Richard Palmer, (1980: 1), writes,

> "By a playful thinking that is more persuasive than the rigor of science," Heidegger tells us, the Greek words for interpreting and interpretation—*hermeneuein, hermeneia*—can be traced back to the god Hermes…As a god of sudden magic and mystery and sudden good luck, Hermes is the god of sudden interpretive insights that come from an ability to approach daytime reality with liminal freedom.

Sudden interpretive insights come from an ability to approach life as lived with 'liminal freedom.' It would seem to be the essence of hermeneutics to be liminal, to mediate between realms of being, whether the conscious and unconscious, the visible and invisible. As a god of roads, Hermes protects the traveller willing to cross borders, punishing those who refuse to help those who had lost their way. His staff is twined with the two antithetical branches (or snakes) of diplomacy and magic, brilliant thought and dark speech. His style of thinking is playful, unwilling to play by rigid rational rules and yet always arising from them.

According to Heidegger (1971: 138), interpretation as hermeneutics should be 'world-shaking.' Only an interpretation that goes outside the prevailing conceptualities can move toward what he has in mind: 'a transformation of thinking.' The French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1987) advocate 'nomadic thought'—the kind of thinking that operates outside the conceptual structures endorsed by the established order. This is the kind of thinking which may have the effect of transforming the whole. Deleuze (1988: 116) believes that thinking always starts in the middle, at the point of intersection between two series, events, or process that, however temporarily, share a mileu.

> Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to another and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 25).

In order to think nomadically, the middle is the privileged point from which to begin: it is where thought unravels itself. In my view, in order to understand the *Maysie* and the ballad experience, a paradigmatic shift in thinking is required.

Paradigm Shift

The dominant paradigms in the study of folklore and expressive arts are linguistic in nature and tend to be dismissive of the dimensions of experience and cognition. What has mattered in research has not been process, action or embodied experience, but rather the object, product, or artefact that is fixed. We are also working in a disciplinary trajectory that holds to the ontological assumption that mind is hierarchically superior to and separate from embodied experience. From such a perspective, to be properly knowledgeable is to repudiate transience and flux, the personal and the subjective, the here-and-now experience. To counter this view, one of the central aims of this thesis is to consider ballads as 'process' as opposed to 'product.'

In the context of trying to recapture the 'truth of experience' as a locus for research in the human sciences, Hans-Georg Gadamer, in *Truth and Method* (1960), is especially critical of the historicist approach. Studies in the field of ballad scholarship often emphasise the historicity of the traditional ballad; it is viewed as a historical narrative that can tell us something about the traditional 'past.' But to

investigate the background of a work, Gadamer argues, 'is to move out of the actual experience of it' (2004: 105).[10] In this process, the ballad is lost to us as immediate aesthetic experience and leads to merely the discovery of a 'dead meaning' (148–49). Rather than concern ourselves with the historical or cultural placement of a work, Gadamer prefers to analyse that moment when past and present are united in experience:

> The text that is understood historically is forced to abandon its claim that it is uttering something true. We think we understand when we…place ourselves in the historical situation and seek to reconstruct the historical horizon. In fact, however, we have given up the claim to find, in the past, any truth valid and intelligible to ourselves (270).

This powerful statement of the consequences of understanding a tradition or text primarily in historical or ethnographic terms concerns nothing less than the loss of its claim to 'truth.' Berger (2009: ix) insists on the importance of experiencing cultural forms as 'texts' in relation to ourselves:

> When placed before a reader, viewer or a listener, the text does not spring whole cloth into his or her [let us say her] experience. People engage with texts to make them meaningful and must actively bring them into their lived experience. In other words, the meaning that scholars seek to study is not the product of texts; it is the product *of texts in experience*.

If this experiential dimension is excluded from the study of the ballad, we are surely at risk of also excluding the ways of knowing and sensing the world that exist in the very practice of the tradition under study. The ballad scholar and folklorist Mary Ellen Brown (2004: 70) suggests that

> If we are able to reconfigure and separate our object of study from the fanciful and intriguing imagined past…we might reinstate the ballad as a fluid, dynamic practice more nearly reflecting its lived reality.

[10] Unless otherwise stated, all future references in this text refer to the 2004 reprint edition.

As Timothy Rice (1994) notes, by turning music and music making into an abstract object, we necessarily reduce the infinitely rich, emotionally intense, ever-changing experience that caused us to want to think more about it in the first place, into studies that lie flat on the page. By placing the 'ballad experience' at the core of this research, I hope to keep alive the sense of wonder that our interaction with the ballad tradition provides us.

Embodiment

In order to reinstate the place of the ballad in scholarship as a dynamic and living cultural phenomenon, a paradigmatic shift in understanding must be attempted. In Western scholarship, with a few notable exceptions, there is the undeclared assumption of the Cartesian dichotomy of the mind and body. We must overcome this dichotomy if we are to account for the complexity and meaningfulness the ballad experience. In my view, literature about the ballad suffers from a detachment from the actual embodiment that creates meaning in ballad performances—the very 'moment' where past and present are united in experience.

Something that has struck me is that little scholarship on the ballad takes into consideration the embodied dimension of the ballad performance. It has neglected the appreciation of somatic awareness, of reflective corporeal engagement with the cultural form in lived experience. Our bodies are the primary instrument for singing ballads, and bodies are the basic irreplaceable medium for their appreciation. Music and song are only possible because human bodily movements can be manifested into *sound*: sounds enter the body and are sensed, felt and experienced in a way that, on the whole, the media of other artistic and cultural forms are not.

Many people would acknowledge the truth of the conviction that we experience music viscerally with our bodies, with our pulse rates and with our emotions. To ignore these dimensions of experience is to fail to acknowledge their true nature. However, in a context where mind and body occupy two completely different domains, there is no ready conceptual framework with which to describe the contribution of the body to our thought and experience.

In order to understand human experience, we need to widen our horizons and encompass non-Western philosophical traditions of reflection upon experience. Scientific research is recognised as one of our many ways of knowing, but this needs to be connected with the other ways. Polkinghorne's idea of 're-searching'(1983: 280–1), mentioned previously, is crucial here. It relates to the 'planetary thinking' advocated by Heidegger (1958), which involves a re-examination of the Western worldview and, drawing upon Eastern ideas in order to achieve a worldview that is planetary in scope, takes better account of human nature, and overcomes some negative effects of our instrumental, technological, consumption-oriented culture. Lakoff and Johnson in *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999) call for a thorough rethinking of the Western philosophical tradition. Richard Shusterman's philosophy of 'somaesthetics' draws on eastern philosophical ideas to understand the bodily dimension of aesthetic experience and has been invaluable to the cultivation of ideas for this work; so too has Varela *et al.*'s *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (1993), advocating that a full appreciation of philosophy and its importance for human experience requires that we examine its role in cultures other than our own. In our culture, cognitive science has caused great excitement among philosophers because it has enabled them to see

their tradition in a new light, and vice versa. Such a perspective is viewed by some as an antidote to what they see as 'postmodern nihilism' and 'armchair theorising' in studies of the arts. This is because cognitive science can help the humanities with questions of perception, imagination, emotions, interpretation, language, narration and perhaps most pertinently, studies of the 'ineffable.' Varela *et al.* (1993) also draw on the Buddhist idea of 'mindfulness.' Scientific research is recognised as one of our many ways of knowing, but this needs to be connected with the other 'ways.' The idea of bringing 'mindfulness' into disciplined inquiry will be further explored in Chapter Three.

Total Somatic Experience

The revered ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1977) believes that the power of music lies in the 'total somatic experience,' that is, the sum of all emotional, physiological and cognitive responses. Wayne Bowman (2004: 41), an advocate for a 'somaesthetics of music,' captures this idea well:

> We feel melodies in our muscles as much as we process them in our brains—or perhaps more accurately, our brains process them as melodies only to the extent our bodily extended schemata render that possible. And people make or listen to music not for what they know through it…but for the way it is experienced, bodily.

Porter too (1976: 17, my italics) has expressed a similar sentiment in reference to ballad singing:

> The singing of a ballad cannot be viewed simply as an act in which a text…is set in motion by a singer with a tune, but as a complex, existential process in which units of both *cognitive* and *affective* experience are embedded.

The ballad experience as a process is simultaneously physical *and* psychological, somatic *and* cognitive. Such an experience involves what has been called 'resonance,' an embodied state of mind that is cognitive and at the same time, affective and corporeal (Bresler 2006). Ethnographic 'thick description'[11] goes some way in documenting this complex existential process, but some other means of description is required to understand both the *cognitive* and *affective* dimensions of experience of being-in-the-world.

Recent Study

There is a growing field of study which clearly demonstrates the importance of embodied knowledge to our conceptualisations of aesthetic experience as well as the centrality of *metaphor* to our elaboration of those conceptualisations. This research explores the role of metaphor in how we perceive and experience our world and shows that seemingly abstract theories are in fact grounded in our basic experience. Understanding 'how the body is in the mind' offers a way to understanding that 'offers us a way to trace the shapes left by the departure of that which is deepest within us' (Zbikowski 2000: 11). The effort to seriously consider embodied cognition in studies in the humanities has, in my own view, been the catalyst for much exciting and novel research in recent years, and insights from such research are

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[11] Clifford Geertz (1973) coined this term to describe his own method of doing ethnography. A 'thick description' of a human behaviour is one that explains not just the behaviour, but its context as well, such that the behaviour becomes meaningful to an outsider. Since then, the term and the methodology it represents have gained currency in the social sciences and beyond.

illuminating in their possible application to the study of the ballad experience (discussed further in Chapter Two). Many scholars today are realising that such insights have great potential for our investigation and understanding of the creation, interpretation, and appreciation of artworks in all mediums. In the same way, the experiences intrinsic to artistic creation and experience warrant serious attention from those who propose to investigate and explain the human mind. For example, Bowman (2004: 31) notes that

> Music is a valuable cognitive resource not because of what it teaches us about the disembodied metaphysical realm of feeling, but what it shows us about the profoundly embodied and socioculturally-situated character of all human knowledge and being.

The 2010 edition of the journal *Ethnomusicology* includes an article that advocates an embodied cognitive approach. Gina Fatone (2010: 418) suggests that ethnomusicologists are well positioned to provide evidence and support to theories of embodied cognition:

> Trained to work 'from the ground up' our insights and questions regarding how people think musically that are derived from our own fieldwork experience can provide highly contextualised perspective on cognition.

In order to elucidate the contours and complexities of the ballad experience where cognitive and affective dimensions coalesce, I propose an inquiry on two levels: the phenomenological and the cognitive. At the phenomenological level, it will be explained how theories of embodied existence inform aesthetic experience; on the cognitive level, the notion of imaginative integration and projection will be explored. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1999), it is understood here that our conceptual systems and our capacity for reflection are shaped by the nature of our bodies and our bodily interactions. In order to clarify an understanding of the

embodied mind I appeal to Varela, Thompson and Rosch's understanding of embodied existence (1993), Lakoff and Johnson's theory of metaphor (1980), Johnson's theory of image schemata (1987) and Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) discussion of 'conceptual blending' (a modification and extension of Lakoff and Johnson's work on image schemata). In this sense, the exploration and analysis presented is based on the metaphorical representation of embodied processes especially as it might be construed from a cognitive viewpoint. At the most abstract level, all these elements are subsumed by and integrate within the concept of embodiment.

Studying within this paradigm has allowed me to realise how much is still to be done in order to expunge old scholarly contradictions, assumptions and misunderstandings and to recover certain dimensions of experience from scholarly ostracism. The impetus for this work stems from the need to redress the inevitable shortcomings of ballad studies, by building upon valuable insights about the profound inter-reliance and inextricable relatedness of body and mind and by acknowledging the existential aspects of embodied communication. In a sense, the Cartesian dichotomy functions here as a metaphor for the need in a wider context to mediate between or even transcend entrenched dialectical concerns and to strive for productive dialogue between theoretical perspectives in order to find a more holistic lens through which to view the world.

Words, Music, *Song*

As an art form, the ballad embodies both narrative and poetic power as well as musical power, which come together to create meaning in the context of

the ephemeral and intangible nature of musical performance. The relationship between words and music is central to the study of the ballad, but is also enigmatic, indeed often neglected completely. Studies will often focus on one element or the other, examples of which will be detailed in the next chapter. Analysis must take into account *all* elements that coalesce to create a powerful and significant experience of song. Porter and Gower (1995) make it absolutely clear that in order to understand the ballad fully, these boundaries must yield to the greater imperative of understanding the traditional creative communicative 'process'. They make it clear that 'to discuss these [elements] separately, rather than as fused in performative unity, is to miss the artistic impulse, the creative singing gesture that binds them together' (xiv).

In an attempt to transcend the 'words versus music' dichotomy that has hampered ballad studies for generations, this thesis explores and develops a new approach in the relatively new field of 'cognitive musicology' which to looks to how words and music come together to create meaning. Scholars here make a case for 'cross domain mapping', 'conceptual blending' and 'cross modal transfer'—relationships that are essentially metaphorical—in order to explain the way we in which we understand and experience music and song. A considerable degree of research has been undertaken in an attempt to understand the process of making-sense-of-music in the context of Western Classical art music; but as yet, these ideas and concepts have not been brought to bear upon traditional music and song. The process of making-sense-of-music in this context remains unexplained and will break new ground in the field of ballad and folksong studies. It is not claimed that the discoveries of cognitive science can capture the essence of the ballad experience.

However, with its mutually informative relationship with embodied philosophy, what theories of embodied cognition can provide is a more holistic framework for explaining some issues thrown up by study of the expressive arts. Certain perspectives point the way to a fuller understanding of the ballad singing experience and provide us with new frameworks within which to describe the embodied and dynamic processes of human experience and imagination.

'Presencing' Imagined Worlds

Aesthetic forms like the ballad arouse strong responses emotionally, cognitively and even bodily. A theme central to the development of ideas here is the *imagination.* A source of my own fascination is the realm of *story*. Stories present and populate a world of the imagination that is separate from the world we inhabit in our ordinary lives, but that interpenetrates with it in every conceivable way. My own fascination with the Scottish ballads has, above all, to do with the realm of the imagined worlds they create: the world of Tam Lin; the Cruel Sister; Lord Thomas and Fair Eleanor or the Selkie of Sule Skerry. The overarching hypothesis here is that the 'ballad experience' has the power to create an imaginative world *beyond* lived reality.

This raises the fundamental question of where meaning resides, and how, why and where meanings are created. New meanings are continually being created with every new act of performance, which creates a powerful dialectic between old and new. According to Gadamer, this is a continual process in any tradition; where old and new combine into exciting entities of living value. Every age has to understand a culturally transmitted text in its own way, in order to create new meanings and

transform understandings of both external and internal worlds. Arnold Berleant (2004: 92), a philosopher of aesthetic theory and the arts, believes that there is 'yet something more' at work:

> Somehow, despite their apparent autonomy, the arts transcend their realm, bursting past the limits of expectation and convention to surpass the established boundaries of the self, of society, of knowledge, indeed of art itself. There is a touch of the wondrous in this, for the creative act illuminates the possibilities of human transcendence that we all share when we engage with art. How is this to be explained? To overlook this special force in our account of art is to turn poetry into plain speech, to render it clear by making it transparent.

Throughout history, people have often attributed sensations of heightened or 'transcendent' experiences to external forces, whether it be a divine entity, or in the case of Stanley's explanation of the ballad experience, the presence of the *Maysie*. Somewhat detrimentally, the words 'spiritual' and 'transcendent' are inherently problematic terms which, in my view, have been misappropriated by 'New Age' self-help discourse. This misappropriation (to many people the terms are cringe-worthy) has undermined what is, essentially, a fundamental aspect of *being human*. There is a huge body of literature that attempts to define what 'spiritual' means; what is needed is an alternative conception of embodied spirituality that at least begins to do justice to what people actually experience. Ideas presented here seek to move beyond the idea of the 'numinous' that was so popular in twentieth century thought, separating this experience from the idea of the 'divine' and the 'supernatural'.[12] In order to make a tentative effort toward rescuing 'spirituality', Lakoff and Johnson re-

[12] The idea of the 'numinous' was popularised in the early twentieth century by the German theologian Otto (1917), influential among the intellectuals of the subsequent generation. The numinous evokes a sense of the transcendent, mystical or sublime; a numinous experience is filled with or characterised by a sense of a presence of mystery beyond the sense of the self. The idea is not necessarily a religious one: noted atheists have discussed the importance of separating the numinous from the supernatural.

imagine the idea of 'transcendence' as 'imaginative empathic projection' (1999). They argue that the concept of spirituality in our culture has been defined mostly in terms of disembodiment and transcendence of this world, and argue that the very idea of disembodiment is a metaphorical concept. In empathetic projection, we imagine ourselves in the body of another. While it remains a form of 'transcendence,' there is nothing inherently 'mystical' about it. According to an emergent, enactive, embodied account of human cognition

> Mind, culture, body and action partake each of the other, co-constructing the only 'realities' available to human experience, through the creation of new narratives and *imagined worlds* (Bowman 2004: 48, my italics)

Such a view does not deny the existence of other realms, but rather points to the existence of multiple phenomenological realities that we actively construct in our *embodied* consciousness, that is, through the intermediary of the body. This worldview, its origins and implications will be explored in Chapter Three. Such a perspective, in my view, sheds light on Porter's own (2009: 160, my italics) explanation of the ineffable ballad 'presence':

> The singing of ballads … the phenomenal recreation of experience … embodies and intensifies emotional depth … at a single stroke it incorporates tradition and social structure into the ritual process. It is a way, in other words, of distilling the life-world and its experiences in a *gesture* that compresses the relationship of feeling, cognition and volition….Why? The cause lies in the need…to test the limits of experience and consciousness… How? By joining present with past, the living with the dead, and the here-and-now with *imagined, transcendental worlds*.

This explanation of 'presence,' along with an emergent, enactive and embodied account of cognition, informs the title of this thesis, 'Presencing Imagined Worlds.'

We humans willingly and frequently partake collectively in the suspension of disbelief; it would seem to be an innate human desire to engage in such imaginative

activities. One might well argue that this is merely a form of escapism, focussing our attention away from the quotidian world to our inner experience. How then is the 'ballad experience' to be seen as different from the experience of other narrative-based cultural forms—literature, theatre, film and TV, even computer games—that are not so fundamentally anachronistic? Such a question is one that this thesis seeks to elucidate.

> It's the layered story, no doubt, its internal drama, deceptive directness and, just as important, how it is told—especially in face-to-face situations—that count in traditional balladry...The means of telling that story are just as important as the story itself, otherwise ballads would have given way a long time ago to prose narratives of different types (Porter 2009: 145).

In the case of song, ideas from cognitive musicology suggest that by joining text and music in a metaphorical process, we can enter into a created imaginary domain, a new 'space.' In an attempt to understand the *Maysie*, such an inquiry is imperative, as Stanley put it:

> In these waves, up here, floats yer melody, and down here floats yer words; so ye've got the melody and the words, and the *space that's in between* is where the *Maysie* lives.

Ultimately, metaphor has a fundamental power in constructing the world we perceive: it enables us to create and recreate meaning, and makes possible the creation of entirely new worlds of imagination. Stories are 'no more, but also no less, than a source of metaphor,' which is 'demonstrably central to the operation of language in general, and can be safely discussed as a human universal' (Leith 1998: 19).

Caveats

This thesis does not present a collection and comparison of personal narrative descriptions of the 'ballad experience.' Although this originally formed part of the research plan, it soon became clear that such material was not necessary in order to achieve the aims of this research. There are simply not enough words in a doctoral thesis to develop a new theoretical approach *and* apply it to any great extent. If I were to collect such narratives, it would be necessary to deconstruct the different worldviews and individual personal backgrounds that shape each example. This would be a fascinating ethnographic project in its own right, but before a solid theoretical framework is established (as is the aim here) this would remain a collection of singular descriptions with no unifying thread or overarching framework.[13] Moreover, there would be no conceivable end to such a project. Before the project of collecting narrative experiences can take place, theoretical models for analysis are needed to understand how we process and conceptualise our experience and how we express such experience in language. The emphasis here is, therefore, on the development of new theoretical methodologies informed by the most recent developments in the twin fields of philosophy and cognitive science, opening up the possibility for future work.

A researcher might ask why a study of the structures of experience is a job for scholars of expressive culture, rather than for psychologists or cognitive scientists. The reason is that experience is *directly* relevant to meaning. If we are interested in the meaning of song, music, narrative or any kind of verbal art for a

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[13] This kind of research could be undertaken in future work.

particular group of people, we cannot just study their texts or performances in context; we must understand how such texts and performances, however contextualised, emerge in the experience of those people.

Lastly, this work is not an attempt to produce the definitive narrative of the 'ballad experience' in contemporary Scotland. It would be foolish to claim that one can tackle this topic and expect to be satisfied; any attempt to explain the ballad experience will not be able to do justice to the complexity of this phenomenon. I am not looking for 'the answer,' but to show that there is a multitude of answers. Ó Laoire (2005: 3) shows how Paul Ricouer's terminology is particularly useful in this regard. Ricouer considers as 'fiction' any new text configured from older elements. He does not view such a fiction as a lie, but a product which can tell us something new. The task of hermeneutic interpretation, by definition, contains a fictional element. It is only one telling of a part of a much larger story, of 'the endless work of distancing and renewing out historical substance' (Ricouer 1981: 246). Clifford and Marcus (1986: 18) also critique the absolutism of writing within anthropology, declaring, 'cultures are not scientific objects…Culture, and our views of it are produced historically and are actively contested. There is no whole picture that can be 'filled in,' since the perception and filling in of a gap leads to an awareness of other gaps. Following Ó Laoire's admonition of his own work, if this study fills in one gap in our knowledge about the understanding of the ballad experience, it certainly opens up many others. It is my hope that this work may provide at least partial answers to some basic questions about what lies at the heart of the ballad experience and the continuing existence of traditional ballads into the modern day.

Chapter by Chapter Summary

Chapter Two comprises the Literature Review, presenting a critical discussion of published works in the relevant fields of ballad studies, folklore and expressive arts and the 'new ethnomusicology.' An argument for holism and a call for the need for interdisciplinary work to understand experience will be justified and defended. The theoretical framework and chosen theoretical methodologies will be set out in Chapter Three, divided into two parts: the first will outline the embodied philosophical worldview informing the development of ideas and practice; the second will introduce and lay the foundations for developing contemporary theories of metaphor and embodied thought to be applied to the ballad experience on several levels in the succeeding chapters.

Chapter Four, 'Developing a Theory of Ballad 'Presence'' takes time to define and explore Porter's notion of ballad 'presence' (2009). The gaps and potential areas for development and expansion in Porter's theory will be identified. The Scottish Traveller's notion of the *conniach* will be introduced—best described as the 'feeling' it elicits in those who hear songs—to give meaning to ideas in context. Heightened aesthetic experience will be then explored from an embodied perspective, considering Shusterman's philosophy of 'somaesthetics.' The nature of such experiences will be discussed using insights from Gadamer, whose work seeks to articulate the very question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art from humanist conceptions and show how these aesthetic formulations of truth lead to the question of experience itself. In extending Porter's theory, ideas about aesthetic temporality will be discussed in this context and in light of recent phenomenological

ideas about the time as a shared experience. All chapters work towards an understanding of the *Maysie* and the central idea of presencing imagined worlds.

Chapter Five, 'Deep Listening and the Ballad Experience' is based on a paper presented at the ICTM conference in Derry, Ireland, February 2011. In an attempt to further understand presence, this chapter turns to the relationship between presence and our experience of *sound*. Ethnomusicology has only recently begun to take seriously the role of the listener. The tendencies and consequences of privileging the visual in scholarship will be discussed and challenged; and as a response, post-phenomenological ideas about listening will be developed to inform a theory of 'deep listening' (Becker 2004) as co-participation in presence. Descriptions from personal experience will be included.

Chapter Six, 'Constellations of Meaning': Ambiguity, Polysemy and the Productive Power of Metaphor in the Ballad Experience' looks to the productive power of metaphor and the role of ambiguity in the creation of meaning. The first half of this chapter explores the figurative language and the 'essential metaphoricity of folksong' (Toelken 1995) re-imagined from an embodied cognitive perspective. Ideas from reception theory, most pertinently the notion of 'indeterminacy' will be developed and applied. The second part will build upon Ó Laoire's (2005) theories of the productive power of metaphor. The ideas developed here are necessary grounding for the development of theoretical ideas developed in chapters Seven and Eight.

Chapter Seven, 'Words, Music, *Ballad*' builds on the ideas of metaphorical mapping from Chapter Six and explores the possible application of conceptual blending theory applied to the ballad as *song* (Zbikowski 2002). The relationship

between words and music—the 'twa sisters of balladry'[14]—is central to the study, and as such the differences and similarities between the two will be debated. Questions asked include, how do words and music work together in song? How do they interact in performance and how do we make sense of this? It will be argued here that melody and text can be understood to constitute two separate domains of experience which blend together in performance, and that this metaphorical process creates new space of for the play of the imagination.

Chapter Eight, 'Embodiment, Somatic Presence and the 'Ballad Gesture' as *Being Between*' investigates metaphorical mapping from sound to body. The idea of intersubjectivity as intercorporeality will be introduced, forming the basis of the exploration of shared experience. The 'intermodal' processes of perception and the sharing of bodily gestures in the ballad experience will be explored in an attempt to build up a holistic picture of presence conceived of as the 'ballad gesture,' further extending Porter's theory of presence. It will be argued that ultimately, an intercorporeal relationship is built upon sharing simultaneously different dimensions of *time*, and to that end, ideas first introduced in Chapter Four will be revisited and extended.

Chapter Nine, the penultimate chapter, will bring together ideas and theories developed in the preceding chapters and show how they merge into a meaningful whole. In a final search for the *Maysie*, this chapter will reflect in more depth on theories of interstitality, the idea of 'imaginative empathic projection' in affective encounters, the non-rational dimension of such encounters and the transformative power of stories in song. In the final and concluding chapter, Chapter Ten, the main

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[14] McLane (2011) discussed this idea in the SWINC public lecture, 'Border Trouble: 'World Literature' and the Case of Scottish Balladry' UoE, 17th March.

contribution to this emerging field will be recapitulated, and directions for future work will be suggested. It will be argued that while the ballad form is distinctive, the theories and models developed here can be applied to other forms of expressive arts.

Each chapter will introduce new theoretical ideas, building on what has come before and seeking to work towards a more holistic understanding of the *Maysie* and the ballad experience. A general problem in the development of ideas in this thesis is the difficulty of pragmatically separating strands of thought for discussion and analysis. In adopting such a holistic approach, ideas connect and overlap, and speaking of one idea in isolation is extremely difficult. This may seem problematic, but it is seen here as a strength rather than a weakness. It reflects the ontological assumptions driving this thesis: the experience of being-in-the-world is always firstly being-*with*; mind and body, self and world, and self and other are intertwined in a unitary whole. A useful metaphor to evoke is that of the ballad form itself: the cyclical nature of the tune creates an insistence on the relationships between each new verse and the whole. Cumulative layers of complexity will be built into the argument as new dimensions of experience are introduced into the process.

Chapter Nine, the penultimate chapter, will bring together ideas and theories developed in the preceding chapters and show how they merge into a meaningful whole. In a final search for the *Maysie*, this chapter will reflect in more depth on theories of interstitality, the idea of 'imaginative empathic projection' in affective encounters, the non-rational dimension of such encounters and the transformative power of stories in song. In the final and concluding chapter, Chapter Ten, the main

contribution to this emerging field will be recapitulated, and directions for future work will be suggested. It will be argued that while the ballad form is distinctive, the theories and models developed here can be applied to other forms of expressive arts.

While some music may be seen as a mere diversion or simple pleasure, the significant experience of certain forms of musical expression would seem to 'lie at the heart of what is means to be human' (Sager 2006: 143). The ethnomusicologist Blacking (1973: 50, my italics) goes as far as make the grand claim that,

> There is a difference between music that is occasional and music that enhances human consciousness, music that is simply for having and music that is for *being*.

The ballad as a form is remarkable for its simplicity, intensity and profound capability to express something true of human experience. Indeed, ballads have been described as 'unbelievably truthful songs.'[15] In them we can find immense compassion, imagination, and insight into of the human condition. While the occasions for ballad singing may well be few and far between, transient moments of shared experience and created meaning still happen, and that is wonder enough. The ballad is certainly one of the greatest sources and products of man's imaginative, musical and artistic capabilities, the continued study of which has the potential to open a window onto the understanding of our cultural traditions and of ourselves. This thesis examines the ballad experience ever more closely, hoping to illuminate the magical transient *process* whereby 'a static, rhythmic accretion of words becomes a living song through the addition of melody, a dynamic of performance, and a personalised, internalised emotional expression' (McKean 2006: 5). It is my hope

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[15] This comment was made in a review in the Scotland on Sunday newspaper, of Lyle's collection, *Scottish Ballads* (1994). See http://www.scottishradiance.com/book/life11.htm

that the ideas presented here will offer a modest contribution to our understanding of this cultural form and its relation to body, mind and culture.

CHAPTER TWO 2

Literature Review

The previous chapter outlined the research questions, aims and objectives of this work and situated this research firmly within new emergent paradigms in the study of expressive arts, ethnomusicology and folklore. This chapter presents a critical discussion, synthesis and analysis of published works in the relevant fields of research. While I aim to show insight and awareness of differing arguments, theories and approaches, the central concern of this review is to show how the ideas developed in this thesis relate to and build upon previous studies. The level of analysis reflects the weight and importance of the works that have influenced this study.

The first section looks to works in the immediate field of ballad studies as it has emerged. It is not helpful here to present a history of the trajectory of ballad scholarship at large; rather, the most recent developments in the field will be highlighted and related to the emergent trends and recent scholarly shift in the wider fields of folklore and interdisciplinary ethnomusicology. Both of these look to the study of vernacular expressive arts. Ethnomusicology is considered as it is conceived of in the twenty-first century: as a platform for new ideas. Hermeneutic, phenomenological and cognitive approaches will be explored, and those works which engage with philosophical theories of embodiment will be emphasised. Recent works in the field of cognitive musicology, particularly those grounded in theories of embodied cognition as well as studies that explore the connection between metaphor and musical experience, will be introduced. Finally, I hope to show that the kind of holism aimed for in this thesis is achievable by assessing those exemplary works that succeed in utilising interdisciplinary perspectives. Appealing

to the folklorist Köstlin's (1997) essay 'Passion for the Whole,' I argue for the responsibility to tackle life as *lived*, in contrast to disciplines that purposely confine their specialisation to a narrow slice of 'the whole.' This passion for 'wholeness' takes on its contours only in the face of modernity and all its ambiguity, and our disciplinary horizons expand when this is perceived as a challenge.

Ballad Studies

'Ballad studies' is seen to constitute a discipline in and of itself, with its beginnings in nineteenth century scholarship, but which since has never followed a unified path of development. The *Kommission für Volksdichtung* is an international association of ballad and song scholars, founded in Germany in 1966. Ballads are the primary focus of research, but studies also include others genres of traditional song. The *Kommission* brings together academics, performers, and enthusiasts from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives to discuss themes and motifs, questions of gender and national identity, orality and performance, computer methods of classification and the intellectual history of the discourse. The ballad is certainly a difficult genre to approach from a scholarly perspective, requiring a range of disciplines to elucidate it, including literary, linguistic, historical, ethnographical, folkloristic and musicological. This is because ballads are notoriously difficult to pin down: they are found in many shapes and forms, in both written and oral traditions and are not are restricted to any specific geographical area. The study of the *music* of the ballads has been neglected relative to the study of the ballads as *poetry*. An attempt to study the ballad as *song* did not come about seriously until Bronson's *The*

Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads (1959-72). This issue will be explored in more depth in Chapter Seven.

Since the late nineteenth century, research in this field has encountered dialectical concerns and even, in some cases, deep philosophical schisms. Scholars have long viewed folksong in terms of an opposition between oral and written forms, in the belief that a song from oral tradition differs in some intrinsic way from one in print.[16] Historically, the analysis of folklore genres in general reflects a split between literary textualists on one hand, and those involved with contextual aspects, giving rise to a debate which was later labelled the 'Text/Context Controversy.'[17] A notable trend in folklore studies mid-century was the huge methodological shift from older philological concerns to the study of creativity and performance.[18] Sydow, as early as 1934, recognised that 'investigators have, to far too great an extent, been content with extracts, instead of seeing their information as part of a natural, living whole (in McKean 2003: 5). From the late 70s, a very different perspective was developing in interpretative anthropology, with an emphasis on enactment and interaction rather than the mediated results of these.[19] While mediated products, i.e. the texts and tunes extrapolated from singing occasions, are valuable for the information they provide, focus on enactment, interaction and reflexivity focuses attention not only on the events recounted in the song, the song's function and meaning, or even the

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[16] Finnegan (1977: 168) makes the point clearly:

> The modes of transmission, distribution and publication of oral poetry turn out to be complicated, and not, as used to be commonly supposed, confined neatly to two distinct traditions, one oral, and the other written...One always has to envisage the possibility of more complex interactions between many different modes of transmission and distribution.

Orality and literacy are 'better considered not as mutually exclusive cultures but as mutually supportive mental habits' (Atkinson 2002: 18).

[17] This debate involved scholars such as Wilgus (1973) and Ben Amos (1971).

[18] Barry's (1961) article was perhaps forward thinking for his time, foregrounding future research.

[19] See Abrahams (1977).

singers view of the song (epistemics) but also, critically, to the observer's perception of the song and existential relationship to it.[20]

Performer and performance-orientated studies pushed the study of the text to the periphery, where contextual and performance information was seen increasingly as essential to interpretation. Theories of performance are vital in the elucidation of cultural forms; all the ethnological evidence we have points to a living, breathing tradition rather than a closed account found in two-dimensional text. A purely synchronic approach to ballad studies, however, resulted in the relinquishing of item-centred scholarship in favour of research into the creativity of the song makers, levels of function and context, and the conceptual boundaries of folksong genres.[21]

In the light of years of contextual and performance studies, Wilgus, in an article 'The *Text* is the Thing' (1973) made a case for the re-affirmation of the centrality of the study of textual meaning. The influence of literary criticism, especially that of the deconstructionists (Barthes, Derrida and others) has meant that any conceptual schema, as an object of study and interpretation, can be called a 'text,' even a person. Wilgus suggested broadening the word to include not just the verbal but also the musical component in any song, so that the transcribed music would also be part of the 'text.' What is interesting about Wilgus is that he held that experience confronts us with phenomena that lead to conflicting attitudes and to problems that call for reconstructions and for new meanings. Although he believed that data on singers, context, the transmission process, cultural meanings all had relevance, for him they were secondary to what he called the 'ballad idea,' and

[20] See Porter (1986).
[21] The culmination of such a perspective is epitomised in the work of Glassie (1982), supposedly written as context for two fiddle tunes.

'narrative themes' in an almost platonic sense. What is key here is that Wilgus refused to perpetuate the dichotomy of textual versus contextual factions, claiming that they are mutually enriching modes of criticism. Traditional products do have aesthetic and functional qualities that make them worthy of study: the two modes must be seen as mutually illuminating, but neither can claim exclusive access to the truth about any traditional genre, including balladry.

In recent years, and in light of many years of contextual and performance analysis, scholars have again seen a new need to bridge the gap between fieldwork and literary explication. In order to effect reconciliation between the two modes of study with different goals and means, Porter and Gower (1995) suggest that the question might be reconceived as: can we study *how* and *why* the product is achieved or constructed, as well as *what* it is? One such work is Barre Toelken's *Morning Dew and Roses: Nuance, Metaphor and Meaning in Folk Songs* (1995). Here, Toelken raises the level of discussion to one of the essential metaphoricity of folksongs. He attempts to clarify the precise nature and function of metaphor within song, seeking to explore the boundaries of how and why metaphors are established and understood. Toelken skilfully exploits his own direct experience of fieldwork, working outwards from detailed ethnographic observations of singers and listeners within their immediate contextual and performance situations, giving us an insightful analysis of the function, within folksong performances, of vernacular imagery. He highlights the fact that 'some ballads are not stories about an event itself, but are dramas of events in which narrative structure provides location for metaphorical images expressing the ironies and ambiguities of life's greatest puzzles,' exploring not only how 'singers and their audiences have continued to respond to well-articulated, culturally shared

metaphors and dramatisations of human stress, frustrations, joy and anxiety' (102–3) but also how those performances actively construct, and thus are participatory in or are contestive of the social relations and the basis of such emotion. One particular commendation regarding this work is Toelken's affirmation that the study of music is key in establishing meaning in song texts (20–23). Regrettably, he does not engage in the kind of music-to-text performance analysis that would give substance to this idea.

From 'Product' to 'Process'

In a Scottish context, scholarship still has a general tendency to focus on songs as 'artefacts'—as decontextualised, disembodied cultural products. This is not true elsewhere. In Ireland, scholars have moved beyond this and have begun to conceive of song as 'process.' A seminal article in the study of Gaelic song is Ó Madagain's 'Functions of Irish Folksong in the Nineteenth Century' (1985), which followed Merriam's ten function paradigm as laid out in *The Anthropology of Music* (1964). A key text in this area is Ó Laoire's invaluable study *On a Rock in the Middle of the Ocean* (2005), which will be discussed in more depth below. Ó Laoire maintains that 'the cultural process, with its situated meanings…is crucial to any full understanding of the working of oral poetry' (28). He realises the dynamic capacity for using poetical power described by Toelken (1995) and extends the productive power of metaphorical thought beyond its traditionally perceived role, conceiving of song as 'a metaphorical discourse which mediates the conflicts and perplexities of social existence' (207). Ó Laoire's emphasis here is on the process of making-sense-of-music as it reflects community values. Building on his ideas, this thesis looks to

insights from embodied cognition and cognitive metaphorical processes and explores the idea that the actual *experience* of the ballad is a metaphorical embodied *process*.

One exceptional example of this shift in focus in a Scottish context is Porter and Gower's epic study of a ballad singer, *Jeannie Robertson: Emergent Singer, Transformative Voice* (1995). In terms of its theoretical perspectives, this book is of great value, built on a confluence of disciplines influenced by both phenomenology and critical theory. The first section of the book is largely biographical; part two presents the texts and tunes of eighty of Jeannie's songs with annotations. The analysis and fieldwork here is purely speculative, based on tapes and recordings and not direct experience with Jeannie in the field. Part Three, 'Commentary,' raises the level of analysis to a deeply philosophical one, attending to questions about music, life, experience and meaning:

> The meanings were not just abstractions of experience; they *were* experience, they embodied it.... (Porter and Gower 1995).

What the question seems to really be about is the way in which *meaning* is derived from cultural communication. This is an area that ballad studies has only recently begun to address over the last decade or so (McKean 2003: 7). Where does meaning lie? In the singer's mind? In the listener's? In the fieldworker's perceptions? In a recorded or transcribed version? Or the shared space where all of these different manifestations interact? Meaning cannot be deduced absolutely; new meanings are created at each intersection of time, performance and reception.

Atkinson, in *The English Traditional Ballad, Theory, Method and Practice* (2002) has shown how insights from fields of reception theory and communication theory can

be extended to the study of ballads, focussing on audience reception and the role of the subject in the creation of meaning. However, again he offers no musical analysis. As study which considers only how the language of texts might be understood is to grossly underestimate the power of *song*. Atkinson argues that the reader is required to 'fill in the gaps' of the ballad narrative, and that the ballad's poetic power plays on this recreation. Constantine and Porter in *Fragments and Meaning in Traditional Song* (2003) suggest that extended narrative with no gaps may be tedious to the listener, who expects to participate in the meaning. Constantine and Porter only see meaning in a song through the act of interpreting its *text*, however. In my view, for every song that has lines, verses or a whole story that is meaningful to the listener, there is another one for which the meaning is *evocative*—reminding the singer or hearer of a person or an event that does not have a literal connection with the text, and this is the fundamental problem with textual analysis in attempts to understand truth and meaning. Most singers possess a depth of cultural background, personal experience and history an understanding of the dynamics of the tradition, and an awareness of technique and style, but listeners too must also have these layers of experience and knowledge for singers and listeners to 'understand each other,' to enable them to understand a performance on the terms in which it is represented. In Toelken's view (1999), any traditional listening audience actively seeks out meaning. Traditional listeners do more than just hear a ballad: they 'glean' it.

The most recent published work in the field of ballad studies takes the form of collected essays and conference papers, such as *The Flowering Thorn: International Ballad Studies* (2003) and various publications by the B.A.S.E series, including *Ballads and Diversity: Perspectives on Gender, Ethos, Power and Play* (Peere and Topp 2004), *Emily*

Lyle: The Persistent Scholar (Fischer and Rieuwerts 2007) and *Genre, Conflict, Presence: Traditional Ballads in a Modernizing World* (Porter 2009). These works focus on internal and external aspects of the ballad tradition, such as song and context, performance and repertoire and structure and motif. Such work gives support to the view that an interdisciplinary approach adds value to its subject. *The Flowering Thorn* (2003) presents the latest trends in ballad scholarship, and McKean's introduction is a useful overview of the 'multidisciplinary nature of the field today' (1). Here he argues that 'the future of ballad studies lies in performance, communication, and the study of the complex, multilayered interplay of melody and text' (10). It is this very complex, multilayered interplay in the very moment of *embodied* performance that this thesis seeks to understand.

Study of Expressive Culture: Recent Scholarly Shift

Historically, the embodied dimension of experience and culture has been marginalised; affective response had no place in the growing canons of folklore scholarship. Dundes' 'Text, Texture, Context' (Dundes 1964), while important in breaking the textual focus within the study of verbal arts, was intent on heightening the scholarly respectability of a discipline. He was critical of the view that something can be seen to hold inherent value because 'you know by the feel, by a tingling of your scalp, by an indefinable something inside you when you hear the song sung, or the tale told, or the tune played' (Chase in Dundes 1964), arguing that such value judgements really require the stamp of approval from a professional folklorist. Such a disciplined framework left absolutely no space for a consideration of affective response, and we are left today with a marked paucity of

interdisciplinary vocabulary to address this dimension of experience. This situation is the result of years of working in a multi-yet-compartmentalised context which holds inherited assumptions about the relationship between body and mind. Ultimately, such a trajectory has impoverished much of the extant ethnographic record of the experience of the expressive vernacular arts.

It has been noted that academic writing about the ballad often fails to engage the ballad as 'experience' and that something ineffable is missing in scholarship as regards the emotional, visual or aural *experience* of singing or hearing a ballad; and that intangible yet real experiences have been systematically excluded from conventional scholarship simply because they constitute parts of the world of human life that are too difficult and too excessive to theorise. Such a marginalisation is becoming increasingly untenable and ethnographers are beginning to recover *sensuality* and *corporeality* as a vital part of understanding expressive culture. Deirdre Sklar (1994) discusses how ethnographers are 'coming to their senses.' She advocates 'kinaesthetic empathy' in research approaches, making the case that it is the embodied aesthetic dimension that is most important for such affective potential.

However, some contemporary scholars still believe that the analysis of the text in the traditional sense is the only true empirical foundation to build upon:

> I urge only that we take our mission the task of explaining, not "expressive enactments," not "cultural processes" but *folksong*. To do so in an effective, convincing and collective way we must recenter our studies in the materials that once gave us great strength but that we self-defeatingly abandoned in an obsessive search for new ideas at the expense of seeking truly to understand our subject matter (Renwick 2001: vii; xi–xii in McKean 2003: 8).

It could be argued that to textualise, transcribe or even to record expressive culture in preparation for study advocated by Renwick serves to eliminate from

consideration all the levels of perception and associated experience that are real and *true* in lived experience. Historically, the implications of technical means of recording vernacular culture were that the tools used—print, and later recording devices—actually served to transform the disciplines themselves. The technologies available to us as researchers have fundamentally shaped the way in which we are able to conceptualise our work; the technologies have likewise fundamentally shaped the subject matter itself. This problem is discussed in Brady's *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography* (Brady 1999).

This problem of technology affecting subject matter is certainly true of the field of ballad studies. There are few who dispute that ballads belong firstly to the oral tradition and that printed ballads came at a later stage in cultural evolution. The study of ballads in their collected textual forms is an entirely different pursuit to an understanding of the lived experience of ballads in culture. This is not to say that the work of the early collectors was not invaluable; if scholars had not collected 'items' of folklore in such a fashion, we would have nothing with which to work in the present. In their written form they can be considered to constitute a literary genre of sorts, but it could easily be argued that text-centred literary analysis of folkloric forms fails to address how we are *moved* by expressive arts and at best 'skirts the issue of the culturally divergent pleasures of listening and embodied experience (Bendix 2000). In a wider context, 'a certain dilettantism, or more precisely perhaps a helplessness in the face of very complex phenomena' has been attested to by various European ethnologists (Burckhardt-Seebass 1992:62 in Bendix 2000 42)

Perhaps the reluctance to study the difficult dimensions of cultural experience is lodged in disciplinary separation and specialisation. For example, in

understanding song as a genre of folklore, the temptation to deal with verbal and musical materials as if they were divorced from each other, as well as from the singers' performance of them or indeed the listeners' understandings, is a strong one that reflects disciplinary divergences and the established boundaries of academic fields. This split began in the early days of the disciplinary development. Herder's best known contribution to the study of folklore is the collection of songs—*without* musical notation—and subsequently, text and music went their increasingly separate academic paths. During the period of textualising vernacular practices that Herder helped to initiate, it was always the words and not the musical or gestural medium carrying them that was emphasised. Yet, for the realisation of Romantic ideology—the expression of national sentiment—the fusion of text and music in performance was (and remains) of the utmost importance. But in the consideration of music, traditional musicology has attached itself to 'high culture,' analogous to literary fields, relying on an esoteric system of notation until a breakthrough into ethnomusicological interest became more acceptable in the latter part of the twentieth century. Interdisciplinary rapprochement, until recently at least, has been difficult and sporadic, as anyone not conversant in musicological terms and notation hesitates to participate in the discourse or defers to the authority of someone who is.

The gaps in literature in comprehending expressive culture resulting from textualising practices have been felt in recent years—a fact that is evidenced in the current trends in the literature. A great deal of reflexive ethnographic work has been searching for a way to legitimately include the 'sensing self' in scholarly work, with experience of sound leading the way (Feld 1982; Stoller 1984, 1997; Baumann 1997, 1999). Preceding this 'reflexive turn,' Hyme's 'Ethnography of Speaking' (1962)

rethought in his 'Toward Ethnographies of Communication'(1972) broke through the confines of textual and etic understandings of expressive forms, clearly seeking a fuller, contextually located subject. However, this work focused in on the diversity of speech rules, speech performance and culturally located ideologies of language rather than attending to the affective experience of sound itself.

Bendix's article 'The Pleasures of the Ear: Towards an Ethnography of Listening' in the journal *Cultural Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular Culture* (2000) sketches the implications of the successive exclusion of sentimentality and sensuality from scholarship concerned with folklore. She puts forward the claim that the property of sound is intimately related to the affective powers of expressive forms and therefore deserves attention in its own right (the importance of the study of sound and listening is considered in Chapter Six). Bendix is credited by the editors for 'opening up brand new theoretical terrain.' She calls on scholars to examine both the historical implications and consequences of the tension between listeners' delight and investigators' objectivity, corporeality and textuality in ethnographic disciplines. She too suggests that we take steps towards the study of the senses, their linkages to cognition and their collaboration in providing us with aesthetic pleasure. Pursuing this direction of study will, she claims, out of necessity, 'lead into the kinds of territories and areas of study that *join cognition, experience and culture*' (40, my italics). She concludes that 'nearly every promising point of entry requires cross-disciplinarity' (40).

In studies of musical forms, Feld and Fox's (1994: 43–44, my italics) comprehensive assessment of the analytic dissonances and convergences of

musicology and linguistics arrive at a conclusion that should, in my own view, be the springboard for further inquiry:

> Paying attention to the social immanence of music's *supreme mystery*, the grooving redundancy of elegant structuring that affectively connects the singularity of form to the multiplicity of senses.

This 'mystery' is experienced along an as-yet-to-be-properly-understood spectrum from great individual variety to cultural specificity to human commonality, and lodged in the whole gamut of aesthetically shaped culture. Aesthetic thrills and chills of the present warrant scholarly attention because they are ubiquitous in, and central to, human experience. There are a variety of approaches that grapple with the ineffable, ill-defined, and idiosyncratic nature of aesthetic experience. Some approaches seek to transform the ineffable aspects of these experiences into precise representations, producing systems that are well-defined and testable but may miss the fullness of the experienced phenomenon. Insights are to be found from looking to ethnography, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, aesthetics, history, religion, linguistics, musicology, psychoanalysis, cognitive science (as it has recently emerged), physiology, neuroscience and no doubt numerous other fields which can bring new understandings to human experience.

Research Ground: A Study of 'Presence'

The centrality of Porter's *Genre, Conflict, Presence: Traditional Ballads in a Modernising World* (2009) has already been stressed. In the preface to this work, Rieuwerts describes this as 'a key text in this history of ballad scholarship.' The novel idea of 'presence' attempts to convey the intangible quality of the ballad, or rather, the ballad in performance.

> Traditional ballads impinge on our consciousness: captivating in their imagery, transient, dramatic, of course, but also magical in the way that embodies a sense of "presence" (Porter 2009: 7)

This focus is surely a reflection of the emergent *zeitgeist* described above in scholarship on expressive arts at large.

It has been suggested that the notion of 'presence' is perhaps Porter's way of explaining and defining the intangible nature of what is defined here as the 'ballad experience.' The idea of 'presence' conveys the notion that the performance of traditional ballads and their modern counterparts can only be effective in the context of exchange between audience and singer, in a two-way communicative relationship that cannot be realised through recorded and digital productions or printed ballad texts. Porter is at pains to make clear that he appreciates that in recent decades the rapid advancement of technology has radically affected how we receive cultural forms. For example, it is now possible to have an experience of storytelling or ballad singing visually and aurally almost instantly across continents via the internet. Porter argues that the immediacy of human contact and the sensory presence of the enactment are essential for the psycho-physiological impact of performance in a social setting; and that it is the responsive nature of the genre that makes it real and come alive. Sensory presence is also essential for transmission. This is something that John Niles (1999) also recognises:

> The physical occasions of performance, with their special and powerful intimacies, both create and stir up memories that will not be forgotten. Televisions and movie theatres are not likely to do this readily, whatever else they provide. This is an important distinction and one that the culture industry seeks to hide (61).

The very context of media is active on only one direction. We cannot internalise and reproduce a movie, but we can with a ballad. Memory has been shown to be context

dependent in many cases. To recall a memory, it helps to be in the same situation, or psycho-somatic state.

'Presence' is conceived of by Porter as 'something to be conveyed,' but at the same time it is understood as a quality of performance—a charged atmosphere—that can manifest itself given the right conditions. Porter believes that the development of a theory of presencing can go beyond an outdated performance theory and help to resolve the two modes of enquiry discussed earlier—text and performance based studies—and the inherent problems of such a dichotomy.

Porter's 'Epilogue,' 'Steps to a Theory of Ballad Presence,' offers up the beginnings of a methodology designed for future research. His work undoubtedly serves to ground my own and helps justify this avenue of research in the field of ballad studies. Chapter Four concentrates on unpacking this theory and identifying ways and means to take it forward.

Oral Narrative: The *Maysie*

John Niles' *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature* (1999) puts the Scottish ballad in the wider context of oral narrative, weaving together the study of Anglo-Saxon literature and culture with the author's own engagements in the field with some of the greatest twentieth-century singers in Scotland. Niles' work is valuable in this context in that he places particular emphasis on the somatic nature of oral literature—physical presence and social communication—in the experience of storytelling and stresses the importance of this dimension for the play of the 'magic kingdom' of the imagination. Most importantly, Niles dedicates some time to a

discussion of the *Maysie*, and as yet I have not discovered any other academic work that discusses this folkloric phenomenon.

Niles describes a fieldwork experience with Scottish tradition bearer Lizzie Higgins, Traveller and ballad singer, very similar to my own with Stanley Robertson. Niles describes her performances as 'uncanny' and recounts what was 'an intense and emotionally demanding experience' (52):

> As she sang she seemed to be letting her soul out, transformed by some ineffable means into a unitary sound made up of a fusion of words, rhythm, timbre, tune and vocal ornamentation (51).

In the following passage, he describes the physical effects he felt while witnessing Lizzie perform: 'It takes the form of a sort of chill. There are shivers at the spine, and the small hairs on your body start to rise and move' (51). Like Stanley, Lizzie herself referred to her intense experiences of singing as invoking the *Maysie*, a kind of magic. She derived the word from 'muse' and said the experience has to do with inspiration (53). Niles speculates that the word has hybridised from the verb 'amaze' but decides that the exact etymology does not matter. More important is what the *Maysie* does to both performer and audience:

> If a singer, storyteller, or musician has the power to bring about such a state, then one of the muses is at hand. One is not just *amused*, however; one is also *amazed* and inspired (53).

Niles decides that a performer wishing to produce a lasting effect between an audience and themselves must make an honest effort to summon the *Maysie*. The power of words, he argues, depends on the skill, intent, and level of engagement with experience on the part of the person communicating the work of art. Niles maintains that the best and most creative cooperation that arises between the

Maysie, the performer, and the audience is accomplished through 'wordpower.' According to Niles, wordpower travels through the performer to the audience, in turn investing its members with this power. That is to say, members of an audience may take a poet's language into the body of their own language, where they apply it to shaping the stories of their own lives, perhaps creating something altogether new, though directly related to the original experience. This process of meaning creation is something this thesis seeks to elucidate. Some people might argue that any literature, whether meant for performance or to be read in solitude, can invoke the *Maysie* to some degree. I argue in this thesis that the *Maysie* in the case of the ballad experience is a sonic phenomenon, and has its roots in the embodied sharing of sound.

In my view, Niles' theories are 'wordpower'-heavy. His focus is purely on the oral dimension of balladry, using ballad singing as an example of contemporary *storytelling*. It was never his intention to comment on the role of singing or melody:

> Unless one's interest is primarily musicological, what is the point of isolating songs from oral narrative in general? Do not both songs and 'prose' narratives tell the same kinds of stories? (36).

I disagree with Niles on this point. Ballads partake of both wordpower *and* musical power, beyond words. Finnegan (1977) has shown that it is extremely difficult to define the differences between kinds of song and oral poetry completely, preferring to view them on a continuum. She offers a useful summary of approaches and disparate methodologies outlining their strengths and weaknesses for dealing with what she calls the 'verbal arts' (1997: 25–52).

> The skill and personality of the performer, the nature of the reaction of the audience, the context, the purpose—these are essential aspects of the artistry and meaning of the oral poem (1977: 28).

Other key texts in the field of oral poetry that are worthy of mention are John Miles Foley's *Singer of Tales in Performance* (Foley 1995) and *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Foley 2002) which apply the concept of 'traditional referentiality,' or idiomatic meaning based on reference to an implied tradition, as it informs several different oral or oral-derived traditions. The subtleties and nuances involved in making clear-cut distinctions between song and poetry and the difficulty of talking about 'song' as a genre is explored in detail in Chapter Seven. This thesis seeks to build upon Niles' theory of the *Maysie*, recognising the power of music in this equation, and applying insights from phenomenological and cognitive approaches in an attempts to strive for a more holistic explanation.

Ethnomusicology in the 21st Century

In order to bring musical understandings and explanations to the event of the *Maysie* in the ballad experience, it was crucial to turn to contemporary ideas in the field of ethnomusicology. I was first drawn into the study of ethnomusicology years ago upon reading Blacking's *Music, Culture, and Experience* (Blacking 1973) and his work *How Musical is Man?* (1974). Where Niles (1995) centres narrative at the centre of culture itself, Blacking was deeply committed to the idea that music-making is a fundamental and universal attribute of the human species. He attempted to document the ways in which music-making expresses the human condition, how it transcends social divisions, and how it can be used to improve the quality of human

life. Insights from Niles and Blacking combined to insipre exciting new ideas for my own thinking in the world of narrative and music-making respectively.

Ethnomusicology is generally understood to be the study of music as, or in, culture. As a discipline, it leans heavily towards anthropology; theoretically, it has been closer to anthropology than musicology. Ethnomusicological works have already been referred to here in the context of research into folklore and the expressive arts. It would not be fruitful to document and survey the breadth and diversity of ethnomusicological approaches; rather, works are selected that are directly relevant to this research—those that utilise hermeneutic, phenomenological and cognitive approaches, with an emphasis on the most recent works that look to theories of embodiment in understanding experience of music and most particularly the experience of *song*. Recent work suggests the importance of continuing interdisciplinary engagement to answer the questions of ethnomusicology. 'Conscious engagement with literatures and ideas outside of ethnomusicology allows us to build on, rather than reinvent, foundations for understanding' (Fatone 2010).

Two recent texts which outline contemporary theoretical and methodological approaches respectively are Stone's *Theory for Ethnomusicology* (2007) and Barz and Cooley's now well-known edited second edition on research methods in the discipline, *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* (2008). Stone's guide covers ethnomusicological theory, exploring some of the underpinnings of different approaches and analysing differences and commonalities in these orientations and addressing how ethnomusicologists have used and applied these theories in ethnographic research. *Shadows in the Field* deliberately shifts the

focus of ethnomusicology and of ethnography in general from 'representation' to 'experience.' Ethnomusicological fieldwork has significantly changed since the end of the 20th century. The focus has traditionally centred around analyses and ethnographic representations of musical cultures, rather than on the personal world of understanding and experience. The shift in interest away from music as an object, towards music as culture and then as cultural practice has resulted in reflexive, non-objectivist scholarship.

In relation to the discussion above regarding the recent shift in focus towards the sensuality and corporeality in knowledge and experience, it would be foolish to overlook some of most interesting works in ethnomusicology. Stoller (1984), working with the Songhay of West Africa, learned—through his native teachers' disappointment—of his own inability to hear what they heard, and that 'sound is a dimension of experience in and of itself' (567). A number of ethnomusicologists in turn have in very different ways uncovered connections between sound and music perception—emotions such as grief (Feld 1982), and other aspects of culture such as narrative and healing (Seeger 1986), or have tried to demonstrate that in some cultures, it is hearing, not seeing, that 'constitutes the pivotal sensory channel' (Menezez Bastos 1999). Furthermore, some of the focus on hearing and listening that has become a bigger part of ethnomusicological inquiry has been turned back onto the performers themselves, such as Brinner's (1995) work on Gamelan, which integrates literature on cognition with ethnographic research to develop a complex and holistic model of musical knowledge. Much of this work has, however, been carried out among so-called tribal, often isolated cultures. There is surely a potential to apply these insights to the study of our own culture.

Hermeneutic and Phenomenological Approaches

For some, phenomenology would seem to be an outdated style of philosophy and critical discourse. Increasingly, however, scholars have become more interested in phenomenological approaches that examine and account for how experience informs subjective understanding.[22] Stone's *Let the Inside Be Sweet* (1982) forged the path for phenomenological ethnomusicology, and laid out the key themes in this line of scholarship: the music event as a situated, cultural interaction in which participants actively make meaning. The ethnomusicologist's *Stance: Ideas about Emotion, Style and Meaning for the Study of Expressive Culture* (2009) is a significant new contribution to scholarship in this tradition, providing fresh and interesting approaches for studying elements involved in creative musical practices, such as practice, meaning, affect, value and experience. How we grapple with the meaning of some aspect of expressive culture and bring it into our own experience for interpretation forms the basis of taking a 'stance' in and towards expressive culture. He asks, why does music move us? How do the immediate situation and larger social contexts influence the meanings that people find in stories, rituals, or films? How do people engage with the images and sounds of a performance to make them come alive in sensuous, lived experience? The book reveals dimensions of lived experience that everyone is aware of but that scholars rarely account for.

Berger begins with the chapter, 'What Phenomenology Can Do for the Study of Expressive Culture.' In a phenomenological context, the body is the first access to

[22] Since the 1980s, a number of scholars in ethnomusicology have used ideas from phenomenology. Stone (1982, 1988); Titon (1998, 2008); Rice (1994, 2008); Berger (1997, 1999, 2009); Wolf (2006).

the world. The meanings that people find in music do not depend solely on their musical practices, but also on their experiences from other domains of practice as well—their work and home lives, their social lives, their experiences in families, schools, sites of public debate, education, health, the whole of their existence. In such a way, this method solves any elitist problem with the study of 'native perspective' (the implication that there is only one local view of things, a view that is identical across 'others', different from our own and fully discoverable by the all-knowing ethnographer). Most importantly, a phenomenological understanding of musical experience sees fieldwork as an attempt to partially share experience by placing the researcher on the same plane as the research participant and engaging in a dialogic agenda. In this way, 'truth' is negotiated through dialogue. Titon's analysis of blues music (1995) maintains that knowledge occurs in the dialogue between the researcher and his or her people: 'this is the world, the intersubjective reality, that the fieldworker comes to know; and this is the only world one can truly reconstruct in one's interpretative writings—if one comes to any understanding at all' (Titon 1998: 13). Such a dialectic also helps to remove the distinction of 'native' and 'ethnic' concepts; it goes beyond a difference of categories or a mere exchange of views, and as such results in important descriptions as well as explanations.

Another strand in the phenomenological tradition is hermeneutic phenomenology, which depicts musical interpretation as an open-ended process. Titon (1988) uses Ricouer's work to inform the 'interpretative dialogies' to explore the process by which people interpret music and verbal art and make them integral to their lives. Rice's *May it Fill Your Soul* (1994) draws more heavily on Gadamer for its portrayal of music making in Bulgaria and its broader reflections on musical

understanding. Both Titon and Rice discuss the relevance of hermeneutics for ethnomusicology in their chapters in *Shadows in the Field* (Barz &Cooley 2008). The philosophical framework for Ó Laoire's study *On a Rock in the Middle of the Ocean* (2005), mentioned above, was influenced by Gadamer and Ricoeur, the developers of modern phenomenological hermeneutics. This work opened the door to a world of possibilities for my own; it was the first context in which I realised how a phenomenological hermeneutics adapted for the study of ethnomusicology can bring a whole new dimension to the field of study. If the hermeneutic philosophers are correct, experience involves the history of the individual's encounter with the world of symbols in which he or she finds themselves, and any effort to understand the experience of ballads must bring both time and the individual to the centre of the enquiry (Ricouer 1981). Ó Laoire looks to the embodied *event* of performance and the meanings created, taking as his subject the small Gaelic-speaking community of Tory Island off the Donegal coast of Ireland. His thesis tries to answer the deceptively simple question of *why people sing*. He focuses on aspects of song transmission and performance, showing how early exposure to musical culture leads certain individuals to be singled out and given special encouragement to express themselves. He also presents a meticulous exposition of the links between music, text, and performance. In a special study of one song, Ó Laoire shows how the song itself emerges as a mediator of dilemmas and tensions in island life. Comparisons are drawn to support his argument that the interpretation of songs reveals particular 'worlds' of meaning, and that is a widespread human activity found in similar configurations at both global and local levels.

Rice's ethnography *May it Fill Your Soul: Experiencing Bulgarian Music* (1994) proved invaluable because of the philosophical underpinnings and approach to fieldwork methods. Rice's final chapter entitled 'Truth and Music' reflects on his own experience and refers back to the writings of Gadamer. Rice offers up an article 'Toward a Mediation of Field Methods and Field Experience in Ethnomusicology'(1997) where he mediates between dialectical concerns. He explores explanations of music-making based on method (epistemological) versus understanding based on experience (ontological), between music 'in its own terms' and music *as* culture, and between insider and outsider positions. He puts forward the idea that 'instead of bracketing experience while focussing on experiment as our methods require—or glorifying experience while abandoning method—Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics suggests bringing experiment within the framework created by experience' (61).

Both Ó Laoire and Rice adopt a particular ontological stance which prioritises ways of being over ways of knowing; a stance that is, in my view, crucial to a truer understanding of the processes of meaning making in the experience of expressive forms. As Ó Laoire (2005: xiii) makes clear, 'such a position foregrounds our being in the world and contends that our conception of reality is always conditioned by our embodied existence.' The application of these ideas to the study of the ballad experience will be explored fully in the next chapter.

Cognitive Ethnomusicology

Porter (2009), Bendix (2004), and others discussed above have pointed out that studies into the mystery of cultural experience must include the cognitive as

well as affective dimensions, and consequently will necessarily lead to areas of study that join cognition, experience and culture. Cognitive science in its widest sense is an emerging discipline that brings together work in philosophy, linguistics, psychology and neuroscience.

Most research in music perception and cognition has focused on a very narrow band of human musical phenomena, namely the tonal concert music of the pre-20th-century Western Europe, as filtered through contemporary European-derived performance practices. Recent research on music that embodies a cognitive perspective has coalesced around a broader set of issues. Cross' 'Music Analysis and Music Perception' (Cross 1998) presents a survey of techinques and approaches, as does Purwin and Hardoon's 'Trends and Perspectives in Music Cognition Research and Technology' (Purwins and Hardoon 2009). Jourdain's *Music, the Brain, and Ecstasy: How Music Captures Our Imagination* (1997) explores the intimate connections humans form with their favourite types of music and the physical and mental reactions music produces in us.

Until recently, cognitive musicological studies have focused on musical perception within Western music and have been largely ethnocentric in nature. A special issue of the *Journal of New Music Research* presents a selection of the different approaches and methodologies for the cognitive study of music. Moisala's article 'Cognitive Study of Music as Culture — Basic Premises for "Cognitive Ethnomusicology' (1995) relates ethnomusicological ideas to the mainstream of cognitive music research. As early as 1987, Kippen published an article 'An Ethnomusicological Approach to the Analysis of Musical Cognition' in the journal *Music Perception*. The question of cognitive ethnomusicology is how to connect

current cognitive approaches with the study of music as culture: that is, musical practice as social process. It consists, so far, of very distinct studies applying various adopted theories and methods, borrowed from the mutually informative fields of philosophy and cognitive science at large.

The reason why insights from experimental studies in cognitive science have not until recently been integrated into ethnographical studies in music is because of the perceived lack of attention paid to the historical and cultural contexts that might frame central research questions. Ethnomusicology has more often than not shunned any claims to science, reckoning itself a thoroughly humanistic endeavour beyond the reach of empirical study, 'firmly committed to the importance of human meanings, human evaluations and human motivations' (Becker 2004: 7). Conversely, music cognition as practised by many theorists is derived from models in which music comes to be symbolically represented in the brain and then subjected to formal processes. Tolbert's exploratory article, 'Theories of Meaning and Music Cognition: An Ethnomusicological Approach' (1992) raises the central issue of reductionism in cognitive approaches to musical meaning:

> Can one determine anything about musical meaning by reducing musical experience to an explanation of perceptual and cognitive processes? From the point of view of most ethnomusicologists, the nature of musical meaning is considered to be inappropriate by empirical studies especially in light of ethnomusicological work that demonstrates the close relationship of musical meaning to its cultural and historical context (7).

In traditional cognitive science, the emphasis on things 'mental' has been at the expense of the physical, and the disproportionate attention paid to 'the rational' has often occurred in opposition to the emotional and the intuitive. In my view, many studies in cognitive musicology exclude the body and focus on generic musical

processes. Such an approach neglects what it is to have a musical experience. Judith Becker articulates this point in her theoretical methodology for *Deep Listeners* (2004), a work that will be further discussed towards the end of this review:

> We experience music with our skins, with our pulse rates, and with our body temperature. To subscribe to a theory of musical cognition which cannot deal with the embodiment of music, of the involvement of the senses, the visceral system, and the emotions is to maintain a Cartesian approach of mind/body dualism' (6).

Metaphor and Embodied Thought

Early work in cognitive science rarely, if ever, engaged with the issue of 'meaning.'[23] The general assumption was that thought amounted to the mechanical manipulation of abstract symbols, and that the mind was an abstract machine, manipulating symbols by algorithmic computation in the way a computer does. All meaning arose via correspondences between symbols (words, mental representations) and things in the external world; these symbols formed internal representations of external reality, independent of any limitations of the human body. The mind was seen as a mirror of nature, and human thought as abstract and disembodied; human bodies and their environments were seen to be incidental to the nature of meaningful concepts or reason. This view does not take into consideration any awareness of the relationship between self and the world, not to mention creativity, physical coordination, or even emotion.

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[23] Turner (1994: 91–91) writes of this perspective,

> Meaning is conceived…as essentially anchored in states of affairs in objective reality, with the consequence that the meaning of an utterance must be the reality to which is refers. This leaves the human person out of the loop altogether: A semantic express train shoots straight from…symbols to an objective reality without passing through the human brain.

Recent conceptual developments in cognitive science have moved towards the inclusion of the body in our understanding of the mind, and an appreciation of the role of culture and embodiment (Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991). In particular, cognitive scientists have begun to infer connections between the structure of mental processes and physical embodiment (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). The basis of much of this work rests on the notion that metaphoric thinking (i.e thinking of one thing in terms of another) permeates both conscious and unconscious thought to an extent previously unrecognised. In my view, the appeal for making a place for the body in theories for understanding expressive arts is absolutely necessary if we are to reconcile theoretical accounts with the range and affective power of expression. The importance of the body in the neuroscience of consciousness has also recently come to light (Edelman 1992; Damasio 1999). Such an embodied perspective is even claimed to unite efforts in these and other related fields into what is sometimes called 'second generation cognitive science' (Gallese and Lakoff 2005). The result has been a version of cognitive science that fits much better with the interest of the humanities, a version that can not only encompass meaning but that also more easily acknowledges the way cultural context and historical moment shape human knowledge.

The role that the body plays in shaping thought has influenced the field of cognitive linguistics through a contemporary theory of metaphor (Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987). A notion closely associated with the contemporary theory of metaphor that would prove important for music scholars was Johnson's theory of 'image schemata' (1987), which will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter. This theory has particularly influenced music scholars because it provides a

theoretical basis for metaphorical descriptions of music grounded in embodied experience.

There is ample evidence in ethnomusicological literature that human constructs of music point to the existence of general patterns of thought specific for music. Feld's research (1981) into the musical traditions of the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea is the earliest example of the approach using metaphor as a basis for musical thought. Drawing on the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Feld argued that the metaphorical descriptions used by the Kaluli were a reflection of key aspects of their everyday experience. Feld's work pointed toward a new approach to metaphor and music that was based on two important assumptions: the first was that metaphor was not simply a literary device but was instead a basic structure of understanding; the second was that music constituted a conceptual domain that was, in some measure, independent of language. Such studies are valuable not for their subject matter but for their applied theoretical approaches: they suggest not only ways to study how metaphor structures our understanding of music, but also ways to investigate how metaphorical processes operate in non-linguistic domains.

An issue of the journal *Theory and Practice* (1997–1998) was given over to the connections between music theory and embodied knowledge. Saslaw (1997) explores Johnson's theory of body-derived image schemata in theories of conceptualising Western classical music and seeks to prove that embodied experience is central in the conceptualisation of music. For example, our understanding of the notion of tension and release in music is grounded in repeated patterns of bodily experience. Applying the image associated with these sensations in the body to music allows us to describe the relatively abstract and ephemeral

domain of sound in terms of concrete physical experiences. Johnson and Larson's essay 'Something in the Way She Moves'—Metaphors of Musical Motion' (2003) provides an example of how an approach based on embodied cognition can be integrated with a theory of musical meaning. Fatone's article on bagpiping (2010) in the Society for Ethnomusicology's journal, draws on Larson and Johnson's ideas in her examination of non-physical to physical cross modal transfer and the role that sounds and rhythm play in the production of musical meaning.

Another important and prominent work is Lawrence Zbikowski's *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis* (2007), which takes as its starting point the idea that that meaning is grounded in embodied experience. The broad-based approach advocated by Zbikowski adopts a generalised view of metaphor as a kind of cross-domain mapping and proposes that music represents a conceptual domain that can be drawn into such mappings. He utilises and applies Fauconnier and Turner's theory of 'conceptual blending' (2002) to extend Johnson's original insights regarding image schemata, proposing that language and music may simply offer different resources for structuring thought: that language excels at capturing objects, events and relations that hold between them, but is less good at representing dynamic processes (this idea will be further discussed in Chapter Seven). Zbikowski is not an ethnomusicologist (his preliminary work on the idea of conceptual blends was focussed on the possibilities of meaning construction in nineteenth century art songs) but his work offers important insights for musicologists as well as for ethnomusicologists, and presents a significant step in the exploration of connections between the study of cognition and the study of art.

Zbikowki's theories of 'song' and the text-music relation have proved invaluable to explaining the ballad experience. This theory will be developed in Chapter Seven.

Cognition as Embodied Action

One of the central problems for a cognitive ethnomusicology, as I have suggested, is the lack of attention paid to the historical and cultural contexts. Recent developments in the field of cognitive science have moved towards the idea that cognition is an activity that is not only structured by the body but also by its situatedness in its environment—that is, as embodied action. In contrast to cognitivist theories, embodied accounts of cognition construe mind as an actively emergent form, structured by and never wholly separable from the material facts of bodily experience. Bowman's article 'Cognition and the Body: Perspectives from Music Education' in Bresler's *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds: Towards Embodied Teaching and Learning* (2004) appeals to theories of cognition as embodied action and the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty's theories of the body and phenomenology. The worldview and philosophical assumptions inherent in this text reflect the deeper ideas underpinning the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Three. Bowman (2010) also edited a collection of articles in the journal *Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education* exploring the idea of Shusterman's philosophy of a 'somaesthetics' for music, an idea that will be developed in Chapter Four.

An account of how musical knowledge is embodied and situated is presented by Ole Kühl (2007) in his work *Musical Semantics.* As he sees it, cognitive musicology should be concerned with describing how human cognitive capacities are specified for music, how the structure of music reflects and shapes those capacities, and with

giving an account of the role of music within human cultures. The book is in two parts: the first part considers the biological foundations of music and their cognitive manifestations in order to establish a groundwork for speaking of music in generic, cross-cultural terms. The second part develops the semantic aspect of music as an embodied, emotively grounded and cognitively structured expression of human experience. His approach is driven by how music is shaped by and shapes human cultural interactions, and throws open the entire range of human musical expression for investigation. He explores the importance of sharing time, in which we also share feelings, gestures and narratives. This is the *semantic* aspect of music: how can something like an auditory stream of structured sound evoke such a strong reaction in the listener? Kühl also takes into consideration the relationship between music and emotion, basing his perspective on researchers such as Damasio (1999; 2003) and using such a perspective to further evidence his claim for the embodied aspect of musical meaning. He also offers another perspective on how music is used to *create* meaning. Of course, the changes evoked by music transform our internal emotional landscape—transform our *consciousness*—which then conditions our subsequent experience. Kühl proposes that this process provides a way of bringing emotion into an account of musical meaning that includes embodied experience and an awareness of that embodied experience through cognitive processes (130–131). Kühl's main point is that a thorough account of musical meaning requires an integrative approach, which is evident from the variety of sources he has drawn upon to create his model. This is a perfectly reasonable way to organise an argument—after all, the resources that cognitive science has to offer the humanities can prompt as many

questions as they might resolve. His ideas will be extended, related and applied to the ballad experience in Chapter Eight.

Bridging the Gap

Contemporary literature on vernacular expressive arts points to the idea that pursuing the affective dimensions of the experience of expressive art necessarily joins cognition, experience and culture. In anthropologist Bloch's (1998) terms, this direction will force scholars to overcome the rift that has developed between those who, in the wake of the 'writing culture movement' (1986) see anthropology above all as a 'literary enterprise [and] criticise the 'objectivist' and scientific pretensions of the field,' and those who are 'interested in cognition [and] who are often impatient with the lack of scientific rigor in traditional ethnographic writing' (40). He argues that an interest and understanding of cognitive science does not constitute a relapse into 'naive, dubious and politically devastating reductionism,' but contributes to an *essential* aim of ethnography:

> If we are to probe the contours of sensory perception and reception and seek to understand the transitions between the individual, cultural and transcultural dimensions, as I am urging here, then research methods will be needed that are capable of grasping "the most profound type of knowledge [which] is not spoken of at all" and thus inaccessible to ethnographic observation or interview (46).

Rice (1994), previously referred to, believes that at the heart of the problem in understanding musical experience lies a gap between the descriptive, scientific, language encoded methods used to study music, and the vivid, deeply moving, often unarticulated inner experiences we have performing or listening to it. .

Finally in this review, I wish to draw attention to an excellent piece of work, Judith Becker's *Deep Listeners: Emotion Music and Trancing* (2004). Becker attempts to get at the 'extra-musical' qualities of the experience of 'trancing' in music—altered states of consciousness—in various traditions around the world. She claims that people who experience deep emotions when listening to music are akin to those who trance within the context of religious rituals, viewing certain arcane cultural rituals as being in the mainstream of spiritual development and arguing that trance-like states may relate to the basic fabric of emotions and consciousness. Her work encompasses an impressive body of literature on the subject, bridging disciplines in an entirely new way, skilfully synthesising disparate kinds of studies on musical experience. My approach differs to Becker in that she bridges traditional study with cognitive neuro-scientific theories of emotion in trancing, where I use theories of embodiment as a vehicle to introduce ideas about cognitive mapping and processes of meaning creation. Her methodology aims at bridging science and musical cognition theories together with the traditional commitment to human meanings, human evaluations and human motivation in the 'intellectual lineage of history, philosophy, aesthetics and cultural anthropology'(7). She writes,

> I believe that it is not necessary to make a scientific description stand in opposition to humanistic or religious explanations of what it means to be human' (9).

Panksepp, a respected neuroscientist, calls this 'a fascinating thesis and a timely synthesis.' That it is viewed highly in both scientific and cultural contexts makes it an example of a successful interdisciplinary piece of research; one that tackles head on the 'hard' questions of the ineffable and the very parts of the world of human experience that are all too often considered too difficult and too problematic to

theorise. In the case of the ballad singing experience, some other means is needed to explain the intangible and at times powerful phenomenon of 'presence.'

Conclusion

It is something of a synchronistic quirk in research that any attempt to bring about a paradigmatic shift in a field of study is often not achieved in isolation. Rather than being entirely new, it would seem that the research aims of this thesis reflect something of an emergent zeitgeist. Across literature in the humanities at large, there has been a shift in focus from 'representation' towards 'experience' and an emphasis on stressing 'process' as opposed to 'product.' Rather than concentrate on cultural objects, questions have turned to the role and experience of the subject in the creation of meaning. How we meet expressive culture and make sense of it are obviously important to the work we do as scholars of culture. A central emergent theme is the role of embodiment, emphasised in the recent shift in scholarship to consider corporeality and sensual experience that fosters aesthetic comprehension. The importance of embodiment theory is also central to new developments in cognitive science, which has a direct bearing on cultural enquiries that look to these insights for inspiration and direction. A survey of literature highlights the importance of continuing interdisciplinary engagement to answer the questions of ethnomusicology—of the role of music in culture—and that an interdisciplinary approach adds value to its subject. Pursuing this direction of study—opening up brand new theoretical terrain—out of necessity leads into areas of study that join cognition, experience and culture, with every point of entry requiring cross-

disciplinarity. The folklorist Köstlin (1997) writes that the passion for the whole can produce pain, but keeps alive premonitions of how life could be:

> It could be the attempt to keep the whole in view, not to extinguish the flame, which makes the field of *Volkskunde* attractive. It is a field trying to view all at once what in life can no longer be controlled, because life, at least, is interdisciplinary (1997).

CHAPTER THREE 3

Theory and Methodology:
Ontological Understandings and Methodological Explanations

Rice (2008: 42–61) argues that 'there is a need in contemporary ethnomusicological research for a mediation between the epistemological, methodological work of explanation…with the ontological understandings of human musical experience.' For this reason, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first will outline the philosophical worldview informing the development of ideas, laying the foundations for *understanding* the ballad experience. We will explore the phenomenological roots of embodied cognition and show how a theory of enaction based in hermeneutics informs 'radical reflection' in fieldwork practice. Part two introduces the fundamentals for the methodical process chosen for *explanation.* Ideas from contemporary theories of metaphor and embodied thought will be introduced with a view to orienting the reader to the very basics of the theories, before developing their application to the ballad experience on several levels in the following chapters.

Horizon of Enquiry

For continuity, it is useful here to reiterate the primary research questions: What elements coalesce to create a powerful 'ballad experience'? How is meaning created in the context of the ephemeral and intangible nature of musical performance? How do we understand the *Maysie*? In tackling the research questions, we need to find a grounded way of talking about the ballad experience as a 'total

somatic experience'—one that affects both body and mind; to find a way of talking about the intangible nature of the ballad experience in a secular humanistic framework; and lastly to find a way to talk about an experience that is paradoxically both highly individual and simultaneously *always* a shared experience.

According to hermeneutic theory, the self-conscious task of bringing new understandings forward involves the hermeneutic circle, or arc of understanding. Gadamer (2004: 302, my italics) proposes that understanding is an 'act of participation' in a tradition in which we have our own subjective 'horizon of understanding':

> A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, whether it is near or far, great or small. Similarly, working out the hermeneutical situation means *acquiring the right horizon of enquiry* for the questions evoked by the encounter with the tradition.

Part of the difficulty in developing a research design, then, is acquiring the right horizon of enquiry. The process of understanding can be understood as a spiralling progression in which we examine our own understandings from within our own historical traditions, in order to identify our prejudices. I have taken my cue from research and practice in the post-modern world where the intermingling of traditions and a wide range of critiques offers a sense of exploration, as well as the possibility of expansion and development of ideas and theories. My own intellectual awareness, personal values and reflection are inescapably woven into this research. Being part of a department that specialises in traditional culture, folklore and ethnology has no doubt influenced my interest and research perspective, and my training in literary theory has given me an awareness of the complexities of working with language and meaning. The influence of my particular interest in the

philosophy of mindfulness, embodiment and truth became clearer as the theoretical ideas evolved.

Following Porter's (2009) direction of ballad study that moves 'away from conventional paths to awareness of ballads as a living voice, a dramatic, transforming "presence,"' this work is set within the wider interpretative framework of hermeneutic phenomenology, where truth and meaning are central concerns. In order to reinstate the place of the ballad in scholarship as a dynamic and living cultural phenomenon, a paradigmatic shift towards embodiment is embraced. Embodiment is identified at two levels: the phenomenological and the cognitive unconscious. At the first level, we are conscious of our feelings and actions; at the second level, the body informs our processes of abstract thought and reasoning. Together, inescapably, these two levels of enquiry encompass conflicting claims. Some scholars argue that the paradigm of embodiment allows us to 'transcend' different methodologies (Csordas 1990: 5). I seek not to transcend but rather to mediate *between*: a double-level theoretical methodology can make attempts to faithfully describe and accept contradictions and ambiguities rather than aiming to explain or resolve them. The methodological principles that drive this thesis instantiate a tension that does not weaken but rather gives power to articulating the very paradox of experience.

PART ONE:
Ontological Understandings

Worldview and Philosophical Assumptions

It has been noted that at the heart of the problem of writing about experience lies a gap between the objective, descriptive, scientific, language encoded methods used to study music, and the vivid, deeply moving, often unarticulated inner experiences we actually experience through performing or listening (Rice 1994).

> The truth that music embodies and symbolically represents is not a propositional logical truth, verifiable by the niceties of epistemological reflection and explanation, but an existential, ontological truth that *sensation, memory and imagination coalesce into a memorable experience* (Rice 1994: 305, my italics).

The questions asked in this research attend to the 'how' and 'why' of the ballad experience. As such, they resist representation, presenting a challenge to objectivist epistemology. This is because within an objectivist view of the world, there is no way to describe experience as a first-person event. Objectivism is the modern-era science paradigm that conceives of human culture as wholly objectively observable, described by philosopher Bernstein (2008) as inhering in the basic conviction that there is, or must be, a permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, and reality. According to this view, reality exists as an absolute, and there exists a pre-given world that exists 'out there' and is internally recovered in the form of representation.

In a modern scholarly context, the antagonism between objectivity and subjectivity has been undermined by philosophical and hermeneutic

phenomenology, as developed in a stream of thought from Heidegger to Gadamer and Ricouer. Hermeneutic philosophy argues that there can be no objective position to view the world because we are 'thrown' into a world that gives us the symbols through which we come to understand that world. Because we use language to construct theory and represent data, we necessarily employ words to stand for or represent the musical performance we seek to understand. It is important to recognise our limitations and appreciate that any attempt at explanation will be mediated through language.

Phenomenology begins with the assumption that we are conscious beings and that everything we know is something that we know only in and through experience. The central research concern is with the processual and constantly evolving multiple meanings that emanate and are created from social interaction over time. It attempts to get at and describe lived experience; its focus is our consciousness as it encounters the world, and of cultural objects as perceived by consciousness. Phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when it becomes interpretive rather than purely descriptive. Gadamer's belief is that the scientific 'facts' of lived experience are always already meaningfully, or hermeneutically, experienced: they need to be captured in language, which is inevitably an interpretive process. Examining the ballad experience, then, requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience and realities; and a hermeneutic ability to make interpretative sense of the phenomena of those constructed realities.

Contemporary hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on meaning that arises from the interpretive interaction between historically produced 'texts' and the interpreter. Ricouer (1981) explores the possibility of considering 'human action as

text,' maintaining that the framework of the human sciences is ultimately not very different from the analysis of written texts; and despite the distinctions that exist between written texts and socially enacted behaviour, in a human context, they are both symbolic activities.

In phenomenology, the concept of meaning is considered to be 'emergent': that is, it cannot be predicted but changes course as particular interactions coalesce. In the study of the ballad experience, where 'sensation, memory and imagination coalesce into a memorable experience' (Rice 1994: 306) what is interesting is the emergent meaning created. Hermeneutic phenomenology must be the primary route to understanding, and thus forms the philosophical backbone to this work. As it will be shown, many of the primary hermeneutic and phenomenological ideas lend themselves to interpretation from the viewpoint of cognitive science; specifically the ideas of embodied cognition, which locate cognition as interaction with a world that is continually shaped by its environment. Contemporary theories of embodied cognition have their roots in phenomenological thought, and as we move forward towards new understanding, these disciplines can be seen as mutually informative.

Embodied Philosophy: Phenomenological Roots

The idea of incorporating complex models based in phenomenology is not welcomed by those who default to traditional, objectivist models. In seeking to refute objectivism, embodied philosophy maintains that reality is not pre-given, but rather that human cognition and consciousness can only be understood in terms of the structures in which they arise—namely the body (understood both as a biological system and as personally, phenomenologically experienced) and the physical world

with which the body interacts. According to this worldview, consciousness, world, and the human body as a perceiving thing are intricately intertwined and mutually engaged:

> The world is inseparable from the subject, but from a subject which is nothing but a project of the world, and the subject is inseparable from the world, but from a world which the subject itself projects (Varela et al. 1991: 7)

This worldview, in which the human individual and his or her surrounding environment are regarded as intertwined, has its roots in phenomenological thought. Re-conceptualising consciousness as constituted through action and interaction with a 'world' owes much to the works of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Heidegger's rethinking of philosophy was an attempt to step away from ontotheological explanations and the 'metaphysics of presence.' Such a conception of 'presence' refers to presence as a 'now' and also a presence as eternal, always present, as one might associate with God or the 'eternal' of laws of science. The metaphysics of presence, in my view, is arguably the central mistake of Western philosophy since Plato and especially of Descartes, whose *cogito* severed mind from body. From the standpoint of existential phenomenology, Heidegger's rethinking of ontology proposed that our 'being' presents itself as a 'being-in-the-world' (the term 'being-in-the-word' seeks to emphasise the relationship between self and world as a unitary whole). Heidegger's central insight was that perception is dependent on the properties of the perceiver and their physical interaction with a world, that perception and action are fundamentally inseparable and that together they are constitutive of a 'world.' In this sense, phenomenology rests upon the radical conviction that meaning is neither in the mind alone, nor in the world alone, but in

the 'intentional'[24] relationship between the two. Hermeneutics holds this same view. Gadamer makes clear that we do not miraculously stand outside the relationship between language and world: we stand within a common space of intelligibility and meaning, a common intelligible space that penetrates the world, our experience, and our languages (Dorstal 2002: 78).

Finite Provinces of Meaning: Multiple Realities

The interpretative framework of phenomenology supports the ontological perspective of the belief in the existence of not just one reality, but of multiple realities that are constructed and continually modified by each individual. The idea of the *lebenswelt* or 'lifeworld' is central to phenomenological interpretation (Husserl [1936] 1970). The phenomenological experience of 'being-in-the-world' is an extension of the idea of the 'lifeworld.' Everyday lifeworld is the world of daily life—the world which existed before our birth, experienced and interpreted by others, given to our own experience and interpretation. All interpretation of this world is therefore based upon a stock of previous experiences of it. This allows for a plurality of attitudes, which again are possible experiential relations that all human beings can stand in with respect to the world, actualised by particular circumstances.

The social phenomenologist Alfred Schütz (1945) contends that our 'realities' are nothing other than 'finite provinces of meaning' insofar as it is our experience that determines what is to be taken as 'real' and in what sense. In his essay 'On Multiple Realities' he claims that we experience many realities: everyday reality, dream reality, musical reality, workaday reality, erotic reality, reality of writing,

[24] 'Intentionality,' in phenomenological discourse, refers to the notion that consciousness is always the consciousness *of* something.

reality of relationships, reality of mystical experience. Each of these shares a specific cognitive style and is internally coherent. It is obviously possible to move from one province to another in an instant, because provinces are not permanent ontological structures but merely the results of diverse tensions in the same consciousness. We can live simultaneously in various realms of reality, or even on different layers of the same province. It will later be argued that the 'ballad world' constitutes a particular *lebenswelt*, which we actively construct.

In Schütz's view, our lifeworld is structurally and radically connected to *time*; and time is a constitutive part of meaning. Accordingly, our lifeworld divides itself into the dimensions of time, space, the social world and various reality spheres which form the boundaries that the self has to understand. Thus, in Schütz's view, the private and the public are not ontologically discrete domains, but simply terms that capture two experienced extremes. This implies that, on one hand, that this world is not private but common to all of us; on the other hand it implies that within this world there must exist others. Lived experience, then, is always and necessarily co-present. We can directly assure ourselves only of the existence of the other's body but not of their consciousness. We can, however, apprehend the other's lived experience at the same time as we are going through our own experience. In this sense, it is *time structure* that performs a decisive role in the basic process of understanding the other.

Paradigm of Embodiment

For the last two decades, social theorists have grown increasingly interested in the *body*. Theories of embodiment begin from the methodological assumption that

the body is not an object to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the subject *of* culture. According to Thomas Csordas (1994: 269), bodily experience makes up the 'existential ground of culture.' It is important, however, to distinguish between 'body' and 'embodiment':

> If embodiment is an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience, then studies under the rubric of embodiment are not 'about' the body per se. Instead they are about culture and experience insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily 'being-in-the-world' (Csordas 1999: 143).

This to say that this thesis is about culture and the ballad experience as understood as a finite province of bodily being-in-the-world, an idea that is fundamentally grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology. It is also important to make clear, as Becker (2004: 8) explains, that the term 'embodiment' is understood in different senses in various disciplines, none of which can be separated cleanly from others. She cites three major formulations:

1. The body as a physical structure in which emotion and cognition happen
2. The body as the site of first person, unique inner life
3. The body as involved with other bodies in the phenomenal world, that is, as being-in-the-world

It is arguable that each of the three can provide special insights into our aesthetic experience. The first formulation above is found in mainstream studies of cognition and neuroscience and looks to brain structures. The second is the realm of the inner life—the traditional domain of the arts and humanities—which was taken up by phenomenology in an attempt to bring scientific rigour to its study. The third sense is the least reinforced in the arts and in the intellectual tradition in which we work: self and world and self and other are intertwined in a unitary whole (Becker 2004: 8–9). The term 'embodiment' in its usage in the context of this thesis includes a

whole array of factors that are not merely peripheral but that incorporate culture, history, and personal experience. It refers to all three of the above formulations, but mostly concentrates on the latter two.

When the term 'body' is used I do not intend to perpetuate the Cartesian dichotomy but rather to imply the notion of the 'bodymind' understood as a totality. That such a perspective is necessary for furthering understanding has become increasingly obvious from recent work in cognitive science and mutually informative studies in the theory of mind, which suggest that conceiving of the notion of mind divorced from body is not only indefensible, but that the very division between mind and body has become so obscured as to become meaningless. Varela et al. (1991) claim that our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge. The French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty made this central to his philosophy in *Phenomenology of Perception* ([1945] 2002: 169):

> The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of new significance...Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world.

Questioning the assumption of a pre-given world might seem absurd, but there is accumulating evidence to the contrary. The dilemma in freely accepting that there is no pre-given world has its roots in the Cartesian anxiety and one of the more entrenched assumptions of our scientific heritage: that the world is independent of the knower. If we are forced to admit that cognition cannot be properly understood without common sense, and that common sense is none other than our bodily and social history, then the inevitable conclusion is that knower and known—mind and

worlds—stand in relation to each other through dependent co-origination. Instead of an objective independent world, we *enact* a world that is inseparable from the structure embodied by the cognitive system.

Embodied Cognition

We all have a constant phenomenological experience that reinforces the illusion of a disembodied mind. Universal embodied experiences give rise to the metaphors of the subject and the self which produce in our cognitive unconscious a concept of a subject as an independent entity, which is in no way dependent on the body for its existence. These metaphors express a common phenomenological experience we all have: in virtually all of our acts of perception, the bodily organs of perception (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin) are not what we are attending to. For example, when we look at a view, we are not normally attending to our eyes, much less to the visual system of our brains. The fact that what we attend to is rarely what we perceive with gives the illusion that mental acts occur independently of the unnoticed body. Because this experience is universal, the idea has risen spontaneously around the world. Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 563) maintain that 'anything that both thinks and is free-floating is a myth. It cannot exist.' The concept of a mind *separate* from the body can instead be understood as a metaphorical concept (561).

Cognition is generally understood today as a complex social phenomenon, distributed among mind, body, activity and culturally organised settings, including other actors (Lave 1988: 1). Varela et al. (1991) construe mind as an actively emergent form, structured by and never wholly separable from the material facts of bodily

experience. Sensory processes (perception) and motor processes (action), having evolved together, are seen therefore as fundamentally inseparable, mutually informative, and structured so as to ground our conceptual systems (1991: 173).

> To the extent that these neural pathways and cognitive schemata arise from a body's interaction with an experience-shaping environment, mind extends beyond the physical body into the social and cultural environments that exert major influence upon the body and shape all human experience. Thus, both body and culture are implicated in and constitutive of mind. The body is minded, the mind is embodied, and both body and mind are culturally mediated (Bowman 2004: 36–37).

According to this model, mind and body are a whole and the perceptions and actions of the individuals are entwined with their cognitive construction of the world, dependent upon experiences based in having a body with sensory-motor capacities which are embedded in an encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context.

> Cognition is not the representation of a pre-given world by a pre-given mind but is rather an *enactment of a world* and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being-in-the-world performs (Varela et al. 1991: 9, my italics).

Relating ideas of embodied cognition to the study of cultural forms, Varela et al. (1991: 178–179, my italics) ask,

> Where is the locus of cultural knowledge such as folktales…? Is it in the mind of the individual? Great leverage for anthropological theory might be obtained by considering the knowledge to be found in the interface between mind, society and culture rather than in one or in all of them. The knowledge does not pre-exist in any one place or form but it is *enacted in particular situations*—when a folktale is told.

A possible and fruitful extension of this view is not just to the field of anthropology but also to the field of ethnomusicology, and from there directly to the study of the

'ballad experience.' Transferred to the immediate context of this thesis, we can consider meaning be to found in the interface between mind and culture, *enacted* in the particular event of ballad singing.

Post-Phenomenology: Ontology of the Singular Plural

Following new paradigms in theories of embodiment, Nancy (2000) reformulates early phenomenological ideas, starting with Heidegger's notion of being-in-the world. Nancy's fundamental argument is that being is always 'being-*with*,' that 'I' is not prior to 'we,' and that there is no existence without co-existence. Heidegger's order of ontological exposition is reversed, the 'with' placed at the heart of being: 'existence is *with*: otherwise nothing exists' (2000: 4, original emphasis). Nancy's *grande idée*[25] is that individuals are in no way fundamentally separated from one another. We always already exist in relations with one another; there is no singular self that pre-exists our relations with others. In Nancy's view, this is the 'minimal ontological premise' (27). As such, being-*there* is already always a necessary being-*with* because there is no isolated given 'I' without others. His ontology is a 'singular-plural co-existence.' This places the tension between self and world at the heart of being.[26]

> It is, each time, the punctuality of a 'with' that establishes a certain origin of meaning and connects it to an infinity of other possible origins. Therefore, it is,

[25] Langer's (1957) notion of *grande idée* is that certain ideas that burst upon the intellectual landscape with an extraordinary force. Promising to resolve many fundamental problems at once, these ideas become the conceptual centre point around which a comprehensive system of analysis can be built (Geertz 1973: 3).

[26] Nancy's philosophical achievement is to remind us of our singular-plural existence in the light of recent postmodern confusion about the fragmentation of the self. Watkin (2009) explores the work of Nancy in relation to Merleau-Ponty and Ricouer, showing how a phenomenological tradition much wider and richer than Heideggerean thought alone can take account of Derrida's critique of ontology and yet still hold a commitment to the ontological.

> one and the same time...the two together. The individual is an intersection of singularities, the discrete exposition of their simultaneity, an exposition that is both discrete and transitory (Nancy 2000: 85).

Moreover, in Nancy's ontology, nothing pre-exists, 'only what exists exists' (28–29). This suggests a turning away from an understanding that art-forms such as song hold some kind of transcendent value—a value that is held outwith experience. This kind of theory is less about 'transcendence' and more about the creative processes present in encounters with cultural forms; it is not what it *is*, but how it perpetually comes to be and the emergent meanings that are produced. This ontology provides a framework for analysing and understanding the ballad experience without resorting to metaphysical explanations.

Being-*with*: Intersubjectivity

Phenomenology embraces the notion of 'intersubjectivity' as a way of explaining human perceptual experience of the world. From the perspective of embodied philosophy,

> Embodiment is an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience' (Csordas 1999: 143).

Recent work in ethnography has become increasingly concerned with how we understand the 'subject.' This work has revolved around a critique of the ways in which the 'subject' has been traditionally understood: as a mental entity existing *prior* to experience. However, this work has yet to think through the implications of this critique for how we understand intersubjective relations. Nancy (2000) suggests a subject that is always already implicated in the 'with' of its being; an

always emergent subject. He conceives of intersubjectivity as 'movements of presencing' whereby the subject is always undergoing the emergent process of becoming, moving towards itself and others, but is never actually reached, never 'self present.' In this view, our everyday world is an intersubjective world of culture, in which we are bound to others, understanding them, and being the object of understanding for others.

In finding a way to talk about an experience that is paradoxically both highly individual and simultaneously *always* a shared experience, the utility of Nancy's ontology of the singular plural becomes clear. According this principle, people are not self-contained subjects experiencing an outer, objective world; every person is an experiencing subject where there is reciprocity through an engagement with one another. Moreover, the notion of intersubjectivity is fundamentally inseparable from the concept of experience: experience is not an inner phenomenon accessible only via introspection to the one having the experience, but rather experience begins with interaction with a world and with others.

Paradox of Experience

Inherent in the worldview and paradigm of embodiment outlined above is a fundamental ambiguity. Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2002: 6) asserts that we must 'recognize the indeterminate as a positive phenomenon.' This indeterminacy is characterised as the human 'genius for *ambiguity* which might serve to define man' (220). With this grand declaration, he attempts to overcome the philosophical habit of opposing self and world and perpetuating dualisms in which the ultimate foundation of 'truth' invariably resides in whichever term of the duality a given

thinker deems more fundamental than the other. Rather, 'ambiguity is the essence of human existence' since 'ambiguity is indeterminate in itself, by reason of its fundamental structure' (169). This 'structure' is consciousness itself, or more precisely, that of *embodied* consciousness (that is, through the intermediary of the body.) The body is the general medium of our existence, but it is never wholly available to us (Bowman 2004). This unavailability is one of the body's more salient features.

There are several apparent paradoxes here. From the perspective of embodied cognition, we perceive reality only as experienced, by our own selves. However, in order for us to perceive reality, it must present itself to us as 'in itself'—preceding and exceeding our subjective experience. This ambiguity is rendered still more ambiguous by the body's simultaneous individual and cultural status. Bodies are always *both* thoroughly individual and thoroughly social or cultural. This is to say that lived relations can never be grasped perfectly by consciousness, since the body subject is never entirely 'present to itself.' Meaningful behaviour is lived through, rather than reflected upon, and this ensures that the actions of particular individuals may be meaningful without them being fully or reflectively aware of the meaning that their action creates or embodies. There is ambiguity precisely because we are not capable of disembodied reflection upon our activities, but are involved in an intentional arc that absorbs both our body and our mind (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 136). Instead, as the philosopher William Desmond (1990: 95).sees it, 'the plurivocity of being is intimated in the sensuous showing of ambiguity itself.'

Merleau-Ponty's body-subject necessarily *requires* ambiguity. In his view, ambiguity prevails in our perception of things primarily because of our temporal

situation which he insists cannot but be ambiguous. We face a time gap between lived experience and reflection, between experience and consciousness of the experience, between experience and meaning. It is also important to remember that actively experiencing and reflecting *on* experience are clear and distinct activities. For Schütz (1976), a clear definition of a lived experience is fundamental for his concept of meaning. Only a defined experience has meaning; and, given the temporal nature of experience, a defined experience is therefore and necessarily always a past experience. Meaning is not an intrinsic feature of experiences, nor is it an additional experience. According to Schütz, experience while occurring—that is, while we are living in it—does not have any meaning; only the past experiences we can reflect upon are meaningful. Schütz (1976: 61–2) defines meaning as 'nothing else but the attitude of the experiencing mind towards its past experiences.' Not only is an experience still undefined while it occurs, but as we turn our attention to a lived instant, while we grasp it in its being *present* and not otherwise, it is already always past. What we grasp by the reflective act is never the present of our stream of thought, it is always its past. This is another kind of paradox: the ballad experience is always its own past.

Finally, there is also ambiguity in the distinction between 'mind' and 'world': the mind may be viewed as symbiotically embedded not only within in its body but also in that body's environment, and structured by its surroundings. What this view of embodiment calls for is an understanding of the subject not constitutive of, but as constituted *along with* experience.

Radical Reflection

It was stipulated that in the construction of a research design for the study of the ballad experience that what is needed is a methodology for exploration that is appropriate for a somatic focus on a seemingly non-rational topic and a consistency of analytical approach, but without becoming a rigid or closed system (Porter 2009). The role of reflection is crucial in the analysis of experience, and lies at the methodological heart of the interaction between the two levels of hermeneutic phenomenology and cognitive science. In order to engage in experience, out of necessity, research must be reflexive.

Varela et al. (1991) advance a change in the nature of reflection from an abstract disembodied activity to an embodied, open-ended reflection. By 'embodied' they are referring to the necessity of a physical body whose sensory-motor experiences result in cognition. They begin their arguments by invoking 'a fundamental circularity' of being in a world that is 'not separate from us' (3). Although Merleau-Ponty recognised this circularity and embraced the study of experience in a radical way in phenomenology—using his phenomenological perspectives to reveal a middle way or an *entre-deux* between science and experience, inner and outer, or self and world binaries, calling it 'radical reflection'—he nonetheless continued the tradition he came from, with only a theoretical means to explain experience.

Varlea et al. move beyond many contemporary theoretical approaches. In an attempt to resolve the dissonance between science and personal experience, they look to a tradition which derives from the Buddhist method of examining experience

called 'mindfulness.'[27] Mindfulness means simply that the mind is present in embodied everyday experience; its purpose is to help us become mindful, to experience what one's mind is doing as it does it, to 'be present with one's mind' (23). The relevance this has for cognitive science is that, if cognitive science is to include human experience as it encounters the world, it must have some method for exploring and knowing what human experience is. Varela et al. suggest that Eastern philosophical ideas offer not only a wealth of important insights into the phenomenon of human consciousness but also otherwise unobtainable insights into the relations of embodiment that permit us to understand how the inner and the outer, the first-person point of view and the objective point of view of science, can coexist.

Theory of Enaction

Varela et al. introduce a theory of 'enaction,' based on hermeneutics, which implies 'the enactment or bringing forth of meaning from a background of understanding' (149). The concept of enaction integrates the Cartesian divide through interdependence of the perceiver and the environment. As we *enact* a world we are necessarily also *embodied in* it: knowledge involves creative cognition arising from the interconnections between our bodies, language, society, and the world.

What this methodology conveys is that reflection is not just *on* experience, but is a form of experience itself. When reflection is carried out in this way, it can

[27] They contend that the rediscovery of Eastern philosophies, in particular from the Buddhist tradition, has the potential to be equally as important as the rediscovery of Greek thought in the European Renaissance. They add weight to their claim noting that in the Buddhist tradition, philosophy never became a solely abstract practice; the practice of mindfulness was considered fundamental.

cut the chain of habitual thought patterns and preconceptions such that it can be an open-ended reflection of the kind Gadamer advocates in his philosophical hermeneutics, open to possibilities other than those contained in the current representation. As discussed, the hermeneutic encounter is one that prompts the interpreter to reflect on prejudices, understand them, attempt to justify them as rationally as possible, and then to go beyond them through what is encountered. By not including ourselves in the reflection, we pursue only a partial reflection, and in Varela et al.'s terms, our questions become 'disembodied.'

The chief idea in its application in the context of this research is that theoretical reflection need not be mindless and disembodied. From the standpoint of a mindful, open-ended reflection, the mind-body question need not be 'What is the ontological relation between body and mind, regardless of anyone's experience?' but rather, 'What are the relations of body and mind in actual experience and how do these relations develop, what forms can they take? Such a worldview has radical implications in answering the key question in this research: how is meaning created in the context of the ephemeral and intangible nature of musical performance?

When we include in our reflection the asker of the question and the process of asking itself, then the question receives new life and meaning. Porter (2009: 177–178) himself notes the importance of this reflexivity as a researcher:

> The voices that emerge in a study such as this must also include the voice of the scholar, who needs to write himself (or herself) into the process…In doing so they may come nearer to the empathy of Herder and the understanding of Ricoeur. They may themselves become part of that "ballad presence."

Ethnomusicology: Truth and Method

It was noted in Chapter Two that the field of ethnomusicology has seen shifting emphasis from representation toward experience—a shift that in itself reflects a confrontation with objectivism. With this change of direction, however, traditional ethnomusicological methods become quickly outmoded: they attempt to provide us with epistemological solutions to an ultimately ontological problem. The purpose of Gadamer's philosophical project in *Truth and Method* ([1960] 2004) was to elaborate on the concept of philosophical hermeneutics and to uncover the nature of human understanding, arguing that 'truth' and 'method' were at odds with one another.[28] The word 'method' itself implies a pre-existing theory and concern with epistemological problem of finding, verifying and knowing the truth within the frames of reference defined by theory. Rice (2002), following Gadamer, believes that in ethnomusicology, the very idea of 'method' is at odds with the fundamental goal of the discipline—that is, to understand the experience of people making music.

Turning back to the call for the ontological understandings of human musical experience, Rice (2002: 47) asks:

> If the self rather than method were the locus of explanation and understanding…might this realignment contribute to the reformulation of theory and method? Could theory and method, which take for granted a fixed and timeless ontological distinction between insider and outsider, be recorded within an ontology that understands both researching and researched selves as potentially interchangeable and as capable of change through time, during the dialogues that typify that fieldwork experience?

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[28] Gadamer was critical of two approaches to the human sciences: on the one hand, he was critical of modern approaches to humanities that modelled themselves on the natural sciences (and thus on rigorous scientific methods); on the other, he took issue with the traditional German approach to the humanities, represented for instance by Dilthey, who believed that correctly interpreting a text meant recovering the original intention of the author who wrote it.

In a theoretical framework where mind, self and world are intertwined, and where being is always being-*with* others, such a 'radically reflective' approach would seem to be the only option to understand the truth of experience as it emerges in context. The space of music and ethnographical work is shared by us all; it is the conceptual space in which cultural experience co-occurs for the researcher, singers and audience. Furthermore, it is where we know the passage of time, grasp meaning and make metaphoric connections to other areas of cultural experience.

Experiential Fieldwork: Being There

Although there is not agreement on any one paradigm for ethnomusicological research, and research can be quite idiosyncratic, there is one very important shared aspect, which is ethnographic and ethnological research. Essential to ethnographic research, of course, is fieldwork carried out among the people who belong to the tradition being studied. Porter (2009: 137) maintains,

> Ethnological fieldwork…remains the first and best way in which ballads can be studied and understood.

However, in the absence of fieldwork method, then the 'field,' if not a place to work and test out theory, becomes an experiential place. Fieldwork *is* experience, and the experience of people making music is at the core of ethnomusicological enquiry. In the context of the new ethnomusicology, in fact, it may be possible to understand the relationship between music and culture in the absence of method, just by *being there.*

Objectivism insists that 'truth' is what remains after the subject has been eradicated. In contrast, a dialectical view insists that subject and object are not

separable entities, but simply words we assign to different yet mutually determining moments and modalities of experience. This highlights a methodological indeterminacy: what is the nature of the relationship between the subjectivity of the ethnographer and the subjectivities of those with whom the ethnographer works? The truth cannot be reduced to either. In other words, we can neither assess the truth of our understanding representationally in terms of its fidelity to others; nor confessionally, as a disclosure of our own ulterior motives and unconscious desires. We may only assess it intersubjectively in terms of the social relationships that exist, first between the ethnographer and those with whom they work; and second between the ethnographer and his or her own lifeworld.

Phenomenological understanding of musical experience sees fieldwork as an attempt to partially share experience by placing the researcher on the same plane as the research participant and engaging in a dialogic agenda. In this way 'truth' is negotiated through dialogue. Understanding occurs in the dialogue *between* the researcher and his or her people:

> This is the world, the intersubjective reality, that the fieldworker comes to know; and this is the only world one can truly reconstruct in one's interpretative writings—if one comes to any understanding at all (Titon 1995: 13).

Porter's development of a theory of ballad presence must look to see how meanings are negotiated among scholars, performers and active listeners (2009: 188). Participation is key. He writes,

> The…negotiation on ballad meaning might benefit if the student can sing as well as converse. This brings the issue of self-consciousness into focus. And if the hermeneutic arc is to function as it should, such mental and cultural preparedness is pre-requisite (137)

Taking this on board, I was keen to experience the tradition myself, as a constant reminder of the actual experience under study in an attempt to not become at too much of a remove from lived reality. The majority of my experiential fieldwork was conducted in 2010 in various locations around Scotland at folk and singing festivals, ballad singing workshops, folk clubs and events, and more personal encounters. [29] Informal interviews were conducted at live events where instances of 'presencing' might occur, based on the conviction that the performance of traditional ballads can only be effective in the context of exchange between audience and singer, in a two-way communicative relationship. As Herndon (1971: 327–388) claims, the musical 'occasion' can be seen as an 'encapsulation of cultural cognition.' She claims that cultural cognition influencing musical processes is to be found in the passing 'moments' of musical practice as performance—the musical occasion, event, or experience.

Often ethnomusicologists find themselves at some sort of cultural or historical distance from the traditions they study. Even insider ethnomusicologists—those born into the traditions they study—undergo a 'productive distantiation necessary

[29] Perhaps most notably were the excellent and highly popular ballad workshops held at Laurie's Bar, Glasgow, with traditional singers Anne Neilson and Gordeanna McCulloch. These women are convinced of the power of ballads to communicate meaningfully to a contemporary audience, and keen to share that thrill with others. The intention and objective of these workshops is to give participants the confidence and the will to sing ballads by themselves. The backgrounds to songs are explored, as well as any folklore that may shed light on their meaning and origin. They work with the tunes, with the words, and with the phrasing, to produce an attractive and vibrant version. This is followed by a sing around in which some fantastic performances happen. I also attended 'FifeSing'—a weekend of traditional singing for singers and enthusiasts, which takes place in Collessie in Fife, organised by Pete Shepherd. FifeSing was for me a unique opportunity to meet, hear and talk with a selection of the finest exponents of Scottish traditional singing to be found today—Sheila Stewart, Geordie Murison, Jimmy Hutchison, Terry Conway among others—and, of course, to participate in the singing sessions. One afternoon was dedicated entirely to the singing of ballads. I also attended Cullerlie Traditional Singing Weekend, a unique celebration bringing together outstanding traditional singers from Scotland, England, and Ireland Tom Spiers and Elizabeth Stewart and elsewhere, including Geoff Warner from New England. The event is especially for those who like to hear, enjoy, and join in unaccompanied traditional singing, including ceilidhs featuring the guest singers and singarounds for everyone who wants to join in.

for the explanation and understanding of their own cultures' (Berger 2008: 62–75). Herndon (1993: 77) writes, 'I speak as myself; neither fully insider, nor outsider, neither fully etic nor fully emic.' Rather than there being simply 'insider' and 'outsider' categories of ways of knowing, all who place themselves 'in front of' a tradition use the hermeneutic arc to move from pre-understandings, to explanation, to new understandings. Such dialectic also helps to remove the distinction of 'native' and 'ethnic' concepts; it goes beyond a difference of categories or a mere exchange of views, and as such results in important descriptions as well as explanations. Experience in this sense is always in-between; understanding is always emergent.

> All individuals operating within the tradition continually re-appropriate their cultural practices, give them new meanings, and in the process create a continually evolving sense of self, of identity, of community and 'being-in-the-world' (Rice 2008: 58).

As Rice (2008) further emphasises, this type of inquiry into musical traditions sees the constitution of meaning as an open-ended process, something that people discover as they perform, listen to, and reflect on music over time. This openness is key to radical reflection. Experience, then, always suggests an openness to *new* experience.

> The truth of experience always contains an orientation toward new experience…the dialectic of experience has its own fulfilment not in definitive knowledge, but in that openness to experience that is encouraged by experience itself (Gadamer 2004: 319).

Truth and Metaphor: Describing Experience

Over the course of this research process I found myself engaged in discussion with individuals such us Stanley Robertson who cared deeply about the tradition

and who held particular beliefs about it. In the study of traditional song, we cannot afford to bypass these beliefs in the search for explanations that will satisfy both scholarly and native logic. We can find illuminating insights for scholarly understanding in the complex of meanings that singers hold about their tradition. Rice (2003: 167) makes explicit the idea that metaphor is an indispensable tool in any attempt to study and understand human experience, and specifically musical experience:

> Ethnomusicologists [must] take seriously every metaphor, whether of their own making or of their research subjects for what they are: fundamental claims to truth, guides to practical action and discourse, ways of reconfiguring our understanding of the world, and sources for comprehending music's profound importance to human life.

Because of the limitations of our modes of representation, we have a hard time trying to express the full meaning of our experiences in language. When we are trying to describe aesthetic experience, we are forced to do so in metaphorical terms, because this the only mode of language in which inner experience can be expressed. For example, the 'ballad experience' is conceived of as the phenomenon of being 'deeply moved' in response to ballad singing. This seemingly simple definition, 'being,' 'moved', and 'deeply'—is infinitely complex. 'Being,' in the simplest sense, refers to an engagement of the self as a sentient organism. But in saying this we are immediately thrown into the complexities and perplexities of the primary ontological issue at the core of metaphysics—the possibility and nature of 'being' as such. The term 'moved' raises the issue of experienced subjectivity—the human capacity to feel and to be aware of that which is being felt as being meaningful; that is, as being significant and fulfilling. 'Moved' is semantically related to 'motion,' and also to 'emotion.' The term 'deeply' is also difficult, being based in the belief that human meanings exist not on a

single plane but on a spectrum, ranging from the trivial to the profound. Both the 'moved' and the 'deeply' terms of the definition are necessarily metaphorical descriptions, grounded in bodily experience, an idea that will be developed in Part Two.

We *need* metaphor to describe ambiguity, to describe those elusive and intangible facets of human experience that are beyond the reach of language. The 'truth' of such language is a truth appropriate to its subject, which, by its nature, requires representation by oblique suggestion rather than by objective exactitude. Post-modern scholars are keen on deconstructing any kind of 'truth claims,' showing how each is nothing more than a self-interested, socially positioned construction. While this might be true in an academic context, it is still important to take people's 'truth claims' very seriously: they are telling us that music is deeply moving and deeply expressive and *this* is what gives meaning to our academic work.

Metaphor has a fundamental power in constructing the world we perceive: it enables us to create and recreate meaning, and makes possible the creation of entirely new worlds of imagination. Part Two below explores contemporary theories of metaphor, informed by a turn in twentieth century analytic and continental philosophy away from a traditional rhetorical view toward the claim that metaphor is a fundamental element in human thought. Guck (1981) contends that metaphorical language can put us more directly in touch with those aspects of aesthetic experience upon which traditional analytical techniques were focussed, and add richness to our understanding of cultural and aesthetic experience.

PART TWO:

Methodological Explanations

Ethnographic enquiry is located on a continuum that extends from description at one end to the use of such description for theoretical models and explanations at the other. This project was created to understand and make sense of a very specific idea, the idea of the 'ballad experience'—an idea informed by a fieldwork encounter with the late Stanley Robertson, described early in Chapter One. According to Moisala (1995: 16), in cognitive ethnomusicology, the task of the researcher is to document the experience, and thereafter, to discover and interpret the implicit cognition and cognitive processes, building and developing models which examine musical cognition as a shared cultural process. This section will present contemporary theories of metaphor and embodied thought, introducing ideas of 'cross domain mapping,' 'image schemata' and 'conceptual blending'—ideas which will be developed and applied to the ballad experience as ideas progress in later chapters. Theory is not theory for theory's sake: in dealing with a study object as ineffable as musical experience, it serves ultimately to make ideas transparent and strengthen the quality of understanding.

Contemporary Theory of Metaphor and the Embodied Mind

Metaphor is a cognitive capacity unique to humans. Ordinary definition describes metaphor as a figure of speech or literary device in which a word or phrase is applied in order to denote a resemblance; however, there is abundant evidence to suggest that metaphor is not simply a manifestation of literary creativity, but that

metaphor is central to language and to how humans understand and make sense of the world. The linguist Lakoff and philosopher Johnson worked together to produce the seminal work, *The Metaphors We Live By* (1980), which in turn provided the impetus for the development of the field of cognitive study.

> Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature…Our concepts structure what we perceive… and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience…is very much a matter of metaphor (3).

Prior to this view, language was explained mostly in terms of grammar; and regarding semantics, only in terms of surface structure.[30] The reason *why* language exists in the first place, and why we use it specifically the way we do, is explored by Lakoff and Johnson.

Metaphors are so deeply embedded in our consciousness that they often go unnoticed. Through the appearance of metaphorical constructions in everyday discourse, Lakoff and Johnson propose that metaphor is a basic structure of understanding. Metaphors create conceptual systems by drawing from two experiences we have in world and culture and by viewing one or the same aspect of something in relation to another, in a process of 'cross domain mapping.' That is to say, we conceptualise one 'domain' of experience (the target domain, which is typically unfamiliar or abstract) in terms of another (the source domain, which is most often familiar and concrete).

[30] There has been a great variety of points of view regarding linguistic study. The key point here is that metaphor is at work below the level of language itself.

Human experience does not cluster automatically into universally meaningful categories; it gets organised, processed, understood and interpreted by the worldviews that our culture and language supply. Like language, metaphors are more than mere objective terms. When we categorise, we do so out of our interactional experience both with the physical world and our environment. Concepts are not arbitrary or reduced to the merely subjective, because they are necessarily created within the constraints of our physical world and the culture in which we live (14). This reflects the ontological assumptions driving this thesis: the fundamental circularity of being in a world that is not separate from us (Varela et al 1993: 3).

A fundamental idea in the contemporary theory of metaphor springing from Lakoff and Johnson's work is a distinction between 'conceptual metaphors' and 'linguistic metaphors.' Conceptual metaphors concern patterns of thought, and linguistic metaphors are the expressions of these patterns through various linguistic constructions. To conceptualise something is to bring order to a perceived phenomenon, to categorise it, relate it to existing experiential structures, to understand it. A conceptual metaphor is a cognitive map across two different domains; a linguistic metaphor is an expression of that mapping in language. The idea here is that linguistic expressions can be seen simply as linguistic manifestations of more general structures of understanding. The most important point in the approach to metaphor epitomised by Lakoff and Johnson is that it extends the discussion of metaphor *beyond* language. Metaphor, construed as one the basic resources of human thought, is evident in all domains of human experience, not just those which use language.

The Body in the Mind

Understanding of the workings of metaphor have since been expanded since Lakoff and Johnson's seminal book, by Lakoff and Johnson themselves and by others in light of new discoveries in cognitive science.[31] One challenge metaphor theorists faced was the ultimate grounding of the process of cross domain mapping and conceptual metaphors. Even if it is accepted that we understand a target domain in terms of a source domain, how is it that we understand the source domain in the first place?

Many important modern philosophers and theorists working within the paradigm of embodiment have emphasised that, ultimately, all of our knowledge is held bodily, because it is through our bodies that we are rooted in the world.

> Knowing in any humanly meaningful sense is emergent from and grounded in bodily experience and continuous with the cultural production of meaning (Bowman 2004: 48).

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) outline three major philosophical assumptions:

> The mind is inherently embodied.
> Thought is mostly unconscious.
> Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical

In answering the question of the 'ground' of metaphor, Johnson (1987) proposed that meaning is grounded in repeated patterns of bodily experience. His work *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason* claims that we draw on our embodied experience, allowing us to describe things within a continuum. We reason so predominantly in bodily terms—'embodied cognition'—that we are largely unaware of this fundamental aspect of thought. He writes,

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[31] See Fauconnier (1997); Gribbs (1994); Johnson (1987); Kovecses (1990); Lakoff and Turner (1989); Sweetser (1990) and Turner (1991), (1996).

> Any adequate account of meaning and rationality must give a central place to embodied and imaginative structures of understanding by which we grasp our world' (xiii).

Image Schemata

Adopting and modifying terminology that he traced to the work of Kant, Johnson (1987) called such patterns of bodily experience 'image schemata.' An 'image schema' is a dynamic cognitive construct that functions like the abstract structure of an image and thereby connects a vast range of different experiences that manifest this same recurring structure (2). His use of 'body' stands as a 'generic term for the embodied origins of imaginative structures of understanding, such as image schemas and their metaphorical elaborations' (xv).

An important thread running through Johnson's work and crucial to the wider theoretical framework developing here is this confrontation with objectivism. In seeking to refute objectivism, it was important for Johnson to show how human knowledge could be grounded in embodied experience; that understanding could develop and flourish without having to touch base with an objective reality; and that such a reality was not a prerequisite for knowledge. The theory of image schemata is crucial in making his argument, for it supports each of these claims.

The theory is that through early interaction with our environment (for example. bodily movement, sensory awareness) we understand and catalogue thousands of body-based concepts such as inside/outside, vertical/horizontal and self/other. This allows us to understand subsequent experiences through a process known as 'metaphorical projection.' This projection is based on the formation of primary metaphors—conceptual metaphors—before they are expressed in linguistic metaphors.

Image schemas are central structures of understanding; they are not literal images but 'structures that organize our mental representations at a [more general] level' (23–4). Acquired automatically and unconsciously, conceptual metaphors constitute neural connections in the brain and involve projection, or 'mapping' of an experience in one domain to an experience in another domain. This is the process that gives rise to image schemata which in turn provide the basis for the concepts and relationships essential to productive metaphor.

It is important to make clear here that image schemata are by no means exclusively visual—the idea of an image is simply a way of capturing the organisation inferred from patterns in behaviour and concept formation. When we invoke the term 'imagery' in the psychological sense, we might assume that this refers to 'mental imagery' and then further to assume that we are talking about visual imagery in the form of pictures or representations. But thinking in terms of the mental-visual representation biases the discussion from the outset toward something quite abstract. Johnson points out that if we realise that imagery (itself a metaphor) can occur in all other sensory modalities and not just the visual, and we realise that imaginary processes are sometimes profound and vivid engagements of the sensory modalities, it is possible to understand that all imagery can be interpreted as 'embodied imagery.'

The 'verticality schema,' for example, is fundamental to our understanding of two or three dimensional spaces—to give physical space an 'up' and 'down' analogous to the 'up' and 'down' of our bodies. This process is evidenced most notably in our expressions of emotions, consciousness and health, which uses our knowledge of physical space to structure our understandings. For example,

> "I'm feeling *high/down*"
> "I woke *up*, I *fell* asleep"
> "I'm in *top* shape. I came *down* with the flu"

In other words, the source domain is often more concrete, and the target domain more abstract. Because image schemata constrain but do not determine absolutely our understanding, imagination comes to play a crucial role in our experience of the world, for it is through the flexible play of imagination that we apply image- schematic knowledge to various situations.[32] Johnson (1987: 170) summarises this perspective as follows:

> Creativity occurs at all levels of our experiential organization and not just in those rare moments when we discover novel ideas. We are imaginatively creative every time we recognize a schema in a new situation we have never experienced before and every time we make metaphorical connections among various preconceptual and conceptual structures.

Imagination is thus not ancillary to our understanding, but is instead basic to it.

Johnson bolstered his argument with numerous analyses of linguistic, conceptual, and visual phenomena, and showed how the theory of image schemata permitted a single, relatively simple explanation for the underlying structure of these phenomena. This theory offers a somewhat unique way to approach the problem of human understanding: it does not consist merely of after-the-fact reflections on prior experiences; it is, more fundamentally, the way in which we have those experiences in the first place. It is a result of the massive complex of our culture, language, history, and bodily mechanisms that blend to make our world what it is. In sum, the theory of image schemata enabled Johnson to develop a fundamentally

[32] Similar arguments for the importance of image schemata or analogous structures have been made by researchers both in neuroscience and in human gesture as a communicative means. On neuroscience, see Edelman, (1989) and (1992); Damasio (1994) and (1999). On gesture, see McNeill (1992).

different view of knowledge and understanding, leading to a fundamentally different way of doing philosophy and understanding cognitive science.

To link this theory to the wider theoretical framework of phenomenological hermeneutics, Arbib and Hesse (1986) make a direct connection between the cognitive schema theory and hermeneutics. The concept of a 'schema' signifies that the knowledge we already have does not consist of disconnected pieces of information but is organised into patterns that we access and use in the acquisition of new knowledge. Such patterns or schemas allow us to 'assimilate' new information into already established frameworks. Importantly, new information can also cause a change in previously established schemas; schemas can change or 'accommodate' themselves to the new object. We *construct* and *create* an interpretation. For example, texts are meaningless unless we have recourse to some interpretative framework that will to some degree facilitate understanding. In this sense, such a process is essentially hermeneutical.

At present, the theory of 'image schema' still remains a theoretical construct. In his more recent work *The Meaning of the Body* (2008) Johnson turned back to cognitive neuroscience to further explore the bodily origins of meaning, thought, and language and examines the many dimensions of meaning, including images, qualities, emotions, and metaphors that are all rooted in the body's physical encounters with the world. Work across a variety of fields has since made strong arguments for this point of view. Damasio, working from a neuro-physiological perspective, has made compelling arguments for the importance of the body to consciousness and thought in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (1999). Although research on image schemata and similar structures is still preliminary, it

offers some of the best prospects for solving some of the problems of the relationship between mind and body that have hampered cognitive research throughout the century.

Linguocentric Predicament

Even with the indispensable tool of metaphor, problems arise from the use of language as a medium to describe or analyse phenomena. How are the complex, multiple dimensions of the ballad experience to be described and represented? These problems are at the heart of what the ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger (1977: 107) called the 'linguocentric predicament.' In order to mitigate against this problem, he suggests that the use of graphic representation or visual demonstration has the power to be both descriptive and analytic at the same time and therefore conducive to understanding musical experience. However, the kinds of models which have been used in most investigators' conceptions of musical phenomena and their social significance have been almost exclusively concerned with the atomistic description of static forms rather than with the process of experience perceived holistically.[33] The purpose of traditional musicological analysis is, certainly, to isolate or identify meaningful elements in the music, its performance, and its social significance; but to do this with any degree of success means understanding the musical *process*. Seeger himself placed a deliberate emphasis upon the functional or processual aspects of music by representing it as temporal, with changing rather than stable components, as dynamic rather than static. In my view, this can only be achieved by means of a more holistic view of the interdependent functions of the music process in the mind.

[33] Porter (1976) has made an attempt to graphically represent in a conceptual model the changing over time of one singer's response to a song, 'My Son David,' and how it transformed its meanings.

Creative Blending

In order to try and overcome the 'linguocentric problem,' this thesis explores the theory of 'creative blending' developed by Fauconnier and Turner in *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (2002). This is an extension of Lakoff and Johnson's original ideas of metaphorical mapping, also variously known as 'conceptual integration,' or 'conceptual blending.' Cognitive processes are incredibly complex. Theories of embodied cognition posit that 'mental representations' are the (embodied) 'images' with which our mind builds concepts and establishes interactive relationships with the environment. 'Meaning' includes patterns of embodied experience and conceptual structures of our sensibility. These embodied patterns do not remain private or peculiar to the person who experiences them, however. They become shared cultural modes of experience and help to determine the nature of our meaningful, coherent understanding of the world (Varela et al. 1991: 150). It is interesting to ask whether these patterns are inherited in our genome or whether they are universal because of our shared physical world.

The basic idea is that we think in mental spaces, which form networks, where the spaces connect through mappings between structures. 'Blending' is specifically the ability to blend two different conceptual arrays so as to produce an emergent outcome (this is, essentially, how metaphor works) (45). Blending includes at least four basic 'spaces': two 'source' spaces, a 'generic' space that captures what both source spaces have in common; and the 'blending' space, where elements from both source spaces are blended to form a new reality. The mind performs many types of metaphorical mapping between these various mental spaces to come up with the

final product, known as the 'blend.' The figure below graphically represents this process at the most simple level. Mental spaces are represented by circles, and connections between elements in different spaces by lines.

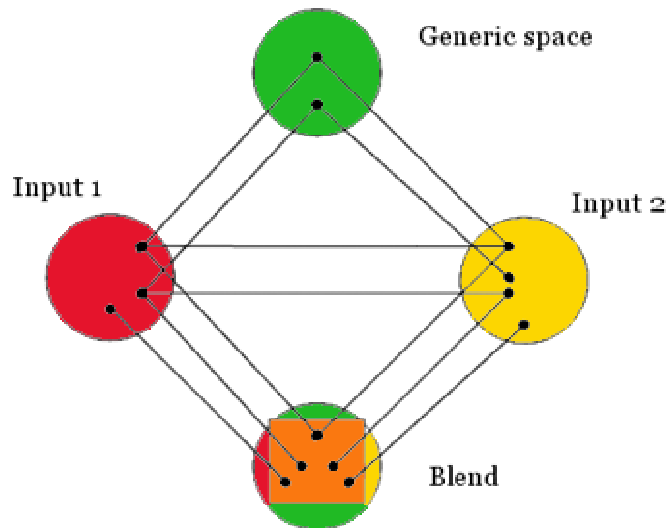

Figure 1.

Blending processes are rarely as simple as depicted in the figure above. There may be several source spaces, and such 'networks' can be developed to model more complex processes. Diagrams such as Figure 1 above can only represent a sort of analytical snapshot of an on-going process, framed with the intention of capturing its essential features, making no claim to exhaust the possibilities for description. The embodied cognitive processes involved in creative blending will be described in more depth and in context in Chapter Six, as these relate to figurative language and personal narrative creation; in Chapter Seven as these relate to the blending of words and melody; and in Chapter Eight in terms of bodily 'cross modal transfer.'

In order for something to be understood as a mental space, it should have the ability to be represented in the mind with a stable structure and a well-defined

boundary. Mental spaces are dynamic structures, because mind is never fixed but constantly modified as our thoughts unfold in time. They contain partial representations of the entities and relationships in any given scenario as perceived, imagined, remembered, or otherwise understood. For example, beliefs, images, and dramatic situations all trigger the construction of mental spaces, whether the linked spaces are a belief and a reality space, a past and a present space, or a picture and a reality space. Source spaces, or input spaces, are mental frames summoned from the mind's long term memory. They include vast amounts of information, much of which is culturally influenced. Guiding the process of mapping between two domains is the 'generic space,' which is both the background and foundation for the meaning-making process, capturing what the source spaces have in common. Our own prior experiences give life to the abstractions created in the generic space. The source spaces are therefore concrete representations of the abstract structure represented by the generic space, and the conceptual 'blend' is a further metaphorical projection from these, a new space where elements from both source spaces are blended to form a new reality. Every blend has an emergent structure, containing unique elements that are not copied from the source spaces.

Blending theory is simply one way to understand how the human mind works. It has been applied in cognitive neuroscience, cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, music theory, poetics, mathematics, divinity, semiotics, theory of art, psychotherapy, artificial intelligence, political science, discourse analysis, philosophy, anthropology, and in the study of gesture and of material culture. It has proven itself to have wide-ranging applicability to the representation of both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of cognition. Indeed, creative blending would

appear to be a fundamental human mental ability: its centrality is widely and robustly confirmed by empirical data. It is involved in everything from perceptual processing, through the sensation of pain, reception of music, to knowledge of cause and effect. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) go as far as to claim that conceptual blending is the great mental ability that gives human beings the ability to invent new concepts and, subsequently, create art, science, religion, culture and language. That is to say, it is our modern human imagination that has given us the ability to invent new concepts and to assemble new and dynamic mental patterns.

The theory of creative blending is not scientifically rigorous. It does not *specify* how meaning is represented in the mind but rather it offers a general model of meaning construction. It is important to make clear that this is not an explanation of how the brain works, but rather a descriptive model of how the mind works, using metaphor. Blending theory is as an open-ended system - more like a hermeneutic model. In truth, it is a grand metaphor in itself. As such, it can be used as a tool to map, model, interpret and attempt to understand the singularly plural ballad experience. In order to understand 'presence,' Porter stipulated that what was needed was a style open to exploration, and to be free from the need for specific answers; but at the same time demanding a consistency of analytical approach without becoming a rigid or closed system. Overly rigid systems do not consider the relationship of logic to human embodiment, or the flexibility of the human mind.

In ethnomusicology, this theory is useful because it provides a way to bring order to something extremely difficult to describe. Theorising about music requires that we bring order, even if of a tenuous sort, to an ephemeral and often intangible human experience. Zbikowski (2002) believes that cross domain mapping is a way

to both structure our understanding of music and extend it, as it allows us to ground descriptions of elusive musical phenomena in concepts derived from quotidian experience. Because an emergent, enactive, embodied view of cognition implicates a view of subjectivity as fluid, transient and polysemic, music's processual character and distinctive bodily sense should not be regarded as secondary or epiphenomenal in terms of their cognitive significance. Such a view marries with and has the potential to extend both Ó Laoire's (2005) and Rice's (1995) prioritisation of modes of being over modes of knowing in the context of the musical experience.

Summary

It seems clear that there is great potential to explore the common ground between the more humanistic, cultural/ethnological approach and the cognitive approach, using theories of embodiment and embodied cognition to mediate between dialectical concerns. By juxtaposing cultures of inquiry in an attempt to elucidate the ballad singing experience, new understandings may emerge that would not be apparent were such juxtaposition not made explicit. It is my own view that although the academic language and metaphors used may be very different, cognitive studies may provide parallel descriptions to the analyses of ethnographic enquiry. It is not necessary to make descriptions from cognitive science stand in opposition to humanistic explanations, because all perspectives are partial perspectives.

Working in the paradigm of embodiment stresses the physical and the processual, and enforces interaction between the bodymind and its environment. Such a holistic view prevents oversimplifications or unrealistic assumptions because it provides specific grounding in reality. Moreover, the embodied view of cognitive

science allows for direct cultural interaction, which is undeniably crucial for both language and music. Most notably perhaps, the embodiment paradigm stresses the temporal—the importance of which will be explored in later chapters. In this light, cognition and bodily activity intertwine: the mind is no longer seen as passively reflective of the outside world, but rather as an active constructor of its own reality. Contemporary phenomenology affirms the intersubjectivity and not the solipsism of Cartesian consciousness; the reciprocity, not the passivity, of perception; and embodiedness, not the disembodiedness, of consciousness. Phenomenologically, language too is a whole bodied activity.

Philosophical hermeneutics investigates some questions that are also asked in the cognitive sciences. The nature of human understanding, the way that we gain and organise knowledge, the role played by language and memory in these considerations, the relations between conscious and unconscious knowledge—these are all good examples of issues that form the intersection of hermeneutics and the cognitive sciences. That is to say that firstly, what hermeneutics discovers is not in opposition to what cognitive science discovers—in fact they are in agreement about a number of things; second, that hermeneutics has something to contribute to the cognitive sciences; and third, that the cognitive sciences have something to contribute to the field of hermeneutics. Philosophical hermeneutics raises questions about the conditions of possibility for human understanding—not how we *should* interpret or understand something, but what interpretation and understanding are and how they work.

With embodiment and radical reflection we find grounded way of talking about the ballad experience as a 'total somatic experience' - one that affects both

body and mind; with Nancy's post-phenomenological ontology we find a way of talking the ballad experience as an experience that is paradoxically both highly individual and simultaneously *always* a shared experience, as well as an explanation that *cannot* resort to explanations of the metaphysical: mind, self and world are intertwined. What this theoretical framework allows for is a focus on the creative processes present in encounters with cultural forms: not what is, but how it perpetually comes to be.

CHAPTER FOUR 4

"At the Mirk and Midnight Hour She Heard the Bridals Sing": Developing a Theory of Ballad 'Presence'[34]

In his most recent work, Porter (2009) is keen to foster an awareness of the ballads that moves towards an understanding of its 'dramatic and affective presence.' The very notion of 'presence,' even with Porter's explanations, remains very complex, ambiguous and exceedingly difficult to define. It has been suggested that this theory is a ground for the study of the 'ballad experience.' If we are relying on Porter's theories of presence as a foundation for this study, however, it is necessary to highlight ideas and areas that are particularly ambiguous in his thinking.

The notion of 'presence' and its usage in academic discourse varies hugely between disciplines and perhaps fortuitously, Porter does not make clear where he appropriated the term 'presence' from. For me, the term has immediate philosophical and theological connotations. It is important to keep the distinction between sacred and secular very clear to avoid tenuous argument. [35] Looking to other discourses for insights, parallels and comparisons allows us to get closer to an understanding of presence; but to attempt a history of the critique of presence in this context is far too ambitious. Such a critique feeds into the theological and postmodern debate on the degree to which we are able to talk meaningfully about the world. Post-structuralist critics and literary theorists appropriate the term to support their view that there is a privileged fixed point at which the meanings of terms are anchored. As discussed

[34] Again, this is a reference to the ballad 'Tam Lin.' The 'mirk and midnight' hour is the liminal time when the boundaries between this world and the next are blurred, and Janet awaits the arrival of the fairy folk.
[35] In a conversation with the ethnomusicologist Dr. Reily (ICTM Ireland Conference, Febuary 2011) I was advised not to be over cautious in divorcing such experiences from religious experience. Reilly talks of a kind of 'reverence' towards the tradition; a deep respect for the songs and where they came from.

in the previous chapter, Heidegger's rethinking of ontology was an attempt to step away from the metaphysics of presence and ontotheological explanations—his term 'being-in-the-world' seeks to emphasise the relationship between self and world as a unitary whole, and Nancy's post-phenomenology seeks to bring out the idea of 'being-with' as a priority in this ontology.

Porter's intended theories and definitions of 'presence' will be laid out more comprehensively for investigation. Examples will be given of presence in context, sourced in collected fieldwork descriptions of the ballad experience. Scottish Travellers have a word in the Cant language called the *conniach*, which is defined as the 'feeling' that can be conveyed in a successful performance. This notion will be explored and it will be shown how it can productively contribute to an understanding of presence. In looking to literature outside of ethnomusicology, Maslow's accounts of 'peak experience' will be used to foreground discussions of aesthetic experience in terms of embodiment. Working from the premise that all humans engage with the world aesthetically, and that the ballad experience is, by extension, fundamentally an aesthetic experience, this section will argue for the idea of *somaesthetics* and appreciation of the body in Porter's theory of presence.

In terms of developing Porter's theory, one of the most difficult obstacles to overcome was the ambiguous nature of Porter's explanations of *time* and ballad presence. The second part of this chapter will consider relevant ideas in Gadamer's *Truth and Method* ([1960] 2004), a work that seeks to articulate the very question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art from humanist conceptions and show how these aesthetic formulations of truth lead to the question of experience itself. Part of Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy seeks to draw out what he calls the

'temporality of art.' His explanations of aesthetic time, his ideas about 'art as play' and his account of the hermeneutic encounter of the past in the present will be used to argue for *enacted* aesthetic time. In the hope of at least recognising to some extent the true nature of the ballad experience, this chapter will explore the social phenomenologist Schütz's (1964) transformation of the philosopher Henri Bergson's concept of *dureé* and the idea of 'inner-time consciousness' in relation to musical time and shared experience. Fundamental ideas will be introduced here and developed further in the following chapters: notably the idea of external and internal worlds, time and space.

Porter's definitions of 'Presence'

Porter defines the term 'presence' in three ways: as a noun, as a quality of performance; as a verb, 'to presence,' by which he means to produce the quality of presence; and also in the active verb sense of 'presencing,' the idea that it is a shared experience in time (8–9). No commonly accepted method has ever been devised for the analysis of performative genres because of their varied character, and especially not for song. Porter chooses to use 'presencing' rather than 'performance' to describe live enactment, because he feels that the terms 'performing' and 'performance' are vague, ambiguous and invested with a broad range of meanings that mean different things across different disciplines (such as linguistics and anthropology).[36] Concepts of 'performance' in scholarship have been so varied that no unified theory has ever

[36]Performance studies incorporates theories of drama, dance, art, anthropology, folklore, philosophy, cultural studies, sociology and music performance: see Schechner (2002). Among the topics discussed are the performing arts and popular entertainments, rituals, play and games as well as the performances of everyday life. Supporting examples and ideas are drawn from the social sciences, performing arts, post-structuralism, ritual theory, ethology, philosophy and aesthetics.

been developed.[37] In Porter's mind, 'presencing' signifies something other than the concept of performance, and he is careful to emphasise that we are not to confuse theories of presence with concepts of performance theory and its methods.

As Porter sees it, presence 'narrows and intensifies the sense of performance' in two ways. First, it refers to an individual fashioning of a song, an artistic creation or re-creation on the one hand; and on the other, a transaction among human actors, a single, observable action or actions in a designated space (7–9). His intended definition conveys the notion that the performance of traditional ballads can only be effective in the context of exchange between audience and singer—in a two-way communicative relationship—and cannot be realised through recorded and digital productions or printed ballad texts. Put simply, it implies direct communication of a ballad to a live audience in a shared physical space. Crucial, then, to the definition of presence then is the idea of 'sharing' in a reciprocal act of communication. Porter also describes presencing as 'a concentrated *process*, in large part an *enactment* that flows from the performer, the singer, who generates the dramatic atmosphere of the traditional ballad in a committed way' (8, my italics). This language is evocative of the discourses in theories of embodied cognition, and as will be shown, his theory lends itself very well to discussion in this context.

It is important to make clear that I do not claim that every time a ballad is sung that 'presence' will occur. Perhaps this is where my own use of presence departs from Porter's; I prefer to save it to describe a special extraordinary performance when a ballad is sung exceptionally well to a receptive audience. By 'well' I mean the skill and musicality of the singer and their ability to transport the

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[37] For a criticism of performance theory see Porter (2009: 182–186).

song. Even if all of Porter's conditions are in place, presence still may not be achieved, and the ballad experience will still remain elusive. Ó Laoire (2006: 102) talks of the 'perfect, ineffable, moment of performance' which, in my own view, could perhaps be better described as the 'moment of presence.' Porter (2009: 182, my italics) writes,

> Presence embodies the ritual moment within the tradition, and as such it renews, invests in, and promotes the tradition as a living potent force. Further, it creates the illusion the tradition itself is suspended, crystallised into a *moment of time* in which it is recast, modified and validated once more.

The idea of the 'crystallisation of time' is a fascinating one. In Porter's view, the performative moment is 'a kind of collective look at the clock to compare time.' More than this, he claims that presence creates its own time, when 'normal measurable time is suspended and another world with its own time embraced' (181). One of the most difficult problems in an attempt to unpack the idea of presence is this reckoning of time. In Porter's explanations, presence forms the 'central element in a tripartite process reminiscent of ritual enactment.' He writes, 'The process of articulating makes presence fall within what Durkheim called *sacred…ritual* time' (181, my italics). This account is rather vague and ambiguous: he appears to use the terms 'ritual' and 'sacred' interchangeably (the distinction is never made clear). If we are using Porter's theory of ballad presence as founded on the experience of an alternative time—set apart from normal, quotidian time—it is absolutely necessary to be clear about what this means in unambiguous terms. In order to understand presence, it is necessary to find a more acceptable way to talk about our experience of time and aesthetic experience that does not rely on metaphysical explanations and that marries with the fundamental ontology set up in the previous chapter. In

order to achieve this, it is vital to consider the nature of the temporality of ballad 'presence,' and seek to understand what happens when 'normal, measurable time is suspended' and another 'world' with its own time is experienced.

According to Porter, the very experience of presence is understood to be 'a departure from everyday norms into the unknown, unexpected or transcendental territory of the imagination.' It is, he grandly claims, 'the complete imaginative encounter' (9). This idea of the 'imaginative encounter' will be explored and developed throughout this thesis. In order to understand the 'ballad experience' we need to access those ephemeral times and spaces created, in which we can discover the embodied and expressive ways of knowing, being and communicating in context.

Porter's Epilogue presents 'Six Steps towards a (Theoretical) Stage' 2009: 186–190). According to Porter, these 'steps,' rather than being sequential, represent distinct fields of analytical as well as artistic and creative activity. The first, 'Motivation and Collection' refers not only to the performer and their choice of ballad repertoire on particular occasions but also the scholarly selection of what is to be studied, as well as the motives and selection processes of all those involved in 'presencing'—in event participation—which takes place within a bounded time and space. 'Situation and Event' refers to the nature and setting of the presencing scenario chosen by the participants. 'Presencing and Interaction' refers to the manner in which the event proceeds. If feedback and interaction is possible, it may lead to 'Transformation.' That is to say, the event will generate certain tensions and expectations. The performers themselves experience, through feedback, some sense of communicative power, or heightened sensation, and in Porter's view, the nature

and extent of social and personal transformation is critical for the negotiation of meaning. Following this is 'Re-integration.' In Porter's view, the return to normalcy is accompanied by a sense of release, and by a sense of common humanity. The final step is 'Perception and Analysis.' The entire sequence or 'events within the event' as it has taken place in time and space is subject to assessment by those participating and in particular by the professional observer (Porter 2009: 186–190).

While these steps are informative and will be referred to in later chapters, the development of a theory presented here takes the notion of 'presence' in a new direction.

Presence in Context: Ballad Singing and the *Conniach*

In attempting to understand presence and its role in the ballad experience, it is vital to go back to native descriptions of the phenomenon of ballad singing. Sheila Stewart,[38] Scottish Traveller, celebrated tradition bearer, talks about the idea of the '*conniach*'—something she learned from her family's tradition or style of singing, and essential to the ballads in particular. The *conniach* is a feeling in singing that is difficult to define, but is known to all her family members. It is clearly identifiable in someone's singing, but is best described by the feeling it elicits in those who *hear* it. Dalargno (2007) has suggested that the *conniach* is roughly equivalent to the '*duende*' in flamenco—a difficult-to-describe term that denotes authenticity and spiritual connection 'Without it, they sound like songs; with it, they're something else entirely.'

[38] Sheila Stewart M.B.E (b.1937) was brought to prominence by Hamish Henderson at the School of Scottish Studies, and has been described as a singer 'from the heart of the tradition.'

The word *conniach* might has roots in the Scots and Irish Gaelic tradition of *caoinead*—keening and lamention—but we cannot be sure. *Caoineadh* is an extremely arresting form of delivery and has links with strong emotion. At some point in history, it could have been appropriated by the Travelling community and come to mean something different in a new context. Sheila is conscious of the *conniach* in longer and more serious songs she sings as well as the lighter and happier sort. If the links to *caoineadh* have been lost, what remains is the idea of an accurate and true performance, one which is heartfelt and sincere, as the following description will show.

According to Sheila, in the Traveller context, storytelling is a 'natural function.' She talks about the many functions of ballad singing, but maintains that the most important thing is that 'everything's from your heart, nae your head.' At a ballad singing workshop I attended in Glasgow in 2010, Sheila was keen to demonstrate in practice what she means by the *conniach.*

> Just like maybe somebody says to you, 'You sang there and the hair on my head stood up,' you know? Well this happens to me, deep within me when I sing a ballad I like. I just go way out there to outer space or into oblivion and I'm singing it to myself and this causes the most emotion to the song and it's a build up, and that's what causes this. See, I dinnae think what I do is a *style* of singing. It's just my own emotions. You put your own emotions and feeling into what you're singing and that gets across to the folk…and makes them listen, involves them. If you produce the emotion, the feeling, the *conniach* to them it makes them stop to listen because that is coming from your heart and no fae your head.[39]

In order to demonstrate the *conniach*, she sang us a verse from the song 'Fause, Fause Hae Ye Been,' firstly without much emotion and feeling, and secondly the way she would choose to perform it, putting in the *conniach.* Before she sang the ballad for the

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[39] Interview with Sheila Stewart by fieldworker Meredith Harley, School of Scottish Studies Archive. See SA1996.84

second time, she suggested that we listen closely so as to identify what she was doing with the words, and with the tune. She demonstrated how she projects into the song and moulds the words, stretching them out. According to Sheila, her singing conveys both feeling *and* emotion. Singing from the heart provides the emotion, and the feeling behind the song is the *conniach*. 'I put my own self into it. My own emotion. My own spirit.' Sheila sees this as a unity, or a trinity:

> "It's the three in one, isn't it? There's the emotion, the feeling and the voice. You blend the three together and it gives you the *conniach.* My three in one is the soul, spirit and the voice. The spirit and the soul is the emotion and the feeling. And emotion is like your deep soul within you."

In order to bring this emotion to a performance, Sheila says she tells the story of the ballad to herself over and over. 'I go *inside* the ballad. Instead of the ballad going inside me and me producing it with my voice, I go inside the ballad. I don't act it. It's just a natural function of the ballads to me.'

> You see there's a lot of different functions within the transportation of a ballad … It's not just a function, say, 'Oh I know that ballad right left and centre. I know the tune right, left and centre. But are you transporting it properly? You see there's a lot functions within there. And once you've got all these functions coming together…the tune, the words, the pauses, the natural function…comfortable with yourself, sure of yourself, being able to cope with your own inhibitions, getting them all out. Then once you've got all that intae a tight ball and you throw it to an audience, it goes past them (1996).

When learning the ballads from Traveller tradition, Sheila told us that if she could not put the *conniach* into a ballad, she would not be allowed to sing that ballad until she was ready for it, when her 'metabolism and voice and character could deal with that particular ballad.' According to Sheila, this is to do with respect. 'If you don't give it justice you're not allowed to sing it, with respect, you've got to respect them.'

What is important in a ballad performance in Sheila's view is that a person feels comfortable and relaxed when they are singing. Her own ability to convey the *conniach* depends entirely on the atmosphere and on the audience—that is, on her environment. Singing within her family is good, but singing in a noisy pub causes her to completely switch off:

> "I cannot sing the way I want to sing. I'm not relaxed, I'm uptight, because I'm no a pub person anyway. If I go to a folk festival the folk know what to do—that I'm an unaccompanied traditional ballad singer—I'm in my element. I know that people are there to listen to me and I just become myself, singing for me. And you can only transport the feeling that you have if you sing for yourself."

In Sheila's view, people should sing for themselves first, for the love of singing and not for anybody else. If people sing with the wrong intention, are uncomfortable, are behaving unnaturally by putting on 'airs and graces,' are singing a song that does not suit them, or if they are looking to get approval from an audience, then the *conniach* will not be conveyed, and a ballad experience will not occur.

> "If it's comin' straight from their heart then it comes to you as a natural function… I listen for the type of song they sing to see if that song or ballad suits them. Because there is songs and ballads people sing that they shouldnae sing. A really good singer is a person that sings from the heart and not from the asshole, you know what I mean, it sounds as if they're squeezing it out, trying to be perfective in their singing, instead of letting it come naturally."

For Sheila, the quality of the singing voice essentially does not matter as long as the singer has the right intention when singing. There would seem to be a very particular Traveller aesthetic, built on directness, right intention and the communication of the song itself, rather than on a self-aggrandising performance. This is not to say that humility or modesty is not involved; rather that it is respect for the songs and stories that must come first. 'Perfect' singing is not of primary

importance in the Traveller aesthetic. What is important for the *conniach* is the idea of 'unity'—of emotion, feeling and the voice:

> I've heard good singers sing rubbish and I've heard a bad singer sing beautiful. I like a singer to maybe make a mistake…a person you know is singing from the heart and no the head. That's what I look for. To me that's most important, and the heart, putting your heart into it, put volume into it, open your mouth and let the words hear, and the feeling for the song. If a singer goes up there and the *hair on my head stands*, which doesn't happen often, and *shivers goes up my spine listening to them*, everybody likes that singer. They have tae.

As Sheila remarks, this does not happen often. However, it is not rare for people to feel that music in particular has some kind of powerful physical effect on them—that it causes, for instance, bodily sensations associated with emotional response, such as 'chills.' Stanley talks about a 'frisson'—a shiver coming down the spine. In recent years there have been several studies into this phenomenon. Not all scholars of the expressive arts refer to this phenomenon in the same way, simply because it is so difficult to quantify or indeed qualify.[40] The neuroscientist Panksepp (1995: 173) notes that, despite its intriguing nature, 'the prickly skin response usually called "shivers", or "chills," has not received the experimental attention it deserves,' and that 'people rarely discuss the experience [because] there is no unambiguous referent for it.' But as Polkinghorne (1983: 280–281) reminds us, such experiences are closest to us, yet most resistant to our attempt to understand. Panksepp (1995: 172–173) describes the experience variously as: 'the tingly somatosensory feeling'; 'the provocative and often delightful bodily experiences that deeply moving passages of music arouse in many people'; a bodily "rush" commonly described as a spreading gooseflesh, hair-on-end feeling that is common on the back of the neck and head and often moves down the spine, at times spreading across much of the rest of the body.'

[40] See Levinson (2006); Goldstein (1980); Panksepp (1995); Sloboda (1999).

The fact that Sheila says that listeners 'have tae' like a singer that can do this is worthy of mention. A good performance elicits this involuntary bodily response that hooks us in before we even have time to think rationally about why our bodies are responding. In order to better understand this in the context of the experience of the *conniach* and of the *Maysie*, the next section will look to Maslow's account of 'peak experiences' in the case of musical experience and further to explanations of such experiences as 'somaesthetic' encounters.

Peak Experiences

The psychologist Maslow was interested in the fact that experiences traditionally associated with ecstatic religion or mysticism were in fact commonly reported in association with a wide variety of stimuli or situations having little or nothing to do with religious settings, such as 'experiences of the aesthetic, of the creative, of love, of sex, of insight' (1970: xi). He coined the term 'peak experience' for such occurrences. As has been often claimed, music can at times provide a substitute for the 'sacred,' for those who find themselves uncomfortable with the traditional demands of religion. Anthony Storr (1992: 155) notes that Nietzsche realised that for many people, 'the concert hall and the art gallery have replaced the church as places where the "divine" can be encountered.' On rare occasions, the effects of such experiences can be quite profound. When not at such a deep level, such experiences can nevertheless be positive in a variety of ways. Maslow's data clearly shows that the effects of profound experiences, including those of music, are long-lasting on those who have them. They can change an individual's sense of themselves and of their place in the world, positively and pervasively (1962: 774–82).

The effects of Maslow's peak experiences of music in particular were examined by Panzarella (1980), who collected and analysed written and aural descriptions of music peak experiences. Panzarealla's study does not make explicit the distinction between song and 'textless' music, however. It is surely an imperative to take into account the possible collateral effects of song lyrics and melody, because, as it will be argued in a later chapter, the experience of song and of music is cognitively very different. Nevertheless, interesting insights emerge from his source data that can relate to a study of the ballad experience.

Perception in peak experience can be relatively ego-transcending, resulting in a kind self-forgetfulness. There is often disorientation in time and space, or even the lack of consciousness of time and space. This kind of timelessness and spacelessness contrasts very sharply with normal experience. Panzarealla found that the responses fell into four major categories: 'renewal ecstasy,' 'motor-sensory ecstasy,' 'withdrawal ecstasy,' and 'fusion-emotional ecstasy.' In renewal ecstasy, people reported a new vision of the world; a world seen as better, more beautiful than it seemed before, even though it continues to contain all the tragic, imperfect aspects it always had done. In the motor-sensory ecstasy, people report a variety of bodily responses such as faster or slower heartbeat or breathing, shivers, chills, tinglings, goosebumps, sweating, a feeling of being 'high,' and in some cases even tears. The withdrawal ecstasy involved a loss of contact with both the physical and social environment. A 'perceptual narrowing' was observed to occur; sense of time becomes distorted and attention is riveted to the aesthetic stimulus. In the 'fusion-emotional' ecstasy, that attention takes on an intensely affective character, as the person feels emotionally connected or fused with the music. Such effects are

described by people who have encountered the ballad experience. Sheila, in describing the experience of the *conniach*, talks of 'going into oblivion,' of hair standing on end and of shivers in the spine.

The next section will look to the experience of the aesthetic, and in particular the idea of an embodied aesthetics and its relation to presence. While 'aesthetics' as a term is often understood to mean what is regarded as beautiful or appropriate in particular circumstances and situations, the aesthetic experience itself—as opposed to the *an*aesthetic experience—is conceived of as one in which our senses are operating at their peak, when we are present in the current moment, when we are resonating with the excitement of the thing we are experiencing and when we are fully alive.

Somaesthetics: Embodied Aesthetic Presence

Csíkszentmihályi, in his work *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (1990), believes that the aesthetic value of a work of art can be determined by its ability to produce 'vivid experiences' in its audience. Aesthetic appreciation has typically been described as an act of consciousness—that is, an act of *mind*. Such an account is not only inadequate, but distorted. Within an embodied world view, there is no consciousness without the body; appreciation can no longer be confined to a contemplative and objectifying act of consciousness. Similarly, the aesthetic object is not discrete and self-contained but both responds to and acts on the perceiving body. Several thinkers have made a case for aesthetic embodiment, which has powerful implications for aesthetic theory, leading to a somatically grounded understanding of aesthetic experience.

The body can be involved in aesthetic experience in fairly obvious ways, such as with art works that require the physical participation of the audience or interactive art in all its forms and degrees. However, there are also more subtle ways in which the human body is actively present and makes an essential contribution to the art work and its appreciation:

> The aesthetic body, as a receiver and generator of sense experience, is not static or passive but possesses its own dynamic force, even when inactive. Aesthetic embodiment is being *fully present* through the distinctive presence of the body with the sensory focus and intensity we associate with the experience of art. It is *being most completely human* (Berleant 2004: 88, my italics).

Embodiment conveys the active presence of the human body in appreciative experience. According to Merleau-Ponty, a body is a 'charged field'. A charged field suggests energy that reaches out; the body is a concentration of forces that is part of a 'field.' The aesthetic adds intense focus, charged meaning, and perceptual power, for embodiment is highly perceptual.

It would seem that if our emotional reactions reach a level of intensity sufficient to produce physiological response, the physiological and phenomenological effects are the natural culmination of the emotional perception itself, resulting in 'presence'. The underlying rationale may be that, as embodied beings, the responses we most admire are not those in which only mind, or only body, are involved. In Desmond's understanding (1995: 159), the quality of the aesthetic is the 'sensuous presence of being whole.' Theoretically, this idea is crucially important to the whole pursuit of understanding the ballad experience. What Desmond is saying, essentially, is that what is important is the aesthetic response of *the whole person*. Responses like this—those that are cognitive, emotional

and physiological all at once—are arguably of greater value than more limited or restricted aesthetic responses. To be most human, it appears, is to react to things, and perhaps especially works of art, with our *whole selves.*

Mindfulness: Being Present

In Desmond's view, the 'organic unity' of mind and body together becomes the sign of 'mindful being' (1995: 159). The importance of the Buddhist notion of 'mindfulness' was discussed in Chapter Three. The discovery of mindfulness in the West is not some encompassing insight into the nature of mind, but the realisation of just how disconnected humans normally are from their very experience. Experiences rapidly pass us by in a blur of constant commentary. We are not often 'mindful' of the present moment; rather, we are more absent-minded. From the perspective of embodied cognition,

> Mindfulness means simply that the mind is present in embodied everyday experience; its purpose is to help us become mindful, to experience what one's mind is doing as it does it, to 'be present with one's mind' (Varela et al. 1991: 23).

When we experience something that shocks us out of the ordinary, it is a moment of acute awareness.

> Musical experience is no…act of symbolic representation. [It] is, however, invariably and embodied practice…people make or listen to music for the experience of 'mindfulness' it affords…the way it is experienced, bodily (Bowman 2004: 41).

This idea of embodied aesthetics and mindfulness has been taken forward by Shusterman and developed into a new interdisciplinary field of study called 'somaesthetics.' His ultimate interest is to develop a practice that cultivates somatic awareness and reflective corporeal engagement and field of study in which bodily

practices are studied and reflectively pursued in disciplined ways. In light of these ideas, ballad 'presence' is, first and foremost, an aesthetic experience—one which is fully embodied; or rather, in Shusterman's terms, a 'somaesthetic' experience. A central appreciative value of ballad presence as a somaesthetic experience lies in the affirmation of wholeness it affords; of mind and body resonating together in response to a given performance.

In my view, conceiving of the ballad experience as a somaesthetic experience adds a crucial dimension to Porter's ideas about ballad presence and provides us with one direction to extend his theory; a direction that reflects the ideas and values of the paradigm of embodiment. Desmond (1990: 67, original emphasis) talks explicitly about the idea of 'presence' in embodied experience:

> We do not experience the artwork as set apart into sensation on the one side and something subjective on the other. We experience, stronger, we are stunned by something sensusous that is richly charged with expressive power. We witness the emergence of charged *presence*, at once stirring and elusive.

This 'presence,' characterised as the 'revelation of aesthetic' according to Desmond, simply cannot be exhausted by any set of finite determinate concepts. Instead, 'the plurivocity of being is intimated in the sensuous showing of *ambiguity* itself' (1990: 95, my italics).

The Temporality of the Aesthetic

The following sections explore relevant ideas in Gadamer's *Truth and Method* ([1960] 2004) which seek to articulate the very question of truth as it emerges in the

experience of art. Part of Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy seeks to draw out what he calls the 'temporality of art.'

Gadamer's argument is directed to showing that understanding—and the kind of 'truth' that belongs to it—has the character of an 'event': that is, something that belongs to the specific temporal nature of our human life. He argues that while any given cultural art work is a product of a particular era, we nevertheless always encounter an artwork, even from long ago, as 'immediately present' (xiii). He does not conceive of artistic communication as the passing of information from one person to another; rather, some subject matter becomes mutually accessible to two or more people, in a process more akin to communion. To attend to a person speaking, or in this case singing a ballad, is to *participate* in a temporal, aesthetic event.

Most importantly, the aesthetic event has its *own time*. Gadamer makes it clear that if we try to define the temporality of the work of art—the temporality of aesthetic presence—by speaking of two kinds of temporality—as Porter does—we are following what is, essentially, a false antithesis. The two kinds of temporality Gadamer refers to are the secular, or historical, and what is most often characterised as the 'sacred.' According to Harmon (2008: 50), 'secular time proceeds linearly toward a goal from a goal, while sacred time is the cyclic return of the past in the present.' Gadamer (2004: 120) argues that

> Only a Biblical theology of time, starting not from the standpoint of human understanding but of divine revelation would be able to speak of a "sacred time" and theologically legitimate the analogy between the timelessness of the work of art and this "sacred time."

To speak of sacred time without this kind of theological justification, Gadamer argues, actually obscures the real problem, which does not lie in the art work being 'removed from time' but rather creating its very own temporality. Rather than talk of sacred time, he prefers to talk of the 'temporality of the aesthetic' and makes an attempt to distinguish this temporality from transient, historical time. We need to ask, if not the 'sacred,' as Porter suggests, what kind of temporality is at work in aesthetic experience?

Art as *Play*

Gadamer, following Huizinga, starts from the premise that experiencing a work of art is a form of 'play.' [41] This to say that the work of art cannot be detached from its presentation, or enactment, in *time.* For Gadamer, play is most obvious in a religious ritual where the relation of community to the performance of the rite is essential to religious truth. This idea holds that the only purpose of play is the game itself, in which the players must 'lose themselves' if they are to achieve its end. This idea has been applied by Ó Laoire (2005: 34, my italics) in his studies of song and dance. He notes that

> In the to and fro hermeneutic of movement of play, Fes an intensified and truer vision of reality becomes apparent.

Inescapably, the presentation or event has a repetitive quality. Here, however, repetition does not mean that something is literally repeated. Rather, every repetition is understood to be new and original. The example Gadamer gives to

[41] Huizinga was a Dutch historian and one of the founders of modern cultural history. His seminal work *Homo Ludens* (1938) discusses the possibility that play is the primary formative element in human culture.

illustrate this point is that of festivals, which are essentially the same but always different in each enactment: simultaneously familiar, yet always new. A festival *only* exists in its being celebrated in time. The same is true of drama:

> It must be presented for the spectator, and yet its being is by no means just the point of intersection of the spectators' experiences. Rather, the contrary is true: the being of the spectator is determined by his 'being there present (121).

It is important to clarify what Gadamer means by 'being present.' In his understanding, this does not simply mean to be there along with something else that is there at the same time. To 'be present' is to *participate*, to *share.* This is immediately relevant in light of Porter's own prerequisite for presence in which it must be a shared, inter-responsive experience. Gadamer maintains that watching a drama in an involved way constitutes participating; in the same way, truly listening to a ballad being sung in a concentrated manner can be viewed as a genuine mode of participating in the event itself.

Moreover, according to Gadamer, 'being present' also has the character of 'being outside of oneself.' He understands this ecstatic condition as the positive possibility of being 'wholly something else.' This kind of 'being present' is a self-forgetfulness, and is anything but a private condition, because it arises out of devoting full attention to the matter at hand. This state, according to Gadamer, is the spectator's own positive accomplishment. The reason why some people will have what Maslow would call a 'peak experience' while others will not is that there is obviously a difference between a spectator who gives himself entirely to the 'play of art' and someone who merely watches out of vague curiosity.[42] Unless the spectator is really involved, there will be nothing for him to deeply reflect upon. This is not to say that instances of curiosity cannot effect the kind of self-forgetfulness described

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[42] Of course, there are many biological, contextual, educational and experiential factors at work here.

here; rather, what is important is expectancy, intention and involvement (119–122). In my own view, these ideas are illuminating in the context of understanding the *conniach* and the *Maysie.* Gadamer's 'being present' is clearly reminiscent of Maslow's accounts of peak experience, which also results in a kind of self-forgetfulness.

Contemporaneity

In order to further explain the temporality of the aesthetic and the idea of 'presence,' Gadamer discusses the idea of 'contemporaneity' (124). Contemporaneity belongs to the 'being' of a work of art, constituting the essence of 'being present'. Gadamer believes that aesthetic experience can only be rightly understood within 'the hermeneutic continuity of existence' (96), and understands contemporaneity as a 'task to be achieved.' This concept of contemporaneity comes from the theological philosophy of Kierkegaard (1844). For Kierkegaard, contemporaniety does not mean 'existing at the same time'. Rather, it names the task that confronts the religious believer:

> To bring together two moments that are not concurrent, namely one's own present and the redeeming act of Christ, and yet so totally to mediate them that the latter is experienced and taken seriously as present (and not as something in a distant past) (in Gadamer 2004: 124).

'Contemporaneity' in a Christian context then is the 'proclamation of the Word'; 'being present' means genuine participation in the redemptive act itself. Gadamer maintains that the same thing is basically true when we experience art. In the event of a particularly deep experience of art, two moments of time are brought together: our own present and the present of the work of art, and past and present are united in experience. New meanings are continually being created with every

new act of performance, which creates a powerful dialectic between old and new. According to Gadamer, this is a continual process in any tradition; where old and new combine into exciting entities of living value. Ballad singing effectively 'tests the limits of experience and consciousness by joining present with past and future, the living with the dead, and the here and now with the world beyond' (Porter & Gower 1995: 298).

Foley's (1991:7) idea of 'traditional referentiality' helps us understand the idea of contemporaneity in this case:

> Traditional referentiality…entails the invoking of a context that is enormously larger and more echoic than the text or work itself, that brings the lifeblood of generations of poems and performances to the individual performance or text.

Traditional referentiality is inherent in all traditional ballad texts; each performance or version is resonant with the depth and breadth of ballad singing across space and time. What is involved in this process is recognition of the song's 'pastness,' and with that, the illusion that the dialogue and characters of the ballad are voices of the past speaking in the present. What the ballad has to say is inevitably affected in a dialectical process by the contrast between life in the present and a sense of how things used to be. This fits in with the concept of tradition as a process of interpretation, attributing meaning in the present through making reference to the past.

Gadamer believes that the unity of past and present in aesthetic experience is self-contained, and crucially, that such an aesthetic experience has its *own sense of time*:

> What unfolds before us is so much lifted out of the ongoing course of the ordinary world and so much enclosed in its own autonomous circle of meaning that no-one is prompted to seek some other future of reality behind it (125).

In order to understand moments of 'presence,' this idea is illuminating. The moment of ballad performance creates 'an enclosed circle of meaning' that includes the present event, the past from which it came from and in some instances the pasts of all those who have sung the song before. Perhaps most importantly, it creates its *own* time. Porter's explanation that presence creates sacred or ritual time, a time when normal, measurable time is suspended and another imaginative world with its own time, embraced (2009: 181). In light of Gadamer's ideas of aesthetic time, this qualification makes far more sense.

People who experience the heightened levels of engagement that can occur when a skilled singer, poet, or storyteller speaks, opening up a circuit between the performer and the audience, the past and the present, and the human and the divine, know that singing a song and hearing it well-performed *is not* simply enjoying a pleasurable experience: it is engaging in a communally creative act.

Aesthetic Experience: Example of the Tragic

Gadamer uses the example of the tragic aesthetic to illustrate his ideas about the temporality of art and play. The tragic is a fundamental aesthetic phenomenon; it is a structure of meaning that does not exist only in Greek tragedy, but in other artistic genres as well. This example is particularly useful here in the context of the traditional ballads, some of which are, by nature, very tragic. 'The Dowie Dens of Yarrow' is an example of the tragic at work in the ballad. The beauty and the horror of this narrative song—the way in which it brings together the themes of love and death—is poignant and effective, evidenced by the ballad's ubiquity and popularity.

It is the story of deep suffering, the story of events that should never have happened, of intense and reasonless human sadness. It would violate both historical reality and poetic truth were the hero to win, though in another sense the ballad is also a poetic prophecy of the conditions of that victory. This is the quality of the Yarrow ballad, which elevates the narrative to tragedy in its full sense. It is the tragic content that guides the internal poetic truth of the ballad and makes it more than just the relating of a poignant incident, and here it become 'a symbol of the duality that structures this ballad and the world view out of which it grows' (Rogers 1980: 103).

> As art, songs provided an escape valve and, in some ways, I believe they continue to serve both performers and listeners in this way. They may be disturbing, as indeed all works of power are, but art's purpose often acts to unsettle us, while at the same time giving us delight and pleasure. This contradictory impasse seems to me at the heart of what art is, and so continues to give the songs I sing a unique and potent charge (Ó Laoire 2006: 98–99)

Blacking too is of the same opinion with regards to music at large. One of the features of musical experience, he claims, is that people become aware that 'opposing' phenomena are in fact different aspects of the same thing and that all 'spring from a single source' (Blacking 1969: 63)

> A profound truth about life is that almost all conditions encountered are of mixed character. We are aware of the bad, if only peripherally, even when firmly engaged with the good, and one glimpses the good even when caught up in the bad, intermingled as they are in virtually anything...The mutual focusing of positive and negative elements that results arguable ends up enhancing the appreciation of whatever good is being enjoyed. The essential poignancy of human life, one may suggest, resides in its mixed nature, in the indissociable union of its joys and its ills, the inescapable commingling of its pluses and minuses (Levinson 2006).

Similar thoughts are to be found in Nietzsche, as Storr (1992: 158) observes:

> Nietzsche realized—no one more vividly—that the only life we know is constituted by opposites. Pleasure is inconceivable without pain; light without darkness; love

> without hate; good without evil...This is why the greatest art always includes tragedy.

A deep, profoundly moving experience of music can somehow yield an altered perception of the world, in which the paradox of simultaneous good and evil is not seen as something to be overcome but as something to be accepted.

Aristotle's seminal theory of tragedy, according to Gadamer (2004), serves to exemplify the structure of aesthetic being as a 'whole.' This whole is a conceptual whole—the reconciliation of oppositions—rather than the sense of whole as discussed above in the context of embodiment. 'Tragedy' is the unity of a tragic discourse of events that is experienced as a unity. It is outwith the scope of this thesis to outline Aristotle's theory of tragedy in detail. What is important to make clear in this case is the fact that in Aristotle's definition of the essence and culmination of tragedy, 'the spectator is an essential element in the kind of play we call aesthetic' (Gadamer 2004: 125). The spectator effectively participates in the communion of 'being present.' What is experienced is something truly common:

> To see that 'this is how it is' is a kind of self knowledge for the spectator, who emerges with new insights from the illusions in which he, like everyone else, lives. The tragic affirmation is an insight that the spectator has by virtue of the continuity of meaning in which he places himself (128).

The tragic has a specific effect on the spectator, to 'overwhelm man and sweep him away.' Aristotle talks of *phobos*, which is not just a state of mind, but a cold shudder that makes the blood run cold and makes us shudder. While *phobos* is associated with fear and the moment of terror, it is a useful concept the context of the ballad experience because it refers not just to an inner state but also its bodily

manifestation. In other words, it sounds very like the descriptions of the *Maysie* and the *conniach*.

In Gadamer's view, such an event elicits ecstatic self-forgetfulness in the same way as a religious rite and that this experience of art has the 'character of genuine communion' (128). This thesis explores the idea that this moment creates a new space or time in which we are confronted with the truths of human existence:

> For it is the *truth* of our own world—the religious and moral world in which we live—that is presented before us and in which we recognise ourselves. The absolute moment in which a spectator stands is both one of self forgetfulness and mediation with himself. What rends him from himself at the same time gives him back the *whole* of his being (125, my italics).

According to Blacking (1969: 64), the ultimate value in music lies in its 'power to restore and develop man's sense of being.' Blacking (1976: 34) claims that music can create a world of 'virtual time' in which things are no longer subject to time and space.[43] Blacking's claims make sense in the context of Gadamer's philosophy, in that this 'virtual time' exists in the self-forgetfulness effected by music and in the enclosed circle of meaning that is created. It is within this closed circle of meaning that we experience what is often called 'sacred time,' reconfigured by Gadamer to be called 'aesthetic temporality'.

Aesthetic temporality is characterised by the fact that it is *enacted*. In this sense, we can refer to both aesthetic time and ritual time as enacted time, whether or not this is based on theological assumptions. Such a mode of time is in contrast to the concept of time understood as the separation of past, present and future. The concept of measured, linear time is one that facilitates our understanding of the

[43] The philosopher Langer (1953: 109) first used the term 'virtual time' to refer to the quality of time passing more slowly or more quickly than clock time.

physical processes in our environment, such as the changing of the seasons, or watching people grow older. In this context, the past is terminal and the future is inaccessible; they are both non-existent in the present. By contrast, enacted time reckons time in a different way. In Christian ritual, in the moment of enactment,

> Time is a ritual now that contains within itself all of the past, the present of the originary, paradigmatic and eschatological event that is being enacted (Begbie 2000: 43).

Musical Time

Music is often the natural partner of ritual enactment because it is the embodied experience of this alternative reckoning of time. Theology reveals this reckoning through theoretical reasoning, but, arguably, music reveals it through direct experience (Begbie 2002). In musical experience, we discover the simultaneity of the different modes of time through an immersion in the immediacy and fullness of the present. This is because musical metre is not measurement of discrete units, but the continuous flow of an indivisible whole, each present moment of which both rises out of its past and moves towards its future, while containing in itself all its past and all its future.

A melody is first and foremost an ordering of acoustic events in time. Every note sounds not only itself but also its relationship with what has been sounded and with what is yet to be sounded. Because every musical note contains within itself all its dynamic meaning, all its movement away from and toward, we hear immediacy of its present sounding all its pasts and all its future. When we hear a melody, for example, we do not hear the first tone, then another, then another in isolated succession; we do not hear it in fragmented pieces, but holistically. In fact, when we dwell on past tones or imagine future ones we lose engagement with it. The inter-

penetration of past, present and future, then, exists in the hearing of a note. 'Melody' can be seen is a kind of temporal *gestalt*. In musical metre, the past requires no remembering and future no foreseeing because both are already, immediately and fully present within each moment. We hear what is, what has been and what will be as a 'simultaneity'—the key is in grasping the 'now' of the music. To be actively in the note now sounding is to be caught up in the dynamic tension between its present and its future (Zuckerkandl 1973: 94).

The presence of past and future within the now of the music's flow does not depend upon human psychological powers of remembering and foreseeing: it is not memory that stores the past, but *time itself* (Begbie 2002). This is to say that in the hearing of music, we discover that the present is not a line dividing past from future. 'Musical' hearing is neither remembrance of the past nor foreknowledge of the future, but *presence to* and *participation in* 'another imaginative world with its own time' (Porter 2009: 181). Melody's role in the ballad experience is to help us enter this time between—this enclosed circle of meaning—through an *embodied* experience.

> Music reveals its existence as the flow of time…indeed, there is hardly a phenomenon that can tell us more about time and temporality than can music (Begbie 2002: 152).

Past, Present, Future: Living in the Presence of Enacted Time

In both music and ritual enactment, being and becoming meet in a single moment of *now*, a moment that is temporal but not timebound (in the clock sense), and immediate but far reaching in both past and future. By the term 'moment' I do not mean a discrete clock determined measurement; 'moment' must be understood here in terms of enacted time of ritual and music, a time that, although it has no

measurement, has limitless meaning. Through both ritual enactment and music, we encounter the meaning of now through the direct presence of its past and future references. Furthermore, we actively create this presence through engagement in the dialectic of memory (past) attention (present) and expectation (future). This can be understood by reference to Ricouer's hermeneutic model, which shows us how every new enactment is made present, and yields new understandings—an idea that will be further explored in later chapters.

Ó Laoire relates the potential to enter enacted time to the situated event, following Gadamer in arguing that art, and especially music, should not be separated from its context. It is the location, in Ó Laoire's (2005: 38, my italics) view, that is important:

> The preparation of a special place creates a special time, the *extended present*, spurring the participants toward a new description of reality.

The Extended Present

Aesthetic experience was defined above as being an experience in which we are 'present' in the current moment. The pragmatist philosopher James (1950: 608) believes that the idea of the 'present' as a separate moment is 'an altogether ideal abstraction, not only never realized in sense, but probably never even conceived of by those unaccustomed to philosophic meditation.' James put forward the concept of the 'specious present,' the time duration in which a state of consciousness is experienced as being in the present. This lived-through or extended present can be understood as a specious present tied to the past and to the future.

> The knowledge of some other part of the stream, past or future, near or remote, is always mixed in with our knowledge of the present thing' (James 1950: 606).

The whole present is therefore absolutely inaccessible. In the ballad singing experience '…performance synchronizes the tradition…[by] making the tradition "present" and experiential (Porter 2009: 181). The core unifying aspect, then, is the present. It is from the present - the '*here* and *now*' - that we can think of the past and of the future; it is from the present that action is planned for performance in the external world through kinaesthetic movements; it is from the present that the chain of memories and anticipations that characterise the life of consciousness originates; it is to the present that the 'essentially actual' experiences are tied.

Time as Shared Experience, Presence as Ontological Unity

Crucially, the experience of time is always a shared experience. Bergson, philosopher of time, went as far as to claim that time *is* experience (1946). If culture is shared experience, as most anthropological interpretations accept (with or without some qualification), it is shared experience not of things or events, but of time itself. It makes absolutely no sense to talk of 'time passing' or of 'experience' except as a shared phenomenon: if time was not a shared experience, we could not know what time *is*. A familiar paradox arises: personal experience of time is highly private, but the experience of time, cannot in principle be bound to subjective states. By extension, it is necessary that co-existence is a *temporal* co-existence. Bergson's idea of 'culture' is in fact the idea of 'socialised time' actualised in experienced duration, or to use his own French term, in the *durée.* According to Bergson, for human beings to have an existence outside their inner world, they must construct an external reality. We use the method of scientific measurement, which Bergson

characterises as 'the spatialisation of time,' to reconstruct the lived experience of *durée*.

There are two commonly accepted frameworks for defining time. First, time is understood as the demarcation of past, present, and future; and second, as the counting of hours, minutes and seconds. The concept of time as the separation of past, present and future is one that facilitates our understanding of physical processes, such as the turning of the autumn leaves. In this context, the past is terminal and the future inaccessible; they are non-existent in the present. However, this first framework raises more uncertainty than clarity about time, for its three divisions are in constant flux: the future is continually becoming the present that is continually becoming the past. The second framework for defining time—as the counting of hours, minutes and seconds—is an artificially established construct. This, essentially, is a measure of movement, and deals not with time, but with *space.* It measures the amount of motion one body makes in relation to another—as for example, the earth turning round the sun. Within this framework, change creates time; that is, the turning of the earth on its axis produces the hours by which we calculate it. In other words, though real living goes on in the indivisible realm of *durée,* the world is broken into segments so we can explain, analyse and even understand the nature of our experiences in the common frameworks outlined above. Although the conscious reconstruction of our experience distorts them, this distortion is inevitable, because of the impossibility of ever halting the flow of *durée*. Bergson is acutely aware that since time is dynamic, as soon as we attempt to measure a moment, it is already gone. Time broken down into measurable units is constructed 'spatialised time,' and not true duration.

For Bergson, the key to reality is that all change (time and movement) should be treated as indivisible. He defines *durée* as this indivisible mobility: in the *durée*, experiences flow incessantly, realising a succession of indistinct elements, a continuous change of conscious states produced by the interpenetration of qualitative moments. These elements structure themselves and interpenetrate like the notes of a melody where every note extends into the next in an organic, unbroken whole. Culture is always in motion; it is grounded in experienced time and driven by creativity in constant motion. The view of the world as impermanent is accepted in eastern philosophies—that all of conditioned existence, without exception, is in a constant state of flux. True time and true reality do not consist of 'states,' since states imply immobility. However, because *durée* is ineffable, the way toward understanding it cannot be expressed adequately through language or symbol. In Bergson's view, it is inexpressible and can only ever be grasped through a simple intuition of the imagination. At every moment of our imagining, whether productive or merely receptive, a certain phase of the imagined world appears as present and refers both backward to earlier phases and forward to later ones.

The 'Vivid Present'

The social phenomenologist Schütz (1964) utilises Bergson's idea of *durée*, emphasising the nature of its importance in the communicative process of music and musical experience. He believes that 'communicating with one another presupposes…the simultaneous partaking of the partners in various dimensions of outer and inner time…' (178). Subjective time in the everyday life-world is characterised by the encounter between inner *durée* and spatialised cosmic time.

Schütz conceives of a new temporal perspective born of the fusion of *durée* with cosmic time; a new flux which he calls the 'vivid present.'

In light of Schütz's transformation of Bergson's ideas, we can reconfigure these ideas and think of 'presence' to be synomymous with the 'vivid present.' In this sense, presence itself creates a new and imaginary dimension of time. The ballad experience has the potential to reveal to us the timelessness of the inner *durée* and removes the boundaries of the outer world time. Schütz contends that we can grasp the Other's lived experience in the 'vivid present' simultaneously with our own stream of consciousness. This is to say, in the case of ballad 'presence,' while the other is singing and structuring his experience in his inner time, we listen to the words step by step, following our own stream of consciousness. 'Simultaneity,' then, is not a concept that refers merely to external time but is especially connected to inner time. For communication, a relationship is established by reciprocal sharing of the other's flux of experience in inner time by living through a vivid present *together*.

The 'vivid present' exists in the intersection between *durée* and cosmic time, *between* inner and outer worlds. In finding a way to talk about time, we can set up a series of dichotomies or binary oppositions: between inner and outer, qualitative and quantitative, internal and external, past and future, spatialised and non-spatial, flux and ordered, measurable and immeasurable, public and private. Porter's concept of presence can be understood to exist in the intersection *between* these dichotomies. In my own view, we can think of presence of creating and occupying that liminal space *between*; between inner and outer worlds, between past and present. It collapses the walls of time and space, transcends or hovers between polarities of existence. If we

re-call the words of Stanley Robertson, this is what he tells us: '…and the space that's in between is where the *Maysie* lives.'

In an attempt to proceed from lived experience to an explanation of lived experience in language, it becomes necessary in terms of philosophy to find, invent or create a metaphorical realm to account for the meaningful. However, if we forget that we are working in the metaphorical realm, the distinction between what is literal and what is metaphorical can break down, and we are at risk of falling into the trap of false logic. It is important to be wary of the danger of the analytic conflation of the metaphorical and the literal, when our language does not embody such a distinction or bear such a conflation. The problem lies in the false sense of understanding brought about. It must be made clear that the new ideas presented here are a *fiction*. Some would argue that subscribing to such fictions or holding them up as 'true' is dangerous, because

> It increasingly appears as if we are dealing with profound and serious questions of human existence, wrestling with mysterious and ethereal qualities, which we know to exist and yet are always, tantalisingly beyond our reach … there remains a fairytale quality to the play of these fantasies (Costelloe 1994).

Ricoeur does not see such a fiction as a lie; he would rather conceive of a product that can lead us to new ideas and new understandings (1981: 246). As long as we are aware of the limitations of language, all is not lost. What is presented here are new ideas that can further our understanding and tell us something *new* about the ballad singing experience.

Chapter Four: Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to identify gaps and possible openings in Porter's theory, unpacking the term 'presence' using insights from a variety of philosophical and fieldwork sources. The fascinating notion of the *conniach* was introduced to shed some light on the phenomenon from the point of view of the singer in a Scottish Traveller context. The importance of the aesthetic experience, of the total somatic experience, or our whole selves was emphasised in order to provide justification for exploring Gadamer's investigation of aesthetic time. Gadamer showed us that art is a form of 'play,' or rather a temporal 'event' in which we participate. This event creates a closed circle of meaning by bringing two disparate events together and creates a state of self-forgetfulness in the participant. The idea of participation, or sharing, is crucial to the dynamic and process of presence. The notion of 'enacted time'—which can be explained in both theological or aesthetic contexts—helps explain the special time of presence within a humanist framework. The echoes of religious experience and parallels with theological ideas point not to a divergence of experience but rather, as Maslow believed, experience that lies at the heart of what is means to be *human.*

The importance of the idea of 'unity' made itself apparent in several ways. It is central in descriptions and explanations of the *conniach* with its trinity or unity of emotion, feeling and voice, and with the particular power of aesthetic experiences that engage our whole selves—body *and* mind. In a hermenetutic context, it manifested in the unity of the enclosed circle of meaning created by aesthetic experience in Gadamer's explanation of the temporality of the aesthetic, in the unity

of opposites in our experience of art given in the example of the tragic and in 'emplotment'—our desire to make sense of experience by creating a unified meaningful whole.

In order to answer the question of how we become so immersed in the ballad experience to be able to 'presence imagined worlds,' we need to explore the relationship between presence and *sound.* The following chapter examines the dynamics of the embodied experience of the performed singing event.

CHAPTER FIVE 5

"Oh What a Voice, What a Voice, what a Voice I hear": 'Deep Listening' and the Ballad Experience [44]

This chapter turn to the relationship between presence and our experience of *sound*, examining the dynamics of the embodied experience of the performed singing 'event.' Studying sound is necessarily related to the act of listening. Based on the assumption that our experience of being-in-the-world is always being-*with* and that mind and body, self and world and self and other are intertwined in a unitary whole, listening must be understood as an act of the body and, by extension, must necessarily take into account other bodies. This chapter concentrates on *aural* experience, but ultimately, the kind of holism aimed for goes beyond our sense of aurality, pointing toward the need to address the entire sensory spectrum.

The focus on listening is a relatively new direction in the study of culture at large, reflecting in a shift in focus from the object to the role of the subject in the creation of meaning (discussed in Chapter Two). If the *Maysie* is said to exist in the ethereal, transient performance space between singer and listener, we must surely ask the extent to which the *listener* recreates the song in the listening, as much as the singer does in the performing. Before the main argument is developed, the notion of 'deep listening' (Becker 2004) will be introduced. For context, limitations of 'ocularcentric'[45] scholarship and the Western cultural bias will be laid forth. In attempt to move beyond such scholarship, post-phenomenological theories about

[44] The quotation here is in reference to the title of a traditional song sung my Lizzie Higgins, Scottish Traveller.

[45] The term 'ocularcentrism' was popularised by Martin Jay (1994) in which he identifies vision as a philosophical buttress to Western thought.

the experience of sound from the post-phenomenologists Don Idhe ([1976] 2007) and Jean-Luc Nancy (2007) will be introduced and discussed. Such works seek to understand how sound impacts upon the body, attempting to reunite 'sensation' with 'understanding.' The semantic difference between hearing and listening will be clarified, and the idea of a *habitus* of listening—a culturally situated mode of listening —will be developed. The idea of *song* as sounding presence will be explored and used to develop ideas about 'enacted time' from the previous chapter. The idea of the 'presence of silence' is also questioned: in an embodied sense, is silence ever possible?

Following ideas developed in Chapter Four, listening is understood here as an act of participation. Porter (2009:148, my italics) advocates that what is important in the study of ballad presence is not just the textual content,

> the gesture, the *existential act* that envelops singer and audience and makes "present" the imagined world the singer is creating.'

The *conniach* was described by Sheila Stewart as the feeling it elicits in those who hear it. 'You put your own emotions and feelings into what you're singing and that gets across to the folk…and makes them listen, *involves* them.' The idea of listening as an 'existential act'—enveloping both singer and listener—is key to the development of ideas here. While there is a stark divergence in the demands and experience of performing and listening, this chapter argues that there is a deep indissoluble connection between the performance of music and its reception through listening. In this vein, the act of listening is considered in the context of Nancy's rethinking of existential phenomenology and fundamental ontology of the singular-plural.

The final section asks how listening opens to a notion of internal and external worlds and investigates the capacity of the ear to reveal, 'make present' or

rather 'create' imagined worlds—an idea rooted in the phenomenology of auditory experience.

Deep Listening

'Deep Listening' is a notion which Becker (2004) appropriates from the composer Pauline Oliveros. The term conjoins musical expression and the emotional impact of musical expression:

> Deep listening involves going below the surface of what is heard and also expanding on the whole field of sound, whatever one's usual focus might be. Such forms of listening are essential to *unlocking layers and layers of imagination, meaning and memory* (Becker 2004: 2, my italics)

A 'deep listener,' then, is a term for a person who is deeply moved by listening to music or an oral performance—a piece of classical music, a certain pop song, a folk performance for example. Some of us, it would seem, are more disposed than others to the act of deep listening. Many of us will be able to bring to mind an experience of singing that has deeply moved us, whether we were singing ourselves or were part of an audience. We may say that a certain song 'resonated' with us, or 'struck a chord'—both examples of metaphors grounded in bodily experience. Becker understands deep listening as a kind of secular 'trancing,'

> divorced from religious practice but often carrying religious sentiments such as feelings of transcendence or a sense of communion with something beyond oneself (2).

The idea of communion in aesthetic experience was explored in the previous chapter, and will be revisited in this context.

Being 'All Ears'

In 'deep listening,' it is not just sound that is important. In an interesting discussion with Professor Foley,[46] it was agreed that what is most important in expressive culture is the live, dynamic, participatory and embodied nature of such events rather than the purely oral or sonic. In other aesthetic experiences—such as dance—sound may not be to the fore. It is important to stress that the wider ideas and discourses engaged with are not reliant on phonocentric assumptions.[47]

Shusterman's philosophy of somaesthetics, discussed in the previous chapter, attempts to develop an understanding that allows us to relate to the world with both body and mind in a more complex way than through cerebral interpretation alone. Shusterman takes 'interpretation' to refer to deliberate reflection or decipherment that construct an understanding of their object (2000). Bowman (2004: 41), an advocate for a somaesthetics of music, claims that 'we feel melodies in our muscles as much as we process them in our brains.' That is to say, sounds that enter the ear affect both body *and* mind. Sound does things to bodies at a visceral level; our ears are not alone in responding. Since the ear has no eyelid, sound cannot be blocked out or ignored - our whole being is involved in listening, just as it is involved, as will be argued, in interpreting what it hears. The idea of 'being all ears' is to articulate the idea of the 'total somaesthetic experience,' where both body and mind are immersed entirely in deep listening.

[46] Personal Communication, (2010).
[47] This does bear significance for an understanding of listening in general for the experience of those with hearing difficulties. Deaf people do in some sense 'listen' – they can feel the resonance of bass frequencies in their bodies (see Idhe 2007: 44–45). For a broader discussion of bodily listening see Ingold (2000: 274–276).

Cultural Bias

It has been argued that a Western cultural bias has constructed the voice and the body as the 'radical alterity of the logos and the mind,' ascribing only meaning to the mind and implicitly imposing value judgements. This assumption is deeply ingrained in twentieth century thinking (Dolar 1996: 7).[48] Essentially, we are working within a disciplinary trajectory that has always emphasised 'rendering the poetic visible':

> We have concentrated on verbal art as it emanates from the mouth and travels through the communicative channel, capturing it before it disappears into the mysterious tunnels and crevices of the ear (Bendix 2000: 36).

The concept of 'ocularcentrism' describes a tendency in Western modernity to ascribe particular primacy to vision above the other human senses. In the English language, there is an alignment of 'the eye' (vision) with the Cartesian *cogito* to signify rational knowledge: the observer is a seat of awareness, bounded by the skin and set against an exterior world. Such a view has only recently been challenged by an 'anti-ocular' turn in twentieth century continental philosophy. Vision, according to anti-ocularcentrism, is the one modality of perception that leads us to objectify our environment, regarding it as a repository of things that exist outside of and alien to our own bodies, and over which we exercise domination. To be ocularcentric is to adhere to an objective world independent of and external to human consciousness, to which the observer gains admission by the authority of the eye. In the twentieth century, European (and particularly French) scholarship mounted a thoroughgoing

[48] A good example is that of Barthes (1977), who made the assumption that the phonic bodily dimension of the human voice—its 'grain' as he called it—has only pleasurable and 'pre-semiotic' connotations. In my opinion there is a fundamental misunderstanding underpinning Barthes' idea of the meaninglessness of the voice as a sonic medium produced by the body, in that he mistakes language for communication.

critique of ocularcentrism, though arguably this recent 'denigration' of vision has paradoxically served to reaffirm its centrality.[49] That is to say, the only tools we have at hand to critique ocularcentrism are ocularcentric in nature, much in the same way that there are fundamental problems in understanding quantum physics: we are part of the quantum field and as such we can never step outside of it in order to observe it.

Such inherited preferences for writing and print are difficult to shake off. This bias has been particularly evident in the undervaluing of oral traditions as compared to their literary counterparts, and a preference for the written is particularly pertinent in ballad studies, as discussed in Chapter Two. Even folklorists studying oral culture have striven to render the performative in print in the interest of adding oral literatures to the canons of written. In my own view, text-centred literary analysis fails to address how a reader is moved by a great work of literature and at best 'skirts the issue of the culturally divergent pleasures of listening and embodied experience' (Bendix 2000: 36). Such works attend to the message; the physicality and embodied experience of sound is bypassed on the way to signification. In my view, the ocularcentric scholarly fixation with text and textualising, combined with the paucity of interdisciplinary vocabulary to address the aural, have impoverished much of the ethnographic record of the ballad singing experience. The ethnomusicologist Stoller (1984: 561,567) proposes that

> Sound is a dimension of experience in and of itself…A deeper appreciation of sound could…make us consider in a new light the dynamic nature of sound, an open door to the comprehension of cultural sentiment.

[49] Derrida (1978), for instance, holds that the binary of darkness and light is the founding metaphor of Western philosophy: 'the entire history of our philosophy is a photology, the name given to a history of, or treatise on, light.'

Orality: Presence of the Word

In the study of orality, some attempts have been made to overcome this bias. Ong (1967) first drew attention to the significant 'presence of the word'—that is, the meaningful sensuous dimension of speech—claiming that the human being communicates with his whole body. Ong's provocative exploration of the nature and history of the 'word' in some of its social, psychological, literary, phenomenological, and religious dimensions argues that the word is initially *aural* and in the last analysis always remains sound; it cannot be reduced to any other category. Ong (1967: 129–130) therefore posits sound as the most important factor in his own theory of presence, claiming that 'being is what we experience in a world of sound.'

His major interest was in exploring how the transition from orality to literacy influenced culture and changed human consciousness. However, it is very difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between what constitutes the 'oral' and what constitutes the 'written.' Not to understand this as a continuum (or perhaps better, a to-and-fro movement between two never fully discrete modalities) is to participate in a Romantic and Whiggish historiography with its embedded value judgements on the relative positions of the written and the oral: that is, the prestige of writing versus the 'authenticity' of oral.[50] Ong claims that the transition from oral to written communication in stages of cultural development entails what he calls the 'loss' of presence. For Ong, people in a primarily oral culture hear words not as things, as though they were *looking* at them, but as sound, sound that consumed them. He conceives sound as an 'event manifesting power and personal presence.' By 'presence,' Ong understands 'the kind of relationship that

[50] This is a huge field of study in its own right. See Havelock (1988).

exists between persons when we say that two persons are present to one another.' With presence, he believes, we 'gain an immediacy and a certain kind of relevance' (646). In his view, sound, unlike vision, envelops us in a multidimensional presence:

> Vision comes to a human being from one direction at a time: to look at a room or landscape, I must move my eyes around…When I hear, however, I gather sound simultaneously from every direction at once. I am the centre of my auditory word, which envelops me, establishing me at a kind of core of sensation and existence (72).

Presence, in the full sense of Ong's understanding, entails more than 'sensation'; it is grounded in all of the bodily senses simultaneously. We speak of a 'sense' of presence, rather than a sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch of presence (646).

Ong was above all concerned to contrast the properties of speech and writing. A possible shift in perspective here is rather to conceive of these contrasting properties as the difference between *hearing* and *vision*. Ong's arguments are provocative in that he asserts that typography 'subverted' the 'proper' power of the word. Arguably, this standpoint is short-sighted in that it does not allow for how typography could potentially enhance that power in the intricate interplay of media we have today.[51] Similar ideas are explored in Abram's *Spell of the Sensuous* (1996), where he argues that literacy served to narrow the circle of communication to the human voice. We still 'hear' things talking to us while reading, we hear voices, see visions, travel across space and back in time.[52] Literacy makes possible abstract thought itself; but, Abram argues, we pay a big price for such spellbinding logomancy: we forsake our bodies and come to live in our heads. Literate

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[51] Finnegan (1977) maintains that if we are to use words accurately, we should speak of a continuum between 'orality' and 'orality plus a full deployment of the resources of literary and mass communication.'

[52] There are different kinds of reading. For example, very fast reading *is* visual and oversteps the phonetic centres in our brain. See Dehaene (2009) for a cognitive neuroscientist's guide of how the brain acquires reading.

consciousness—abetted by Plato and Descartes—creates the subject/object, mind/body and nature/culture dichotomies of Western thought. It also creates the form/matter dichotomy. That is because words in themselves are neither a sound nor a sight, once they can be both heard and seen. The meaning (form) of a word is abstracted from both its audible and visible embodiments (matter). The vowel sounds, made by breath passing through the larynx, animate a text—literally. Breath is air. As Abram notes, in the ancient way of thinking at the boundary of orality and literacy that survived in the earliest Greek philosophy (the Anaximenes), 'air' is 'soul.' This is still echoed in the etymology of the English word 'spirit' which is cognate with 'respire.' Abram's claim is that modalities of human consciousness correlate with modalities of human communication, and that fundamental changes in modalities of human communication—as from orality to literacy—are accompanied by profound changes in human consciousness.

Our modern society and modern technologies have moved far beyond the original cultures Ong and Abram talk of in which the 'word' acquired its powerful meaning. It could also be argued that in the literary context, the move to print results in the hibernation rather than the complete loss of presence, because that text can always be brought back to presence in the act of speech, or indeed song. Gadamer (2004: 394–395) believes that all writing is a kind of 'alienated speech,' and its signs need to be transformed back into speech and meaning through the process of interpretation and dialogue with the text.

> In writing, the meaning of what is spoken exists purely for itself, completely detached from all emotional elements of expression and communication (392).

It could perhaps be argued that collected ballad texts are alienated in a similar way, and need to be transformed not only in the act of reading but performed and shared in live experience.

Contemporary Philosophical Theories

Moving past the dominance of visual categories and into a phenomenology of sound, listening and embodied presence, phenomenological enquiries have sought to go against the grain of tradition. Prominent here are Don Idhe's ([1976] 2007) exploration of listening and voice and Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophical enquiry *Listening* (2007) which investigates the philosophical ramifications of sound and its relationship to the human body. Nancy is interested in the ways in which the subject listening is constituted in its relations to, or *with* the sound itself. For Idhe, listening is always 'listening *to*' (23). On Nancy's model of co-existence and being as being-with, the act of listening is always listening-*with* rather than listening *to*.

Nancy's ideas have been taken up by Simpson (2009), who explores a classical music performance. In my own view, Nancy's ideas offer a particularly insightful route into and a conceptual means with which we can begin to characterise these listening events, and by extension build upon our understandings of the ballad presence. In the ballad experience, there exists a plurality of relations: relations between the listeners' body and the sound encountered, and between those bodies simultaneously experiencing the sound together. Listening evokes a complex of physiological, emotional and reasoned responses. Nancy describes the body like an 'echo chamber,' responding to music through inner vibrations as well as outer attentiveness. His ideas are explored and applied in the following sections.

'Hearing' and 'Listening'

It is important to distinguish between 'hearing' and 'listening,' for in some contexts they are semantically very different. Barthes (1986), in his short writings around music and listening, devalues the significance of 'hearing'—the physiological —suggesting it is something shared with animals, something 'primitive,' while 'listening,' conceived of as the interpretation of a sign, is what makes us human (249). 'Interpretation' here is taken to refer to those acts of conscious thought and deliberate reflection that construct an understanding of an object. There is a tension set up here between the language of meaning and its pre-verbal status of sound. That is to say, Barthes underplays the significance of the physiological form of hearing as a bodily experience. This is generally the case in studies of music and sound.

In Nancy's view, 'hearing' is physiological. There are not different modes of hearing as it were, but there are of listening—listening is an existential 'act.' He argues convincingly that we can listen without intentionally interpreting what we hear and that sounds can affect us powerfully *before* signification.[53] His decentring of interpreted meaning in this case suggests being attentive to the sound itself. This not to say that people will not interpret or find meaning in sound, but rather that there is something of significance in un-interpreted experiences. Ó Laoire (2005: 214) would argue that this stance prioritises 'modes of being' over 'modes of knowing.'

[53] This idea is not new. Many Romantic poets believed that imaginative literature communicates by means of words that are felt before they are understood. This conception of poetic thinking as fundamentally pre-rational (if not altogether anti-rational) is taken up by Keats, who, in a single verse couplet of 'Sleep and Poetry,' conveys his sense of wonder at

> '[t]he hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
> Into the brain ere one can think upon it.'

Shusterman (2000) believes that it is possible to have a 'sense' of an experience without necessarily having to think about it, and without having to intentionally interpret that experience. With this deeper appreciation of sound experience, we can 'open doors to the comprehension of cultural sentiment' (Stoller 1984:567). While it might be difficult to do this in an alien culture, with deep reflection, such an appreciation certainly opens a door to the understanding of our own.

Habitus of Listening

Becker (2004: 71) proposes that we need a term which is the 'aural equivalent of the visual term for modes of seeing, that is, *the gaze*.' The term 'gaze' is used in a variety of contexts to exemplify the situatedness of looking, the historical and psychological specificity of any one visual approach, and the complex of modes of seeing with rhetorical and structures and beliefs. Modes of *seeing* imply habits of seeing that change not only across space, but also at different historical periods within a single culture. Similarly, modes of *listening* vary according to the kind of sound heard—whether that be music or otherwise—the expectations of the musical situation, and the kind of subjectivity that a particular culture has fostered in relation to musical events (Johnson 1995). In Becker's view, even more than modes of looking, modes of listening implicate not only structures of knowledge and beliefs but also intimate notions of personhood and identity. Listening addresses interiors; listening provides access to what is hidden from sight. This idea is central to the arguments in this thesis and will be explored later in this chapter.

In an endeavour to express temporal situatedness of the listener, Becker suggests the utility of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. *Habitus* was originally coined as

an alternative to terms such as 'culture,' which seemed too static, and obscured idiosyncratic modes of thought. Still left with the need to refer to the ways in which beliefs and behaviours seem relatively stereotypical within a given society, Bourdieu proposed the term *habitus* to function theoretically in place of the world 'culture':

> The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment…produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*…it also designates a *way of being, a habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity*, or *inclination* (1977: 72, 214)

Habitus, then, is an embodied pattern of action and reaction, in which we are not fully conscious of why we do what we do, not totally determined, but with a tendency to behave in a certain way. Our perceptions operate within a set of habits gradually established throughout our lives and developed through our continual interaction with the world beyond our bodies—the evolving situation of being-in-the-world. The 'pro-active ballad audience' (Toelken 1999) must have layers of experience and knowledge to enable them to understand a performance on the terms in which it is presented. Being an informed ballad listener is a learned art, learned by some in the context of their family, community or peer group, and by others through actively seeking out today's performance environments, which can range from intimate family settings to commercial broadcasts (McKean 2003: 10). Our *habitus* of listening is tacit, unexamined and seemingly completely natural. We listen in a particular way without thinking about it. Becker argues that most of our styles of listening have been learned through the unconscious imitation of people around us and with whom we continually interact. It is possible that our listening behaviours are innate, but the fact that they vary across cultures would suggest that it is more likely that they are culturally constructed.

Becker's notion of a *habitus of listening* can be extended in the light of Nancy's ideas in this context. Bourdieu's concept is characterised as a 'system of dispositions.' Nancy maintains that as we are always already *with*—or rather, a with that is at once singular, but one among many singular relations—we will always be 'disposed' in a certain sense. Every hearer occupies a position in a cultural field not of his or her own making; every hearing is situated and enacted. We accumulate our listening habits and expectations largely unawares; only when we are confronted with an alternate kind of listening are we likely to reflect on our own conventional mode. Listeners can shift modes in different contexts, such as the ways in which we listen to music at a chamber music recital, or at a rock concert, or a folk club. For example, we sit quietly at a chamber music recital; we shout loudly and dance around at a rock concert; we may tap our feet along to the beat at a folk club. Cross culturally, modes of listening may add features not shared by us, or may not involve features that we take for granted.

The idea of a *habitus* of listening underlines the interrelatedness of the perception of musical emotion and learned interactions with our surroundings. It entails a disposition to listening with a particular kind of focus; to expect and to experience particular kinds of emotion; to interpret the meaning of the sounds and our emotional response to them in somewhat (but never totally) predictable ways. It will encompass expectation, attention, absorption, and imagination. The stance of the listener is not a given, but necessarily influenced by place, time, the shared context of culture, and intricate and irreproducible details of our personal background and experience. Such a position foregrounds our being in the world and

contends that our conception of reality is always conditioned by our embodied existence (Ó Laoire 2005: xiii).

Nancy's Concept of 'Sense'

We can ask questions about the textual content of a ballad, but Nancy would argue there is also a 'sense' in the very sound of the lyrics, in their tone, timbre, and so on, which can be 'made sense of' before and even *without* them being interpreted. Such an understanding of sense is important in the context of the paradigm of embodiment in that it suggests that there is a 'sense' before it is articulated or voiced.

> Bodies make sense before we sense in words in the folding and unfolding of their presence with other bodies' (Simpson 2009: 2563).

Sense, then, is fully embodied: it is 'constituted in the materiality of corporeal existence (James 2006: 106).

The understanding of sense here is that it is always *this* sense, ever present, each time it occurs. It is not a universal sense, but a singular multiplicity of sense (Simpson 2009: 2563). There is also performativity to sense. According to Nancy, sense 'has to repeat itself' (2003: 93). It is possible to link back to the idea of play and performance discussed by Ó Laoire (2005), recalling Gadamer and his theory of enactment. Inescapably, the performative event has a repetitive quality. Here, however, repetition does not mean that something is literally repeated. Rather, every repetition is understood to be new and original.

Nancy talks of sense in terms of 'being-toward.' This is to be understood in the temporal sense—we are always moving *toward* sense. It is the movement of being

toward or rather 'coming to' presence. The coming of sense is infinite. We cannot say that sense exists, but rather it is emergent, it *is* process; it cannot be predicted but changes course as particular interactions coalesce. In my view, this is a useful metaphor for understanding the *Maysie*, which comes to be as particular interactions coalesce. This idea will be developed over the following chapters.

In terms of listening, sense must 'resound.' Nancy's (2007: 6) notion revolves around a fundamental resonance, 'as a first or last profundity of 'sense' itself (or of truth).' Sense is not sound and vice versa, but rather, sound is a modality through which sense arises (in resonance). Meaning is therefore resonant; its sense is found in resonance. This wisdom is captured in the fact that we often say that a powerful song 'resonated' with us. In Nancy's view (2007: 54), listening to sound is always on the edge of meaning. That is to say that meaning is always 'in praxis' it is never a given but has to be enacted.

Voice and Song

Harmon (2008) believes that song reaches the objective of instilling a quality of presence more quickly and more fully than speech. As the modernist poet T. S Eliot one said of the words of a song,

> The text is there...partly to keep those parts of the mind and body engaged while the song goes about its deeper work (in Burrows 1989: 400, original reference unknown).

This idea might be fanciful, but there are many who would testify to its truth. The bodily act of singing opens up a resonant presence that, according to some thinkers, allows words to penetrate our being at a deeper level. From this view, daily speech is

so regulated and stylised that we enter an almost dissociated state of awareness into which the words drop and diffuse themselves, whereas song heightens our embodied awareness. Physiologically, David Burrows (1989: 391–394) claims that musical prolongation of a single word sung to one pitch has the effect of focussing attention on the sheer sonic quality of the voice, its timbre and resonance:

> In singing, anatomy expands into temporality, because lungs and larynx take more time to realize their sonic potential as pitch and resonance than is required by the surface apparatus to articulate the phonemes of speech.

Moreover, in singing, the *whole* body is engaged. The following quote articulates the complexity of the physical act of singing, often taken for granted:

> Singing is a physical experience… It is a combination and coordination of breath, resonance and articulation. The breath rises from the body supported by the muscles of the lung cavity and the lower back. The air passing through the larynx activates the vocal folds…The pharynx enlarges and enhances the resonating space through which sound passes. The sinus cavities are also involved as resonators. The articulators of the buccal cavity shape the words and the breath carries the song outward to its listeners (Brodovitch 1998: 46–47)

As a bridge, breath is aligned to both body and mind and it alone is the tool which can bring them both together, illuminating both (Hanh 2008: 23).

Zumthor (1990: 5–6) emphasises the physical power of the voice:

> Voice lodges in the silence of the body as the body does in the womb. But unlike body, voice returns to its matrix, immediately and constantly erasing itself as speech and sound…There is no doubt that voice constitutes an archetypal form in the human consciousness: a primordial and creative image, both an energy and configuration of features that predetermine, and activate and structure our first experiences, feelings and thought.

'The image of voice reaches deep into a region of lived experience where it escapes conceptual formulas and where *prescience* alone operates' (Zumthor 1990: 6, my

italics). Prescience could suggest a 'foreknowing,' but rather in this case it could relate to the idea that song can affect us prior to signification and that there is significance in un-interpreted experiences. Ó Laoire (2005: 222) notes that the term 'prescience' here comes under the heading of a mode of being, and that such a view contends that the singing voice is not first experienced at the level of knowledge but at the prior level of being. Zumthor's analysis points to the existence of voiced song on the phenomenological plane, functioning independently of any conceptual framework. He also draws attention to the etymology of the terms for voice in various languages for this phenomenon and its equation with spirit, discussed above in reference to Abram's (1996) discussion of breath and respiration. It can be argued that *sounds* of words and melody and their intonation focus the awareness of 'presence' in the present through an embodied experience, where 'one body acts upon another in song' (Zumthor 1990: 5–6 in Ó Laoire 2005: 222)

Sonorous Present and Emergent Spaces

This section explores what happens in the emergent and enacted 'present' of embodied song experience, understood as the 'sonorous present.' The previous chapter introduced the idea of 'enacted time' as a way to describe the kind of temporality experienced in aesthetic encounters, arguing that music in particular reveals this sense of enacted time through direct experience. Ó Laoire (2005: 38) believes that it is the location that is allows us enter enacted time— 'the preparation of a special place creates a special time, the extended present.' Rather than think of a 'special place,' we can imagine a 'created space'—a result of the interplay of sound, space and time.

Like vision and touch, our dominant understanding of space is Cartesian. For instance, we think of the body (which is an object) as being in a space (a void) rather than constituting space itself. In the sonorous present, sounds create their very own emergent temporary space. Nancy (2007: 13) writes,

> The sonorous present is the result of space-time: it spreads through space, or rather it opens a space that is its own…immediately omnidimensional.

Nancy's understanding of listening here as both spatial *and* temporal is significant. As Idhe (2007) notes, in the past there has been a tendency to emphasise the perceptual significance of sound in terms of temporality rather than spatial perception.

Stanley Robertson refers to 'waves in the air' in his descriptions of the *Maysie* and the ballad experience. This description is fitting: from the point of view of physics, 'sound involves changes in the pressure of the air, and travels as waves in the air' (Taylor 2000: 34–65). Sounds are temporal, emergent and transitory. Sounds come to us in a series of physical waves that set off reciprocating vibrations within the interior of every object they touch: 'the expansion of sound through obstacles, its property of penetration and ubiquity has always been noted' (Nancy 2007: 13). Sounds have a single source but they do not remain fixed. In this sense, sounds are liminal; they are always in-between. What we have is a single source with multiple interpretations, an idea that makes sense using Nancy's model of the singular-plural.

Ihde (2007) argues that to hear a sound is to share or actually 'participate' in the source of that sound. This participation 'from the inside out' serves to dissipate our sense of separateness from the source of the sound, creating a temporary space. In Nancy's view, in entering this space created by sound, we are immersed in the

sonorous present of that space, in addition to being processually integrated in a multiplicity of other relations with other bodies. Irigaray, (2004: 139), a commentator on Nancy's work, writes that 'sounds…open and re-open a space outside bodies, in bodies and between them.'

Experience of Song

It is helpful to leaven these theoretical ideas with descriptions from lived experience. While the following example is limited by my own culturally situated imagination, the ideas can be crafted and shaped to make clear exactly the point under discussion. In my own experience, when I have sung, and it has 'worked,' my face and my ears feel strange, and my voice feels very loud inside my head. For this to happen, I have to be fully committed to the performance and give it my full concentration. Such an experience of singing is an experience that is beyond language; or rather, our language system does not allow us to describe the contradictions inherent in such experiences. I have a feeling of nerves, but this feeling is not as simple as nervousness. While singing, I feel absolutely in the present moment but *not* at the same time; or rather, I feel so immersed in the present that I cease to be aware of it and I feel like I am somewhere completely removed. The space created would not be there if not for the real space encompassing myself as the singer and the audience; but the song space is created by the participants and myself—their bodies, breath, expectations, intention, memories, histories and emotions. It is a strange feeling to have one's voice filling a space that is not defined by the material walls.

Such an experience has not been comprehensively explained or theorised, but has attracted some critical attention nonetheless:

> Singers themselves have the sensation of expanding, in attenuated form, into surrounding space and filling it (Burrows 1989: 20).

Singing generates a 'sensation of swelling or of expansion of self that, along with the sensation of connectedness with breath, builds within us *a palpable sense of presence*' (Harmon 2008:44). When we sing, we know that we are here, that we are alive, that we are connected.

While I am singing, it feels as if I am so immersed in the present I 'forget' about myself. All perception of time passing in quotidian experience is altered. We truly experience what could be called the 'nowness of now'.[54] A 'perceptual narrowing' occurs, according to Malinowksi's descriptions of peak experience. I am so 'zoned in' on concentrating on singing that I am surprised when it is over and people show their appreciation. I suppose I would be tempted to describe the experience in terms of Csíkszentmihály's (1990) explanations of 'flow'—where a person in an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energised focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity. On some occasions, I am so focussed on the act of singing that I *become* my voice, I *become* my body. I *am* my voice for that period of time, for that vivid, extended present.

This feeling can be perhaps be explained to some degree by the fact singing naturally integrates the body in a kinaesthetic sensation generated by the cycle of inhaling and exhalation. Although this is also true when we speak, the sense of continuous flow is more pronounced when we are singing. Deleuze (2005: 39,

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[54] Personal Conversation with Dr. Martin, UoE, 6th June 2011.

original emphasis) suggests that music 'strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence: it *disembodies* bodies. This disembodiment is, at the same time, a realisation of coming into ourselves as embodied beings, because 'music traverses our bodies in profound ways' (39). In singing we merge with the present and feel like our individual subjective body is no longer separate from the surroundings, but this feeling is a direct consequence of the fact that we are very much *in* our bodies. Such an idea is echoed by Nancy (2007), who talks about ek-stasis: in sounding, and consequently listening, we stand outside of ourselves at the same time as we become more aware of ourselves as being a body.

Co-existential Act of Presence

Niles (1999: 53) argues that effective performance arousing the *Maysie* will have a corporeality about it '...dependent on a visible, audible, and sometimes tactile *connection*' between the audience and the performer. This mirrors Porter's (2009) theory of ballad 'presence' which he claims is particularly meaningful when the singer and audience are inter-responsive in a specific space that they share. It is possible to claim, then, that the listening audience plays a pivotal role in the success of oral performance:

> The listeners lift the singer, allowing the transformation of breath melody and articulate sound in a true "culmination of voice" (Ó Laoire 2006: 93).

The 'power of the *Maysie*,' Niles (1999: 53) believes, 'depends on the presence of receivers, not just a sender.' That is, it will be 'collaborative' and dependent on 'a visible, audible, olfactory, and sometimes tactile connection' between the audience and the performer (53). Self-expression, on the other hand, endows the performer

with the full, perhaps overblown figure of creativity, reducing the audience's role to a passive presence in the creative act. Niles believes that many contemporary performances of self-expression have skewed the performer-audience relationship: performers hog the spotlight while the audience sits physically and spiritually isolated in a darkened hall as if its members are passive consumers of a product rather than essential participants whose reactions can, as Niles puts it, guide and *inspire* the performer (53). In a collaborative performance, the *Maysie* affects not only the performer, but also the audience, who will take the singer's words and make something of them, perhaps long after the performance has ended.

I can remember one instance of singing in a bothy in the early hours of the morning at Cullerlie Traditional Singing weekend, Summer 2010. I was singing a version of the ballad 'Young Emslie,' a tragic song that has a repeated line in every verse with the potential for beautiful harmonies. The bothy was tiny—it must have been only two metres square, and it was not the greatest venue for acoustics. We were crammed in like sardines, unavoidably encroaching on each others' personal space, uncomfortable but intent on sharing songs. Bottles of whisky were passed around. I managed to find a space in the back corner, half sitting on a window ledge. It was my turn for a song and so I started singing from the corner. With the others listening intently and soon joining in the repeated line with supporting harmonies, the song started to take a life of its own. I really felt like my voice was being carried by the others; I really did feel 'lifted' by the others.

We may say that in order to experience the *Maysie*, there must be differentiation and divided roles; there must always be a singer and a listener—or listeners - in order for presence to take effect. The medium in this case is the ballad,

but the singer and listener together effect presence. Where Niles and I differ is in conceiving of this relationship between singer and audience. Niles calls it the 'sender-receiver' relationship. In my view, it is more akin to a process of *sharing*, more like a communion than a process of transmission. Perhaps in deep listening, the dialectical differentiation between speaker and listener becomes the pathway to a kind of interpersonal social communion. This idea was introduced in the previous chapter, when the experience of the play of art has the character of genuine communion. This idea complements Nancy's idea of being-*with* and listening-*with*, with co-presence as singularly plural. To recall Gadamer, truly *listening* to a ballad being sung is a genuine mode of participation in the event itself.

In 'presence,' there exists a dialectic between voicing and listening, between sounding and hearing, which embodies the dialectic between the individuals engaging in the communication. I propose that the 'ballad experience' can be understood, in Nancy's terms, as the co-existential act of 'coming to presence.' Together, the performer and audience - singer and listener - create an environment in which the *Maysie* may flourish.

The Presence of Silence

The necessity of voice and song for ballad presence has been discussed, but it is also important to consider the 'presence' of silence. Contrary to what might have been argued thus far in this chapter, ballad presence is not all down to the manifestation of *sound*. If sound, voice and participation in song are what reveal presence, what place does silence have? The audible is a field where sound and silence exist in alternation. Silence is not *absence*, however. Rather, it is expectation,

and in my view contributes to presence as much as does sound. In embodied experience, is this really possible? Our hearts are always beating, our lungs are always breathing. Nancy's conception of sense is that sense is first of all the rebound of sound.

> Sense opens up in silence—as when we listen to our heart beating, which is more than just 'hearing' a sound: our whole being is resonating there (30).

Dauenhauer (1980: 18–19) writes that 'music itself is filled with silence'; that there is a silence that characterises all rests and pauses. Harmon (2008: 55) believes that silence is 'the timeless space between the soundings of its successive tones.' But music is *not* filled with silence as absence as such, but rather, it is filled with 'not-music.' This not-music—or embodied silence—is not timeless but the opposite; it is highly temporal and active. Arguably, 'not-music' is an equal but different component of the *whole.* A truly musical performer is aware of this embodied silence while he or she performs:

> The accomplished performer 'takes his time' for he [sic] understands that music lives not only by sounds, but also by silences which cause the very soul of the performer or the listener to be steeped in music. The mediocre performer, however, hustles the notes instead of linking them together flexible and freely: for he fears the breathing spaces and silences which break the continuity of the form when one does not know how to give them spiritual content (Brelet 1968: 116).

With this in mind, we remember the *conniach* and the idea of 'respect' and understanding for the songs and the idea in the Traveller tradition that you are not permitted to sing the song unless you can 'give it justice.' Since embodied silence is as much component of music as is sound, its relationship to the ballad experience is integral. In fact, without embodied silence, the presence that sound reveals can never be fully acknowledged.

Presencing Imagined Worlds

This final section looks to the idea of how listening opens to a notion of internal and external worlds, exploring how we can become so immersed in the ballad experience to be able to 'presence imagined worlds'—a central theme in this thesis. The capacity of hearing to reveal or 'create' the hidden dimension of reality is an idea rooted in the phenomenology of auditory experience. Ihde (2007: 51) claims that,

> Any inquiry into the auditory is also an inquiry into the invisible. Listening makes the invisible *present*.

Ihde believes that sound reveals the internal world in a way that other senses cannot. Listening addresses interiors; it is characterised by withdrawal, turning inward. Sound not only makes the invisible present, but makes it *visible* in a certain sense, as internal, imagined movement. In this way, 'oral performance takes on a visual as well as an auditory dimension' (Niles 1999: 55). Arnold Berleant (2004: 157). writes that

> The verbal presence is a species of incantation, for it evokes an imagical realm in which there is a reconciliation between man and his direct experience.

There is, then, an interesting relationship between sound and vision in deep listening. In embodied experience of music and song, I argue, following Berleant (2004: 157), that 'sound evokes sight and together they form a world of imagination that surpasses the ordinary world around us.' The phenomenological worldview is that reality is not something 'out there', but rather something that is constructed. This is also the understanding from the view of embodied cognition, where 'mind, culture, body and action partake of each other, co-constructing the only 'realities'

available to human experience' (Bowman 2004: 47). The idea of the *lebenswelt* or 'life-world'—the world of immediate experience—central to phenomenological interpretation, suggests that we can inhabit multiple lifeworlds or realities. In phenomenological terms, the 'ordinary world around us' described by Berleant is the everyday lifeworld, the world of daily experience. That is to say, deep listening takes us out of our daily lifeworld and spurs us to temporarily inhabit a new created reality.

Nancy argues that our sharing of a 'world' comes in the sharing of resonance. This is not just the resonance of sound, but a resonance of sense itself. It is a 'being familiar with'—a *habitus*—that is the access to and sharing of a world. Nancy gives examples of the 'hospital world' or 'Debussy's world' but here we could equally think of various sub-cultural worlds that access to which comes with a sharing of sense and resonance. It is through our *habitus* of listening we are able to *share imagined worlds.* The loosely defined 'ballad world' (Atkinson 2002), or the 'balladic otherworld' (Porter & Gower 1995), constitutes a particular *lebenswelt*, which we actively construct. This idea will be developed in the following chapters.

Imagination Becomes Experience

In deep listening, as Becker (2004: 27) proposes, 'imagination *becomes* experience.' Niles (1999: 81) believes that

> The strong tendency of oral poetry … is to collapse the walls of time and space so as to create the illusion of continuity between the heterocosmos of the poem and the world in which the audience live.

The hermeneutic idea of a 'fusion of horizons' is relevant here. In such a model, meaning is always experienced as immediately present. Our own horizon of experience, our internal context—prior experience, associations—fuses in the present with the meanings in the text, and the horizon of the world in which the cultural work was produced.

Ethnomusicologists studying living traditions have uncovered interesting insights in the body of native beliefs connected to the meaning of song and musical experience. Suojanen's (1984) study of hymn singing and the oral tradition in Finland is particularly interesting in this case. An informant claimed that folk hymn singing 'creates a link with the limits of reality, something unusual and something beyond man's own existence' (92).

> One can live, as it were, through song…Through it you can enter a completely different world, both musically and emotionally, with all its associations, and then contact with other singers like a link in a long chain' (in Suojanen 1984: 87).

The idea of entering a completely different world makes sense in a phenomenological context and the idea of inhabiting multiple realities. The idea of a 'long chain' in this description is reminiscent of Henderson's well-known idea of tradition characterised as a 'carrying stream' - a river of songs, customs, skills and beliefs that flows through time, borne by succeeding generation, reflecting the value and importance placed on the oral tradition of passing on the stories, songs and tunes of the people for successive generations (in McKean 2007: 154).[55]

The idea of 'traditional referentiality,' briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, also comes into play here - the 'invoking of a context that is enormously

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[55] See Henderson (1992).

larger and more echoic than the text or work itself, that brings the lifeblood of generations of poems and performances to the individual performance or text' (Foley 1991:7). The singer, in this case, valorises and empowers his or her performance by tapping into a shared community inheritance. Traditional referentiality necessarily deprives the ballad singer of a measure of freedom in performance, but for ballad singers and audiences, these restrictions are the conditions of the very realisation of poetic power:

> For it to be a story, the song must make you want to listen; thus it calls upon metaphors from across the land, across hundreds of years and hundreds of generations, to catch your ear. Folk songs are unfathomable and undeniable. The old ballads carry a kind of truth, a collective something that is its own truth (Wilentz & Marcus 2005).

It is interesting to conceive of the idea of traditional referentiality in a more directly sonic capacity, specifically the relationship between sound and memory. More often than not, it is not the textual content of the song that has affective meaning. For every song that has lines, verses or a whole story that is deeply meaningful to the listener, there is another one for which the meaning is evocative—reminding the singer or listener of a person, or an event, that has no literal connection with the text (it could be argued that this is problem with limited text-based approach to the analysis of ballads). It is not just the teller whose physical presence makes these stories so memorable; it is the whole set of people, both living and dead, who share the site of performance:

> It is this 'ritual space,' as (Turner might call it) where social dramas are 'enacted' in a 'time out of time' that is akin to what is found in ritual and ceremony (Niles 1999: 63).

In this 'space,' connections are made that defy rational understanding. Lizzie Higgins, Scottish Traveller and ballad singer, claimed that when she was singing she was looking into her father's eyes. 'Often, fan I'm singin, ye'll see my eyes lookin ava. I'm lookin' at him. That's the magic, I see him all the time. When I'm singin, he comes' (in Niles 1999: 51). Niles, the fieldworker in this instance, could not explain Lizzie's transformation in performance: 'She was voicing the language of another world; I have no other way of putting this' (51).

Some people may hold the belief that this kind of 'other world' is *real*: the world of our ancestors. It is not my place to judge such claims. I suggest only that the ideas presented here offer a possible explanation: that it is a cognitive process of imaginative projection, focused in the present through the embodied experience of the sound. In the imaginary space created by space and time in the ballad experience, we encounter the meaning of *now* through the direct 'presence' of its past and imagined future references. Furthermore, we actively *create* this presence through engagement in the dialectic of memory (past), attention (present) and expectation (future). This process of meaning-making will be further explored in Chapters Six and Seven.

Such ideas help us understand and give new meaning to Porter's (2009: 9) claim that ballad presence is 'a departure from everyday norms into the unknown, unexpected or transcendental territory of the imagination…the complete imaginative encounter.' What we are dealing with is the creative construction of narratives and imagined worlds. Unlike Porter's approach, this methodology provides a way to talk about this process or experience without using words like 'transcendental,' and allows for a consideration of the fully embodied nature of experience. The text of the

song, which is so often the focus of ballad studies, is not the sole reason for the creation of meaning. What is importance is the total somaesthetic experience, the 'existential act that makes "present" the imagined world the singer is creating' (Porter 2009: 148). It is not the singer alone who creates imagined worlds; it is the listener and singer *together.*

Totality of Experience

According to Nancy (1993: 200), to be 'listening' is always to be outside and inside, 'opened from without and from within' a body. 'Deep listening' can be defined as a direct perception of non-material events through the medium of material events. The activity of our senses engages us with the materiality of the world. Musical melodies can be fundamentally defined as dynamic events. They are conveyed through physical events—vibrations in the air, the stimulation of our organs of hearing, the responses of the nervous system—but they are not contained in these physical events. It is arguable that hearing the dynamic qualities in music is a direct perception of non-material events through the medium of material events. Sonorous presence reveals two dimensions of existence: internal and external, material and non-material, tangible and intangible. More than this, sonorous presence reveals that these two dimensions are not closed off from one another, but are actually interconnected aspects of one world and one experience. The ear is a membrane that unites what is outside with what is inside. Baumann (1990: 123) invokes the image of an eggshell mediating between sound and brain/body, arguing for a consciousness

> which taps the shell of reality from both sides—through which the inside becomes the outside and the outside becomes the inside…This consciousness incessantly

> listens with a 'third ear' which finds between the two auricles the creativity that constructs reality in its own and special manner.

What we perceive through deep listening is a 'totality experience'—a totality of the tangible and the intangible.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

'Deep listening' as a concept was shown to be a useful term that encompasses the idea of listening as an existential act where both body and mind are engaged, as well as to emphasise its participatory nature. The idea of a *habitus* of listening was suggested as a way to express the temporal situatedness of the listener. It was argued that the sharing of sound catalyses the embodied 'presence' necessary for our full, conscious and active participation in the ballad experience. The ballad experience itself was approached by means of a spatial metaphor. Although these 'spaces' only exist for the duration of performance, and are therefore temporary and transient, they *make sense*, even if they do not provide us with a rational explanation for the phenomenon of ballad singing. They constitute a sense of understanding and belonging for many people who participate in their making. The fact that we cannot hold such spaces in our hands—nor is it possible to capture or represent them—does not make the methodological venture to understand them a futile one. By making an attempt to study the 'liveness' and richness of real time, it is possible to access the spaces created: the embodied and expressive ways of knowing, being and communicating in context.

In concluding this chapter, I tentatively suggest that the semantic power of 'words' expand the awareness of possibilities ranging over past, present and future,

through the creation of narratives; while sounds of music and melody and their intonation focus the awareness of 'presence' in the present through a visceral, embodied experience. There is an interesting relationship between sound and internal vision, where in the ballad experience the singer and listener together 'make present' imagined worlds. 'Deep listening' in the ballad experience induces a sense of collective identity through the experiencing of self and other as co-participants in an enacted, situated, live event, and actively listening can be viewed as a 'co-existenital act of coming to presence.' The way sound touches the body is the 'very vibratory essence that puts the world of sound in motion and reminds us…that we are alive, sentient, and experiencing' (Shepherd 1987: 158). The following chapter analyses what this sound is made of in the context of the ballad experience. The ideas developed in this chapter will be further extended in Chapter Eight, which looks to the nonverbal 'sensory perception of presence.'

CHAPTER SIX 6

"That is the Road to Fair Elfland": Ambiguity and the Productive Power of Metaphor [56]

The ballad scholar Toelken asks the question, 'to what extent can all language and meaning be interpreted as metaphorical in essence?' (1995). In developing his argument for the 'essential metaphoricity of folksong,' he nods to the theories of Lakoff and Johnson's seminal *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), but looks only to their very early work. It is quite possible to take Toelken's idea of 'metaphoricity' much further: ballads are not just figuratively and linguistically metaphorical; the actual *experience* of the ballad is a metaphorical embodied *process*, at work on a 'complex matrix of several levels' (Ó Laoire 2005: 255).

The characteristics of the ballad form—formula, patterned arrangements and narrative components, refrains, motifs, recurring melodies and melodic elements—have been explored by countless scholars. I do not wish to rehearse this scholarship but rather think of new ways to explain how ballads have 'productive power.' To this end, the first section of this chapter will concentrate on the figurative language of the ballads understood from an embodied cognitive perspective, based on the contemporary theory of metaphor. Blending is explicitly at work in figurative language, and as such an examination of the ballad will serve to illustrate the productive value of conceptual blending theory in this context. The idea of novel metaphors, entrenched meaning and the idea of cultural framing will be introduced.

Such cognitive theories have their origins in reception theory.[57] Ideas from reception theory, most pertinently the notion of 'indeterminacy' will be developed to

[56] This title is in reference to the Border ballad 'Thomas the Rhymer' (Child#37). Here the Queen of Elfland is trying to entice Thomas to come with her, where he will trapped from seven (fairy) years.

bridge the first section with the second section of this chapter, which explores the productive power of metaphor *beyond* its traditionally perceived substitutive role. Inspired by the writing of Ricouer and his narrative theories, Ó Laoire (2005: 207) understands song as 'a metaphorical discourse which mediates the conflicts and perplexities of social existence.' The final section builds on Ó Laoire's ideas, exploring Ricouer's hermeneutics in relation to ideas from embodied cognition. Ricouer (1976) presents metaphor as the 'touchstone of the cognitive value of literary works.' The point of departure for Ricouer's theory of metaphor is essentially the same as for Lakoff and Johnson; however, where Lakoff and Johnson focus on the broad patterns of thought evident in systems of metaphor (such as those that link emotional states with orientation in space) Ricouer chooses to concentrate on the *singularity*, what he called the 'raw poesis' of metaphorical utterance (Zbikowski 2009: 88).

The basic idea expounded in this chapter is that when two or more entities come together a metaphorical process is at work, and it is in the liminal *space between* where new meanings are created, in a 'perpetual process of coming to be.' Meaning is not grounded in external culture but is emergent, created in the tension between self and world and between self and other. Central to the developing argument is the notion of ambiguity. As discussed in the Chapter Three, Merleau-Ponty's (2002: 220) idea of the 'genius of ambiguity' challenges us to construe ambiguity not as a cognitive flaw but rather as a cognitive advantage. There is a plurality of relations present in the ballad experience which points to a fundamental multiplicity in meaning.

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[57] The convergences and divergences of these theories have been noted by other scholars. See Hamilton & Schneider (2002).

The chapter will conclude by relating these ideas back to the thesis title, 'Presencing Imagined Worlds.'

Strongly Marked Discourse

The ballad scholar Gunmere, writing in 1907, believed that 'the main structural feature of the ballad is simple repetition with incremental changes, *utterly devoid of metaphor*, which advance the statement of fact and help the narrative, however slowly, on its way' (42, my italics). In my view, he could not have been more wrong. It was once the generally held view that the subject of poetic diction and metaphor were more appropriate to the discussion of authored 'elite' literature, and folkloric oral clichés were seen to be a flaw of 'bad' literature. After the Parry-Lord theory of oral formula for epics was developed, such 'clichés' were re-characterised as a powerful device of recreation, and certainly not a 'flaw.' This theory sought to elucidate the mechanism whereby some oral poets are able to improvise poetry, and why orally improvised poetry has the certain characteristics it does. In Parry's view, formulas were not individual and idiosyncratic devices of particular artists, but the shared inheritance of a tradition of singers. They were easily remembered, making it possible for the singer to execute an improvisational composition-in-performance. For a time, oral formulaic composition was assumed to be the ideal model for understanding *all* oral poetry. In an attempt to redress the balance or bias of scholarship, such a model rethought the distinct and inherent differences between the oral and the literary.

These ideas were explored in balladry by Andersen in *Commonplace and Creativity: the Role of Formulaic Fiction in Anglo-Scottish Traditional Balladry* (1985) and in Buchan's *The Ballad and the Folk* (1972).

> Where the literate poet strives for originality of expression, the oral poet is content to use his *received traditional diction*, and not only for reasons of necessity. Through generations of use traditional language accrues a contextual force; it acquires connotative reverberations unrecognised by the ear unturned to tradition and it becomes the 'right' and 'fitting' language of verbal art (Buchan 1972: 171, my italics).

In Buchan's view, where literary poems express personal vision, ballads tell stories that express a community's outlook on life. 'Where the literate poet writes as an individual…the oral poet tells stories that embody and give expression to the kinds of belief and feeling shared by his community…' (171).

Atkinson (2002) is rather more cautious in extending the oral formulaic theory readily to ballads. It is not as easy to claim that ballads sit at the oral end of an oral versus literary spectrum. Oral versions of ballads have coexisted over long periods of time with written versions as well as printed texts. The complex interplay at work was discussed in the previous chapter. Atkinson makes the point that ballads, unlike epic poems, permit the possibility of a substantially larger degree of memorisation of the entire text not only by the singer but even of the audience. Formulas may function more as mnemonics for memorisation than as materials for re-creation on the Parry-Lord model. Ballad melodies usually comprise of distinctive tunes which also can be expected to function as effective mnemonics for the ballad whole. Moreover, more recently in the life of ballads, recordings of versions have been made available which drastically alter modes of transmission, and ideas of formulaic recreation would seem to apply less and less.

The ballad form certainly uses words in such a way that they differ somewhat from ordinary everyday speech, using word association to convey emotion and mood. This allows songs to convey meanings in a more vivid manner, which is heightened further in the act of embodied performance.

> Poetry is a *strongly marked discourse*…Whether it is voiced in a unique register or is accompanied by a musical instrument, poetry is always distinguishable from normal speech or prose. Its ability to express emotion, articulate wisdom, and activate memory is naturally linked to its listeners or reader's perception of rhetorical marking, which in oral performance takes on a visual as well as an auditory dimension (Niles 1999: 55, my italics).

The idea that oral performance takes on a 'visual and auditory dimension' was explored in the previous chapter and has been described elsewhere as the 'eminently visual nature of the ballad diction' (Rogers 1980:103). It will be discussed again in Chapter Eight.

'Essential Metaphoricity of Folksong'

Since the introduction of oral formulaic theory, ballad scholars have since striven to understand figurative language in terms of the role of metaphor in traditional art forms. An ordinary definition describes metaphor as a figure of speech or literary device, in which a word or phrase is applied or substituted in order to denote a resemblance. Ballad imagery is therefore not metaphorical in the *literary* sense. Ballads lack the similes and imagery of written literature, but what they do have, in Buchan's words, is a kind of 'traditional received diction' (1972: 171). Such strongly marked discourse works by association and can be characterised as 'ritual occurrences carrying a freight of cultural meaning' (Toelken 1986: 140). The description of 'ritual occurrences' is pertinent in the light of discussions about

'presence' in Chapter Four. Porter believed that 'presence embodies the *ritual moment* within the tradition, and as such it renews, invests in, and promotes the tradition as a living potent force' (2009: 182, my italilcs). Ballad language itself, it would seem, has a part to play in presence.

Toelken (1995) attempts to clarify the 'precise nature and function of metaphor' *within* song: oral formulations, motifs, imagery and symbols and commonplaces. Metaphorical language is found throughout folksong, but, he argues, is most prominent in dramatic ballads:

> In dramatic ballads, there is more latitude for metaphor, more room for variation, for it is the shared experience of trauma rather than the detail of a coherent story line that seem to be central concerns...dramatic ballads seem to use narrative structure more as a framework for associated evocative images and metaphors (15).

The idea here about 'shared experience' is important to the argument. Toelken does not suggest that there is an arbitrary set of metaphors which singers have memorised and applied in narrowly defined poetic or metrical situations, but rather that there exists a considerable well of potentially connotative references, based on shared cultural values, which have been shaped and used by gifted singers to give them value and meaning. He argues that not to recognise the power of metaphor is to overlook some of the most compelling reasons for the intensity of the ballad experience; but, at the same time, to read too much into them or to interpret them according to arbitrary or literary systems is 'to denigrate the facility with expressive language demonstrated by those whose songs these ballads were and are' (129).

Traditional Elements

To summarise Atkinson's account (2002: 12) of the often-described characteristics of the ballad style, traditional elements include repetitive textual, metrical and melodic structures; patterned arrangements of narrative and conceptual components; parallelism of phrases including so-called incremental repetition; conventional vocabulary and epithets; recurrent, formulaic phrases, lines and stanzas; formalised refrains. They also encompass a characteristic musical idiom: a distinctive corpus of folksong tunes, unstably matched to the texts so that there may be many tunes for the same ballad type or many different songs sung to what is essentially the same tune; a recurrent vocabulary or melodic, rhythmic and dynamic techniques, as well as ornamentation, designed to meet with the emotion and metrical demands of the song texts.

In the ballad, the story is not articulated fully, it is implicit. The language and imagery are highly suggestive, which is key to the productive power of metaphor. Conventional ranges of personal and place names, times of day, seasons of the year and colours all contribute to the loosely defined but nonetheless unmistakeable 'ballad world' (Atkinson 2002: 13). Buchan (1972) argued convincingly that through generations of singers, such language and imagery acquires and develops, comprising this received traditional diction. In such a highly suggestive narrative setting, the associations of traditional metaphors help establish a deeper recognition of cultural meaning.[58]

[58] In Buchan's view (1972: 171), the symbolic imagery has roots which lie in a now fragmented mythology. The ballad genre itself has evolved from medieval (and even earlier) oral traditions, incorporating the ritualistic, magical elements of ancient myths and folklore. Traditionally, the teller, singer or poet would have been a kind of magician, a mediator between the other world and this world, and this emerges in the ballad theme of the supernatural.

The following examples are in no way exhaustive but are useful for illustrative purposes. An example of suggestive meaning in balladry is the use of colours. Green and red are common—virtually every time someone gets dressed in green, that person will inevitably encounter danger and in most cases, ends up dead by the end of the story. Green is also associated with the supernatural. Janet, in 'Tam Lin,' 'kilted her green mantle a little aboon her knee' and soon after encountered the supernatural in the form of Tam Lin, and ends up pregnant. Location is also important: dangerous encounters take place in liminal spaces, away from the family home, by rivers or in woods. Markers like 'in the greenwood' are loaded with this association. In the ballad 'Lord Randal,' the greenwood was a place of danger—in one version he met a fairy there disguised as his true love and was punished and poisoned. It is 'down by the greenwood sidie-o' that 'The Cruel Mother' kills her twin babies, but their ghosts come to reproach her and tell her how she will suffer for her crime. As well as spatial markers, the ballads are ripe with temporal markers. Times of year and even times of day are crucially important. Supernatural happenings take place around transitional periods of the day, such as the 'mirk midnight hour'; and of the year, like Halloween. Romantic encounters often happen in early May. The connections here are too consistent to be a matter of coincidence. It is not cliché; rather, such metaphors are loaded with cultural meaning.

Recurrent too are story elements or motifs, many of which are found throughout folklore genres at large. Motifs are abstract representations of an idea, frequently recurring ideas or repetitions of a meaningful element in a work. Identifying a motif is invariably an act of interpretation. Narrative units such as journeys, water-crossings, executions, murders, scenes of meeting, talking birds,

magical corpses and so-called 'floating verses' can all constitute motifs of sorts. Würzbach and Salz (1995) have attempted to compile an index for the Child ballad corpus:

> The tension between conceptual potentiality and textual realisation inherent in the motif constitutes fascination…The content of a motif derives from the components of character, action, locality, objection and disposition.

The possible content components of the motif can be categorised according to 'person' (characters, action and dispositions), 'space' (localities and objects) and 'time' (into courses of action). By way of illustration, common motifs include, for example, the act of combing hair. This image often occurs just before a suitor appears, and would seem to indicate readiness for marriage or willingness to be approached. Where a woman loses her lover, she vows that a comb will never go through her hair again, or that she'll cut her hair off, suggesting the intention of remaining faithful. In folklore at large, hair is often associated with various aspects of sexual power. Another example is the appearances of certain animals. In many ballads, birds carry messages of importance, often to tell of death. Motifs can also pertain to structural elements. Of all the possibilities, the most ubiquitous structural element is the use of 'three actions,' very familiar to folklorists. In the 'Bonnie Banks of Fordie,' three sisters encounter a man; the first two are murdered by him, but the third uses her wit to survive, realising that the man is her brother. Such a series of actions is more 'ritualistic' than 'real.' The so-called 'law of three' also allows for intensification of the key issue through incremental repetition. There are hundreds of such examples of suggestive language, spatial and temporal markers and motifs in the ballad tradition, but it is not the purpose of this work to describe them; rather

here I seek to understand the relationship between such markers and the human embodied mind.

In Toelken's view, metaphor functions in a number of ways to do with structure and narrative style, but mostly to do with a shared range of textual understanding among the members of the audience in which the song is understood and used. In terms of structure and style, metaphor can be used as a powerful way to resolve complications of the linear plot. The ubiquitous image of the rose and the briar is a good example: after death, a rose often grows out of the female grave and the briar out of the male's, bringing lovers together in a physical union denied them in life. This serves, on one level, to resolve the emotional dilemma. The image of the rose and female sexuality is powerful in its foregrounding the sexual reunion of the couple; even in cases when sexual connection is not central, we can still see a distinctly metaphorical function being fulfilled by the image. Toelken's main argument is the extent to which a central, rich metaphor such as the rose and the briar can bring forth or suggest a cluster of important shared values, what he calls a 'constellation of shared meanings' and help us apply them meaningfully to a scene or event. Ballad images and structures create

> A simply designed but emotionally effective context of cultural meaning in which dialog and dramatic interaction foreground an event of vicarious experience in terms of its most intense and disturbing moment, phrased not in the language of explanation, description or information, but in a dramatic language of nuances and connotations (Toelken 1986: 139)

Inside the space of the 'ballad experience' can be seen as a kind of vicarious theatre where the stage is in the minds of those who share the cultural associations, and who understand the language which animates them and through which—in the performance of a gifted performer—they achieve articulation.

Multivalent Metaphors

Many of these ballad metaphors are so rich in divergent possibilities and are employed in scenes of such recognisably heightened or intensified human concern that when their traditional associations (e.g the rose with both sex and death) are expressed, they have the capacity to excite a broad range of implied meanings not expressed overtly in the text. These metaphors are 'multivalent' (Toelken 1995: 96) and point towards ambiguity. They contain little explanation, little detail and almost no data but have a great deal of visual imagery that is presented, as if listeners already 'know' the story. This calls to attention to the multiple possibilities of meaning as well as the metaphor's capacity for ambiguity in its poetic sense.

Csikszenmihalyi (1978) has observed in *The Arts, Cognition, and Basic Skills* that the making and experiencing of art constitutes a process in which cognition and emotion are intertwined, and the conflicts which art attempts to master cannot be encoded by the unambiguous symbols on which reason relies. Like other forms of knowledge, art is an adaptive tool by which we master forces in the environment in order to survive it. Artistic cognition models experiences that are ambiguous, and must therefore use codes that are multivalent, changeable and holistic, but at the same time highly specific. It is true to say that there has been a tendency among ballad singers throughout history to dramatise the traumatic, ironic, threatening, anxiety-provoking and ambiguous dimensions of human experience rather than the stable, predictable and mundane. Perhaps mundane occurrences have not been worth singing about; but even this tells us something about cultural attitudes. It is because these areas of human concern are seldom unambiguous, and every person

responds to them differently, that the poetic devices used are appropriately open to multiple interpretations.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that many people map the unfamiliar onto the familiar in order to create new understanding and clarity. In contrast, Strauss and Quinn, in *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning* (1991) argue that metaphors are based on culturally agreed understandings, and more often than not they add complexity rather than clarity, pointing towards ambiguity. A series of metaphors that suggest both death and sex—the rose and the briar—for example, can hardly be explained away as ways of making a single abstraction more available to the senses, for their result is not clarification but ambiguity.

Metaphor works *both* ways. Apart from the ballad's complexity and emotional power, metaphors *within* in folk song are powerful because of their positive *ambiguity*: the capacity to express an idea more fully and with greater complexity of human feeling than can an objective statement. Hymes (1972: 29) insists that metaphor is 'basic to rendering experience intelligible probably because the topics broached in these forms are complex and ambiguous for most people.' Moreover, metaphor and image allow for the presentation of emotions and concepts that can reflect on one another profitably.

As an example, the phrase, 'the dowie dens of Yarrow' is polysemic. The word 'dowie,' an old Scots word meaning sad, is linked to 'dens,' another Scots word which describes the banks of the river. In such ballads as 'Babylon', 'Lady Isabel' and others, the riverside is the scene of a poignant reminder of destruction. It is often the site of a sexual encounter; or, as it is in this case, the place where a murdered victim is dumped. On one level, these scenes are depicted along riverbanks because they are

liminal areas. The word Yarrow too appears to have multiple meanings. Nicolaisen (1984) points out that the percentage of an audience listening to this ballad being sung who would have prior knowledge of the geographical location of the river would be very small indeed. Therefore, its geographical associations become redundant and the function of the place name operates on the level of metaphor. Performances of this ballad have to be understood not as the recounting of one particular drowning, but as the presentation in a narrative song of the death of the lover trying to reach his beloved from whom he is separated. Just as the fast flowing river becomes the symbol for the separating obstacle, so 'Yarrow Water,' as the name of that river, takes of the role of metaphor in this context,

> [serving] the same iconic function and [playing] the same semantic roles of the river as a dividing boundary and fateful separation, inviting parted lovers to fatal attempts at reunion…it is a symbol for everything that divides, separates and disrupts, a poignant reminder that all is not well in this world and that so much is broken and fractured and still has to be healed. [The] name helps to narrate that condition and to rehearse its tragic consequences (Nicolaisen 1973: 226).

Metaphor, then, functions in a number of ways and has to do with the shared range of textual understanding. Good poetic imagery of any sort, whether written or performed, is important because of its *positive ambiguity*—its capacity to express and idea more fully and with greater complexity of human feeling than can an objective statement.

Context

The ballad is not only a literary entity; the music and performance are equally important for many of its receivers, and sometimes more important than the

text itself. Toelken's concern is with the singing of the ballad in its live, cultural context and not the text as it may appear in print as a 'fossil.' Ó Laoire (2005: 207) also contends that too literal a reading of a song can be limiting: 'if we conduct only a literal reading, removed from performance context with its special spatial and temporal precincts we are at risk of misinterpretation.' Finnegan (1977: 33) expresses a similar view in her discussion of the ways in which oral poetry is performed. She contrasts this with the written word, emphasising the emotional rapport built up between performer and listener, citing style, constraints and opportunities of delivery as important factors which shape oral poetry and which cannot be discerned from the text alone. Oral poetry, when separated from the 'chance conditions in which it appears' (Gadamer 1989: 116 in Ó Laoire 2005: 38) loses its many salient features necessary for a full understanding of it. Gadamer's idea that art is a kind of 'play' was introduced in Chapter Four, where it was argued that that the work of art cannot be detached from its presentation, or enactment, in time. In listening, we are called to actively construct possible nuances and implications which might otherwise be overlooked. 'Performance is the enabling event, tradition is the context for that event' (Foley 2002: 131).

In understanding the function of ballad imagery we must, as Toelken advises, take cognisance of not only the texts, but of all other contexts as well. He suggests four contexts: the ballad text itself, the cultural context, the generic context and the performance context. While it is helpful to isolate these different contexts in the case of ballad meaning, it is my own view that these should be seen more holistically and understood to function together.

The performance context is the live situation in which a ballad is actually performed by a singer to an audience, who could be said to inhabit the same *habitus* of listening (this might not always be the case). Since there are various conditions which might affect the way in which the text actually comes forth, the performance itself may be said to take place within contextual realities that can *create* a constellation of meanings. Toelken argues that it is evident that the figurative meaning cannot be said to reside entirely within the text as part of its manifest content, but somewhere *between* the text (as it is performed) and that shared constellation of assumptions and associations that gets triggered when this singer sings this song before this audience at this particular time. Wilgus suggests that the historical context must also be considered. Being aware of the diverse and complicated literary and cultural history of certain texts, commonplaces and clusters of meaningfully related actions is another way of perceiving the depth of ballad meaning. Toelken argues that this knowledge is more addressed to the scholar or very knowledgeable singers or listeners who have access to such information than to the singer or audience to may not know about the details of a symbolic or metaphorical development. There are therefore differing degrees of depth to which we can plug into such constellations of meaning. Lastly, Toelken suggests the musical context—the constellation of tunes and tones through which the ballad reaches articulation. The afterthought of mentioning the musical context is telling of the bias in ballad scholarship towards the textual dimension.

Contemporary Metaphor Theory and 'Creative Blending'

Examining the above-described processes at work from the point of view of embodied cognition affords an even richer understanding of the productive power of metaphor. In the ballad experience, Rieuwerts (2007: 254, my italics) claims,

> What is involved is not the passive repetition of externally determined words...but people *actively moulding* the world around them which, ultimately, constitutes the world we experience and live in...It is through poetry, not exclusively, certainly, but surely pre-eminently, that people create and re-create that world.

The idea of actively creating and recreating phenomenological worlds is key to the development of ideas in this thesis. We create the world we inhabit through creative and cognitive processes which often operate below the level of consciousness. As human beings, we are always thinking, but not all of our mental processes take place on a conscious level. In fact,

> Nearly all important thinking takes place outside of consciousness...the *imagination* is always at work in ways that consciousness does not apprehend; consciousness can glimpse only a few vestiges of what the mind is doing (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 33–34, my italics).

Creative blending plays a crucial role in how we think and make sense of the world we encounter. In my own view, it is illuminating in understanding cognitive processes at work in the ballad experience. Through creative blending we can understand how we create and recreate reality and unreality—how we 'actively *mould* the word around us,' to use Rieuwert's term. The simplified explanation of the theory of creative blending presented below is intended to lay out the basics of the theory as it can be applied on two levels: firstly, to the figurative language of the

ballad—that is, oral motifs, imagery and symbols; and secondly, on the macro level, the mythic, or the level of fictional worlds.

Blending theory frequently appeals to literary examples for explanation; however, it is important to make clear here that the development of the theory in this context is intended to elucidate the cognitive *processes* that underlie meaning construction and not merely a theory for literary analysis. In this sense, its application to a form such as the ballad does not reduce the ballad to a literary entity, but rather allows us to study the experience of the ballad as a literary entity *and* as process, allowing for the integration of musical experience and other dimensions at later stages in the argument.

The Blending Process

According to cognitive theory, the networking facilities of the brain have enabled us to keep complex ideas in our minds as stable representations, to manipulate these representations in various ways, and to combine them with other representations. Creative blends bring together two or more conceptual realms in such a way that the conceptual space which they share has features and powers that are not necessarily found in the things compared. This contrasts with our usual sense of metaphor where meaning is rigidly constrained to compare concrete features. Complex concepts are formed through a process of integration, or 'blending' of concepts from disparate domains to create new meaning.

Although the blend unfolds in a flash and not necessarily in linear fashion, it is still possible to distinguish certain stages of the process. According to Fauconnier and Turner, the emergent structure is generated through a three-part process of

composition, *completion* and *elaboration.* Composition puts together elements from input spaces to create new entities in the blended space. Completion extends the image suggested by the initial mapping from the input spaces, drawing on our background knowledge of the circumstances and associations—this is the process of filling in background information from the source inputs (information that is not explicitly mentioned in the blend). Especially in the process of completion, the person processing a blend needs to access a vast store of long-term knowledge, including culturally-dependent frames. Elaboration is a more extensive operation than completion—it develops the structure of the blended space by building on the principles and logic at work in the blend. Elaboration is the process of what is called actually 'running the blend'; it involves the creation or discovery of new meanings. In effect, the input spaces decrease in importance and the focus is directed towards the rich imaginary possibilities of the blended space (Zbikowski 2002: 80). It is at this stage in the process where we can start to invent our own narratives, and project emotions using our prior knowledge. An important feature of the emergent blend is then that it is not static, but can be further elaborated in a perpetual process of coming to be.

Tension and Invariance

Conceptual blending assumes that there is a degree of structural 'invariance' between the input spaces of a given blend. Correspondences need not always be factual—need not make logical sense—in order that meaning might be distilled from them. When the information in each of the input spaces is very different from one

another, the integration can produce extremely novel results. The idea of invariance, or 'tension,' is crucial to the theory developing here.

According to Turner (1998: 65), 'the tension of the blended space is *reinforced* by a corollary blending of impossibilities.' It has already been noted that preponderance of the metaphorical references in ballads and folksong operate in fields of love, sex and death—arguably the most definitive of human experiences. Experiences such as death and sex are not ambiguous in and of themselves, but the devices we create to talk about them *are*. This is because our attitudes *toward* them are conflicting. For example, we can conceive rationally of death, and yet we are incapable of really *knowing* about it. Love and sex equate to creation; death equates to destruction. It is important not to conflate love with sex in this context: abductions and rape in ballads are very different from sexual love affairs. Love and sex are not the same, but are often discussed coterminously in ballad literature. Conspicuously, metaphors of love and death almost appear magnetically in the ballads, one juxtaposed with the other. Love, death and sex would seem to form a complex of meanings in ballads, or what Ó Laoire (2005: 201) calls a 'widespread thematic network.' Such a thematic network, he notes, is extremely prevalent in folksong traditions of Northern Europe. It was discussed above that metaphors are based on culturally agreed understandings, and more often than not they add complexity rather than clarity, again pointing towards ambiguity. Toelken (1995:158 in Ó Laoire 2005: 202) suggests that the interplay of love and death themes 'works like a powerful oxymoron, each term mitigating and qualifying the other in extremely effective ways' and further that direct juxtaposition and interaction of erotic and deadly elements has proven to be a tension of essences with considerable power.

The heavy focus on love and death in the ballads, it would seem, is neither arbitrary nor coincidental. Creative blends are generally activated when situations of ambiguity and confusion exist, and new ideas must be conceived in order to respond to those conditions. In Turner's view (1998: 823), the tension created by such a juxtaposition of impossibilities allows for a deeper understanding of each:

> Blending is a dynamic activity. It connects input spaces; it projects partial structure from input spaces to the blend, creating an imaginative blended space that, however odd or even impossible, is nonetheless connected to its inputs and can illuminate those inputs.

Ballads create blended spaces of love and death in order to explain and teach something new by drawing on and extending the familiar. Ricouer's theories of the productive power of the inner workings of metaphor as discussed by Ó Laoire (2005) add a further dimension to understanding in this case. Ricouer points out that metaphor brings together two distinct semantic fields which serve to break down ways in which these separate fields were already categorised. The power of a metaphor is founded on the 'tension between the strangeness of the pairing and its suitability':

> Remoteness persists in closeness. This is why to see similarity is to see the likeness in spite of its difference. To speak of one thing in terms of another which resembles it is to pronounce them alike and unalike. Imagination—in its semantic sense—is nothing but this 'competence' which consists of producing the genre through the difference, again not beyond the difference, as in the concept, but in spite of the difference (Ricouer 1991:125 in O'Laoire 2005: 228).

Meaning is created in this new ambiguous blended space. According to Ricouer, although a new order comes into being, the old categories also continue in the sense of incongruity revealed by the metaphorical juxtaposition. The ballad form exploits the ambiguity of language as well as its utility for forming novel ideas. In the

example given above, Turner's concept of blended spaces reconciles the tension of essences of the love and death dichotomy into *one* novel idea: creation and mortality are brought together in a metaphorical process.

Turner argues that these very ambiguous contradictions are what enable us to understand an altogether newly created realm, which logical consistency is incapable of invoking. Blended spaces allow unusual cognitive freedom and creativity. This helps explain why the ballads utilise such ambiguous metaphors to convey their meaning.

Creating 'Unreality'

The process of creative blending is not unusual or exceptional; it is in fact exceedingly common. 'Blending is in principle a simple operation, but in practice gives rise to myriad possibilities' (Fauconnier 1997: 149). The result is not simply a sum of the shared characteristics of the inputs, but rather the flexible human mind actively *creating* or *recreating* something which did not previously exist; and in some cases, an 'altogether newly created realm.' Human beings have the ability to 'operate mentally on the unreal, and this ability depends on our capacity for advanced conceptual integration' (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 217). In other words, it is part of our cognitive make-up to be able to operate on the level of the unreal.

The three most important elements that allow the cognitive construction of imagined worlds are language, meaning, and the conceptual abilities of humans to extract and create meaning from language. We do this by metaphorically mapping elements from one idea onto another and then merging these elements with other elements to project new meanings in the process of *elaboration*, described above. The

example given by Zbikowski (2004) by way of illustration is that of fairy tales in traditional folklore, where new imagined beings are created. Fairy tales are imaginative and fantastical. Accordingly, features of imaginary beings and beings are blended together with real beings and/or beings. Concepts associated with an animal (in particular, its characteristic behaviour and physiognomy) might be integrated with concepts associated with humans (capacity for speech and rational thought) to create a new kind of creature that that lends itself to any number of possibilities for narrative structure and 'play' of the imagination. In this example, both domains—or mental spaces—are linguistic. For example, a person in a ballad may be able to transform from one shape (human) to another. A good example of this is the mythological creature of the 'selkie,' or 'silkie.' Selkies are able to become human by taking off their seal skins, and can return to seal form by putting it back on. An examples of such a story is the famous ballad, 'The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry.'

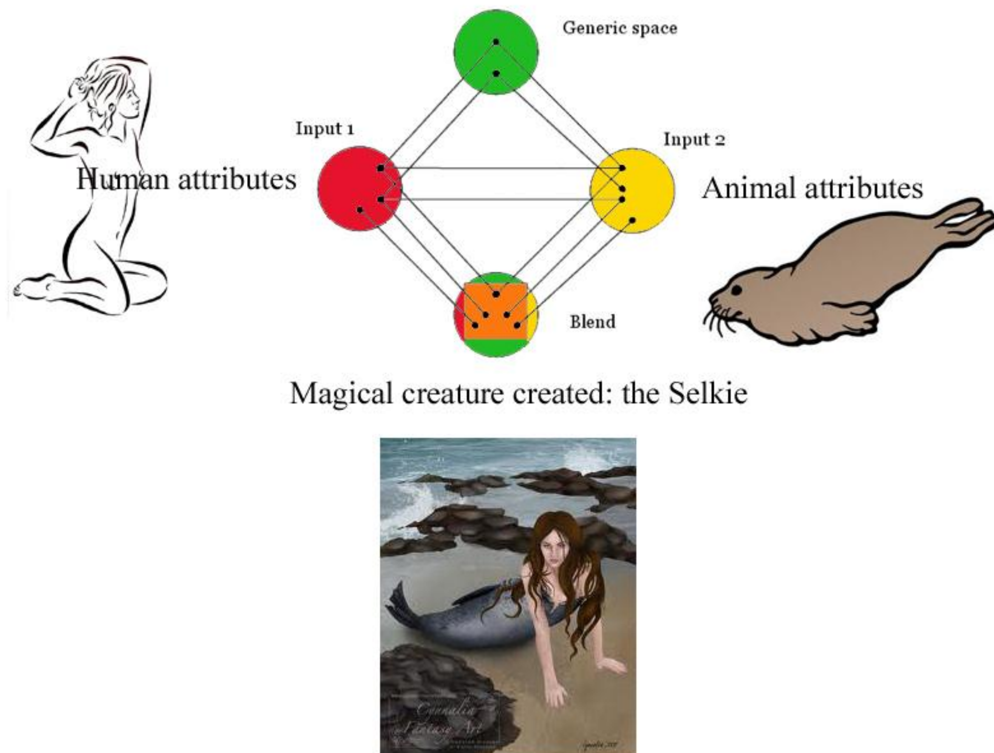

Figure 2.

Reality is not simply the opposite of unreality; possible worlds are constructed cognitively by our ability to blend concepts.

Background Framing and Entrenched Blends

The central developing idea in Toelken's argument about the 'essential metaphoricity' of ballads is that meanings within and attributed to song must invariably be formed through a combination of personal experience and contextual understanding, rather than being fixed in essence: 'we perceive the differences and register the connotative meanings chiefly by context and cultural experience and not by simple reference to denotation' (1995: 48). Interpreting the ballads requires the marshalling of a large stock of background information, including background knowledge, knowledge of conceptual metaphors, and local contextual information.

Context is also crucial for interpretation, figuring into the meaning construction processes to yield the derived meaning of a given utterance.

As Fauconnier (1997) notes, figurative language expressions do not have meaning in and of themselves, but rather they have meaning *potential.* The meaning that an expression can produce in a particular communicative situation depends greatly on the background knowledge of the participants, as well as the extant mental space configuration set up in the local context. Different communicative contexts activate structured background knowledge that constitutes and constrains the interpretive process and defines meaning. These background assumptions are indefinite, ranging from explicit assumptions to tacit knowledge and personal configurations. Much like Toelken's 'constellations of meanings' and Buchan's 'traditional received diction,' creative blends can become entrenched concepts with repeated use and social institutionalisation. Ballad metaphors have developing meaning; new metaphors become entrenched in time. What inevitably happens in this process is that entrenched metaphors like this can form input spaces in themselves, and can be further blended with other complex constellations of meaning. The difference that comes with entrenchment is that the mappings between spaces in the network are retrieved from memory rather than being calculated or created in the act of performance.

Fauconnier and Turner (2002) classify such examples as involving 'compression.' This term suggests that the relationship that allows us to draw mappings between elements in different mental spaces. Such mappings can be compressed so that a single element in a blended space simultaneously represents all of its counterparts in the various input spaces in the network. In the ballad, such

entrenched blends function as effective mnemonics for the ballad whole. Fauconnier and Turner argue that compressions are cognitively useful because they enable speakers to employ 'human scale' concepts to mediate our comprehension of abstract ideas. This idea will become crucial in the next chapter when the entrenched metaphors and textual elements of the ballad constitute one domain of experience, to be blended with the musical element as a separate domain of experience and creating further possibilities for the imagination.

Ultimately, comprehension relies on the receiver's ability to *unpack* the blend and apprehend the mappings to elements in the input reference spaces. Our ability to unpack a creative blend demonstrates the complexity of this process. As in the case of metaphor interpretation, however, the correct interpretation of these constructions requires the use of background and contextual knowledge to apprehend the mappings from elements in the blended space to elements in the input reference spaces. This is an important point in that it shows the open-endedness of creative blends. Some blends have to be interpreted in very specific ways, but some may have wildly varying interpretations of certain elements because of a listener's subjective view. In theoretical terms, this is referred to as 'optimality constraints.' A theory of human cognitive powers must not only account for the richness and variety of human innovation, but also show how that innovation is guided (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 310).

Traditional Referentiality

It is important to emphasise that, while the blending process itself is universal, its practical application in the thought processes of an individual ought to

be analysed in the light of that individual's cultural background, always singularly plural. It is important to further emphasise the importance of 'culture' in conceptual blending. There is a vast amount of cultural background information that must be accessible in order for a blend to be properly understood, for our ability to 'run' a blend. Especially in the process of completion, the person processing a blend needs to access a vast store of long-term knowledge, including culturally-dependent background frames and be able to easily recognise entrenched blends.

The idea that the meaning an expression can produce depends greatly on the background knowledge of the participants can be explained using Foley's idea of 'traditional referentiality.' This was mentioned in the previous two chapters: in Chapter Four it was introduced to help explain 'contemporaneity'—the idea of the past speaking in the present; and was discussed in Chapter Five in relation to the idea that a singer enlivens performance by tapping into a shared community inheritance rather than through individualistic imposition.

By virtue of their particular traditional way of telling, Foley argues that such oral or oral-derived texts embody reference to all pre-existent moments within the same body of tradition. Chapter Four discussed Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy in relation to the idea of the temporality of art. His argument is directed to showing that understanding—and the kind of 'truth' that belongs to it—has the character of an 'event': that is, something that belongs to the specific temporal nature of our human life. He argues that while any given cultural art work is a product of a particular era, we nevertheless always encounter an artwork, even from long ago, as 'immediately present' (xiii). In Foley's view (1991: 6), the most characteristic features

of oral texts are exactly those which most often recur in other texts within the same body of tradition:

> Traditional elements reach out of the immediate instance in which they appear to the fecund totality of the entire tradition, defined synchronically and diachronically, and the bear meanings as wide and deep as the tradition they encode.

The presence of such 'elements' relates the individual oral traditional text to the entire body of tradition and so deepens and enriches its resonance and its meaning:

> Each element in the phraseology or narrative thematics stands not simply for that singular instance but for the plurality and multiformity that are beyond the reach of textualization (Foley 1991: 7).

To describe this process of generating meaning, Foley (14–17) uses the term 'metonymy'—a mode of signification where the part stands for the whole. The particular traditional, metonymic elements referred to by Foley are most readily represented by the formulaic phrase and theme, but in fact can embrace 'a whole spectrum of structural units of phraseology and narrative pattern with varying degrees of traditional resonance'.

The term 'traditional referentiality' was first developed primarily for the study of the oral epic traditions, as well as the oral derived-texts of Homeric and Old English epics. The notion is, then, predicated on its oral nature and so upon cognitive categories that that are operative in the world of oral traditional art, performance and reception. It was noted above that theories of oral formulaic composition do not transfer readily to the study of the ballad. In developing and adapting the theory of traditional referentiality for the study of the ballads, Atkinson (2002) explores Foley's idea as 'intertextuality'—suggesting that each textual version only comes into existence by being modelled upon and varying from a pre-existent

version; that 'each acquires a multiplicity of subtexts representing different and potentially contradictory accounts' (16). Texts are 'not structures of presence but traces and tracings of Otherness' which means that they are created by the duplication and reinterpretation of other 'texts' (Von Worton & Still 1991: 45). Many ballads have links to folktales and are therefore *implicitly* intertextual.[59] That there are many variants of ballads points to their inherent intertextual qualities.

It is possible to expand further on this idea by rethinking what intertextuality means in a cognitive perspective. Intertextuality is usually regarded almost exclusively as a literary term, but it is not merely a literary phenomenon. It is possible to explain it in terms of the underlying cognitive processes by referring to creative blending. Conceptual blending underpins intertextuality: understanding intertextual texts from a cognitive perspective reveals new creativity involved in the meaning-making process, based on conceptual structures rather than on purely linguistic structures and processes. We *think* intertextually. In other words, our physical and socio-cultural knowledge and experiences form a type of 'intertext' that may be conscious or unconscious knowledge at specific times, but nonetheless influences the meanings we construct. Since it is possible to regard the 'self' as a textual construct, and intertextuality as a condition of thought or consciousness, then it is inevitable that individuals should bring their own 'texts' to a ballad performance. The ballad achieves meaning when it is brought into an intertextual relationship with all the other 'texts' that go to make up the individual mind at that specific time and place. By rethinking this from a cognitive point of view, we begin

[59] For a list of folktale parallels of the Child ballads see Taylor (1964).

to see the multiple 'layers of story...that make for an understanding of presence' (Porter 2009: 137).

Such a level of cultural understanding, or traditional referentiality, is vital to understanding creative blends. This is especially true in unpacking the figurative language of the ballads and making sense of constellations of meanings. Traditional referentiality activates structured background knowledge that constitutes and constrains the interpretive process and defines meaning; metaphors become 'compressed' into tradition. The meaning of the ballad is often found in the 'emergent structure' of the blend—the elements that are unique to the blend and that do not exist in either of the source spaces. However, if the listener of the ballad is not familiar with the cultural background of the source spaces, they may not recognise what material is unique to the blend, and meaning will be lost. Cultural background is not the only factor that contributes to the understanding of a blend; personal experience with the input spaces, for instance, is also a contributing factor. Fully accessing the input spaces requires cooperation between several processes of which cultural background is a vital element.

Novel Metaphors

There is a stark difference between 'entrenched metaphors' described above and 'novel metaphors.' This section concentrates on the idea of the 'novel metaphor' and in particular Turner's theory for understanding how these metaphors work through the idea of creative blends. In *The Literary Mind* (1998) he describes the mind itself as 'literary,' meaning that it forms stories. He views the process of cognition as

narrative in structure and does not separate cognition from the act of *narration*. Turner, in *The Literary Mind* (1996: 4- 5), writes,

> Narrative imagining—story— is the fundamental instrument of thought. Rational capacities depend upon it. It is our chief means of looking into the future, of predicting, of planning, and of explaining. It is a literary capacity indispensable to human cognition generally. This is the first way in which the mind is essentially literary.

This is a fundamental point. Telling stories, singing songs, and conjuring imaginary worlds are skills that have been coded into us by the processes of evolution itself. The folklorist Niles (1999: 3, my italics) articulates this human propensity in different terms:

> Only human beings possess this almost incredible cosmoplastic power, or *world-making* ability…Storytelling is an ability that defines the human species as such…Through storytelling, an otherwise unexceptional biological species has become a much more interesting thing, Homo narrans: that hominid who not only has succeeded in negotiating the world of nature…but has also learned to *inhabit mental words that pertain to times that are not present* and places that are the stuff of dreams. It is through such symbolic mental activities that people have gained the ability to create themselves as human beings and thereby transform the world of nature into shapes not known before.

Lakoff and Johnson also agree that metaphors have the power to *create a new reality.* Ultimately, human beings shape their world through the stories they tell, through 'cosmoplastic power' or creative blending, whichever explanatory route we choose to take. The world of the narrative is not the world of immediate perception but a world of imaginative possibilities. It is, essentially, a process of imaginative understanding.

> A good metaphor creates a semantic innovation that gives us a new understanding which we have not previously possessed. In this way, it resembles the process of *mimesis*, the creative manner in which the stuff of life is fashioned into works of art (Ó Laoire 2005: 32, my italics)

Ricouer's narrative theory explains this process of narrativisation through what he terms 'emplotment' or 'mimesis.' Emplotment is a 'power of schematisation'; mimesis 'presents' or acts out a story dramatically. Ricouer considers that the creation of metaphor is similar to the creation of a work of art. He defines mimesis not merely as representation, but as a creative imitation. Emplotment is the process whereby a person gathers scattered events, actions, goals, causes, and desires into one meaningful story, as a way of imitating our actions with the hope of grasping them as a meaningful whole. Understanding these seemingly disconnected events is by means of the plot. According to Ricouer, the plot must have a beginning, middle and an end, while the narrative text must be construed according to the rules of genre and composition of the culture, to impose a form upon material. The narrative, then, as a work, refigures the world of action as a world of imaginative possibilities. In the same way that creative blending provides us with new meaning on a miniature scale, disparate, already existing elements are put together in a new way as part of the mimetic process to form new works. The following sections explore this mimetic process as they relate to meaning-making in the ballad experience.

Reception Theory

The second section of this chapter explores the productive power of metaphor *beyond* its traditionally perceived substitutive role. Ideas from reception theory are useful to bridge ideas from the first section with ideas of personal narrative creation. Convergences and divergences in reception theory and Turner's cognitive criticism have been noted elsewhere in literature (Hamilton & Schneider 2002). The two theoretical lines focus on the cognitive processes involved with

reading specifically literary texts. Iser (1974) argues that there are 'two poles' in any text: 'the artistic refers to the text created by the author, and the aesthetic is the realisation accomplished by the reader.' Somewhere between the poles is the cultural work, which readers create by 'realising' a text, but Iser admits that the realisation can never be precisely pinpointed (274–72). It is the omnipresent third wheel, the vague *space between*, that Iser wishes to theorise. This idea of the 'third wheel' is reminiscent of the idea of the 'third ear' of our consciousness discussed in the previous chapter, which 'finds between the two auricles the creativity that constructs reality in its own and special manner' (Baumann 1990:123). Toelken argues that it is evident that the figurative meaning cannot be said to reside entirely *within the text* as part of its manifest content, but somewhere *between* the text (as it is performed) and that shared constellation of assumptions and associations that gets triggered when this singer sings this song before this audience at a particular time.

A developing theme in my argument is the role of the subject in the creation of meaning. The previous chapter focused on the role of the listener. A model of audience response has been markedly lacking from folklore studies at large, but a phenomenological approach to the realisation of the text finally acknowledges the central place of the audience in the achievement of presence in vernacular performed art. Neal and Robidoux (1995) argue for the applicability of reception theory to the creation of meaning out the dynamic interaction of text and audience in folklore genres; Atkinson (2002) has begun to explore the possibilities in the context of ballad studies, focussing on audience reception. Foley, in studying oral-derived epic, drew on the reception theory of Iser and Jauss in studying the creation of meaning in the performance of oral narratives. Atkin's work is very much text-centred in the

traditional sense, although there are insights that can be expanded and developed here nevertheless. Tom McKean (2003: 6), in *The Flowering Thorn: International Ballad Studies* summarises Neal and Robidoux's reception theory (1995):

> The interplay engendered through the reciprocal relationship between the text and the audience can no longer be perceived as a static entity: when engaging any text the audience becomes embroiled in an interactive game that can be played over and over again. This process takes place with differing results for each individual and for each contact with that specific text. Just as the success of any game depends upon the involvement of the participants, the success of any 'reading' of the text depends not only upon that text but upon the *audience.*

Several ideas here feed into ideas already discussed. We saw in Chapter Four that art itself can be understood as a form of 'play' where the plays must 'lose themselves' in a kind of game, and that a work of art cannot be detached from its presentation, or enactment, in time. Such ideas were illuminating in developing a theory of 'presence.' The idea of the 'singularity' of experience is key; and the idea that meaning is emergent and changing is central to understanding.

Reception theory for literature was first inspired by Barthes' famous proclamation of the 'Death of the Author' (1967). According to Barthes, writing and creator are unrelated; to attribute an author is to place a limit on the text. Barthes argued that every work is 'eternally written here and now' with each re-reading, because the 'origin' of meaning lies exclusively in its impressions on the reader. The author, existing before the text, is the past of his own text. With the death of the author, the transformed text effectively takes on a multidimensional space; it becomes an irreducible plurality of meaning that depends on the plurality of signifiers that weave the text together. Barthes' idea is clearly relevant in the field of ballad studies. Ballads rarely have a known author, and when they do, this quickly becomes unimportant in the process of transmission, variation re-creation and

constant renewal. Perhaps it is because this observation is so obvious that it has not yet been articulated. In fact, if the ballads were authored, this would completely change their aesthetic power. It is almost inconceivable that traditional ballads have a known origin. It has been noted that what characterises ballads is their *a*-temporal quality: they describe a world that is Other and that is *past*. There is no narrator to speak of. 'Ballads' of the kind ubiquitous in Ireland are often composed to commemorate a particular person or a particular event, which necessarily imposes a limit on the text and radically alters the creative processes of perception.

In Barthes' essay, 'From Work to Text' (1971), the text is no longer 'an object of consumption,' but rather a process of 'play, activity, production, practice.' Meaning emerges in the experience of those who make it and listen to it, in *praxis.* Ó Laoire (2006: 1) suggests that the ballad itself constitutes a 'multidimensional praxis.' Praxis is defined here as the notion of *actively creating* a subjective world, and is key to the ideas expounded in this thesis. Porter and Gower (1995: xxvi) use the term 'cultural practice' in their study of Jeannie Robertson's ballad singing, because it attends to the 'intersubjective meanings by which individuals create the world they live in, which is riddled with conflict and ambivalences.' According this view, 'music-making, singing and narrating supply a performative means of making these conflicts and ambivalences intelligible, and what is more, meaningful.'

Gaps of Indeterminacy

One of the key ideas in reception theory relevant here is that texts are inherently indeterminate. As well as the literary text, they comprise what is called the 'unwritten' part of the text. The act of reading involves filling in the 'gaps of

indeterminacy.' Reading is understood as a subjective, affective activity, in the course of which the reader re-creates the text and becomes co-creator along with its author. Textual indeterminacy becomes an essential condition for art to exist, and a text alone without an act of re-creation cannot be perceived as a work of art. According to this model, the literary or cultural work is itself a phenomenological concept, realised from the dynamic interaction of the written text and the subjective reader.

> A written text requires a reader, brought into being by the inherent requirement of the cultural text that it be subjected to an active, co-creative process of reception in order to achieve its complete realisation (Atkinson 2002: 9)

Although reception theory has concerned itself with written, literary texts, Atkinson argues that it is not difficult to extend these insights to ballad texts. Lacunae are integral to the narrative style: ballads tend to focus on a central situation and stress the situation rather than continuity of narrative or characterisation. The idea of the 'gap' is integral to some of the classic descriptions of the narrative style of the ballad form at large:

> The focus on situation, emotion and action rather than continuity of narrative or characterisation; brief sharply illuminated scenes, impersonality, economy of expression and avoidance of circumstantial detail (Gerould 1932: 4–11).

We also find gaps in melody (musical intervals), in plot (often absurd), in narrative (often fragmented), in sound (verse end, long pauses etc), in structure, in logic and reason, in between words and their meaning. Gunmere (1907: 91) famously described the ballad style as 'leaping and lingering.' Hodgart (1950 in Toelken 1995: 96) suggests that ballads are less like linear plot sequences but more like plays or film montages, because

> They contain little explanation, little detail, and almost no data, but have a great deal of pointed and heightened dialogue and visual image that is presented as if listeners already know (or can quickly perceive) the story's basic situation and dilemma.

Indeed, it would be possible to claim that ballads are often conspicuous by what is *absent* rather than what is present. Similar ideas are inherent in Ricouer's hermeneutics: no matter how detailed and complete a text may be, there is *always* a gap:

> Every text, even a systematically fragmentary one, is revealed to be exhaustible in terms of reading, as though, through its unavoidably selective character, reading revealed an unwritten aspect in the text. It is the prerogative of reading to strive to prove a figure for this unwritten side of the text. The text thus appears, by turns, both lacking and excessive (Ricouer 1991: 401).

Paradoxically, then, ballad texts seem to lack determinacy but also enable an excess of meaning, so that they are inexhaustible in terms of interpretation. As Atkinson notes, the corollary of the ballads is that part of their artistry lies in these omissions which require the readers to contribute to the realisation of the ballad meaning. 'Gaps in texts not only *necessitate* but *provoke* audience interaction' (Neal and Robidoux 1995: 224).

Iser's concept of the 'implied reader' (1978), brought into being by the inherent requirement of the text - that be subjected to an active, co-creative process of reception in order to achieve its complete realisation - can be re-imagined in the context of the ballad experience as an 'implied audience' brought into being by exactly the same requirement for co-creative reception in the traditional text. In performance, this is the role of the 'deep listener.' It is this inherent indeterminacy that invites both ballad singer and audience to participate in the realisation of the

ballad text as a coherent whole and become co-creators themselves, in what Nancy might call the 'co-existential analytic of coming to presence' (2007).

What emerges from this picture is the necessity of indeterminacy and ambiguity in folklore such as the ballad and also the necessity of co-creation on the part of the audience. It is pertinent to ask how far meaning is destabilised by the phenomenology of reception. Neal and Robidoux assert that there is a complete instability of meaning; Foley on the other hand believes that tradition places constraints on a possible range of meanings, embodied in the concept of 'traditional referentiality.' It is simply not exceptional for two people to take away different meanings from an experience of the same aesthetic phenomenon. This is not to say that meanings are infinite, but to say somewhat paradoxically that there is an infinite possibility of meaning within given set of parameters:

> Meanings intended by performers and those received by listeners need not be congruent; audiences always have latitude in interpreting songs, as performers do in presenting them (Greenhill 1995: 171 in Atkinson 2002: 10).

Songs are replete with potential for interpretation, which may differ greatly among individuals according to their personal and situational contingencies (Ó Laoire 2005: 204).

> Old songs preserved as texts in the present are ripe for interpretation by whoever hears them or sees them, while at the moment of performance new meanings may be generated by ostensive reference to the performer, the audience, or the situation. Songs, like any text or meaningful action, have an excess of meaning and the potential for widely varying interpretations (Rice 1994: 115)

That there can easily be more than one meaning attributed to a song furthers an argument for the importance of ambiguity and the singularly plural. What is interesting in developing these ideas from reception theory study is an examination

of the embodied cognitive *processes* at work in the creation of meaning in ballad presence and the ballad experience.

Personal Narratives Configured as Metaphor

Ó Laoire's work (2005), rooted in the phenomenological hermeneutics of Ricouer, extends the productive power of metaphor far beyond its traditionally perceived substitutive role:

> It seems to me that personal meanings attributed to works of art can be regarded as the configuration of a metaphor and that some of Ricouer's ideas provide insight into the way in which it functions.

Such a configuration, as he sees it, fits well with Ricouer's views on the formation of successful metaphors, and in my view, with Fauconnier and Turner's theory of creative blending.

This function of metaphor explained and explored by Ó Laoire can be seen as a part of a larger cognitive process at work in cultural experience. Identifying with a character's plight or emotion and relating it to personal experience, to family bereavement, trauma or tragedy, for example, provides people with a mediating context—or 'space'—to comprehend personal experience more deeply. Ricouer points out that metaphor brings together two distinct meanings which serve to break down the ways in which these were already categorised. As discussed above in relation to mimesis and narrative creation, successful metaphors are founded on the 'tension between the strangeness of the pairing and its suitability.' The striking difference between our idiosyncratic personal narratives and the narratives of the song, in Ó Laoire's view, must constitute what he calls the 'tensive core' of the metaphor, suggesting that it is this 'tension' between the similarities and the differences of the

two cases which lend the metaphor its expressive power. Such a process of configuration enables us to gain a new and sympathetic understanding of human relationships in the same way it provides people with a mediating context to comprehend more deeply and perhaps relate it to personal experience (2005: 200). Contradictory emotions emerge from the performance situation. Songs, in creating ambiguity, provide a context for the expression of what may or may not be otherwise expressible.

The idea of 'gaps of indeterminacy' is crucial to this argument. Arguably, such lacunae require a more personal relationship with the ballad, because the subject is obliged to fill in the gaps with their own personal experience. It is this kind of 'plural, multilayered context that obtains' (Ó Laoire 2005: 209). The experiences of our past, our history, the natural world around us, deeply personal experiences and the experiences of family and friends all play a part in the processes of meaning creation in the ballad experience. Sheila Stewart talks about her own personal experience in the following quote, which illustrates the above ideas very well:

> When I sing I'm not just singing for the song's sake. I'm singing for the trees, for the grass, for the birds, for the horses we used to go on long ago, for the free way of life that Travellers did, of the music, of the stories we told, and all that comes into one and that's tunnelled into the body and it all comes out like that and that's what I think I sing like... And there's so many functions within that. This is what I want to share with everybody, to identify it to them so as they can get this feeling that I have down here as well, taking all these things into perspective and it's a good thing to share. 'Cause not many folk are free.[60]

The previous chapter highlighted the role of memory and 'deep listening.' Songs often remind the singer or listener of a person or an event that has no literal connection with the text. Certain songs bring into sharp memory loved ones who

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[60] School of Scottish Studies Archive tape SA1996.84.

are lost, great teachers who we learn from—certain personalities perhaps—and it is often these associations that move us rather than the content of the song or subject or song itself. Meanings, then, can also build up cumulatively over an extended period and can be more intensively interpreted than is possible from a single performance.

> Such meanings can *unfold a world* which exists independently of any one enactment, increasing their emotional power with every successive performance. In such cases, accumulated meanings exceed the ostensive reference in their revelation of another world (Ó Laoire 2005: 204).

In this way, a ballad's emotional power is increased with every successive performance in such a way that the dramatic metaphor of the song has the power to suggest a constellation of shared experiences and values, at once singular and shared. Artworks, regardless of their age, can endlessly renew themselves by taking on contemporary meanings:

> The fact that a work stretches out of a past into the present as enduring moments still does not mean that their being is an object of aesthetic or historical consciousness. As long as they fulfil their function they are contemporaneous with every age (Gadamer 2004: 120).

Through a process of creative blending, past and contemporary reality can be experienced *together*. Gadamer believes that it is in narrative that these become unified. As we have seen, Turner views the very process of cognition as narrative in structure and it is impossible to separate cognition from the act of narration.

Thomas Dubois (1995: 238–9) has recognised three ways in which meaning may be attributed to songs:

> *Narrativization* involves the application of a temporal, local and character specific framework as means of conceiving and appreciating the situation described… Singers and audience members alike may relate elaborated narrativised

> explanations for many traditional lyrics…*Personalization* (or first-person association) refers to a variety of ways in which a lyrics could be explained through reference to oneself. Audience members may relate a song to their own present or past situation or recall the circumstances in which they first heard the song. *Attribution* (or third-person association) refers to the act of glossing a lyric through mention of another person, often the song's author. Audience members may relate the song to other people in a given situation.

Ó Laoire (2005:209), informed by Dubois' three processes of narrativisation, personalisation and attribution, shows how we can discover the key to the creation of meaning for songs. This, he argues, explicitly requires the uncertainty of performance and the circumstances informing it, invoking Foley's notion of traditional referentiality to add weight to this argument.

This three stage process could be mapped onto the three major operations at work in the creative blending process: *composition*, *completion* and *elaboration*. In this way, the human mind actively creates something which did not previously exist. Such a view clearly demonstrates the productive potential of metaphorical thought far beyond its traditionally perceived substitutive role. The metaphorical process that occurs in the juxtaposition of personal meanings and works of art, in this case the ballad, forms part of a more complex metaphorical process that can be explored even further in the context of ballad singing, that incorporates many levels of cross domain mapping and conceptual blending.

This 'law of three' also applies to Ricouer's mimesis model. There are three moments of understanding narrative: pre-figuration, configuration and re-figuration. This three-fold mimesis, the pre-reflective understanding of the world of action and the appropriative reconfiguration of that world as a world of possibilities for being are mediated by the objective 'moment' or event of the text, the 'presencing' of it.

> Having alienated itself if the text, the subject returns to its life world, now developed and transformed, in a moment of appropriation (1990: 71).

Imagining the *Epochē*

> In the to and fro hermeneutic of movement of play, a change occurs which *suspends everyday reality*, through which an intensified and truer vision of reality becomes apparent' (Ó Laoire 2005: 34: my italics).

Ricouer proposes that a metaphor is part of a process through which new properties were attributed to a familiar subject, which he calls 'predication.' For Ricouer, the key to the process of predicative assimilation was the *imagination.* As he saw it, discourse—and in particular, poetic discourse—generated a rich and potentially contradictory assembly of images, and it was through the processes of the *imagination* that these processes could be reconciled:

> By displaying a flow of images, discourse initiates changes of logical distance, generates rapprochement. Imaging or imagining, thus, is the concrete *milieu* in which and through which we see similarities. To imagine, then, is not to have a mental picture of something but to display relations in a depicting mode (1978: 150)

This word 'rapprochement' could easily be replaced by 'creative blending' in this context. What Ricouer's process of 'imagining' required, however, was a suspension of what he calls 'ordinary reference'. The idea of the *epochē* is central to his theory of metaphor. In the *epochē* there is a temporary suspension of ordinary reality, of time and of space. I suggest that the idea of the 'created space,' explored in the previous chapter, can be seen to constitute the embodied *epochē*, which could equally be explained in terms of Gadamer's 'closed circle of meaning' discussed in Chapter One. As Ricouer observes,

> Poetic language is not less *about* reality than any other use of language but refers to it by the means of a complex strategy which implies, as an essential component, a suspension and seemingly an abolition of the ordinary reference attached to descriptive language (1978: 153).

The *epochē* allows us to accept all data on an equal footing, whether that data be contributed by the physical world or by our imagination, whether the data is objective and subjective. The kind of split reference mentioned in this formulation—involving both objective and subjective data—is made possible by the imagination.

> Imagination does not merely *schematize* the predictive assimilation between terms by its synthetic insight into similarities nor does it merely *picture* the sense thanks to the display of images aroused and controlled by the cognitive process. Rather, it contributes concretely to the *epochē* of ordinary reference and to the *projection* of new possibilities of redescribing the world (Ricouer 1978: 154).

The split reference of poetic discourse has its correlate in the relationship between emotions (as embodied processes) and feelings (as a reflection on those processes). The similarity between two things is regarded as a product of an endlessly creative faculty of imagination. Through the workings of productive imagination, metaphor brings into being 'new meaning, semantic innovation, which operates verbally to extend the polysemy or multiple meanings of words found in natural language' (Ricouer 1981: 39 in Ó Laoire 2005: 34).

Meaning, Temporality and Transformativity

Why do we imbue certain experiences with more significance and meaning than others? An explanation is needed for the selective activity of consciousness. It can be said that our consciousness interprets experiences according to the cognitive

interest existing at that moment. We then turn the attention towards one point or another of the lived experience and interpret it according to the cognitive interest existing at the moment of performance. Meaning must be relational: it is the relationship between one lived experience and the whole life-experience of the individual. It is therefore necessarily unique to each individual; and furthermore, it changes with every successive lived moment. Not only is the meaning of each experience fundamentally unique, but the 'same' experience does not have a meaning established once and for all. Such information is not a solipsistic configuration: it is socially constituted and pertains to the culture handed down through socialisation or enculturation. This, on the one hand, explains the similarity of the visions of the world characteristic of any individual social group; on the other, it does not eliminate the subjective dimension.

According to Ricouer, a 'text' can be read and re-read with the possibility of new appropriation in each case; there is no final appropriation, no final meaning. Ballads are continually sung and re-sung, experienced and re-experienced. This process involves a creative manipulation and integration of three senses of time: past, present and future. Ricouer (1988: 21) calls this a 'mimetic trinity.' Human time is figured as a 'three-fold present.' Whenever we bring an experience to mind, it takes on a different meaning, a meaning that will depend on the temporal moment in which attention is again focused on the experience. By consequence, meaning is therefore fundamentally a function of time itself. Central to Bergson's philosophy of time, discussed in Chapter Four, is the idea of memory. He argues that *durée* is only possible because of memory, in that through memory the past is accumulated in its entirety. In memory, not one element is lost and every moment that it retains carries

within itself the entire flow of the past and so is, as such, irreversible and unrepeatable. To follow a narrative, we must use our accumulated memory of its events and our own accumulated memory in order to comprehend or, as Ricoeur (1984: 21) puts it, 'grasp together in a single mental act things which are not experienced together.'

In the 'narrative event,' event is simply understood to mean the passing from one state to another and therefore some sort of change must take place. Most analyses of narrative largely ignore this aspect of a narrative because they emphasise structural relationships rather than their transformation in *time*, and focus on the static rather than the dynamic relationship between parts of a narrative. All narrative structures are, essentially, systems of transformations. To link these ideas back to ideas of ballad presence, Porter (2009: 181) claims that presence forms 'the central element in a tripartite process.' Performance 'synchronises tradition' by making the tradition present and experiential:

> The singing of ballads, as the phenomenal recreation of experience through feeling, is the essence of transformativity, not only because singing intensifies emotional depth, but because, at a single stroke, it incorporates history and social structure into the ritual process (Porter and Gower 1995: 298).

Transformativity, essentially, is the existential act that 'makes the imagined world present' as if it were real. Fluxes of past, present and future run back and forth in some mysterious netherland to meet and meld in the arena of aesthetic performance. This is the realm of the imagination. In the many worlds of the imagination, time is not subject to the same constraints as in the everyday life experience of the outer world. In our imagination, we can travel backwards and forwards in time; we can be in different places and times simultaneously; the structure of time appears chaotic

compared with that of the everyday life-world. Present, past and future seemingly entangle.

Imagined Realities

Ó Laoire (2005: 207) writes,

> If we accept that song can act as a metaphorical discourse which mediates the conflicts and perplexities of social existence…it becomes apparent that it constitutes a *world* in its own terms, in which everyday norms may be suspended.

This idea can be developed from ideas introduced in the Chapter Five. In music and song, we experience a 'world of imagination that surpasses the ordinary world around us' (Berleant 2004: 157). 'Deep listening,' it was argued, takes us out of our daily lifeworld and spurs us to temporarily inhabit a new created reality—a reality that we actively *construct.* We enter the *epochē* through the suspension of our ordinary reference. Ideas about creative blending and mimesis help make sense of this process. The polysemy of the song and of its performance context separates it from quotidian terms of reference; disparate new meanings can be invested in songs at the very moment of their performance, depending on the singer and on the listeners. The indeterminacy of the lyrics and the liminal nature of the created 'space' in which they are performed creates a gap for singer and listener alike which could free them from the constraints of every day conventions. 'A whole song may picture a 'reality' which is as much of the mind as it is accomplished fact (Shields 1993: 74).

Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusions

Ideas presented here suggest that the traditional elements alone do not make ballads what they are. Such features can be used to focus attention, but are not always the key to dramatic meaning. Ballads exist through time not solely because their singers recall all the stanzas and sequential details but because singers and their audiences have continued to respond deeply to well-articulated, culturally shared metaphors and dramatisations of human experience. Ballads must be seen as

> Hallmarks of intensification, distillation and vernacular recognition of the smallest critical mass that can still evoke an audience's response through employment of appropriate cultural nuance and metaphor (Toelken 1995: 103).

Ballads achieve their characteristic effect through masterful dramatic recreation through culturally meaningful situations or events. Because human concerns about love, betrayal, family violence, sex, vulnerability, courtship and death are powerful, we respond deeply when they are made palpable in a dramatic scene with cultural meaning. Because these areas of human concern are seldom unambiguous, and everyone responds to them differently, the poetic devices used are open to multiple interpretations. Metaphors have the capacity to animate and direct our responses to the situations described or suggested in the ballad. Indeed, ballads may have persisted not because they have successfully transmitted strings of narrative detail, but because they have continued to dramatise powerful constellations of personal and cultural meaning. Their function is to foreground or dramatise ambiguous aspects of human concern. Because a culture's nuances of language and values inform the processes of articulation, the result is likely to be far more meaningful than the invention of a single author:

> By and large we are not studying the accumulated texts of a few educated poets but the dynamic record of a general dynamic capacity to use the poetic power available in the song traditions and the contexts of everyday life in order to foreground and articulate central features of shared human concern (Toelken 1960: 50).

Ideas from the contemporary theory of metaphor and embodied cognition can be used to extend work already undertaken dealing with the creation of ballad meaning. The characteristic ballad language and 'commonplaces' (Andersen 1985) set up a schema (a mental representation of the structure). Hearing these markers immediately brings to mind the schema of a ballad story in the mind of the reader. Applying the framework of creative blending enables us to examine how we are cognitively able to set up worlds in relation to the *real* world using the example of the 'ballad world.' The listener *expects* certain elements that are intrinsic to ballads to be presented in the narrative. The listener is also required to 'fill in the gaps' of indeterminacy in the co-creation of meaning. This process takes place with differing results for each individual and for each contact with that specific text. The ideas presented here demonstrate how a creative blending network may be used as a tool to illustrate how we could understand the ballad world in terms of a deeper meaning. As Toelken (1995: 21) reminds us,

> Folksongs, dependent as they are on the styles, colourations, nuances and ambiguities of spoken language and the ongoing creative variations of musical expression, thrive on the suggestiveness and multiplicity of possibles inherent in culturally shared arenas of vernacular performance, negotiation, and discourse. Because so many levels of perception are simultaneously engaged, a folksong is worth a thousand pictures, for it expands our engagement with meaning...And yet, for this to be perceived and experienced with force, the song must be encountered in its unique reality—*while it is being sung*.

The conclusion here then is that,

> No matter how frugally the details of a ballad are presented, no matter how wonderfully ambiguous the metaphors may be, the *music* organises the verbal materials into readily understood, intensely felt and easily recalled units of cultural meaning'(Toelken 1995: 21).

The following chapters will explore the idea of creative blending in relation to 'song' as a temporary metaphorical construct, and further, in relation to 'gesture,' which takes into consideration the lived experience of the body in the process of meaning making.

CHAPTER SEVEN 7

"Harp and Carp and Come Alang Wi' Me": Words, Music *Ballad* [61]

This chapter builds on the question asked in the previous chapter: how is meaning created in the context of the ephemeral and intangible nature of musical performance? The full realisation of a ballad cannot exist independently of its sung performance with melody, and so this chapter seeks to elucidate the elusive partnership between melody and words in the ballad experience. In her lecture on Scottish balladry, McClane (2011) spoke of words and tune as the 'twa sisters' of balladry, each vying for attention, much like the sisters themselves in the ballad of the same name. Chapter Five made the claim that few would dispute: it is not words or melody as separate entities, but both *together* that work in song. But how do they work together in song? How do they interact in performance and how do we make sense of this? The relationship between words and music is central to the study of song in general, and so recent work on understanding song will be briefly summarised.

Talking of coming 'together' presupposes that two isolated entities are to be juxtaposed. The ease and difficulty with which we can talk of words and melody as isolated or separate entities will be discussed here; and whether words and music constitute separate symbol systems is also questioned. In Chapter Five we explored the difference between *sound* and *words*, and argued that sounds can affect our bodily way of being *before* signification. Before the main thrust of the argument is

[61] Again, this chapter title is in reference to the ballad 'Thomas the Ryhmer.'

developed, a brief account of the problematic nature of the traditional semiotic approach in the elucidation of the embodied ballad experience is necessary.

The idea developed in Chapter Six - that when two or more entities come together a metaphorical process is at work - will then be developed in relation to words and melody. This idea was inspired by conversations I had with Stanley Robertson (2008), introduced earlier in this thesis:

> ...in these waves, up here, floats yer melody and down here floats yer words, so ye've got the melody and the words, and the space that's in between, that is where the *Maysie* lives...

Using insights from embodied cognition developed for understanding 'song' as a temporary construct (Zbikowski 2002), this chapter proposes a new model for understanding how words and melody come together in the ballad experience. We have previously discussed 'creative blending' in relation to novel metaphors, entrenched meaning and the idea of cultural framing. Creative blending theory is based on evidence of metaphorical mapping between different 'spaces,' or 'domains' of experience. I suggest here that words and music can be understood to constitute two separate domains of experience, which blend together to create 'ballad blends.' This theory will be explored using a case study.

Words, Music, *Song*

Possibilities arise when words and music come together in song, and in certain circumstances, the result is far greater than simply the sum of its parts. The topic of the power of song in general has fascinated writers on music for centuries, but surprisingly, a satisfactory definition of song itself remains elusive. In its most

basic taxonomical description, 'song' is a conjunction of 'words' and 'music,' especially where the vocal production of the words makes use of determinate pitches. This definition is clearly inadequate, but it does provide a common ground for considering how we categorise such entities.

Lawrence Zbikowski (2002: 44) notes that, in the history of song analysis, there have been relatively few attempts to come to terms with how words and music combine to create the phenomenon of song. There have been painstaking analyses of song texts which only mention cursorily the music that sets the texts; in musicology there are carefully crafted analyses of musical structure supported by instances of how the words mirror this structure, but there are few comprehensive analyses that attempt to capture how the meaning constructed by the words and the meaning constructed by the music come together to create the meaning associated with a particular song in performance.

In the case of aesthetic forms that involve language and music, a consequence of the emphasis on language has been that mappings from language to music have received most attention, and mappings from music to language tend to be neglected. It is telling that contemporary metaphor theory and the theory of conceptual blending were originally developed with respect to linguistic phenomena. This bias is also evident in the history of song scholarship at large and in the narrower field of ballad scholarship. While some scholars have explored the ballad as 'song,' it is not the central focus of many seminal works.[62] Historically, the study of the musical dimension of the ballads has been neglected relative to the study of the ballads as

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[62] One notable exception is Bronson. *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads* (1959–72) is considered indispensable in the history of ballad studies. *The Ballad as Song* (1969) is concerned with both the methodology in the comparative study of folksong and the interrelationship of tunes and texts. Tolken (1995: 20–23) affirms that the study of music is key in establishing meaning in song texts.

poetry, a trend which was noted in Chapter Two. Bronson and other scholars of ballad music maintain that the neglect of the musical dimension—of the ballad as *song* - leads to a dangerously incomplete knowledge of oral transmission. A study of the interrelationship of tunes and texts is paramount in establishing meaning in song texts. In my view, an understanding of this relationship is crucial for our understanding of the embodied ballad experience.

Recent Work on Song

Victor Kofi Agawu (1992) offers a survey of some recent work on song and identifies four basic models for analysis. The first model derives from the work of Susanne Langer (1953) and operates on the premise that when words and music come together in song, the music wholly absorbs the words. As Langer puts it,

> Song is not a compromise between poetry and music, though the text taken by itself be a great poem; song *is* music (152).

The second model proposes that there is an irreducible relationship between words and music. As Lawrence Kramer expresses in *Music and Poetry* (1984),

> A poem is never really assimilated into a composition; it is *incorporated* and it retains its own life, its own body, within the body of the music (127).

The third model conceives of song as a compound structure in which the words carry the primary semantic content and the music colours or enhances what the words signify. This is somewhat limited in that it takes no account of the meaningfulness of music. It also assumes that people always attend to the word, which is certainly not the case. Agawu proposes a fourth model in which song is constructed as a confluence of three independent but overlapping systems: 'music,'

'words' and 'song.' He notes that this model provides no concrete identity for song, but instead, allows song an identity only by default. This led him to conclude that,

> Perhaps, then, what the model points to is song as *process*, not as product. What is interesting in other words, is not what song *is*, but what it becomes in its perpetual striving for a concrete mode of existence (1992: 7–8).

In this light, song can be defined as a dynamic phenomenon in which discourse structures from language and music combine. One of the main objectives in this research is a desire to move away from conceptions of Scottish songs as cultural objects, and welcome a shift in focus to 'process' rather than 'product.' Key to this insight is the understanding of 'song' as a dynamic process, rather than song as abstract static concept. Agawu's perspective adds a new dimension to this conception, leading to the definition of 'song' as a temporary cognitive construction, recruited from the text and music presented to us in performance: a metaphorical product of the interaction between words and melody in performance.

Zbikowski argues that both the literary and musical content of a song and the ways in which it is structured as a vocal and melodic composition must constitute the basic pattern and frame of any interpretation and understanding. To this end, he adapts Agawu's fourth model and explains this idea in light of recent research in cognitive science on image schemata. Working on the assumption that the mental spaces basic to creative blends can be set up by music as well as language, Zibowksi (2002: 286, my italics) comes up with a theory to explain 'song' in this context.

> Music breathes life into poetry and poetry breathes life into music, and together they proceed as *song*.

In an attempt to understand the workings of the ballad experience, Zbikowski's model of song can be appropriated as the confluence of 'music,' 'words' (in no particular hierarchical order) and 'ballad,' and can be elaborated to include specific ballad features. This is the space of 'song' or in this instance, 'ballad.' Such a new space creates cognitive possibilities for the play of the imagination, metaphorical mapping and creation of new ideas, narratives and even new worlds. Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) idea of 'compression' is crucial in this process, allowing linguistic mappings to be compressed so that a single element in a blended space simultaneously represents all of its counterparts, enabling us to mediate our comprehension of abstract ideas. Entrenched textual metaphors constitute one compressed domain of experience, to be blended with the musical element as a separate domain of experience in a novel way. This process will be explained in more detail below.

Ballad as Song

The close relationship between words and music is exhibited in a particularly intimate way in the ballad; the specific relation between the words and the tune are often intriguing, and are certainly inextricably and symbiotically linked. Although a neat fit between a musical phrase and a metaphorical nuance may not always be discoverable, and even though different tunes are known to migrate from one song to another, Bronson considers the tune to be potentially far more central to the establishment of meaning.

> Whether a tune strikes us as beautiful, plaintive, cheerful, plain or complex, the rhythm, tone, structure, and performance of a song is integral to its meaning (Toelken 1995: 20).

Considering these important musical features of ballad melody leads us to appreciate the potential richness of the study of the ballad *beyond* the verbal metaphoric discussed in the previous chapter.

The question of 'stability' often lies at the heart of any discussion of ballad texts and tunes. The degree to which the 'inner core of identity' (Bronson 1969) persists in balladry is demonstrable on both the verbal and musical sides; but arguably perhaps more so on the musical. Bronson argues that a narrative theme may be stated in any number of ways; the plot being independent of the choice of words.

> When we consider that there is no accessible original to impose its authority; that at every moment in its history such a tune is open to all the gusts of casual influence, subject to forgetful recollection, to individual, or local, or epochal, preferences in mode and rhythm, to wilful invention or derangement, to the accidents of marriage with continually altered verbal patterns that impose their own necessities upon melodic statement, and all these operative without any counterbalancing overt external control: we can only marvel at the inner urgency with which folk tunes maintain their essential selfhood in the face of such overwhelming odds (Bronson 1955: 51).

The concept of stability, by implication, also raises the question of instability. Ballads have survived through varying fashions and cultural changes, moving back and forth between oral and written traditions. In surviving through change, then, they do achieve a kind of cultural stability. Paradoxically, however, 'if there is one characteristic shared by traditional song, it is variation' (McKean 2003: 2). It has always been a matter of contention whether variation or stability should be emphasised in the study of traditional ballads. On one hand, as Rieuwerts (2007: 243) makes clear, the variants of a narrative can help us to 'read' culture and attempt to understand cultural concerns. However, in literary analysis, the very concept of variation raises difficulties: 'a genuinely popular ballad can have no fixed and final form, no sole authentic version, there are *texts* but there is no *text*' (Kittredge xvii in

Rieuwerts 2007: 243). Musical variation is hardly less frequent than textual variation; indeed, it is almost impossible for a singer to perform a ballad exactly the same way twice. While a singer may endeavour to do so—to sing it the way it should be sung—the conditions under which a song is performed are always unpredictable.

It not unusual, then, to find the same version of a ballad being sung to a variety of tunes of suitable rhythm and metre, or to find the same tune utilised for several different ballads. Just as there are clusters of versions for most ballads, so a given ballad may have associated with it a family of tunes whose members appear to be versions of a single form. This does make 'text-to-music' analysis difficult and problematic. This problem is a difficult obstacle when the focus is on the *fixity* of printed texts and tunes. However, the fact that different tunes exist for the same ballads becomes an irrelevancy and can be overcome in the context of embodied performance: what matters is the temporary interaction of a text and a tune in a specific and dynamic moment of performance. This is not to say that some tunes may have a more powerful effect than others. We must ask, then, what is the relationship between melody and text in the presencing of ballads?

Creative Blending of Text and Music

Perhaps one of the reasons why we humans are so fascinated with 'song' and why the ballad has proved to be such an enduring cultural form is the fact that it combines two separate domains of experience. Textual meaning and musical meaning exist both independently and interdependently, but when these two meaning systems collide in the act of performance, a powerful aesthetic experience is possible.

From the perspective of creative blending theory, in some cases words and music will prompt the construction of two independent but correlated mental spaces, which interact with each other in a dynamic way leading to a new space in which concepts drawn from each of these two input spaces are blended. This new space typically serves as a site for the imagination. However, the extension of such an imaginary world cannot simply be predicted from 'linking' the domain of the text with the domain of music. It results instead, according to Zbikowski, from 'blending' elements and events from these two domains to create a new one with its own structures and relations and extends *beyond* the immediate bounds of text and music, greater than the sum of its parts. This idea might help us understand Stanley's claim that 'the space between is where the *Maysie* lives': it is the newly created 'space between' where new meanings are created.

Such a theory of creative blending and song is based on the assumption that words and music can be set up as two *separate* domains of experience. This assumption has to be defended. On one hand, the differences between words and music would suggest that they do indeed belong to two different conceptual domains; on the other hand, the similarities between the two suggest that language and music may use some of the same cognitive resources.

The similarities and differences between music and words actually works productively *both* ways in this context. According to the theory of invariance introduced in the previous chapter, the two cognitive domains need to be sufficiently *different* to produce novel results, but at the same time there needs to be a degree of *similarity* between them so that the structure from one domain may be readily mapped on to the other to create meaning. The power of a metaphor itself,

according to Ricouer, is founded on the 'tension between the strangeness of the pairing *and* its suitability,' where 'remoteness persists in closeness.' According to Ricouer, imagination - in its semantic sense - is nothing but this 'competence' which consists of producing the genre through the difference, again not beyond the difference, as in the concept, but in spite of the difference' (Ricoeur 1991: 125 in Ó Laoire 2005: 228).

In the case of song, as Zbikowski observes, the invariances or 'tension of essences' is between the mental space set up by the text and the mental space set up by the music. Before developing this theory further, it is necessary to unpack the ideas and notions we hold about what constitutes 'words' and what constitutes 'music.'

Language... Music?

There are numerous similarities between words and music. Both are unique to the human species, both unfold over time and both make use of sound. There are innumerable cultural practices across the world which blur the boundaries between the two modes of communication. Consequently, any attempts to draw or determine a finite boundary between what counts as language and what counts as music is very difficult.

'Music,' as a term used to describe the melodic and rythmic dimension song, is unsatisfactory in this context because what it implies in a wider discourse is simply too large in scope. It is pragmatic, therefore, to divorce the overarching concept of 'music' from *vocal* music, or singing. Interestingly, there are surprisingly few examples of vocal music without words. There exists 'diddling' or mouth music,

which makes use of non-meaningful phonemes that imitate instruments to create melodies. The information available on forms of wordless vocal music account for examples distributed over different musical cultures and practices, ranging from simple devices for musical learning to elaborated forms of performing art. [63] Two examples in a Scottish context are *canntaireachd* in the Gaelic tradition, a method of teaching pipe tunes orally; and also *puirt a beul*, some of which make percussive use of vocables.[64] The fact there is surprisingly little wordless vocal music would suggest that perhaps listeners find the sounds coming from a human throat unconvincing without the sort of explanation a song text provides, but instruments succeed in being convincing even without using words. Perhaps we are simply more culturally pre-disposed to expect words, but what is clear is that in most cultures, song requires the two *together*: the poetic power of words and the affective power of melody. Often when a great piece of music is played—a fiddle air for example—we often describe it as 'singing,' *cantabile*, that is, able to imitate the human voice.

It is perhaps easier to conceive of words and music as constituting a spectrum, or a sliding scale, with vocalisation as language at one end, through heightened speech, through various forms of vocalised non-language and with verbal music at the other. The question of when sound becomes music is certainly troubling, and there is no satisfactory answer to be found. In my own view, in certain contexts, from the point of view of their sonic properties and in the specific context of *orality* for example, verbal music can belong to such a continuum; but in

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[63] It is possible that such forms originated from the combination of a vocal apparatus in human species and the necessity of rhythmical expression in all human cultures. See Scher (1970).
[64] Mouth music is rarely non- meaningful in its original form, In a Gaelic context it is often satirical. The point is that the cultural referents have been forgotten - especially for the satirical pieces, which tend to be local in focus.

other contexts, when defined by function, verbal music and language can pragmatically be separated into different entities.

Symbolic Systems: The Problem of Semiotics

The question as to why we have developed both language and music is a fascinating one and has troubled many scholars.[65] There are many ways to approach this question. From the point of view of literary theory, we live in a world that we understand through symbols, and we make meanings through our creation and interpretation of 'signs.' Indeed, the notion that music is a language is the basis for some of the most prevalent metaphors used to describe music. Whether music is such a symbol system is still a point of contention.

Analysis of the ballad singing experience is incredibly multifaceted. Porter (2009: 112) suggests that such analysis will often lead to what he calls 'a reflexive semiotics.' I am not entirely sure what he means by this. The relatively recent field of musical semiotics is very complex, and it is outwith the scope of this thesis to engage in its origins or various trajectories.[66] In my view, traditional semiotics is not entirely productive to understanding the ballad experience because it does not lend itself particularly well to the dynamic and processual nature of performance, or

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[65] Pinker (1997: 534) suggests that we did not evolve a taste for music, and that music is merely 'auditory cheesecake, an exquisite confection crafted to tickle the sensitive spots of at least six of our mental faculties.' Mithen (2009) holds the opposite view, offering an evolutionarily-informed hypotheses that music evolved as a device for enhancing cooperation among individuals. Mithen brings to bear cognitive and evolutionary perspectives which support Blacking's (1973) belief that rhythm and dance are the most primal expressions of a culture; that music it is one of the things that makes us *human*, that began to distinguish us from our hominid ancestors. Blacking's idea is that the origin of music, what he terms proto-music, was not functional but *ecstatic* in nature. Essentially what Mithen and Blacking propose is that there were rudimentary rhythms which caused ecstatic experiences in humans whereby people would spontaneously emit sounds, which, he believes, was the beginning of singing and vocalisation.

[66] See Tarasti (2002).

indeed the idiosyncrasies therein. Traditional semiotic theory assumes an external, objective reality and a separation of subject from object. We proposed a fundamentally different ontology of self and world intertwined in Chapter Three. Where structural semiotics seeks to uncover the universal and a temporal condition under which these experiences come to be 'lived' as such but only as a 'coded' production that perpetuate a 'singular universal structure of the mind' (Levi-Strauss 1966), phenomenological hermeneutics grounds the multifarious expressions of human existence in a hermeneutic understanding of being-in-the-world.

The basic problems with traditional semiotic theory and the ontological status of the 'sign' are firstly the question of how cultural systems can be at once transpersonal, seemingly existing independently of the actions of any individual subject, but at the same time entirely reliant upon their instantiation in the actions of individuals; and secondly the question of the relationship between process and structure. The objectification of music required by semiological analysis is diametrically opposed to the humanistic research established by anthropological and folkloristic models. In the study of Western Classical notated music, there exists a bias which parallels the bias of literacy over orality discussed in Chapter Five, borne out of the eighteenth and nineteenth century objectification of music. Musical semiotics and ideas such as 'topic theory'[67] operate in elite and individually composed music that has a larger element of fixity of musical 'text' than traditional forms. In the case of most classical music, there is a musical score; and while each iteration of that performance will be different for many reasons (for example, technological advancements, conditions of performance, style), there is a fixed form

[67] See Monelle (2000).

with which to work. The oral tradition to which the ballad belongs is characterised by variation and adaption, and the same degree of fixity does not exist.

The reason traditional semiotic approaches have not been favoured by many ethnomusicologists lies with the suspicion that semiotics dwells on musical signs and structures to the detriment of social context and significance. Advances in embodiment theory highlight what is perhaps the main problem encountered by musical semiotics, which is the complete lack of a general semiotic theory of *time*. Many such problems of representation and meaning have been taken up by cognitive science, which is why this is the direction taken here rather than attempting to develop a semiotic model for understanding the ballad experience. The framework of embodied music cognition seems to adapt more naturally to the problems of investigation developed in less formalised music cultures. The temporal dimension will be further explored in Chapter Eight in relation to the idea of 'gesture' and the embodied nature of musical experience, as well as the idea of time being a singularly plural experience.

Words and Music as Different Domains of Experience?

One of the main differences between words and music is that music, on the whole, is much less precise than linguistic meaning. Comparing a musical phrase to a sentence, it is abundantly evident that the musical phrase has a low level of semantic specification, while the linguistic sign has a high level of specification. It is often argued that this is because we, as humans, have created words for the purposes of signification- we have imbued them with their meaning - and that musical notes as sounds are naturally occurring in nature (Harmon 2008: 117). According this view,

words and musical notes differ fundamentally. Words, as opposed to musical notes, set up a separation between subject and object: what the word names becomes that object, separate from the name. The namer becomes the subject, separate from what has been named. To vocalise the word 'rose' for example, is to make present to the imagination what may be physically absent to the senses. There will be as many different images of 'rose' present in the room as there are participants in the conversation. Here the idea of the singular plural comes into play: it may be ontologically true that a rose is a rose, but this is never the case in our subjective experience. Words, according to this theory, necessarily establish divisions between speaker and listener and speech has to struggle towards understanding unity by continually spinning new webs aimed at overcoming what the spinning itself separates and divides.

With words and with language there is always a system of symbols that must be negotiated before meaning is found. David Burrows (1989) argues that, because musical notes do not refer to anything outside of themselves but contain within themselves the full and actual presence of their meaning; signifier and signified and subject and object can stand together. From this perspective, words indicate things beyond themselves, whereas musical notes do not. Musical notes in and of themselves rarely carry meaning, but series of notes composed together can be symbolic and have referential power. This is not the same as words in a sentence, because each word by itself is a semantic signifier on some level. The meaning of musical notes, in Victor Zuckerkandl's (1973: 68) view, lies not in what they point to, but 'in the pointing itself.' Zuckerkandl argues that what gives notes in a melody their musical meaning is their *dynamic* quality: not in the musicological sense of loud

and quiet, but in the sense of their movement in time. This dynamic is also relational: a note heard in isolation has no dynamism, but a note as part of a melody is a heard as complex of relational notes (which includes 'not-music,' discussed in Chapter Five). This dynamism is nonmaterial, intangible, yet 'alive.'

In Chapter Five it was noted that in recent years, ethnomusicology has focused on the role of the listener and on comprehension of the function, importance or meaning of music. To this end, ethnomusicologists have turned to a rethinking of semiotic methods as a basis for a better synthesis between detailed musical and textual analysis and possible interpretive approaches. For example, Thomas Turino (1999, 2008) looks to Piercian semiotic theory of emotion,[68] using concepts of the icon, the index, the symbol, snowballing and chaining in order to explain the effects of music. Semiotic approaches like this delineate the power of music to bring to memory associations of other realities not intrinsic to the musical sound (Rouget 1985; Seeger 1987). 'Indexical meanings' may include remembering an emotional event in our lives; music may be 'iconic'; that is, within the convention of a particular musical culture: it may portray, express or resemble a particular emotion and thus elicit that reaction in the listener. But how does Turino's theory work in the context of song where there are two meaning systems at work? Moreover, such theories still fail to seriously consider the idea of the emergent present. There are many insights to be found in Turino's work, but the fact that musical sounds can affect us *before* signification (as discussed at length in Chapter Five) is, in my view, is of as much - if not *more* - interest. One of the central aims of this thesis is to develop an

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[68] The pragmatist philosopher and logician Charles Sanders Peirce formulated his own model of the sign, of 'semiotic' and of the taxonomies of signs in contrast to Ferdinand Saussure's model of the sign.

understanding that allows us to relate to the world with both body and mind in a more complex way than cerebral interpretation alone.

Form and Function

Zbikowski states that language and music have different functions within human culture. He follows the work of the developmental psychologist Tomasello (1999), who situates the emergence of language in our species within the broader development of human culture. It is possible to argue that the primary function of language is to direct the attention of another person to objects or concepts within a shared referential frame. Music's primary function is to represent through patterned sound various dynamic processes that are common in human experience. Chief among these dynamic processes are those associated with the emotions.[69] The difference in function between these two modes of communication is matched by a difference in the forms through which the functions are realised, or performed. Given this perspective, it can be argued that mappings between the domains of language and music - in terms of function - involve structures that are fundamentally different in kind.

Zbikowski notes that language tends to focus on objects (whether real or imagined) and on relationships between objects. Language can direct our attention to a process (e.g. the noun 'descent' picks out a dynamic process that involves a traversing of space), but it is less common for language to *embody* such a process (364). When it does—the sound of a horse's step, to use Zbikowski's own example—we imitate this with the words 'clip-clop, clip-clop,' and language starts to become

[69] Recent work by Damasio (2003) can be construed as sequences of physiological and psychological events that delimit feelings and the movements of bodies through space.

more 'like' music. Music, then, does not tend to be involved to the same extent with the rich symbolic systems typical of language. The following distinction can eventually be made: 'the basic materials of music . . . contain no direct reference to a surrounding world' (Burrows 1989: 73). Mappings from language to music will tend to focus on static aspects of the musical domain; mappings from music to language will draw out the dynamic aspects of the domain of language. Music has evolved its own kinds of complexity - complexities in the management of pitch, timbre, rhythm, form - in keeping up with the complexities of the world that speech orders and represents.

Chapter Five argued that the semantic power of words expands the awareness of narrative possibilities ranging over past, present and future, while sound focuses the awareness of 'presence' in the present through an embodied experience of 'deep listening.' In this sense, the 'sonorous presence' of music is attributed to the ability to remove the separation words can create between signifier and signified, and between speaker and things spoken about, in a process akin to communion. To recall Eliot, 'the text is there…while music goes about its deeper work.' This the only way I can understand Langer's claim that 'music can convey truth in a way that language cannot' (1994). In language, there are always symbols to negotiate; whereas the effect of music is visceral, physical and more immediate in comparison to the detour we must negotiate with language.

Despite the exceptions and problems inherent in the claim that words and music are separate domains of experience, in general, and for our purposes, it is possible to claim that, at least in their characteristic usage in the contemporary world, words and music have different functions. While the range of language

functions is broad (to communicate between a mother and small child, or between two work colleagues for example), it is *primarily* characterised by the use of symbolic tokens to direct the attention of another person to objects and relations. Music, by contrast, provides a sonic medium for a wide range of dynamic processes that are marked in human embodied experience, and has the effect of focussing attention in the present, through embodied experience. As Zbikowski notes, what music *does* make reference to—or perhaps *embodies*—is the *interior world* of emotions or physiological states, and that it is this 'world' that typically escapes the grasp of non-metaphorical language.

The 'Ballad Blend'

Zbikowksi's theory is not concerned with very general correlations between music and text, but with the creative blend produced by an entire song rather than at the level of sounds or very specific phrases—although this could be the focus of future research in this area. What is interesting is how words and music work together to tell stories that enhance and expand on structural features inherent in the 'source spaces' for each individual blend, where the emergent structure produces narratives considerably more extensive than suggested by the ballad text alone. In the case of traditional ballad and in song more generally, this process does not include simply 'music' and 'text'. A given 'ballad blend' involves many other elements —performance context, cultural context, internal context etc. According, to Porter, it is in the event of the ballad singing experience that these layers of story 'fuse' and attain 'presence.' The idea of fusion can perhaps be better understood as 'blending.'

The 'blends' produced will never be the same; each is a unique, highly personal and subjective experience. The two lines between input 1 and input 2 are directional.

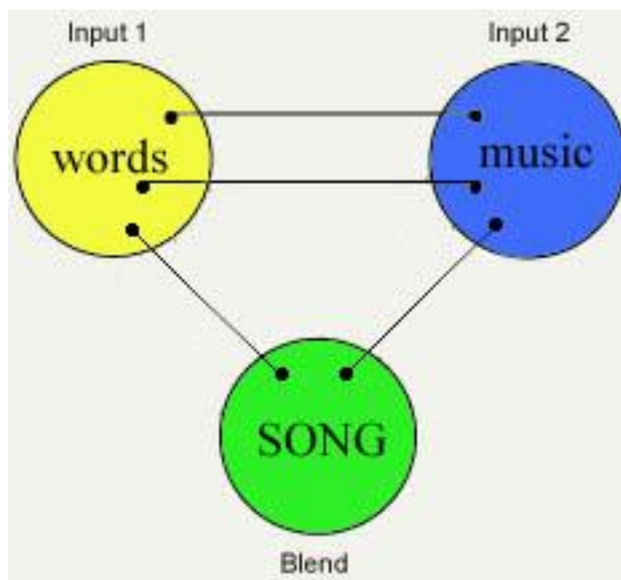

Figure 3.

Zbikowski applies his methodology to nineteenth century art songs, and experiments further by applying his theories to some twentieth century pop songs to show the multiple applications of his theory. In my view, Zbikowski's approach presents unique opportunities for the analysis of the ballad experience. What this theory can illuminate is *where text and melody interact*, to create the effect that we recognise as 'the ballad.' The problem with this methodology is that it can only be achieved after the event, and relies upon a knowledge of the text. Zbikowski's model is therefore limited, but for the purposes of demonstrating the dynamic processes of how the words and melody come together in performance, it has illustrative value.

The Ballad Form

Central to the conventions of the ballad genre is the ballad stanza, consisting of quatrains of alternating four-stress (tetrameter) lines, and three-stress (trimeter) lines. The simple rhyme scheme has proved remarkably stable over time, retaining two common variations, 'abcb' and 'abab.' Internal rhyme is extensively used within lines and stanzas, and alliteration and assonance add to the mood, and ease of recitation of the poem, and probably act as mnemonic scaffolding. The language is simple and colloquial, interspersed with archaic words, but showing little use of elaborate or literary figures of speech, but rather, as discussed previously, 'entrenched blends.' Characterisation is minimal, with no explanation given of a character's motives or actions.

The ballads are also characterised by repetition. One major feature of balladry is the extensive use of incremental repetition, coupled with grammatical parallelism, a literary device which can build up successive layers of insight and meaning around the central theme and manifest a unity as well as opportunity for development in the poem itself (examples will be given shortly). The unfolding of a story often involves repetition of a theme with slight variations, thereby 'creating a feeling of tension and gradually leading to the denouement' (Karpeles 1973 in Finnegan 1977: 105). Ultimately, it gives structural prominence to a sense of inevitability and foreboding. Wittig (1958: 149) explains,

> The fact that ballads were songs, and the use of incremental repetition, made it possible to jettison much strictly unnecessary connective material, and most ballads lead abruptly from one scene to the next.

Ballads also encompass a characteristic musical idiom: a distinctive corpus of folksong tunes, unstably matched to the texts so that there may be many tunes for

the same ballad type or many different songs sung to what is essentially the same tunes; a recurrent vocabulary or melodic, rhythmic and dynamic techniques, as well as ornamentation, designed to meet with the emotion and metrical demands of the song texts. Ballad tunes are based on modes rather than the diatonic and chromatic scales. As Bruno Nettl notes in his work *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents* (1973), most ballad tunes have, as one characteristic, a melodic contour which roughly forms an arc, starting low, rising in the second phrase, remaining on the higher level of *tessitura*[70] in the third phrase (the prevailing vocal range within which most of the tones lie) and moving down to the level of the first phrase in the last. The most stable part of the tune occurs at the mid-cadence (the end of the second text line) and the final cadence (the end of the fourth line). The third phrase of the tune, corresponding to the third line of the stanza, is the most variable in terms of pitch. Significantly, these notes happen to coincide with the rhyming words. The last note of the tune, the point of resolution and final repose, usually falls on the keynote of the scale; the mid-cadence falling normally a perfect fifth above the tonic or a perfect fourth below it. Where the lines of music and the text coincide, and the points at which the music comes to a temporary rest, are also those at which the sentence, phrase or thought in the text is completed. There is, moreover, a close relationship between the smaller segments of musical and linguistic structure, for example, between stress and accent, between the smaller segments, length and tone of the syllable.

70 In music, the term tessitura generally describes the most musically acceptable and comfortable range for a singer.

The usual situation in balladry is that the narrative or lyric statement unfolds lineally in the words while the music presents a circular, redundant counterpoint that mitigates and even slows the way a story progresses, or intensifies the way a lyric develops. This means that in ballads especially, where descriptive detail is sparse, the redundant tune creates an insistence on the relationships between each verse and the whole. The repeated strophic structure of song melody is in tension with the temporal progression of the narrative. The repeated tune slows the lineal rush of events and therefore allows for a more intensified perception of the metaphorical language. Compared to language, music's reasoning is essentially circular. There is one kind of verbal discourse that does double-back on itself, and the word for it is 'verse'; and it is verse, interestingly, that characterises the ballad. The word 'verse' itself is derived indirectly from the Latin *vertere*, 'to turn.'

There are other devices in poetry that tend to a merging of particulars into the whole. Metaphor, for example, encourages the listener to achieve a stereotypical and individual fusion of images with a common focus, always singularly plural:

> Each rhyme is the copula in a metaphor which states, in generalised form: there is a realm in which the diverse things we are talking about come together and *fuse*, and a common resonance can stand for that place. The parallel structures of a series of stanzas carries this effect over into larger dimensions, and a strophic musical setting of those stanzas reinforces the effect. Music is free to take all of this further, because it is free of the need to make discursive sense (Burrows 1989: 397, my italics).

This demonstrates my hypothesis that the semantic power of 'words' expands the awareness of narrative possibilities ranging over past, present and future, through the creation of narratives; while sounds of music and melody and their intonation focus the awareness of 'presence' in the present through a visceral, embodied experience. The partnership between repeated words, parallel action and redundant

tune functions so powerfully that often captivating ballads have hypnotic qualities. This idea will be discussed in more depth towards the end of this chapter. The tune and the text should reinforce each other; both should stress the same place in the narrative.

> Upon reflection, we must perceive that the very idea of narrative, of progress from point to point in a story, is inimical to its statement in identical units of simple melody, repeated as many time as needs requires. The melodic form, an integrated succession of a given number of short phrases, has powerfully imposed itself on the verse form, to mutual advantages; but the inherent demands of *narrative* song are for a freer and more dramatic vehicle (Bronson 1969: 129).

It is clear from this quote that in Bronson's view, melody affects *all* aspects of the text.

Case Study: One Narrative, Two Contrasting Examples

In order to demonstrate the utility of conceptual blending theory and its application to the study of the relationship between words and melody in the ballad, this next section will work through two example analyses of the ballad 'The Dowie Dens of Yarrow' in terms of two conceptual blends, and argue for an interpretation of the narrative strategies of both text and music in terms of these blends. It seems fitting to select this example because it is the very song that Stanley sung to me in our early fieldwork encounter to illustrate the *Maysie* and the ballad experience; and it was the experience of hearing this song that was the genesis of this entire study. Furthermore, this representative ballad example clearly supports my argument. Philip Bohlman (1988: 17) comments,

> Analysis of a single song stands not just to proffer a hermeneutic explanation of its form or of the meaning of which it is part, the text exists only within a

> context of performance and tradition, and it is one task of the student of folklore to understand how text, performance and tradition interrelate.

A methodology for the analysis of the blending of text and music in song, according to Zbikowski (2995: 243- 286), entails several stages. Firstly, to highlight the basic characteristics of the text and the basic characteristics of the melody and to establish the correlations between the two; and secondly, to propose how these correlations might lead to a blend: that is, how do music and text combine to create a blended space? What are some of the features of this blended space?

The transcriptions below are descriptive, not prescriptive, and are based on a singer's performance on one occasion or from recorded versions. The problem with this methodology in an attempt to get at lived experience is abundantly clear. Nevertheless, the pictorial representations are useful to illustrate the different versions.

The first version here was collected from Stanley Robertson, learned from his aunt, Jeannie Robertson. The tune has been adapted and forced into a Western scale for the purposes of transcription and reference, and is written an octave above the original performance. [71] The slanting line represents a slide.

[71] Transcriptions were created using Sibelius notation software. There are broadly three kinds of transcriptions of tunes. First is the skeletal type, exemplified by Bronson and by most collections of folk songs. The second, at the other extreme, are exact transcriptions which show nuances of grace notes and detailed time values. These are very difficult to read even for an experienced musician and are useful only for purposes of comparison (Munro 1996: 53). The third is the compromise utilised here. Porter (1968: 172–75) classifies this level of vocal transcription as a 'detailed transcription by ear.' Most of the ornaments are given, as are the main changes in time signatures. The key signatures given are as close to the original recordings as possible, with accidentals marked as they appear in the melody.

Dowie Dens o Yarrow

Stanley Robertson

There wi - s a la - dy in the north You scarce would fi - n' her ma-rrow, She was

6

cour-ted by nine ge - n - tl - e men And a ploo bo - y la - d fae Ya - rro - w.

Figure 4.

There was a lady in the north
You scarce could fin' her marrow
She was courted by nine gentlemen
And a plooboy lad frae Yarrow

These nine sat drinking at the wine
A' drinking on Yarrow
When they a' swore they would mak' a vow
Tae fight for her on Yarrow

It's will ye tak' the lang sharp lance
Or will ye tak' the arrow
Or will ye tak' your trusty sword
For tae fight wi' us on Yarrow

I winna tak' the lang sharp lance
I winna tak' the arrow
But I will tak' my trusty sword
For tae fight for her on Yarrow

She's washed his face and she's kaimed his hair
She's stroked his hips sae narrow
And she dressed him up like her ain braw knight
For tae fight for her on Yarrow

Fare weel, fair weel my lady gay
Fare weel my lady Sarah
For I must go and fight for thee
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow

For three he slew and three withdrew
And three he wounded sairly
'Til her false brother john came up behind
And stabbed him maist fouly.

Oh faither dear I dream a dream
I dream o' doul and sorrow
For I dreamt that I shewed windin' sheets
On the dowie dens o' Yarrow

Oh dochter dear I read your dream
I doot it will prove sorrow
For your ain true love lies dead and gone
And a bloody corpse on Yarrow

And she's gaed ower yon high high hill
Doon by the houms o Yarrow
And there she saw her ain true love
A bloody corpse on Yarrow

Her hair it being three quarters long
The colour it was yellow
And she wrapped it roond his middle sae sma'
And she carried him back tae Yarrow

Oh faither ye have seven sons
You could wed them a' the morrow
But the bonniest floo'er amongst them a'
Was my plooboy lad frae Yarrow

Oh faither, faither mak' my bed
And mak' it lang and narrow
For my true love died for me today
I shall die for him tomorrow.

The second version here was sung by Emily Smith and was learned from the written page, printed in McMorland's book *Herd Laddie of the Glen: Songs of a Border Shepherd* (2006).

Dowie Dens of Yarrow

Emily Smith (From Willie Scott)

The - re was a la - dy___ in the north You could scarce - ly find her
5
marr - ow; she was cour - ted by nine no - ble men and a plough - man boy o Yarr - ow.

Figure 5.

There lived a lady in the north
You could scarcely find her marrow
She was courted by nine noble men
And her ploughman boy o' Yarrow

As he gaed ower yon high, high hills,
An' doon yon path sae narrow,
There he spied nine noblemen
For to fight with him on Yarrow

There was three he slew, and three withdrew,
Ane three lay dyin wounded;

'Til her brother John stepped in behind
An' pierced his body through oh.

"Go home, go home, you false young man,
An' tell your sister sorrow,
That her true love John lies dead and gone
And a bloody corpse on Yarrow"

As he gaed ower yon high, high hills,
And doon yon path sae narrow;
There he spied his sister dear
She was comin' fast for Yarrow.

"Oh brother dear I've dreamt a dream
I hope it won't prove sorrow,
I dreamt that you were spilling bluid
In the dowie dens o' Yarrow."

"Oh sister dear I'll read your dream
And I'm sure it will prove sorrow;
Your true love John lies dead and gone
And a bloody corpse on Yarrow."

Now this fair maid's hair was three quarters long
And the colour of it was yellow
She tied it roon his middle smaa
An she cairried him hame tae Yarrow.

"Oh daughter dear dry up your tears
An dwell no more in sorrow,
For I'll wed you tae a far higher degree
Than your ploughman boy on Yarrow

"Oh faither dear you have seven sons
You can wed them all tomorrow,
But a fairer flooer there never bloomed
Than my ploughman boy on Yarrow."

Stanley's version has thirteen verses; Emily's has only ten. Consequently, Stanley's version is more involved; the story is more complete and there is a more detailed explanation of events. Despite the differences in length, the narratives are very similar and there is no question that both tell the same story. Between them, they have six almost identical verses. It is not productive to engage in a very close textual analysis here; what is important is the creative blend set up by each, words and melody.

Despite the fact that these two versions are different in length, there is a similar structure: a tale of the death of two lovers told in three parts.[72] If we divide the ballad into its elemental components, interesting conclusions can be drawn. At the narrative level, the ballad may be split into three parts: preparation, battle (climax) and mourning. Interestingly, the ballad also has a binary structure. The first half of the ballad concentrates on the hero, the second half on the heroine. The first half concentrates on the action: the stanzas tell what parties are there and what they do, where all is for the sake of the story. The second half concentrates on feelings: the stanzas tell what the parties feel, focussing on the revelations of the characters. The moment of the boy's death, then, is particularly significant. It indicates the precise point at which the ballad begins to concentrate on how people feel and react rather than what they do.

The tragic nature of this ballad was discussed in Chapter Four to illustrate Gadamer's ideas about aesthetic temporality and the idea of the reconciliation of opposites. Here we have a split between the hero/heroine, action/emotion, plot/character, and the physical/metaphysical.

> This difference between the two parts corresponds to a fundamental duality in worldview…the worldview of the Scottish balladry that duality includes the difference between male and female, as the character structure emphasises (McCarthy 1990:110).

Images culturally associated with love and with death appear in pairs, balanced one against the other in descriptions of characters, events and scenes. The juxtaposition of irreconcilable inseparables such as death and love arouses strong emotions and

[72] This structure is meaningful in itself. Glassie (2000) has demonstrated the importance of what is called 'bilateral tripartite symmetry.' It is logical that we should find the same kinds of symmetry satisfying in ballads as we do in other creative forms.

gives depth and power to a number of traditional songs including this one, and a large number of the stories and motifs serve to express this basic, unstated opposition, such as the motif of the rose and the briar discussed in the previous chapter.

The central stanzas of the second part of the ballad expresses the heroine's grief in manic and grotesque terms, and is possibly the most powerful and most memorable image in the ballad. The girl sets out alone to bring home the body of her murdered lover. In this emergency, she ties her hair round his waist and drags him home. Both versions include this iconic motif. The action, at first glance ridiculous, serves well to highlight the desperately lonely plight of the girl: it is powerfully poetic and a compelling act of grief. Here, the ballad certainly takes on a visual dimension; a good example of Roger's (1980:103) 'eminently visual nature of the ballad diction.'

The verse incorporating the dream adds an element of the supernatural to the story, but also serves to show that the lovers were close emotionally as well as physically. In Smith's version, the girl is in dialogue with her brother about the significance of the dream; in Robertson's she is in dialogue with her father. Other notable motifs include the image of 'pulling heather bells,' common in folk literature as a portent of danger. The 'marriage bed' motif is found in the first version given here, but not the second. It is an example of what is commonly known in folk literature as a floating or 'wandering' verse—an entire verse that is supplanted from one ballad to another with ease. The simple reference to the marriage bed is powerfully emotive, suggesting the lovers never had the chance to realise their love for each other. This verse is powerful and shows refusal of consolation, and points to

the possibility of her death in a final suicide. This last verse dramatises a fundamental ultimate ambiguity: does she really die?

As discussed is the previous chapter, such motifs are 'traditionally referential,' working as examples of Buchan's received traditional diction. In this context they can work as entrenched blends retrieved from memory, recruited and blended with the melody in performance creating the ballad as song as a temporary construct and novel blend. That is, they have been compressed and stored in memory to be recruited in new ways in the processes of elaboration, which is the third stage in the creative blending process, following composition and completion (Fauconnier and Turner 2002).

Incremental repetition is one particularly notable structural characteristic of the ballad in both examples, on both the musical and the verbal side. On the verbal side, incremental repetition is most notable in the ballad's rhyming scheme; on the musical side it is made up of repeated musical phrases. This repetition also lends tension to the unravelling story. Arguably, it is the rhyme scheme that is the definitive characteristic of this ballad. It may seem somewhat prescriptive and restrictive—it only admits words that rhyme with Yarrow, with very few exceptions:

There lived a lady in the north
You could scarcely find her **marrow**
She was courted by nine noble men
And her ploughman boy o **Yarrow**

"Oh brother dear I've dreamt a dream
I hope it won't prove **sorrow,**
I dreamt that you were spilling bluid
In the dowie dens of **Yarrow**"

"Oh faither dear you have seven sons
You can wed them all **tomorrow,**
But a fairer flooer there never bloomed
Than my ploughman boy on **Yarrow.**"

In my view, the success of the ballad is in fact made possible in part because of this restriction. It produces a powerful emotive result. The rhymes 'marrow' 'narrow' and 'yarrow' all work to evoke the word 'sorrow.' 'Dowie' itself means 'sad' or 'sorrowful,' so with the incremental repetition there develops a semantic complex of words. The ballad has a prevalence of vowel sounds in it - in 'Yarrow' there is the Y a sound, the long [j ɑ:] sound (two phonemes). It does not come across as mundanely repetitive; it actually works as a hypnotic device, reaching the objective of instilling a quality of presence more quickly and more fully than speech. Physiologically, this is an example of the musical prolongation of the vowel sound having the 'effect of focussing attention on the sheer sonic quality of the voice, its timbre and resonance' (Burrows 1989: 391). In this way, the melody expands temporality: these prolonged sounds inadvertently contribute to the overall sorrowful feel of the ballad, unmistakeable in its effect. Overall, the tonal effect of the recurrent rhymes for Yarrow are characteristic, and even when difficult, they help to convey the aura of dire tragedy.

Where there is a stark difference between these examples is between the two melodies and singing styles. Stanley's tune is modal and haunting, with wavering minor intervals that do not conform easily to Western scales. The melody itself—the minor intervals and modality—embodies the sense of 'dire tragedy' discussed above. The idea of a regular time signature is irrelevant here; Stanley pushes and pulls the melody for effect, stretching the words, playing with the dynamics and changing rhythms. This irregularity probably helps to explain phrasing differences. In my experience, irregularity tends to correlate with a greater dominance given to words in the rhythmic structure. As he tells us, 'ye get some ballads that have natural

resting places. And ye get ither verses key to reminding the story' (2008). The Hungarian composer and ethnomusicologist Bartók identified two primary singing styles in European folk music, which he named *parlando-rubato* and tempo giusto. *Parlando-rubato*, stressing the words, departs frequently from strict rhythm. *Parlando* is essentially a mode of performance, extremely difficult to notate, where the melodies are not performed in strict rhythm but with many, hardly perceptible abbreviations and elongations (Suchoff 1997: 264). Such a term is useful to describe Stanley's approach to performance.

The second tune easily fits into the Western scale of Bb major, which gives the song a very different feel. It is sung in straight metre, with no wavering of pitch and only subtle discrepancies in rhythm and variation in ornamentation to emphasise certain high points in the narrative. The story is carried along in a certain way, but the melody does not 'pack the same punch' when it comes to emotion. The structure of this major tune is very gentle, rolling up and down like hills of the landscape where the song originated. As a shorter version of the narrative, the second example here can be very effective as well as affective. Emily herself remarked,

> It's more major you know? It doesn't sound quite as miserable as some of the others can... It gets to the point and doesn't miss out any major events.[73]

The most interesting elements in any creative blend are the conflicting elements. According to the theory of invariance, it is 'tension' that lends the metaphorical process its productive power. In the ballad as a form in general, it is

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73 Personal Communication, Thornhill, 24th June 2008.

often the case that melody and verse are in tension, developing from the forward progression of the narrative contrasting with the insistent cyclical nature of the tune. Essentially, what we have is a redundant tune carrying a progressing narrative culminating in cataclysmic events. It is not simply that the text mentions something sad at a particular point, and that the melody features minor intervals. Numerous correspondences combine to form the outline of a general principle of correlation between the two domains. In the case of the second tune given here, it could be argued that the major intervals and gentle melody contrast sharply with the deeply sad imagery, serving to shock a listener into contemplating just how dreadful the ballad situation is. Such a traumatic experience contrasted against such a gentle tune is the 'tensive core' of this particular ballad blend, serving to highlight the tenderness and sadness of the heroine's actions and emotions. Ó Laoire (2006: 98–99) believes that the presentation of dualisms lies at the heart of what art is, and it is this that give songs a 'unique and potent charge.' Such an elusive 'charged presence' (Desmond 1990: 67) somehow yields an altered perception of the world, in which the paradox of simultaneous good and evil is not seen as something to be overcome but as something to be accepted.

The first tune works in a different way. The sounds and the dissonances have a very visceral effect on the body, setting up an atmosphere of unease which allows for the hypnotic perception of the unfolding narratives, playing on the tension and release that we actually 'feel' in our gut. Arguably, one of the main features of the ballad as a cultural form is the insistent rhythm of the words and the melody which can, on occasion, have hypnotic qualities. This rhythm is married to the powerful figurative language and metaphor and, in the case of the ballad, is transported by

melody in the act of performance. Moreover, ballads have compulsive rhythm: words and music combine rhythmically to produce manipulation and control of time, which can in some cases serve to alter our consciousness.

The diagrams below map out these two examples:

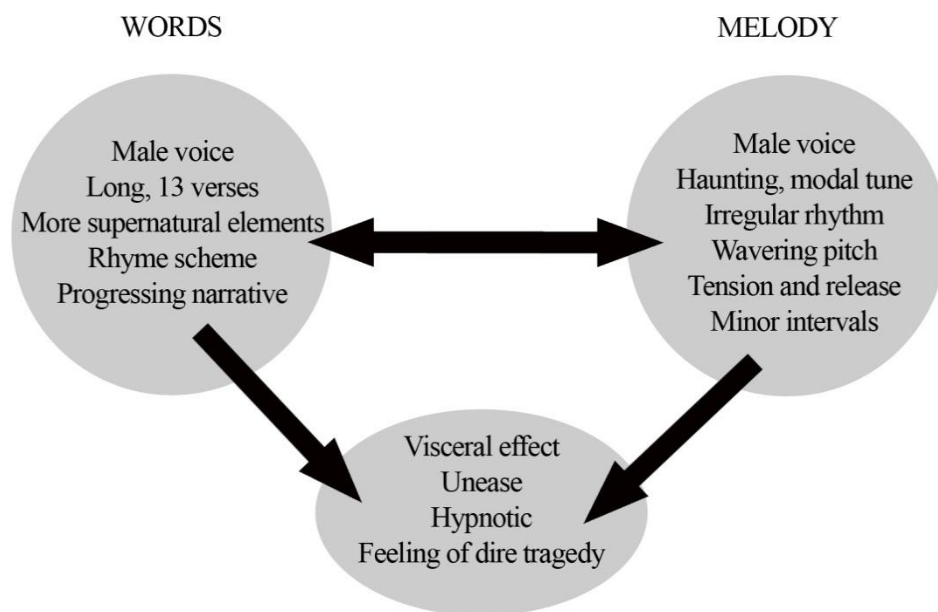

Figure 6.

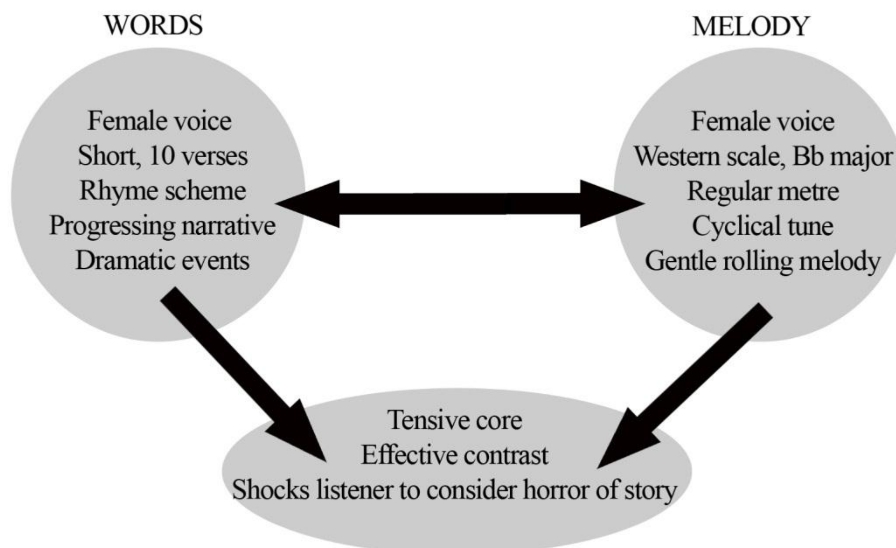

Figure 7.

Presence, Rhythm and the Imaginative Grasp

The question remains, how do we become so immersed in the ballad to participate in a created imagined world? In his work *Textual Narratives and a New Metaphysics*(2002), Raymond Shorthouse attempts to show that the 'question of presence' is actually a question of the unity with the world that we imaginatively appropriate and inhabit in an encounter with a textual form; and that sonority and rhythm play a key role in this notion of unity. Focussing on the relationship between presence and sound, he appeals to both Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity and to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the phonetic 'gesture.' Drawing extensively upon recent developments in post-phenomenological philosophy, his work argues that each narrative has a rhythmic structure, or prose rhythm, in relation to its semantic and figurative characteristics. The 'imaginative grasp' is grounded in the mediated relationship between ourselves and the text in a 'rhythmic, sonorous condition of

being.' That is to say, each narrative has a rhythmic structure, or prose rhythm, in relation to its semantic and figurative characteristics. Shorthouse draws on theological ideas to further explain his ideas: in this case he likens the process of relating to a text to participating in liturgical activity, where symbols play an ontological mediatory role. In this context we 'imaginatively participate' in the active world of the text by means of the symbolic rhythmic structures of metaphor and narrative; and unity, or presence, is achieved in the rhythmic drive to inhabit the world of the text.

In an encounter with a given cultural text, our attention is focused in the process of grasping the meaning, or the 'unity' of the narrative, made possible by the background of the unfolding world which we imaginatively inhabit. Shorthouse gives literary examples to illustrate the structural rhythmic texture of the poetic/narrative mode and the role rhythm in poetry and narrative play in this dynamic process. Rhythm and metaphor are seen to be the key factors in this unfolding process, with the significance of metaphor being its powers of re-description, in terms of new meaning. He claims that our grasp of the narrative is rooted in an 'ontological sonority' which is mediated through the rhythmic resonance of the physical body. It is arguable that the inherent rhythms of narrative he talks of are highly dramatised in embodied performance, as opposed to the mere act of reading. The effect on the lived body is not so philosophically abstract; it is far more obvious and physically immediate. This furthers the argument advanced in Chapter Five that the semantic power of 'words' expands the awareness of possibilities ranging over past, present and future, through the creation of narratives;

while sounds of music and melody and their intonation focus the awareness of 'presence' in the present through a visceral, embodied experience.

According to Shorthouse, this process is an alteration of the very state of our being and is 'rhythmic' in a profoundly ontological sense. As part of his examination, he argues that textual rhythm mediates emotional states, activity and—significantly with respect to rhythmic anticipation—the mediation of temporality. While Shorthouse's musings remain abstract, there is scientific evidence from cognitive and neuro-scientific experiments that the capacity of the brain for the registration of events is limited to a time window of three, four or five seconds.[74] This is so fundamental that it tends to influence our strategies for interacting with the world, especially when dealing with others in a cultural setting. Our language and culture has evolved to have rhythm that matches our bodily experience. Natural language unfolds within a time window; our sentences roughly reflect the amount of information our consciousness can process. We can easily convince ourselves of the validity of this through our own experience.

When we speak, we usually stress one particular syllable in a clause. The same is true for each line of the ballad. From a cognitive perspective, even the simplest musical or song phrase is extremely complex. In this context, each ballad phrase has a specific internal structure with a focal point which can be examined closer. Consider the following, an excerpt from the singing of Stanley Robertson:

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[74] Carol Krumhansl (2000: 160) remarks that 'the perceptual organization of temporal patterns is possible only in a restricted range of times. That this range corresponds with the duration of rhythmic patterns typically found in music suggests a psychological restraint on temporal patterning in music. The most reliable results are those of Ernst Pöppel (1994, 2000) who has performed a large number of experiments. He sees our inherent tendency to group events into larger units as being intrinsic to our perceptual systems.

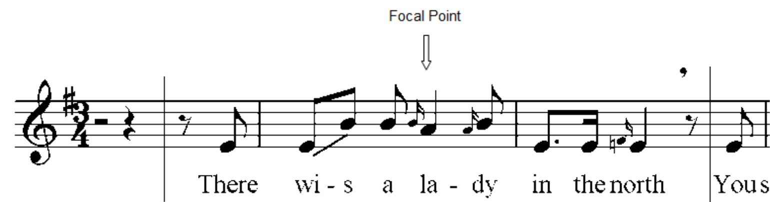

Figure 8.

This is known as one of the 'paralinguistic' features of language that do not easily transmit in written form. Although the stress is not referential in itself, it does have a semantic value, as it serves to transmit meaning in a certain way.

As humans, we are very rhythmic beings. The physical body has rhythms that can be measured: the beat of our hearts, our breathing, the speed at which we naturally walk across the planet. Somewhere deep inside we hear the music, feel the rhythm, and instinctually react. Cultural forms such as music serve to dramatise the temporal and rhythmic nature of our existence. On some occasions they serve to create the effect of the 'crystallisation of time,' seemingly stopping the forward movement of time altogether.

Altered States

The use of music as a means of promoting changes in states of consciousness has been practised for centuries across different cultures.[75] Becker uses the following quote by William James to open her contemporary study, which suggests that there may be some use for extraordinary states of consciousness:

[75] See Aldridge and Fachner (2006).

> Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaption (James 1982 [1902]).

Becker (2004) believes that given the right cultural expectations, 'deep listening' to any kind of music, vocal or instrumental, can be associated with 'trance'—or, rather, 'extended alternate consciousness.' She believes that such 'trance-like' states may relate to the basic fabric of emotions and consciousness, which are our ancestral, animalian heritage.[76] Musicians often use the expression 'I become the music' to describe their sense of self when playing music. Barthes (1986) writes of the 'the body in a state of music' and T. S. Eliot (1943) claims that 'you are the music while the music lasts' (in Becker 2004: 144). Becker (2004: 54,25) views such an experience as a 'profound mystery':

> Feelings of nearness to the sacred or loss of boundaries between self and other can occur in relation to emotionally aroused musical listening…You lose your strong sense of self, of ego, as you feel one with the music, you lose the sense of time passing and may feel transported out of quotidian space. Trancers experience a kind of syncope, and absence, a lapse, a "cerebral eclipse".

The ethnomusicologist John Blacking frequently alludes to this dimension of musical experience, which he sees certain as a means to 'transcendence'.[77] For the Venda people of the Northern Transvaal (South Africa) studied by Blacking, such experiences of transcendence resulted in communications with the 'spirits.' In Becker's (2004: 147, my italics) view,

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[76] The potential for the extreme mode of trance 'may be genotypical of all humans, but if so, only a very small percentage ever actualize it - even in societies where trancing is much more common than in Western Europe and the United States' (Becker 2004: 150).

[77] See Blacking (1995)

> Music enhances the sense of a different imaginary world…increases emotional excitement, and may facilitate the experience of a different self. The transformed consciousness…allows for alternate mental images, the accompanying emotions and behaviour that may be remote from quotidian ways of interacting with the world. I suspect the power of music to stimulate emotion, *to create an imaginary world*…while entraining the minds and the bodies.

Beyond identification of time, place, action or character, much of the music in trance is also important in bringing into existence other times, other places, other beings. This idea of 'creating and imaginary world' is central to ideas in this thesis.

Blacking (1995 [1969]: 34) refers to the experience of transcendence as meeting the 'internal other' or the 'other self,' which is tied to our sense of who we are at different times and is the memory or prospect of self in the future:

> The 'other world' or 'other mind' refers to states in which people become keenly aware of the true nature of their being, of the 'other self' within themselves and other human beings, and of their relationship with the world around them

In this way, music provides a link between alternate selves, places and times that become real places and real times in heightened musical experiences. By enveloping the listener in a soundscape that suggests, invokes, or represents other times and distant spaces, the transition out of quotidian time and space comes easier. Imagination *becomes* experience. This idea was first introduced in Chapter Five.

> One is moved from the mundane to the supra-normal: another realm, another time, with other kinds of knowing (Becker 2004: 27).

This 'other consciousness,' from a phenomenological perspective, can be seen to constitute another 'lifeworld,' When someone is performing music, singing a song, or indeed participating in performance through active listening, different rules are created than those operating in the quotidian world.

‘Space Between’: The *Maysie’s* Imagined Worlds

Stanley believes that the space between words and melody is where the *Maysie* lives. According to Zbikowski’s model of creative blending for song, the words dynamically interact with the melody in performance, creating meaning together in the emergent ‘space between’ in a perpetual process of ‘coming to *be*.’ In the structure of the blended space of the ballad, elements of the textual domain and the musical domain combine, suggesting a world of rich imagery that draws upon both domains and extends beyond them. Through the process of creative blending, we can enter into an imaginary domain, creating a new ‘space’ with possibilities for the creative play of the imagination. This is the domain of *song*, of *ballad*.

The imaginary world summoned by the ballad has been characterised as the ‘ballad world’ (Atkinson 2002: 13) and the ‘balladic Otherworld’ (Porter and Gower as 1995: 306). This ballad otherworld is analogous with Zbikowksi’s imaginary world, the extension of which is rendered possible with the blending of elements from different domains of experience. Stanley’s own description of the ballad ‘the Dowie Dens of Yarrow,’ exhibits a fantastic example of the extension of an imaginary world, and an example of the flexible human mind actively creating or recreating something which did not previously exist; and in this case, an altogether newly created ballad realm. Stanley was able to tell me about the motives of the characters, their personalities, their physical build, what they looked like, what kind of clothes they were wearing. It was remarkable:

> Ye ken it’s aboot knights—they’re sayin’ nine gentlemen but they are knights. She dressed him up like her ain braw knight so he’s nae made a fool of. Now he was just a poor wee laddie, ken, just a poor wee lad, a slim lad. And you could

> see his hygiene wasnae the best ye ken 'cause she's had tae wash his face and kaim his hair…But she's given him colours and that tae wear which dressed him up. So, at least he had the honour to go out. See, he couldna use a lance, he couldna use an arra—see, he wasn't trained in the rules of armoury. But his trusty sword—he was a ploughboy. And a ploughboy could knock the hilts aff o' trees that stuck in the field. So he was a good—he could smack weel; although he was little and slim he could smack weel. And it says—and this is very important to the actual battle scene: 'and three he slew,' so he killed three o' them, and 'three withdrew.' Now, the three that withdrew didnae withdraw out o' cowardice; they withdrew because he made them feel ashamed—the other knights fightin' a bit o' a laddie. So oot o' the laws o' chivalry they left. And three he wounded sairly. But the false brother John—see he was ashamed o' his sister, dear lookin'. She had all these knights courtin' her but she was aye pickin' up wi' a ploughboy laddie, and he was shamed. And that's where, he was comin' up tae congratulate the laddie and sleekitly stabbed him in the back. Sayin' 'well done now' and stabbed him maist foully. So he was a false brother John. And then, it was an affa shamin' as well for the father, that this ploughboy laddie had been killed by his own son fa was a knight, a noble man ye ken (2008)

The level of imaginative involvement Stanley has with this ballad is truly *amazing*.

> If a singer, storyteller, or musician has the power to bring about such a state, then one of the muses is at had. One is not just *amused*, however; one is also *amazed* and inspired (Niles 1995:53).

Stanley had a similar involvement with all the ballads in his repertoire. He has effectively created an entirely new reality inside his head. Such a degree of imaginary world-making as in Stanley's case is not altogether common in the modern day (it may have been in human's distant past); nevertheless this example serves to highlight in fairly spectacular fashion the narrative possibilities for the imagination created by a creative blend set up by the words and the music. In itself, this is a fantastic example of the human capacity for advanced conceptual integration (Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 217). Some people may hold the belief that this kind of 'other world' is *real*: the world of our ancestors. In Chapter Five, we discussed Lizzie Higgin's imaginary world, and suggested that her experience was

an example of the cognitive process of imaginative projection, focused in the created space of present through the embodied experience of the sonorous.

The Ballad World

It has been argued that the 'ballad world' can be seen to constitute a particular phenomenological *lebenswelt*, which we actively construct. According to Porter (2009: 9), the experience of 'presence' is described as 'a departure from everyday norms into unknown, unexpected or transcendental territory of the imagination. The process of creative blending provides us with an explanation of how we cognitively construct such imagined worlds.

Developing ideas from this chapter with the previous chapter, the 'ballad world' can be understood to constitute a kind of collaborative, singularly plural 'macro blend.' Culture is, in large part, a product of social cognition. The narrative form of mythology especially is an ideal subject for creative blending analysis, since blending theory has been successfully applied to the understanding of narrative structure by a number of authors.[78] Most work on creative blending considers blends as the product of single individuals, and considers multiple 'agents' only to the extent that a blend is created by one agent for the comprehension of others. In contrast, cultural blends are the result of a community process in which many voices interact over time, and this interaction imposes a variety of unique forces on the development of a blend. It is tempting to accept this diversity at face value as a complex creation of a single culture, but it is in fact the result of many successive

[78] Todd Oakley (1997) argues that scholars of myth, e.g. Robert Graves (1955) have long used their own equivalent of blending theory's optimality principles of 'web', 'unpacking' and 'good reason' to deconstruct the social purposes and history behind myths.

blendings of the individual belief systems of different peoples, each of which contributes a new character, story or motif to the overall blend. These grand themes allow mythology to serve as a magnifying glass through which the microscopic workings of conceptual blending can be seen in macroscopic terms. A mythic blend may sometimes originate with a single source, but its survival depends on acceptance by a community, where each individual may have different cultural purposes for the blend.[79] These purposes sometimes conspire, sometimes oppose, to shape the blend. Opposition can produce the tension and invariance needed to reinforce the blend and in fact give it more power.

In the discourse of conceptual integration, such new worlds are described simply as 'fictional' or rather, as 'possible' worlds (Ronen 1994: 88–91):[80]

> Once the label "fiction" has been attributed, conventions dictating the status and proper interpretation of fictional propositions are activated. When a text is considered to be fictional, its set of propositions are read according to fictional world-constructing conventions and it is made to signify by observing the set of fictional reconstructing conventions.

Possible worlds represent things that *exist* and things that *do not exist* in the real world; they are the space for the 'blending of impossibilities.' Properties from the real world are projected through cross domain mapping onto properties in the possible world. Some elements from the fictional world correspond with elements from the real world, and some elements are entirely fictional, but we understand the elements that are entirely fictional in terms of our knowledge and experience of the real world—for example, time passes differently or people do not age for example. Created worlds conform to real-world logic, but at the same they transcend it.

[79] Relevant here is Carl von Sydow's suggestive notion of the 'ecotype' as a localised folk narrative that have features unique to a peculiar place and people: see von Sydow (1934).
[80] The term 'possible worlds' was first coined by Liebnitz (Ronen 1994: 5).

Reality is not simply the opposite of unreality; it is the *same* but *different*; in Ricouer's terms, 'remoteness persists in closeness.' As a result, counterfactual or possible worlds may have very authentic and substantial effects on our conceptualisation of the real world, and our processes of meaning-making often embody contradictory conditions. 'Counterfactual' reasoning—reasoning not based on cause-effect relationships—is central to this process. Not all created worlds must display elements of the supernatural, but such examples illustrate the process of creative blending in constructing 'unreality' rather well.

The created 'space between' of the ballad experience is omnidimensional, in which the space between words and music plays a central part. In terms of the relationship between words and music, the idea of the 'ballad' itself can be understood as a temporary construct that we recruit in the act of performance. Such a created space also bridges internal and external worlds: in entering this 'space' created by sound, we are immersed in the sonorous present of that space. Another dimension of the space between is created by the participants—their expectations, intention, memories, histories and emotions in processes of mimesis, emplotment and personal configuration described in Chapter Six. Such experiences transform one's sense of time and space while at the same time conjuring memory and associations with previous events. As well as the interaction between words and music in the ballad blend, the background cultural framing and personal experience play a huge role in the meaning making process. The listener must

> Fill in lacunae in the sung narrative, extend metaphor and symbolism, feel the implications of the melody line, and engage in many other forms of internalised interpretation…The song—melody, performance, and text—combine to involve the listener's intellectual and emotional armoury in the act of conscious or unconscious understanding (McKean 2003: 6–7).

The idea of the *epochē* is important here—the idea that ordinary reference is suspended, which could equally be explained in terms of Gadamer's 'closed circle of meaning' discussed in Chapter Four. The act of 'deep listening' to words and music blended together cognitively takes us out of our daily lifeworld and spurs us to temporarily inhabit a new created reality—a reality that we actively *construct.* Disparate novel meanings can be invested in songs at the very moment of their performance, depending on the singer and on the listeners, through the process of creative blending, elaboration and the retrieval from memory of traditionally referential entrenched blends. In this way, a whole song may picture a 'reality' which 'is as much of the mind as it is accomplished fact' (Shields 1993: 74).

Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusions

The theory of creative blending offers one way to capture the unique contribution of each mode of communication—the two sisters of words and tune—to the process of meaning construction in the ballad experience. Under certain circumstances, elements and relations from the mental space set up by the music of a song blend with elements and relations from the mental space set up by the text to create an entirely new world for the imagination. Most importantly, spaces need to be sufficiently different for invariance to have its effect, and at the same time must also have a uniform topography—that is, the mental spaces that contribute to the blend at the centre of the phenomena of 'song' must be structurally similar for blending to occur: at some level, the discourse strategies for language and music must be similar, or no blend will result.

The importance of and value of the theory of creative blending to the study of ballads then is firstly that it provides us with a way to ground our descriptions of elusive musical phenomena in concepts derived from quotidian experience, since it has been shown that the structural relations basic to cross domain mapping have their source in repeated patterns of bodily experience; and secondly, it provides a way to connect musical concepts with concepts from other domains, i.e. the text with the music. It is important to make clear that what is presented is not a comprehensive theory; rather it can be viewed as a new contemporary perspective that may help us understand one level in the complex existential process of meaning-making in the ballad experience. While creative blending theory raises as many questions as it answers, it has the potential to bring the importance of ballad melody into view, so that we may better understand the contribution of both words and melody to a larger multimodal metaphor. The process of creative blending does not include simply 'words' and 'melody': personal experience and levels of context, or 'layers of story' are vital, as we saw in the previous chapter. Together with a highly personal background framing consisting of multiple narratives, these layers conceptually blend in the act of performance to create striking possibilities for the imagination.

The insistent rhythm of the words and the melody can have hypnotic qualities. In this context we 'imaginatively participate' in the active world of the text by means of the symbolic rhythmic structures of metaphor and narrative; and unity, or 'presence,' is achieved in the rhythmic drive to inhabit the world of the text. These ideas are illuminating for understandint how we imaginatively become

immersed in the ballad narrative to participate in a created imagined world, and how we might try to understand the role of presence in the ballad experience.

What is still needed in this picture is an explanation in cognitive terms how the body is involved in this process. Porter insists that the 'presence' of ballads is only meaningful when the singer or performer and audience are inter-responsive in a specific space that they share. The following chapter will explore the ballad blend in terms of the musical gesture, and explore the multimodal processes of mapping sound to the body.

CHAPTER EIGHT 8

"In Earthly Flesh and Blood": Embodiment, Somatic Presence and the 'Ballad Gesture' as *Being Between*[81]

This chapter turns again to the central research question, how is meaning created in the context of the ephemeral and intangible nature of musical performance? It considers the lived experience of the body, what has been called the 'sensory perception of presence.' Chapter Five investigated the role that 'deep listening' as an existential act plays in 'the gesture…that envelops singer and audience and makes "present" the imagined world the singer is creating' (Porter 2009: 148). This chapter turns to the idea of the 'gesture' itself. Porter's theory states that:

> ballads attain "presence" when they are realised in face to face performance…in the *unifying gesture* of the singer and the active feedback of the audience' (137, my italics).

One of the central aims of this chapter is to show how Porter's notion of the 'unifying gesture' can be extended in the light of new ideas concerning musical gesture, based on theories of cross modal perception. The previous chapter looked at cross domain mapping between text and music as separate domains of experience and the possibilities this creates for the imagination inside the ballad experience. Here we develop theories of cross domain mapping to account for how sound affects

[81] The title of this chapter refers to the ballad 'The Wife of Usher's Well' (Child #79). This ballad tells the story of a mother whose three sons are shipwrecked. The strength of her grief brings them back to earth as revenants, but they may only stay for one night. She defies the natural order by wishing for the return of her dead sons: 'I wish the wind may never cease, / Nor fashes in the flood, / Till my sons come hame to me, / In earthly flesh and blood'.

the body, as well as how bodies interact with other bodies in a shared space and time. Embodiment and the ballad experience will be explored here in two senses: the singular and the plural; of being and being-*with*. The idea of being-*with* will be discussed in relation to the notion of intersubjectivity, re-thought as 'intercoroporeality.' Ideas here will further support the claim that ballads are embodied acts of musical and verbal communication between people who have a visceral experience affecting both mind *and* body, and further the hypothesis that musical experience is about much more than symbolic representations of feeling: body and action partake each of the other, co-constructing the only 'realities' available to human experience, through the creation of new narratives and imagined worlds.

Gesture works on two levels: it has external movement in space and time as well as in the internal world as a cognitive phenomenon. It will be argued that it is the *body* that mediates between these two dimensions of experience. In the musical gesture, we share not just sound, but also *time*. It is vital, then, to reconsider the nature of the temporality of ballad 'presence' in the context of the ballad gesture. Ideas first introduced in Chapter Four will be revisited: that with presence, 'normal, measurable time is suspended' and 'another world with its own time is embraced' (Porter 2009: 181). Bergson's philosophical ideas about time, first discussed in Chapter Four, suggest an *already embodied* conception of culture; and for that reason his theories of time resonate with contemporary concerns of understanding the body. Bergson argues that the only way to understand the relationship between mind and body is in fact through *time* rather than through space.

Ideas developed in this final chapter allow us to talk about the ballad experience as a 'total somatic experience'—one that affects both body and mind, and offers explanations of the intangible nature of the ballad experience that do not resort to metaphysical explanations. What we are dealing with is not the contemplation of an alternative reality, but the perception of a heightened reality—a reality which is embodied; and moreover, a reality that is at once both subjective and shared.

The *Maysie* and the Sensory Perception of Presence

It has been argued that what is most important in expressive culture is the live, dynamic, participatory and embodied nature of experience. Chapter Four made the argument for a somatically grounded understanding of aesthetic experience. 'Bodily effects,' it was argued, are essential to the full value of the experience, because they represent a corporeal confirmation of what is registered at the same time by the mind and imparts a kind of added value to 'somaesthetic experience.' Niles (1999: 53) argues that effective performance arousing the *Maysie* will have a 'corporeality about it…dependent on a visible, audible, and sometimes tactile connection' between the audience and the performer.' One of the central claims of Niles' work is the importance of 'somatic communication': that when people listen to songs and stories performed, they are aroused by the physical presence of the speaker as well as the sound of the voice striking the ear. Stories and songs do not have affective qualities simply because of their abstract wisdom or style, but also because of the *bodily presence* of the people who tell them:

> [Singing] is a bodily phenomenon. Like ritual, it depends on the physical presence of the members of a group and involves their participative energies...The physical, somatic presence of performers and listeners in a site set aside for performance—the sensory perception of presence—is a powerful yet underrated factor (Niles 1995: 122)

This mirrors Porter's theory of ballad 'presence.' Porter believes that presence is particularly meaningful when the singer and audience are inter-responsive in a specific space that they *share*. The immediacy of human contact and the sensory presence of the enactment are essential for the 'psycho-physiological' impact of performance; it is the responsive nature of the ballad genre that makes it real and come alive. Crucial to the definition of presence is the idea of 'sharing,' in a reciprocal act of communication. This idea has been explored with regards to the role of listening in the singer-audience relationship, where it was argued that audience members are not merely listeners, but active participants in the ballad experience. In Porter's argument, the 'feedback process' is central to the production and reception of songs. Even if members of the audience are only passive tradition bearers, they have an essential role to play in the dialogics of performance. Ultimately, feedback has the power to modulate the performer's own response to his or her performance, who themselves experience through feedback some sense of communicative power, or heightened sensation—perhaps the *Maysie*.

Active feedback involves much more than aural reception, however. Participation also involves processing the movements made by the performers, the visual spectacle of them singing and the qualities and expressive meanings of the movements and gestures of their hands, arms, head, and other body parts. In cognitive terms, even at the sensory stage, the body's role is far more extensive and intensive than the mere act of listening. The idea of bodily listening— 'being all ears'

—was first mentioned in Chapter Six. Ontologically speaking, it has been argued that musical hearing is hearing-*with*, and the foundation of this 'with' dimension is the body: grounded, polysemic and active. Ambiguity and unpredictability are therefore always part of sonic experience. The roots of musical listening, performing and creativity draw upon our bodily constituted appreciation and attraction, and the mechanism by which we negotiate such ambiguous terrain is not rational and calculating, but somatic and culturally informed by our *habitus.*

A musically moving experience entails a kind of sympathetic resonance activated by sound, an embodied state of mind that is cognitive and, at the same time, affective and corporeal (Bresler 2006). In Nancy's (2007) view, we *come to be* in bodily resonance with our environment in this affective relation. This understanding highlights the significance of our coexistence in material relations, and especially with sound in this case, and adds another dimension of understanding to Blacking's claim that music is 'an experience of becoming' (1973: 28).

Being Between: Intercorporeality

As was discussed in Chapter Five, ocularcentric tendencies in scholarship privilege vision as the dominant sense, equating it with light, consciousness and rationality, while the remaining senses are considered inferior. This view has implications for perceiving the world:

> Trapped in the dualism of individualism and idealism, we become convinced that whatever we see in our "mind's eye" is a private vision, split off from what others know and feel, split off from the synaesthesia that integrates all our perceptions, split off from the body, the other, the world (Grumet 1988: 129).

An opposing view is explored by Gail Weiss (1999), in *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality*. Weiss's ideas are informed by a phenomenological world view and specifically theories of embodiment in this context. Inter-embodiment poses that the construction of the body and the production of body knowledge is not created within a single, autonomous subject, but rather that body knowledge is created in the intermingling and encounters *between* bodies. How we come to know ourselves and the world around us is performed, constructed, and mediated in relation to other beings, and it is this relationality that is crucial. Rather than knowledge formed through the rational autonomous I, knowledge is the body's immersion, its intertwining and interaction in the world and between others. To describe embodiment as 'intercorporeality' is to emphasise that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies (Weiss 1999: 5). Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005: 4) agrees, arguing that experience 'acknowledges that to be alive and to inhabit a body is to be continuously and radically in relation with the world, with others, and with what we make of them.' To be a body is to be 'with' other bodies, to touch, to encounter, and to be exposed, and such bodied encounters produce *intercorporeal* understandings.

Intersubjectivity as Intercorporeality

Intersubjectivity as a term used in philosophy, psychology, sociology and anthropology is used to describe a condition somewhere between subjectivity and objectivity; one in which a phenomenon is personally experienced (subjectively) but by more than one subject. According to this principle, there is reciprocity through an

engagement with one another. Phenomenology embraces the notion of 'intersubjectivity' as a way of explaining human perceptual experience of the world. However, collective subjectivity can still be the sum of the subjectivities of isolated individuals. From the perspective of embodied philosophy, the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience (Csordas 1999: 143).

In his later work, Csordas (2008: 117, my italics) argues that intersubjectivity actually takes the form of *intercorporeality*, with the intention to 'bring an explicit theoretical recognition of intercorporeality as a *mode of collective presence.*' Csordas' work is an exercise in cultural phenomenology insofar as ethnographic instances provide the concrete data for phenomenological reflection: describing his encounter with a Navajo singer, he explores elements of embodiment including language, gesture and touch, concluding that intersubjectivity is a concrete rather than an abstract relationship.

To describe intersubjectivity as intercorporeality has certain valuable theoretical implications. Firstly, it helps us to avoid the temptation to think of intersubjectivity as an abstract relation between two isolated mental entities. Secondly, because bodies are already situated in relation to one another, intersubjectivity becomes primary, so that we do not have to begin from the Cartesian position of the isolated cogito and later arrive at the possibility and necessity of others; we are always already-*with* others in the world.

Presence and Intercorporeality

The relevance of these ideas to the study of the ballad experience relates directly to Porter's theories of presence in the ballad experience, first explored in depth in Chapter Four. Porter argues that

> The meaning of the ballad is at its most complex in the performance situation, when narrative immediacy is reinforced by communicative devices (singing, gesture, visual and aural contact) and modulated by contextual factors (domestic space, public arena), all of this to a point where the individual sense of a ballad's meaning is modified by audience expectation and a shared sense of performative understanding (2009: 173).

Furthermore, he claims that

> Meaning is not contained solely in the ballad texts but in *the entire communicative gesture* and in the interpretative moves of the audience as individuals... These meanings are all part of a potential "presencing" of ballads as singers, audiences and students bring to coherence their experience of an essentially performative genre (177).

By suggesting that meaning is not contained solely in the ballad texts not only shifts the focus from the text to the role of the interpreting audience, but makes it an imperative to place emphasis on what Porter calls the 'communicative devices'—that is, the *nonverbal* dimensions of the performative understanding. Following Ruthrof (2000), Csordas talks of 'wordless intercorporeality' and argues that language *must* be associated with its 'Other' —the nonverbal—if it is to have meaning:

> The Other of language is not the world as a set of unmediated data, but rather a fabric of nonverbal signs out of which cultures weave the world the way they see it (30–31).

In his view, to talk of non-verbal 'communication' or body language is misleading because it presumes that the non-verbal is parallel to the verbal, and can be studied in parallel, with parallel methods. Csordas (2008: 117) writes,

> The problem with using the term "communication" in conjunction with the nonverbal is that it focuses our attention the code…the analogy is particularly unfortunate in the term "body language," for that which is nonverbal is precisely not language, and to treat it as if it were is to deny its positive aspect.

In emphasising the body's centrality, Henri Bergson (2007) is suspicious of language and symbolic representation because of the effect of alienating us from our own constantly unfolding *embodied* experience. He convinced many thinkers that immediate experience and intuition are more significant than rationalism and science for understanding reality. Chapter Seven highlighted the problem of traditional semiotic theories which assume an external, objective reality and a separation of subject from object, in counter distinction to phenomenological hermeneutics which grounds the multifarious expressions of human existence in a hermeneutic understanding of embodied being-in-the-world.

It has been argued that in understanding communicative, artistic orality in a culture, we should attend to *sounds* rather than words. This is because words are abstract but sounds bind humans to one another. For example, Niles (1999) argues that piping is a more intense form of communication than words because of its power to speak directly to the 'spirit.' Lizzie Higgins repeatedly remarked that piping is a form of 'spiritual expression,' 'a kind of language, for it speaks to you as if in words' (50).

> "When my father picked up his set of pipes, Jack, he used tae lay his head against his drones an' close his eyes. The pipes became my father's soul; my father's soul became the pipes" (Higgins in Niles 1995: 51).

According to Ong (1967: 126), when there is sound operating in shared physical space, what becomes bound together are the 'most interior of interiors'—that is, the conscious interiors of human beings. John Blacking (1977: 9) shares a similar view:

> The interiorizing force of…song, relates in a special way to the sacral, the ultimate concerns of existence. On psychological and physiological levels, interiorizing corresponds to *shared somatic states* and the rhythms of interaction that transform commonly experienced sensations into externally and visible transmissible forms.

The question, 'do we have ineffable knowledge of certain kinds of nuances in expressive forms that we cannot express in words?' was asked in Chapter One. It was argued that in order to understand the transitions between the individual, cultural and transcultural dimensions of aesthetic experience, research methods are needed that are capable of grasping 'the most profound type of knowledge [which] is not spoken of at all' (Bloch 1998: 46). The following sections make use of theories of cross modal transfer, musical gesture and theories of mirroring that attend to the 'shared somatic states' and 'rhythms of interaction' of human aesthetic experience, in an attempt to understand the *Maysie* and the ballad experience.

Cross Modal Transfer

The 'simultaneously ambiguous yet vivid and compelling character [of musical experience] stems from a human capacity for cross modal transfer' (Bowman 2004). Cross modal transfer occurs where perception involves interactions between two or more sensory modalities. The word 'cross' in this context, however, is limited, implying a one way transfer rather than an interactive process. It needs to be clarified or perhaps reiterated here that both cross domain mapping and cross modal transfer are not about the imposition of one structure on to another, but rather a dynamic correspondence that is set up between two domains or modalities (Fatone (2010) prefers to use 'intermodal' for this reason). Cognitive, neuro-scientific and post-phenomenological research emphatically show that sensory processing is

modulated by information in and attention towards other senses, which suggests that we need to consider the wider perceptual system in its totality instead of isolating registers of experience and separating the senses hierarchically. That is to say, perception *crosscuts* the boundaries between brain, body and world.

In musical experience, cross modal transfer results from the human capacity for mapping structures, patterns, and gestures from our embodied existence and sections onto sound:

> We deploy bodily-acquired schemata to transform intriguing patterns of sound into measured and metered musical movements and events musically…a function of our having experienced and enacted things like them elsewhere, in non-musical realms (Bowman 2004).

Discourse concerning auditory phenomena, and music specifically, relies heavily on terms derived from non-auditory realms of experience, applying metaphorical mappings from visual-spatial, kinaesthetic, and tactile domains. In our attempts at describing musical experience, we objectify music and characterise it as disembodied, and through the medium of language we use metaphors to relate it back to musical experience.

Johnson and Larson's essay '"Something in the Way She Moves" —Metaphors of Musical Motion' (2003) provides an example of how an approach based on embodied cognition can be integrated with a theory of musical meaning. In their view, 'our very experience of musical meaning is fundamentally shaped by conceptual metaphors that are grounded in bodily experience' (8). Through a process of cross-domain mapping, we apply our bodily understanding to domains such as music, giving rise to a rich variety of linguistic expressions through which we can describe musical relationships. Our mappings of conceptual metaphors onto

music are constrained by the image-schematic structure of the correlated domains: we must be able to draw correspondences between the musical domain and that of our embodied experience. We can use our understanding of the former to structure our understanding of the latter. They propose that musical experience is based largely on identifiable conceptual metaphors of physical motion. We know about motion through seeing objects move; through moving our own bodies; through feeling our bodies moved by outside forces. These three bodily based patterns of perception are cognitively inscribed and re-inscribed by virtue of having a body and being in the world (4). For example, it has long also been established that our concepts of time are metaphoric, and we conceive of the passing of time as movement in space (3). Since music occurs over time, they reason, it is logical that we conceptualise music as spatial movement. Our perception seems to extract certain shapes and patterns from sound, which are subsequently represented in the mind.

The example of the idea of 'tension and release' illustrates this perfectly. The reason for characterising music in terms of tension and release is not to exercise abstract technical musicological jargon but to capture, in a single, highly salient image, important aspects of our experience of music. This image is more kinaesthetic than visual, and comprises a host of bodily sensations that we associate with tension and release, of tightening and relaxing our muscles. Applying the image associated with these sensations to music allows us to describe the relatively abstract and ephemeral domain of sound in terms of concrete physical experiences (Zbikowski 2000: 3). We know tension cannot be maintained indefinitely, and so infer that musical events that provide tension must progress to musical events that provide release.

Imaginative Act: Sound and Vision

It has been argued that there is an interesting relationship between the modalities of *sound* and *vision* in deep listening. There are two kinds of 'vision' here: external vision and internal, created 'vision' in the mind's eye, in the *imagination.* Recent discoveries in neuroscience research have shown that the visual and motor cortices are closely linked. For example, Vines et al. (2006) have studied interactions and perceptions of musical performance in the aural and visual domains, and found that visual information—in the form of performer's movements—actually modifies listeners' experiences of music with respect to tension, phrase length, anticipation of phrase and emotional content, concluding that 'seeing' a performer's movements in combination with 'hearing' the performance creates a different musical experience for the subject than perceiving music in the aural domain alone. Vines et al. refer to this experience as having an 'emergent experience.' Godoy (2003: 318) proposes a triangular model to show the inextricable cross modal relationships between action, vision and sound:

> The image of sound production will have visual and motor components in addition to that of the "pure" sound, and I believe images of sound producing actions can play the role of mediating between the visual and the sonorous, i.e. that actions can translate from the sonic to the visual and, conversely, from the visual to the sonic.

Godoy's model places cross modal imagery as fundamental to musical experience. His understanding allows for an interactive process *between* modalities, and the emphasis is on bodily experience.

One of the main aims in investigating the ballad experience is to understand this connection between the auditory and the visual - the idea that 'sound evokes sight and together they form a world of imagination that surpasses the ordinary world around us' (Berleant 2004: 157). Consider this description of a singing occasion by Ó Laoire (2005: 225):

> The correlation between music and lyrics is reflected in the bodily behaviour when songs are being sung…When Tory people are listening to songs, they sit very still, their arms folded, perhaps softly repeating some of the song lyrics for themselves. They appear intent on the song, their heads bent almost as if in prayer, reminiscent even of a foetal position. They give themselves up to the song and to the singing of it, an imaginative act, I argue, which allows for the redescription of reality (Ricouer 1991: 128) and the coalescing of meaning at different levels.

Ó Laoire highlights the importance of the bodily response—the total somaesthetic experience—and that in this experience they give themselves up in an 'imaginative act.' The theory of cross modal transfer helps us make sense of this seemingly abstract experience. The embodied templates that constitute and permeate musical experience become the embodied resources for further constructive action, other acts of 'world making.' Musical experiences such as the ballad experience are very complex and nuanced situations. Our corporeal existence makes it possible for us to phenomenologically experience features of sound. According to this view, we actively create our subjective world. Richard Middleton (1990) suggests that music is both an embodied construction and a semiotic device for constructing and enacting further possibilities and ranges of embodied experience. Not only is music constructed both by those who engage in acts of performing and listening to it, it is significantly implicated in constructing the broader realities in which those acts of performing and listening occur. Music at large is therefore not just a source of

'aesthetic' meaning but a vital constructive agent in the lives of all who engage in it. The act of making music - of singing songs - whether as a performer or listener, is a constructive act: the creation of coherent constellations of cross-modal connections, rich in their capacity to align and realign experiential worlds' (Bowman 2004: 41)

Being-*with*: The Unifying Gesture

Current theory in cognitive science in its widest sense holds that the development of human consciousness hinges on our neural capacity for having unified, multimodal representations of 'gesture.' Cross modal references, then, result in 'gestures.' The term 'gesture,' however, is a problematic term that can be classified in various ways according to different theorists. As work on the gesture that accompanies speech has shown,[82] non-linguistic forms of communication are an important way in which humans shape their thought. As embodied meaning, gestures are an important part of our national and cultural identities. The Linguist David McNeill (2005: 15) maintains that 'gestures are a universal and inseparable part of language.' McNeill also proposes that language is inseparable from *imagery*. It would seem that non-linguistic thought (in the case of music at least) is also inseparable from mental imagery, which is always already embodied imagery.

There is evidence that in infancy, our earliest stages of consciousness are not modality specific. When an infant is engaged in the exchange of gestures, there is no distinction for the infant between the different modes of communication, i.e. somatic, auditory, and visual. According to this theory, gestures are represented in the mind as a kind of unified *gestalt.* Only later in our development does our

[82] See Goldin-Meadow (2003); Kendon (2004): McNeill (1992).

perception become stratified. The psychologist Daniel Stern (1998: 53) describes the properties of such a gestalt in the following terms:

> The experiments on cross-modal capacities suggest that some properties of people and things, such as shape, intensity level, motion, number, and rhythm, are experienced directly as global, amodal perceptual qualities.

Colwyn Trevarthen (2002) has also suggested that in later life, this ability to recognise the way we share information about ourselves through bodily states and movement patterns informs our linguistic and cultural skills at a fundamental level. Evidence based on studies into preverbal communication between infants and their parents shows that human infants are apparently unique in the richly rhythmic interactions in which they engage, responding to movement and sonic representations of movement. He suggests that human cognition develops from image schemas formed in our earliest childhood; schemas that condense the experiences of our earliest interaction with the world on an abstract, preverbal level. These schemas are not only related to the physical experiences of moving and acting, but also to our emotional experiences. Gesture and *emotion* are therefore closely interrelated.

> The foundations of all psychological co-operation or intersubjectivity are to be found in a sense of movement and in detection of the generation of qualities of movement in other bodies (Trevarthen 2002: 26–27).

The idea is that our earliest experiences of communication combine gestures with vocalisations and touch, and unfold in several modalities simultaneously: visually, somatically, and aurally. Considering the development of human cognition in this light, it would appear that cognitive functions are active at all levels of consciousness. Stern (1998) believes that this deeper—or earlier—level of perception

does not leave us as we mature, but stays with us at more abstract levels of thought. In other words, even though we might not be aware of it, this early state of intersubjective meanings of a unified *gestalt* remains with us and is fundamental for our social and communicative skills.

The Musical Gesture

Cross modal reference in musical experience results in *musical* gestures. The idea of the 'musical gesture,' conceived of in subtly different ways, has been the subject of recent scholarship.[83] Bowman (2004) goes as far as to assert that the entire range of musical gesture is invariably a fundamental part of what music fully perceived is. Music theorists use the term gesture to refer to both the physical external gesture in the form of movement, as well as the internal gesture as a cognitive phenomenon, as 'imagined movement.' The internal gesture emerges in the mind in response to musical stimulus, the result of the extraction of shapes and patterns from sound in the process of cross modal transfer as discussed above. Robert Hatten (2004: 1) offers a broad definition of musical gesture to be understood as 'energetic shapings through time' which emphasises the processual and temporal nature of experience and helps to illustrate the idea of intermodal images in combination. He argues that 'the basic shape of an expressive gesture is…intermodal across all systems of production and interpretation' (109).

[83] See Kühl (2007); Hatten (2004); Gritten and King (2006); Sklar (1994).

Cross Modality in Singing Perception

In the ballad experience, what we have is an exchange between audience and singer - in a two-way communicative and active relationship. The natural context to experience a ballad performance is through audio-visual perception in real time where the audience can listen to the musical sounds and *see* the gestures which originate them. Porter, in his developing theory of presence (2009: 155) quotes Merleau-Ponty in his discussion of 'gesture':

> What is communicated by the singing act can only be grasped by understanding the singer's *gesture* or expressive intention—which is a synchronic modulation of his own existence, a transformation of his being" (1945: 214)

It is interesting to think of this relation in terms of cross modal transfer and the musical gesture. Claudia Mauléon (2009) explores the communicative intentions of the singing performer in terms of embodied experience, seeking to observe the incidence of audio-visual, visual and aural modalities of perception on the audience with regards to five singing events. Her hypothesis is one of 'multimodal complexity' - that gesture and voice together form unique and complex indivisible whole, allowing the listener to encounter a deeper experience of the musical event. Interestingly, Mauléon's participants had no formal music training, were not familiar with the song performed prior to the performance and could not grasp the 'meaning' of the song text as it was sung in a foreign language. Their aesthetic judgments were therefore based exclusively on their *sensory* perception.

In every performance, singing is guided by sensory-motor perceptions. Tactile, kinetic and sonic perceptions coming from the ear (both internal and external) all provide feedback to the singer. In turn, the listeners have access to the sound and the

external movements of the performance. The singer effectively shapes, in vocal sounds, the musical representations in his or her mind. According to this view, in every performance, the act of singing implies a series of internal movements that lead to a complex of actions that allow the materialisation of the imagined sound, and this complex imagery is the result of cross modal transfer.

According to Mauléon, the voice in artistic use is the result of a dynamic interplay between the 'corporeal reality' and 'communicative intentions' of the interpreter or listener. 'Corporeal reality' is a concept encompassing both anatomical and functional aspects beneath the quality of the vocal sound, and the corporeal situation of the interpreter and their relationship with the environment, both immediate and mediate. 'Communicative intentions' are conscious and unconscious musical ideas conducting the performance, including affective and emotional features, which give rise to complex imagery and where corporeal reality plays a role. Mauléon asks if the communicative intentions are also present in the dynamics of the gestures themselves, and if the listener could infer the communicative intentions of the singer solely by means of gestures. In her view, recordings cannot reveal communicative intentions in the same way as actually participating in the performance. However, it seems that suppressing the vision at the origin of sound does not completely prevent the audience from perceiving the communicative intentions of the singer through sound alone. This explains the feelings of those who testify that they can experience the *Maysie* from recordings.

When we listen to music, what we actually hear is an auditory stream, which is subsequently being processed by auditory perception. Gestures, accordingly, are rich *gestalts*, that combine auditory information (hearing the movement) with

implied visual information (imagining the movement), somato-sensory information (feeling the movement) and emotional information (interpreting the movement). Fatone (2010: 416) suggests that 'intermodalising' in performing or listening to music is a spontaneous and automatic process, and represents a 'unitary cognitive experience—a kind of ur-gesture, or meta-gesture—while each individual image plays a co-articulating role.'

Kühl's *Musical Semantics* and the Musical Gesture

The cognitive musicologist Kühl in *Musical Semantics* (2007) presents a novel way to think about musical meaning by linking musical sounds to gesture, and gesture to both processes of communication and to embodied experience. His models take into account the *here* and *now* of the embodied experience. While Kühl's theories have been developed with Western classical music and jazz in mind, with few slight modifications and extensions they are illuminating in their application to study of the ballad experience, and add a new dimension of understanding to Porter's (2009) idea of the 'unifying ballad gesture.'

Kühl's approach to musical meaning is grounded in Johnson's theory of image schema (1987) and Ricouer's theories of metaphor (1975) and narrative creation (1984- 8). He believes that musical experience involves several cognitive functions including categorisation, narrativity, schema-based perception, cognitive mapping and conceptual blending—ideas that have been developed and utilised in the previous chapters and applied to different levels of the ballad experience. Kühl believes that the metaphoric mapping from the music domain to the body domain is a meaning- making process, in that it pertains to the way human beings make sense

of the world. In other words, Kühl suggests that the 'musical gesture' is the human way of *making sense* of music.

Kühl (2007: 1) goes as far as to claim that 'musical gesture epitomizes human expressivity.' Gesture represents an *implied* and *embodied* level of communication, and is therefore key to understanding musical meaning. This is the level of 'wordless intercorporeality' emphasised by Csordas (2008); the 'other' of language and the ineffable knowledge that we cannot express in words alone. Crucially, Kühl's argument is based on the premise that musical meaning emerges first as a preverbal concept, 'sensed rather than thought' (49). The idea that music can affect us *before* signification was introduced in Chapter Two: in Nancy's argument that we must attend to the 'actual fleshy materiality of the body'; that sounds that enter the ear affect both body and mind, and in Shusterman's philosophy of somaesthetics that calls for bodily understanding more complex than cerebral interpretation alone. Such a stance can be interpreted as the precedence of 'modes of being' over 'modes of knowing' advocated by Rice and Ó Laoire—a position that 'foregrounds our being in the world and contends that our conception of reality is always conditioned by our embodied existence' (Ó Laoire 2005: xiii).

The Process of Meaning-making

Kühl argues that the process of semiosis in musical experience lies at the very root of aesthetic expression and experience. He builds on this insight by drawing on Lev Vygotsky's (1962) analysis of pre-conceptual knowledge, who argued that a key phase in the development of conceptual thought was what he called 'thinking in complexes,' with a complex construed as a 'pre-conceptual agglomeration of

impressions and observations' (61). Kühl proposes that this same kind of loose affiliation is typical of cognitive process of making-sense-of-music:

> Musical meaning joins uneven elements, like phrase, timbre and form, in order to name a few possibilities, that involve cognitive processing at different levels. The formation of a unified *gestalt*, as with in a Vygotskyan complex, seems to rest on an innate property of the human mind/brain (67).

Kühl's formulation of the idea of 'gesture' incorporates both external physical experiences of music *and* internal perceived patterns of movement. We experience musical events as internalised movements or gestures, that is, as mental imagery or imagination. In Kühl's understanding, the expressive gesture works on *two* levels: it has external movement in space and time on the expressive level; and on the content level the movement symbolises an emotion in the internal world. The external sound pattern is intimately linked to an internal gesture. The internal gesture, or image, exists between the presence where the object is experienced, and the thought where it becomes idea. According to Kühl's model it is the *imagination* that somehow creates the bridge between mind and body, between external and internal.

The process of experiencing music is described by Kühl (2007: 150-151) as follows:

> The auditory stream presents humanly structured sound to the human ear, which is not yet music. Auditory scene analysis and schema based perception leads to an extraction of musical elements from the sound stream, like for instance, rhythm and melodic phrase…some of these elements are selected subjectively as being of special interest, evoking cognitive responses that are mapped to the elements…Through cognitive processing, involving functions like categorisation and integration among others, responses are bundled in an *emerging musical experience*

This 'emerging musical experience' is, essentially, a kind of 'creative blend.' According to Kühl, the construct which typifies this integrative process is the

musical gesture, which is active and polysemic. There is an interdependence in this process between emotion, gesture and music, which makes it clear why we experience this mapping from musical experience to movements of the body and emotional response, and vice versa. As Kühl conceives it, the musical gesture is a rich *gestalt* that combines auditory, somato-sensory and emotional information and lends itself to imaginary visualisations of musical material. The process relies in the main on metaphorical understanding of successions of musical gestures as representing or instantiating various image schemas—an idea based Johnson's theory of image schemata (1987) outlined in Chapter Three. Kühl points out that language has preserved this piece of wisdom for us in the metaphorical expression 'we are moved by music,' which is, in itself, a cross modal expression grounded in bodily experience. 'Motion' and 'emotion' are more deeply semantically linked than we might first realise. Kühl's work suggests that music has any number of interesting things to tell us about the relationship between body and mind.

The Rhythmic Body

Probably the most conspicuous evidence of the linkage between music and body comes from music's temporal or processual character. Bowman (2004) suggests that perhaps the intimate relation between music and the body involves a kind of experienced similarity between the beat's imagined movement and those of the body. Bodily constituted properties highlighted by Kühl include tension and release, volume and balance, accent, metre and syncopation, tonal centre, line and phrase, height, depth and movement. There also exists the range of expressive attributes including seriousness, tenderness, and playfulness, for example. It is the

body's *presence* in each of these, and their consequently intimate links to personal and collective identity, that account for music's remarkable capacity to deeply move and affect us.

Salient features of the ballad will resonate in the human body in different ways. Rhythm resonates as body gesture; textual elements evoke specific semantic content; metrical form is experienced as spatial maps (routes through imaginary space); musical phrases are expressive gestures; the quality of the human voice has strong affective resonance; certain specific elements in the music will call upon acquired personal or cultural memory (cultural framing). Outer representation of sounding causes (the musical object) are mapped onto an inner representation of effects, which emerges in the ballad experience. The encompassing gesture maps onto emotion, and integrated as inner subjective movement (creative imagination). Different elements arise as musical experience and map onto each other in different ways for each individual, forming a meaningful cognitive network and emerging as embodied musical meaning.

The cognitive linking of an external auditory event to an internal emotional content in a metaphorical process through the expressive gesture indicates a kind of *narrative*, but one based on embodied experience rather than on literary models. This is an absolutely key point in the context of the development of ideas in this thesis at large. The musical experience creates an unfolding story. Ricouer's hermeneutic and narrative theories (1984-8), and Ó Laoire's extension of these theories (2005) as applied to the experience of song, are crucial here. Chapter Six developed the idea that we grasp the meaning of lived experience configuring and reconfiguring past experiences in on-going stories which have certain plots or directions and which

guide the interpretation of those experiences. In the case of the ballad experience, this process is exceedingly complex: there are multiple new narratives and imagined worlds emerging in the process— 'layers' of story—and integrating with each other to create powerful new meanings. This idea helps us make sense of Porter's (2009: 137, my italics) prolegomena for a study of ballad presence:

> The student needs to peel away these layers of "story" in relation to a specific song sung in a defined context: the plot, the story of the text and of the tune, the story of the singer and how he or she views the song, the story of the culture that produced and sustains it. These layers attain "presence" when they are realised in face to face performance. They commingle and collide as the singer unfolds the song, contributing in their diversity to that sense of presence. The story of the performance, then, when analysed along with these other layers, makes for an understanding of presence. In the act of face-to-face performance, these layers *fuse* in the unifying gesture of the singer and the active feedback of the audience.

According to Porter, it is in the event of the ballad singing experience that these 'layers' of story 'fuse' and attain 'presence' in the performative gesture. The idea of fusion here reminds us of Gadamer's hermeneutic 'fusion of horizons,' where meaning is always experienced as immediately present, and past and present are united in experience. Our own horizon of experience, our internal context—prior experience, associations—fuses with the meanings in the text, and the horizon of the world in which the cultural work was produced. The idea of 'fusion' can also as easily be characterised as a process of creative 'blending.' In this sense, the 'story' of the song exists on multiple levels: the internal narrative; the story of the song's creation and transmission; the story of the singer, specific performance, situation and audience, the story of the community. Considered alone, the verbal text, for example, is only one part of this interdependent, intersubjective reality, in which the singer seeks to transform experience through traditional patterns and sounds into an existential act of communication (Porter & Gower 1995: 277).

It is interesting to here to bring to mind Sheila Stewart's explanations of the *conniach*. She talks of the 'many functions' of ballad singing. In the performance of a ballad, she says one must ask, 'are you transporting it properly?'

> You see there's a lot of functions within there. And once you've got all these functions coming together… once you've got all that intae a tight ball and you throw it to an audience, it goes past them (1996)

The experiences of our past, our history, the natural world around us, deeply personal experiences and the experiences of family and friends all play a part in the processes of meaning creation in the ballad experience. Ó Laoire (2005: 209) writes that it is 'this kind of plural, multilayered context that obtains.'

The Total Ballad Gesture

Analysis of the ballad singing experience has proved to be complex. The idea of the all-encompassing 'gesture' that expresses both external and internal worlds is illuminating in its application to the ballad experience. The *gestalt* musical gesture can in this context be re-characterised as the 'unifying ballad gesture,' combining all the elements needed—external and internal —for the success of ballad presencing. If we read the following quote from Porter in light of Kühl's formulation, we can see how the two theories can marry together:

> I have already argued that the meaning of the ballad is at its most complex in the performance situation, when narrative immediacy is reinforced by communicative devices (singing, gesture, visual and aural contact) and modulated by contextual factors (domestic space, public arena) —all of this to a point where the individual sense of a ballad's meaning is modified by audience expectation and a shared sense of performative understanding' (2009: 173)
>
> These meanings are all part of a potential "presencing" of ballads as singers, audiences and students bring to coherence their experience of an essentially performative genre (177)

Subjective and Shared: Being-*with*

The same ballad can mean difference things to different people, and the same person can experience the same ballad differently in different contexts—always singularly plural. This does not mean, however, that the relationship between the ballad's structure and its experienced content is absolutely arbitrary. We can *share* aesthetic experiences. Most importantly, we seem – in all cultures and at all times – to use art in the form of music as an indispensable part of our most meaningful moments, as a device for sharing. This means that although meaning cannot be pinpointed in any specified manner, there is still an amount of stable substance in musical communication which can be defined.

The most important part of musical meaning, in Kühl's view, is this shared nature of the experience. The musical gesture, he believes, represents the link between music as sound, on the one hand, and what he describes as the intersubjective social and emotional content on the other. The specific view of intersubjectivity advocated by Kühl is informed by the view of Trevarthen (2002), discussed above—the idea that our unique ability to have a language and a culture begins with the experience of the intersubjective sharing of emotion and sensation.

Crucial to this picture is the distinction between 'experience' and 'sensation.' In Blacking's (1975) view, 'Sensations are unique to [a] person, time and place, not really susceptible to analysis.' Experience, on the other hand, is 'cumulative and shared' and therefore social: it creates links between others and the self. Experience, in Blacking's view, is 'described in language, acted out in company…[they] need not be couched in words, but must be shared (in Sager 2006: 146). This public definition

of experience nevertheless presupposes that our 'shared' experiences affect our *inner* sensations. In Kühl's view, the musical gesture directly conveys information about a subject's emotional state and intention. In music, the sharing of gestures is further intensified through the pulse, which beings about a synchronisation of implied movements.

> The mind accurately 'represents' the moving body in time and space, and…these mental or cerebral 'motor images' of the body in action serve efficiently to represent other persons' bodies and their intentions in behaviours (Trevarthen 2000: 164)

This, according to Kühl, is what gives music its power.

Kühl suggests that we subjectively experience music on three levels: embodied, mental and emotional, and that these three levels of response interact with each other in certain ways through cross modal transfer. This experience, however, is always framed by the situated, socio-cultural and personal—ways that are *mostly shared*.

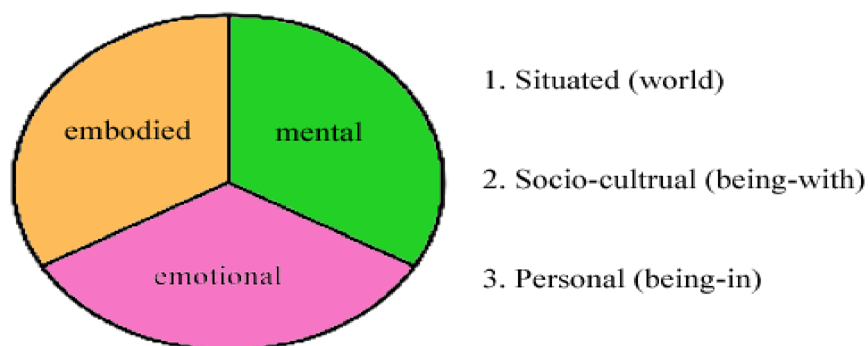

Figure 9.

Intercorporeal Sharing of Gestures

The idea of gesture-based communication is further strengthened through the discovery of 'mirror-neurons.'[84] This phenomenon is a general neural mechanism that enables individuals to understand the meaning of actions done by others, their intentions, and their emotions, through activation of internal representations coding in motor terms the observed actions and emotions by mentally simulating their actions, as though the observer were itself acting. Shusterman (2009) explores the use of mirror-neuron theory to explain certain problems of the convergence of audience and performer perspectives in the context of musical experience. According to the theories of embodied cognition, mechanisms such as mirroring and cross-modal sensory mapping allow a witness to a performance to project clues contained in sound and movement into their *own* body. In this way, the listener simulates in their own body sensory-motor experiences that trigger images about the communicative intentions of the singer.

When we hear a song, we entrain ourselves to it, while we synchronise ourselves cognitively to a temporal pattern of expectations and predictions, set up through musical form and gestures. All this evidence would suggest that seeing and hearing a performer using their body to sing a song is thus very likely to engage motor neural pathways involved in performing those movements, so that the observer, if they have a keen somaesthetic sensibility and are very attentive, can get a feel in their body of the motor qualities of the performers' movements they observe. Since imagined visualisation can provide analogous neural and physiological activity

[84] Mirror- neurons play an extensive role in human neural processes; their primary aim is deemed to be to enable us to simulate the minds of others, whether the other is observed or imagined: see. Gallese and Goldmann(1998); Lacoboni (2008); Shusterman (2008, 2009).

to that of vision itself, a 'deep listener' who imagines what performers are doing in producing the music they hear could likewise experience motor sensations relating to such somatic movements of performance. Emotion, gesture and sensual perception are interwoven in a dialogic communication with 'the other.' Essentially, what we are concerned with here is the experience of intercorporeal sharing through gestures.

This perspective adds a new dimension to ideas explored in Chapter Four about 'being present.' In Gadamer's understanding (2004), to 'be present' is to participate, to share. This is immediately relevant in light of Porter's own prerequisite for presence in which it must be a shared, inter-responsive experience. Gadamer maintains that watching a drama in an involved way constitutes participating; and in the same way, truly listening to a ballad being sung in a concentrated manner can be viewed as a genuine mode of participating in the event itself. The idea of 'being present' is conceived of as a kind of game. Gadamer starts from the premise that experiencing a work of art is a form of 'play' - it cannot be detached from its presentation, or enactment, in *time*. Ultimately, a relationship is built upon sharing simultaneously different dimensions of *time*. The listener participates in the process of making meaning through sharing, where meanings are built up and shared simultaneously in a sort of flux set up between singer and listener.

In Kühl's understanding (2007: 226, my italics), musical meaning has its roots 'at the level of gesture, in its expressive, microstructural dimensions, and in the expanding of the gestural flow inside the *extended present*.' Ó Laoire (2005: 38) also talks of the 'extended present' in terms of the preparation of a special place, which,

he believes spurs the participants 'toward a new description of reality.' This lived-through or extended present can be understood as a kind of 'specious present' tied to the past and to the future. The idea of the 'vivid present' was introduced in Chapter Four to help make sense of this idea of the extended present. It exists in the intersection between the inner *durée* and outer cosmic time, between inner and outer worlds. It will be shown below that understanding Kühl's notion of the 'extended present' in terms of the 'vivid present' allows us to extend Kühl's ideas in relation to theories of ballad 'presence.'

Sharing External and Internal Worlds

This final section develops the argument for the intercorporeal sharing of gestures exploring the importance of *time*. A study of time helps us to understand the relationship between both internal and external worlds, and between mind and body. Schütz, whose work (1973) bridged phenomenology and sociology—the subjective and the shared - argues that experiences can be partially shared across individuals, offering us a scheme for analysing the dynamics of partial sharing which helps us see experience as 'cultural' without homogenising groups of others or indeed exaggerating differences.

The relationship between time and meaning, however, is extremely complex. Arising from it is the apparent paradox of a present that cannot be grasped in its immediacy and therefore remains obscure. Radically, Schütz asserts that time *is* meaning, and that 'the problem of meaning is a time problem' (1967: 12). In his view, our lifeworld is structurally and radically connected to time; and time is a constitutive part of meaning. Communicating presupposes the simultaneous

partaking of 'various dimensions of outer and inner time…' (1964: 178). We can directly assure ourselves only of the existence of the other's body but not of their consciousness. We can, however, apprehend the other's lived experience at the same time as we are going through our own experience. In this sense, time is a structure that performs a decisive role in the basic process of understanding the other.

> Only within this experience does the Other's conduct become meaningful to the partner tuned in on him—that is, the Other's body and its movements can be and are interpreted as a field of expression of events within his inner life (Schütz 1964: 178).

We can grasp the other's lived experience in the 'vivid present' simultaneously with our own stream of consciousness. A relationship is established by reciprocal sharing of the other's flux of experience in inner time by living through a vivid present *together*. In the case of music, meaning is tied in a special way to inner time. According to Schütz 'there is no doubt that the dimension of time in which the musical work exists is the inner time of our stream of consciousness—in Bergson's terminology, the *durée*' (31).

Mind and Body and the Experience of Time

Bergson's philosophy claims that the body plays a crucial role in mediating between - or rather, synthesising - these two dimensions of existence: the external (shared), and internal (subjective). That these dimensions are considered separate is a result of our interaction with the world on a human scale. Chapter Five made the case that sounding presence reveals that these two dimensions are not closed off from one another, but are actually interconnected aspects of one world and one experience.

Bergson (2007) emphasises the importance of our bodily movements for the constitution of the outer world and its particular time perspective. He argues that the world is given its character by action, process and movement, and that it is our lived experience alone that validates these as real truths. Crucial to the process of communication, then, is that all forms of social action are necessarily based upon bodily movements - kinaesthetic movements in space. We act in the outside world through the movements of our bodies. We experience bodily movements from within, we act them without: this is to say, we experience our kinaesthetic movements simultaneously as both events in the outside world and as aspects of our own stream of consciousness. As events in the outside world, our bodily movements partake of the structure of objective, spatialised, measurable time; as aspects of our stream of consciousness, they also belong to the qualitative time of *durée*. In Bergson's view, it is therefore our bodily movements that synthesise in simultaneity the two perspectives into a new temporal perspective borne of the fusion of *durée* with cosmic time, the vivid present:

> In and by our bodily movements we perform the transition from our *durée* to the spatial or cosmic time, and our working actions partake of both. In simultaneity we experience the working action as a series of events in outer and in inner time, unifying both dimensions into a single flux which shall be called the *vivid present* (Schütz 1962: 216, my italics)

In musical experience, we discover the simultaneity of the different modes of time through an immersion in the immediacy and fullness of the present. This is because musical metre is not the measurement of discrete units, but the continuous flow of an indivisible whole, each present moment of which both rises out of its past and moves towards its future while containing in itself all its past and all its future.

Becker (2004: 133), in her exploration of deep listening and trance, considers this dimension of time, here quoting Gilbert Rouget (1985: 121, my italics):

> In the dimension of time, music modifies our consciousness of being to an even greater extent. It is an architecture in time. It gives time a density different from its everyday density. It lends a materiality it does not ordinarily have and that is of another order. It indicates that something is happening in the *here* and *now*; that time is being occupied by an action being performed, or that a certain state rules over the beings present.

Shared Vivid Present

In order to communicate with others, we have to perform acts which are to be interpreted by others. Gestures, speech, storytelling, song and other forms of expressive culture are all forms of social action. The ballad in this case is understood as a form of meaningful communication. Schütz (1962) believes that it is these experiences of meaningful communication that generate the very idea of community. He coins what he calls a 'mutual tuning-in relationship': a sharing, in the 'vivid present,' by each individual in the inner time of the other; or, more precisely, in the constitution and sharing of a common time, the common vivid present. We recognise the other's humanity in the way in which the other shapes our experience. The foundation of intersubjectivity, of intercorporeality, is to be found in a sense of movement in others' bodies interwoven in a dialogic communication with 'the other.'

The power of song, its 'interiorizing force' *corresponds* to 'shared somatic states' and 'rhythmic interactions' (Blacking 1977: 9 in Porter and Gower 1995: xiv). This idea makes sense in embodied cognitive and phenomenological terms. Schütz characterises this *sharing* as the 'We-relation' and places it as base of a shared world. The streams of consciousness coordinate and co-determine each other in a series of what he calls 'reciprocal mirrorings.' Each individual's expectations are influenced

by the other's expectations. All this determines the fact that the experience we share simultaneously in the vivid present is not felt as your personal experience, nor as mine, but as *our* common experience; the time of the experience is not my or your vivid present, but *our vivid present.* Schütz believes that 'this present, common to both of us, is the pure sphere of the We' (1962: 175). He later (1976: 177) describes the 'We-relationship' as:

> The transcendence of I and Thou into a We that goes beyond the uniqueness and the finitude of both. This We is not the sum of I and Thou; it is a reality in some way, whose nature is symbolic (it does not belong to the everyday world), and which integrates and transcends both.

Schütz expands the meaning of the word sharing, so that sharing radically implies a fusion of the streams of consciousness: 'the intertwining, the sharing, the fusion, of two streams of consciousness, of two internal times into a common time, a shared vivid present' (in Muzzetto 2006: 22). The 'now' of the stream of consciousness, the present of human experience, is not an instant experienced as separate from the preceding and the following instants, it is a 'vivid present' which, like James's 'specious present,' is tied to the past and to the future. This idea is illuminating in its application to the ballad singing experience. We discussed above the idea that Porter's (2009: 137) 'layers of story' 'fuse' in the unifying gesture of the singer and the active feedback of the audience. The meaning of this assertion can be extended further. As well as understanding the idea of a fusion of layers of story in terms of a hermeneutic fusion of horizons or an act of creative blending, we can choose to interpret it in terms of Schütz's fusion of streams of consciousness unfolding in time.

This idea of the fusion of consciousness also helps us understand what Niles refers to when he suggests that personal and social memory can take on aspects of a

'single consciousness.' In the following quote he links the physical body to memory and consciousness, implicitly expressing the relationship between body and mind:

> The workings of both personal memory and social memory…from certain distances away can take on the appearance of aspects of a single consciousness (1995: 122, 202)

The final chapter will come to the conclusion that what these kinds of experiences have evolved to foster is empathy. In Blacking's view (1973: 51), 'we often experience greater intensity of living when our normal time values are upset' and that music may help to generate such experiences. In his view, music creates a special world of time, no longer subjected to real time and space; and in the 'virtual time of music,' people become 'keenly aware of the true nature of their being, of the other self within themselves and of the relationship with the world around them' (52). The result of such an experience is what Blacking (1989) later calls 'fellow feeling,' defined as an awareness and sensitivity to other people and to the 'other self within.' Keil and Feld (1994: 91) articulate this idea in *embodied* terms:

> The significant feature of musical communication is…that its generality and multiplicity of possible messages and interpretations brings out a certain kind of 'feelingful' activity and engagement on the part of the listener, a form of pleasure that unites the material and mental dimensions of musical experience as fully embodied.

It is phenomenological fact that such experiences are often saturated with the awareness of others. For Heidegger, care and concern for others is the ultimate reason for 'being-in-the-world': care and concern is what signifies man's existence and makes it meaningful. He argues that the sense of care is time: if humans had no concept of time they would have no reason to be engaged or implicated in the world in a human way—it is the awareness of temporality that establishes that the relationship that human beings have with the world is through concern. The world

is not a private possession but a *shared* world. The following quote from Burrows (1989: 399, my italics) illustrates this idea well:

> To whatever extent music does not point to a world beyond the cognitive and motor activity of constituting it out of the raw material of sound, it gives the participant a sense of himself as someone with a central responsibility for the creation of his own provisional world…In any of these roles [performer and audience] the participant is released for the duration of the performance from dependence on some outer, oppositional world. At its most fulfilled, the world he synthesizes is a self-validating, *non-dualistic world of presence* in and through movement.

Chapter Eight: Summary and Conclusions

The 'presence' of ballads requires direct communication of a ballad to a live audience in a shared physical space and is only meaningful when the singer or performer and audience are inter-responsive in a specific space that they share. Rethinking intersubjectivity as intercorporeality allows us to develop this argument to include the non-verbal dimensions of experience. '[The] articulation of a ballad in a sung *gesture* realises, actualises and presences the tradition' (Porter 2009: 181, my italics). This claim can be extended in light of new ideas about musical gesture based on theories of cross modal perception. The contiguity between gestural and musical structures in the cognitive system can serve as the basis for cross-modal mappings, which results in embodied meaning from music. The idea of the all-encompassing 'gesture' that expresses both external and internal worlds is illuminating in its application to the ballad experience. The cognitive linking of an external auditory event to an internal emotional content in a metaphorical process through the expressive gesture indicates a kind of *narrative*, but one based on embodied experience. Time is important in this argument for two reasons: firstly, it enables the ballad experiences to be a *shared* experience; and secondly, it helps create altered

states of consciousness which allow us to access and create imagined worlds *beyond* lived reality. A particular way of being-in-the-world while inside the ballad experience differs from the more emotionally neutral, everyday inner experience of daily living. But this is also an experience of being-with-others; in the ballad experience, singer and listener become one in a sonic and rhythmically coordinated whole. In this sense, the ballad experience has the potential to reveal to us the timelessness of the inner *durée* and removes the boundaries of the outer world time. It is the *body* that mediates between internal and external worlds.

Ballad singing is not merely a cultural performance, but a way of 'distilling the life world and its fullness in a ritualising gesture that fuses cognition, feeling and volition' (Ricoeur 1966 in Porter & Gower 1995: 298). Meaning is not contained solely in the ballad texts, but in *the entire communicative gesture*.

CHAPTER NINE 9

The Space Between is Where the *Maysie* Lives

This penultimate chapter will bring the central themes of this work to their culmination. The genesis of this study emerged from Stanley Robertson's originary quote, 'the *space that's in between* is where the *Maysie* lives.' Before concluding, in a final search for the *Maysie*, this chapter will reflect in more depth on the idea of 'imaginative empathic projection' in affective encounters, the non-rational dimension of such encounters, theories of interstitiality and liminality in relation to the hermeneutic process, and the transformative power of stories in song. It will conclude with reflection on the question of ballads and truth.

Imaginative Empathic Projection

In Chapter One I quoted the philosopher Arnold Berleant, who writes that 'the creative act illuminates the possibilities of human transcendence that we all share when we engage with art.' In the context of music specifically, Becker (2004) believes that 'deep listening' to certain musical forms often carries sentiments such as feelings of transcendence or a sense of communion with something beyond oneself. Before bringing ideas presented here to their conclusion, we must ask how this feeling of 'transcendence' is to be reconciled with the ontological convictions underpinning this research.

From the standpoint of embodied cognition, the idea of transcendence—from a relation to or dependency on another world beyond this world—is simply not a valid proposition. Rather, such abstract thinking relates to conceptual metaphor and

the workings of the brain. Our transcendent experiences must find expression through words that articulate the nature of the abstraction. In order to make sense of and describe such transcendent 'experiences,' we—as humans—limited by language, are forced into the realm of metaphor. In my view, cultural and folkloric metaphors such as the *Maysie* can be understood as a tool for explaining one of the most fundamental and profound of *human* experiences: that is, engagement with something beyond ourselves, whether simply a sense of community and communion, or something more deeply existential. My own argument, following Gadamer in his search for 'truth in human experience,' is that this kind of heightened experience is firstly and fundamentally a very *human* thing. Many cultures and individuals across human history look for such transpersonal experiences perhaps because they—*we*—need something *beyond* ourselves to *make sense* of the human experience.

The inherent problems with words 'spiritual' and 'transcendent' were raised in Chapter One, and the need for an alternative conception of embodied spirituality was stressed. Lakoff and Johnson's theory of metaphor (1999) is of vital importance in understanding this extraordinary realm of the transcendent. They re-imagine 'transcendence' as 'imaginative empathetic projection,' defined as the cognitive ability to imitate others, to 'know our environment, understand how we are part of it, and how it is part of us' (566). The mind within the brain has an imaginative ability to project itself onto outer circumstances. A major feature of the embodied mind empathic, and our capacity for imaginative projection is a vital cognitive faculty. From birth we have the capability to imitate others, to vividly imagine experiencing what another might experience. We can experience something akin to getting 'out of' our bodies; yet this process is very much a bodily capacity. We

empathetically imagine ourselves in the body of another, cognitively simulating their movements. That cognitive simulation, when vivid, results in the 'feel' of movement without moving (we experience this when dreaming, for example). This feeling is never disembodied or impersonal, but the expression of the depth of the human subject. The experiences of such a 'feeling,' in Lakoff and Johnson's view, form a major part of what has often been called 'spiritual' experience (although this claim depends on the particular use and definition of the word 'spiritual'). Particular forms of music—those created *for being* as opposed to *having* (Blacking 1973: 50)—can engage the emotions while coordinating interaction between self and others. Arguably, there is nothing inherently 'mystical' about this, yet phenomenologically, *experientially*, it *is* a form of transcendence: breaking down the boundaries between self and other.

The *Maysie* as the Spirit of the Gaps?

How do we understand the Maysie? It was suggested in Chapter One that a good way to understand the hermeneutic process is through the myth metaphor of the Greek figure of Hermes. Hermes is the mediator belonging to a liminal realm: between the magical realm and the realm of ordinary, everyday reality; between waking and sleeping; day and night; world and underworld, conscious and unconscious. Walter Otto (1979: 118–119) describes the phenomenological experience of the liminal in the context of darkness:

> A man who is awake in the open field at night, or who wanders over silent paths, experiences the world differently than by day. Nighness vanishes, and with it distance; everything is equally far and near, close by us and yet mysteriously remote. Space loses its measures. There are whispers and sounds and we do not know where or what they are…There is no longer a distinction between what is lifeless and living; everything is animate and soulless, vigilant and asleep at once.

Otto's passage above, and the seeming paradoxes inherent within it, resonates with John Niles' (1995: 52) description of the *Maysie's* visitation, which might take on new meaning in this context: 'There are shivers at the spine, and the small hairs on your body start to rise and move...While it lasts it is like a living death.' We may ask, what is this realm of night in which the nearness and far-awayness of objects vanishes, where there is no objective difference between the lifeless and the living and we experience a living death? In the objective world of day, things have their finite measure; but in the mind, in imagination and dream, distances vanish, relationships of time alter, and we can sense our self in a different world. It is possible to make a comparison between the Greek mythical figure of Hermes, first discussed in Chapter One, and the *Maysie* herself. Like Hermes, She is a 'spirit of the gaps.' She inhabits an in-between realm, at the crack between worlds.

Affective Encounters

The encounter with the *Maysie* herself is an event that presents itself as in- between. Through this encounter—the creative tension between self and world — we are able to open ourselves to our own experience, our own perception. Our senses saturate us with the undeniable richness of experience and open us to the non-rational—or perhaps *more*-than-rational—dimensions of existence. The shivers and chills experienced when the *Maysie* is present are essential to the full value of the ballad experience because they represent a bodily confirmation of what is registered at the same time in the mind. In this sense, bodily felt chills act as corporeal

endorsements of what is grasped in more cognitive or cerebral terms. It has been argued here that the central appreciative value of such chills lies in precisely the affirmation of wholeness that they afford, of mind and body resonating together. Levinson (2006: 172) suggests that it is first and foremost in bodily feeling that we experience a sense of our unity and wholeness, and that the act of singing itself 'puts us in touch with the wholeness of our being' As argued in Chapter Five, conceiving of the ballad experience as a somaesthetic—engaging body and mind—adds a crucial dimension to Porter's ideas about ballad presence. Somaesthetic appreciation celebrates the value of our ambiguous, plurivocal presence, and in this sense can be seen as an ontological opening.

Ó Laoire (2005: 34) suggests that in the to and fro hermeneutic of movement of play, 'a change occurs which suspends everyday reality, through which an intensified and truer vision of reality becomes apparent.' It was argued in Chapter One that such insights come from an ability to approach life with 'liminal freedom.'

> From the source of the event of appearing, something comes toward man that holds the two-fold of presence and present beings... One does not so much act as respond, does not so much speak as listen, does not so much interpret as understand the thing that is unveiled. The primary movement here is *understanding as an emergence of being* (Palmer 1980: 3)

What is interesting and important about this kind of interpretation is that it goes beyond technique and method-oriented conceptions to a moment more primordial—a moment before our present thought forms—in order to grasp something essential. In Heidegger's view, this is a kind of bridge to 'non-being.' The transcending of the already-given world, in Heidegger's own writing ([1955-7] 2002), is called the 'step back.' This step back is a movement back from an embeddedness in a set of fixed definitions of reality in order to regain access to a certain realm of 'latency' which we might also call our 'deeper sense' of the meaning of being. Heidegger roots his

thinking in a latency lying below the level of manifest consciousness. In the preface to Richardson's work, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (2003: viii- xxiv), Heidegger writes that this realm of ontological nonbeing is not the 'transcendental,' but rather a kind of 'creative foundation and source for our being-in-the-world.' Desmond (1995: 270, my italics) talks of this creative foundation in terms of 'mindfulness transcending instrumental reason, to a renewing of our *being in the middle*.'

The aesthetic phenomenologist Dufrenne (1973: 542) believes that the proper function of art is that it makes us undergo the 'absolute experience of the affective.' We are 'moved' affectively by the confrontation with aesthetic forms. The new position to which we are 'moved,' metaphorically, is 'deep.' The metaphorical use of depth is of something that is hidden from view, something which cannot be seen when we are positioned at the surface. When that which is hidden is suddenly seen —suddenly experienced with 'liminal freedom'—our foundations are shaken. We are seized, physically, emotionally, mentally, by meanings resonant with a sense of that which is most real to us: our consciousness of ourselves as being in and of the world.

We are clouded in our daily lives, but sometimes we gain access to the realm of clear-sightedness and truth. Desmond (1995: 75) believes that through art we might access something essential, something we are always losing, something for which we sometimes long, and something we sometimes regain. In the following quote he gives the example of the ballad experience itself:

> I speak of the elemental…It is simple yet elusive, clear as daylight yet mysteriously stirring, ageless yet recurrent….*Listening to some old ballads we sometimes hear the elemental*—so simple, so elegant, so powerful—yet without insistence—as if singers were in touch with more directly with something irreducible… For the elemental is such that its expression is just its simple being. There is no disjunction between expression and being—as if a pure voice

> of innocent song just rose from the heart of being, as if that song were the most natural thing in the world, were the very nature of things (Desmond 1990: 272, my italics).

Unfolding Worlds of the Imagination

This thesis has argued that the ballad experience provides access to the imaginary 'ballad world,' remote from the quotidian lifeworld, by enveloping singer and listener together in an experience that suggests other times and distant places. Songs can 'unfold a world' of the imagination. This idea is echoed by Michael Jackson (2002: 254): 'stories…transport us into another space-time…It is in this sense that once upon a time is always the here and now.' That is to say, we cannot divorce the 'once upon a time' in a sort metaphysical sense from the actual 'here and now' of the vivid present.

The idea of creating new imagined worlds, according to Dufrenne (1973), is a defining feature of aesthetic perception itself. Our imagination is a most valuable tool, for it assists us in seeing beyond the immediately visible. It is our ability to imagine other 'possible lives'—our own and those of others—that creates our bond with diverse social and historical worlds. Storytelling in all its forms mediates our relationship with worlds that extend beyond us. It is absurd to speak of stories as either personal or social, for their meanings inevitably depend on a fusion of both horizons, as well as a fusion of horizons of biographical and historical, self and other, private and public.

In this case, whatever the distinctive qualities of the ballad experience, the significance of it seems in large part dependent on what a listener takes such experiences to signify. The emphasis here is on the ways in which individuals draw

on extant narratives to create meanings particular to *themselves*. As Katharine Lee (1993:77) explains, aesthetic encounters are significant

> when there is a perceived wholeness in which the scattered details of the object or event fall immediately into order and coherence and resonate with the individual's understandings and feelings. It is a moment of great magnitude because of the transformative insights it affords the individual.

This process was explored in Chapter Six through Ó Laoire's theory of the productive power of metaphor, Ricouer's theory of mimesis and the process of creative blending. Gadamer (2004: 306–310) reminds us that understanding is not a merely cognitive process, but rather it is achieved (on an existential level) by means of the practice of previous understandings applied to new situations. We actively use our imagination and 'bodily thought' (Grosz 2001: 70) to empathically understand the other's position and bring about our own existential understanding. Jackson (2002: 33) writes of this essentially hermeneutic process,

> The intelligibility of any story or journey will depend on this unconscious bodily rhythm of going out from some place of certainty or familiarity into a space of contingency and strangeness, then returning to take stock.

In becoming immersed in the ballad story through cognitive processes of metaphorical mapping, our self-identity is altered in an imaginative appropriation of the narrative identity. This process is the very essence of 'transformativity' that Porter (2009: 153) talks of in his theory of presence:

> I want to suggest by "transformativity" the active, transitive, capacity of singing to bring about a qualitative change, both internal and external...Ballad singing transforms not just the song material itself but also the human effort and experience that gave rise to it. In this transformativity indeed, that is the key to achieving "presence" in ballad performance.

Singular and Shared: The Carrying Stream

The twentieth century philosopher Hannah Arendt (1968) argues that storytelling transforms our lives by enabling us to reshape and diffuse diverse and difficult personal experiences in ways that can be *shared.* Blacking (1969) believes that the purpose of art is to capture force with form: the force of individual human experience and the form of collective cultural experience. Without the perennial conversion of cultural narratives into stories that speak to private idiosyncratic concerns, cultural narratives such as the ballad lose their viability. Jackson (2002: 226) believes that storytelling is a modality of working with others to transform what is given into forms of experience and meaning that are collectively viable. Stories bring philosophy down to earth, working within the everyday lifeworld of human struggle, encompassing a plurality of perspectives, in order to gain an enlarged view of human experience.

Stories, then, cannot exist as purely personal revelations, but must be realised dialogically and collaboratively in the course of sharing with others. This is why we may 'no more recover the original story than step into the same river twice' (Jackson 2002: 23). It is possible to use this river metaphor to extend Henderson's (1992: 24) idea of the 'carrying stream of tradition,' first discussed in Chapter Six. Ó Laoire (2006) believes that such narratives represent the fundamental framework of an ancient structure, a continuing development which is negotiated anew with each coming generation. Since their original conception and creation, the ballads have changed, enriched or transformed their meanings, but in a way, still preserve many of their original patterns. To revisit a quote from Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 25), 'it is a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed

in the middle.' This is the effect of the transformations all experience undergoes as it is replayed, recited, and reworked in the place of intersubjective life. As Arendt (1958: 184) puts it, the 'story comes into being within an already existing web of human relationships.' 'Life stories only assume the full measure of the meaning in the space of the world...of plural existence, of intersubjectivity' (Jackson 2002: 226).The power of ballads, then, resides in the *in-between spaces of intersubjectivity*, of *intercorporeality*. In sharing them we testify to the very diversity, ambiguity and interconnectedness of experiences that abstract thought seeks to reduce, tease apart, and contain.

The Ballad *Song*

Crucial to the idea of 'presencing imagined worlds,' and arguably what makes the ballad experience it so distinct, is the fact that it is story in *song*. Melody is an integral element of the ballad narratives: their musical component heightens narrative energy and adds a new dimension the expression of emotion that language cannot communicate. A central argument in the preceeding chapters has been the idea that the semantic power of 'words' expand the awareness of possibilities ranging over past, present and future, through the creation of narratives; while 'sounds' of music and melody and their intonation focus the awareness of 'presence' in the present through a visceral, embodied experience. The insistent rhythm of the words and the melody together can have hypnotic qualities, and in this context we 'imaginatively participate' in the active world of the text by means of the symbolic rhythmic structures of metaphor and narrative. Ideas in Chapters Four and Eight

further explored the importance of temporality, arguing that that the temporal structure of experience is crucial to the meaning of expressive culture.

In Chapter Five it was argued that together, performer and audience—singer and listener—create an environment in which the *Maysie* may flourish. Niles (1995: 49) proposes that such moments of communication—or rather, in my view, *communion*—unite the separate souls of the audience, 'sparking recognition of their common character or fate.' Experiencing self and others as co-participants in presence requires that we traverse the frontiers that seem separate to us. Harmon (2008: 30) argues that the essential nature of communal song is this very crossing: the breaking down the boundaries of self and other and experiencing a unitary state. In her view, song has the potential to reveal the fundamental togetherness in the being of things: self and other are brought together in shared experience. Although Harmon (2008) talks of communal song in a specifically Christian context, the fact that she believes that 'with no other art does this crossing occur with such immediacy and directness' supports this argument for the power of song. In Desmond's view (1990: 259), 'in singing we meet an outpouring of articulation of enigmatic affirmative power':

> It is the human voice overreaching itself in a song that speaks to the human heart but knows also that the human heart does not know itself (Desmond 1990: 270)

This is, perhaps, the very ambiguity that 'serves to define man' (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 220).

Some kinds of music—and I argue that the ballad is one such kind—are capable of affecting humans at the very depths of what can be experienced. Blacking (1973:108) believes that music can 'transcend time and culture':

> The realisation of music's unifying nature can help people to transcend narrow cultural boundaries and political interests and to act in ways that are in the interests of their fellow human beings and their self-actualization into wholeness by giving them the means to experience human connectedness, perhaps the most vital of all experiences.

The 'being' of significant experiences of music blurs the distinction of subject and object, of self and other. We become aware, if only fleetingly, of the interconnectedness of all things. This idea is articulated by Burrows (1989: 399) in the following quote:

> Music is a dualistic trick for suspending duality: music and participant do form a duality of self and other, but to attend deeply to this other is to merge with it.

Subjective meaning, feeling, and knowing take on an extended reality by merging with significant, imaginative instances of musical creation. This results in an altered experience of our body in time and space. This kind of experience reveals that there exists, under the differences that language and words create, a layer in which all things have a common rootedness, which 'spring from a single source' (Blacking 1969: 63).

> Being aesthetic is a living refutation of dualism in showing us *bodied* mind as activating is own self-mediation with otherness (Desmond 1990: 66).

At such depths an alternative reality and an alternative way of being are achieved, in which wholeness of meaning is attained in a world full of division and alienation. As Desmond rather wonderfully articulates, '*Whole worlds sometimes rise up in a song…the articulation of a whole sense of being* (Desmond 1990: 270, my italics)

Ballads and Truth

It has been claimed that the ballad as a form is remarkable for its simplicity, intensity and profound capability to express something true of human experience. Wilentz and Marcus (2006: 354) go so far as to claim that the 'old ballads carry a kind of truth … that [cannot] be found anywhere else.' What does this mean? We might say that 'truth' is created in performance. Since singers speak of 'getting into' the song, of 'being the person,' in short, like an actor on stage, they project themselves imaginatively into a situation in which they have never in reality participated and the audience accepts this projection as truth. In this closed circle of meaning, the *epochē*, the 'created space between,' there is a temporary suspension of ordinary reality, of time and of space. The space between allows us to accept all information on an equal footing, whether it is contributed by the physical world or by our imagination. Jerrold Levinson (2006), writing on the nature and function of musical chills, reflects that

> Experiences of the sort in question announce themselves as the mark of a confrontation with some fundamental truth of life, bodied forth by the music that so moves us. Such chills are received not as mere physiological disturbances, but as ones fraught with significance.

To return again to Timothy Rice's central conviction (1994: 305, my italics), and my own opening quote:

> The *truth* that music embodies and symbolically represents is not a propositional logical truth, verifiable by the niceties of epistemological reflection and explanation, but an existential, ontological truth that *sensation, memory and imagination coalesce into a memorable experience.*

CHAPTER TEN 10

Conclusion

This concluding chapter will comprise an integrated, retrospective summary of this research, highlighting its importance to the respective fields of ballad studies, folklore, expressive arts and ethnomusicology. The overall aim of this work, as stated in the abstact, was a paradigm shift in terms of the way in which the ballad is understood. Here I will reflect on the ways in which the preceding chapters delivered on this aim, in challenging entrenched worldviews, breaking down notional barriers and synthesising disparate areas of scholarship. A brief summary of chapters is presented, reflecting on how each, rather than forming stand- alone units, work together to form a progressive narrative and coherent whole. Following this, my contribution to scholarship in this emerging field will be recapitulated, and directions for future work will be suggested. By way of closing, I will offer some concluding remarks.

Transformation in Thinking

This research sought to go beyond prevailing and traditional approaches and move towards a 'transformation of thinking' that operates outside the conceptual structures endorsed by the established order (Heidegger 1971: 138). In this case, the 'established order' could be seen to be related to the traditional 'text-centred' approaches in ballad studies, and the 'conceptual structures' to our perhaps un-reflected Western philosophical assumptions about the nature of our engagement with the world, such as mind/body dualism and isolated subjectivity.

The idea of the liminal 'space between' has been central to this process of transformative thinking. In hermeneutic theory, the space between is a source of both creativity and critique of the prevailing forms of thought and being. Not only is the space between where the *Maysie* lives, it is also a space of juxtaposition that unhinges expectation and opens thought to the emergence of something new altogether. I have striven here for in order to find a more holistic lens through which to view the world. By juxtaposing cultures of inquiry and striving for productive dialogue between theoretical perspectives, new understandings have emerged that might not have become apparent had such juxtaposition not been made explicit.

On Reflection: Brief Summary of Chapters

The introduction to this work invoked the metaphor of the ballad form itself, where the cyclical nature of the tune creates an insistence on the relationship between each new verse and the whole. Methodologically, I took the approach of writing a cumulative narrative, feeding in new theoretical ideas to create layers of complexity as the narrative advanced. In adopting such a holistic approach, ideas have connected and overlapped in interesting ways, and it is difficult to separate the strands of thought for reflection here. Each chapter does not stand alone; rather, each develops progressively, building on what has come before. By approaching the synthesis of ideas in this manner, it can be shown how areas often treated separately in academic studies are in fact deeply interconnected.

Chapter Two offered a critical discussion of published works in the relevant fields of ballad studies, folklore, expressive arts and ethnomusicology. My position was established in relation to the primary scholars in this field, notably Lillis Ó

Laoire (hermeneutic approaches to the experience of traditional song, prioritising ways of being over ways of knowing), James Porter (developing a theory of ballad presence), John Niles (oral narrative in relation to studies of the *Maysie*), Barre Toelken (the 'essential metaphoricity' folksong), Lawrence Zbikowski (embodied cognitive approaches in conceptualising musical experience) and Judith Becker (bridging the gap between arts and science, studies of the ineffable and 'extra-musical' qualities). The central emergent theme of embodiment was identified, which opened up new theoretical terrain leading into areas of study that join cognition, experience and culture. An argument for interdisciplinary engagement to answer the question of the role of song in culture was advanced.

Chapter Three underpinned the research aims of this thesis philosophically, laying the theoretical foundations for the development of ideas. Part One, in stressing the philosophy of embodiment, advanced the notion of 'intersubjectivity' as the existential ground of culture, rather than the solipsism of Cartesian consciousness. Through contemporary phenomenology, it was argued that 'subject' and 'object' are not separable entities, but simply words we assign to different yet mutually determining moments and modalities of experience. It was shown how phenomenology, theories of embodiment and a theory of enaction based in hermeneutics can inform 'radical reflection.' That our conception of reality is always conditioned by our embodied existence had radical implications for fieldwork practice. Rather than a pre-given and prescribed 'method' which objectifies the culture under study, an argument for simply 'being there' was advanced, where meaning emerges in productive dialogue. Part Two outlined ideas from contemporary theories of metaphor and embodied thought, with the mind viewed as an active constructor of its own reality. This theory was later applied to the ballad experience

in Chapters Six (at the level of figurative language and personal narrative configured as metaphor), Seven (the interface between linguistic and musical meaning) and Eight (the level of intercoporeal and bodily gesture).

Chapter Four, 'Developing a Theory of Presence,' began to open up the discourse to include dimensions of experience rarely considered in this field. Gaps and possible openings in Porter's theory were identified. In taking Porter's theory forward, the need to find a way to talk about presence in *embodied* terms was recognised. To this end, somatic elements of balladry as a relevant and necessary field of study were reclaimed. Fieldwork interviews and archival sources of recorded interviews with Sheila Stewart (1996) were drawn upon to create and exemplify the theory of presence in context. The importance of the aesthetic experience, of the 'total somatic experience,' was emphasised, in order to provide justification for exploring Gadamer's investigation of aesthetic time, where art was seen as form of 'play,' or rather a temporal 'event' in which we participate. Reflecting on the idea of the 'space between,' this chapter explored the idea of a 'fusion of horizons' between past and present to create new meaning in the present. Here, the idea of the 'vivid present' of shared experience was introduced

Chapter Five, 'Deep Listening and the Ballad Experience,' built upon ideas in Chapter Four but introduced a new dimension: sound and aurality. It encompassed the idea of listening as an existential act where both body and mind are engaged, as well as to emphasising its participatory nature. This chapter challenged the tendencies and consequences of privileging the visual in scholarship, and in response, post-phenomenological ideas were developed to inform a theory of 'deep listening' as co-participation in presence. Examples from my own personal experience were used to craft and shape theoretical ideas. It was decided that this

approach should be taken in order that the descriptive examples chosen would allow for more critical and philosophical questions to be asked. Here I extended John Niles' ideas about the *Maysie* —whose focus is purely on the 'wordpower' and narrative dimension of balladry—to include the musical dimension. It was hypothesised that the semantic power of 'words' expands the awareness of possibilities ranging over past, present and future, through the creation of narratives; while sounds of music and melody and their intonation focus the awareness of 'presence' in the present through a visceral, embodied experience. The ballad experience itself was approached by means of a spatial metaphor. It was argued that sounds themselves create a temporary omnidimensional space, not restricted by the material walls. In performance, this space is also *created* by the participants themselves—the flesh of their bodies, their expectations, intentions, memories, histories and emotions. The active, transitive, capacity of singing and performance was emphasised.

Chapter Six, 'Ambiguity and the Productive Power of Metaphor' explored the figurative language and Toelken's 'essential metaphoricity' of the ballad form in great depth. The central argument was the idea that when two or more entities come together there is a metaphorical process of 'creative blending' at work, and it is in the liminal space between where new meanings are created. This argument built upon and extended Ó Laoire's work on the productive power of metaphor as well as extending ballad scholar David Atkinson's reception theory for ballad studies ideas in the light of theories of embodied cognition, metaphorical mapping and creative blending. This was explored on the level of the figurative language of the ballads and their 'essential metaphoricity,' expanded to incorporate Ó Laoire's (2005) discussion

of personal narratives configured as metaphor. Figurative meaning cannot be said to reside entirely within the text as part of its manifest content, but somewhere between the text (as it is performed) and the shared constellation of assumptions and associations which gets triggered when a singer sings a song before an audience at a particular time. Any meaning which emerges does so as a positioning of the song *in the living present*. The relationship between text, melody, experience and meaning are also culturally and historically specific, an idea explored in Chapter Five through a discussion of the idea of the *habitus* of listening. That is to say, meaning arises not from the ballad alone but from the culturally specific ways in which people grapple with 'texts' and 'actively bring them into lived experience' (Berger 2009: ix). (Appendix Two presents a Case Study which gives an example of how this theory can be applied.)

The importance and value of the theory developed in Chapter Six was further explored in Chapter Seven, 'Words, Music, *Song*,' which investigated the metaphorical mapping between words and music and applied it to melody and text interacting in performance. Chapter Seven developed a contemporary theory of metaphor for song, looking beyond language to the central idea of the space between words and music, song and poetry, proposing that the metaphorical blending of text and music creates possibilities for the play of the imagination. This chapter in itself is a crucial contribution to the field of ballad studies. Throughout the field's entire history, music has been relegated to a subservient position to text. In the past, where music *has* been studied, it has been chiefly to do with the origins of a particular tune, or its relationship to a particular version or variant. Understanding what music is

'doing' in these ballads is a vital step forward, and something of a revolution in this field.

Chapter Eight developed this theory a step even further, investigating the metaphorical mapping from sound to body. 'Intersubjectivity' was (re)imagined as 'intercorporeality.' Ideas from Chapter Five about shared musical experience were extended in the light of layers of theoretical complexity developed in Chapters Six and Seven (theories of creative and conceptual blending). Chapter Eight looked at intercorporeal spaces between in performance—the sensory perception of presence—and the nonverbal dimensions of communication. The idea of 'intermodal' processes of perception and the sharing of bodily gestures were used to extend Porter's theory of presence. In taking the overall narrative full circle, this chapter revisited ideas first introduced in Chapter Four, arguing that in the ballad experience, an intercorporeal relationship is built upon sharing simultaneously different dimensions of *time*.

Chapter Nine, 'The Space Between is Where the Maysie Lives' presents a shorter chapter, bringing together ideas and theories developed in the preceding chapters, and answering some of the questions not yet answered. The problematic notion of 'transcendence' in affective encounters was reimagined and reconciled with the ontological convictions driving this research. The idea of the non-rational dimension of such affective encounters—the shivers and chills of the *Maysie*—was linked to the essential nature of the hermeneutic process, and the essentially transformative power of stories in song. Returning to ideas first introduced in. The final sections brought the argument full circle, returning to the idea of the vivid, deeply moving quality of aesthetic encounters.

The methodological drive throughout this work has been a shift from representation to experience, a freedom from prescriptive method and a commitment to openness through mindfulness and radical reflection. The emphasis has therefore been on the development of theoretical models created to understand the ballad experience rather than descriptions of the embodied experience in question, concentrating on the culturally specific ways in which structures of experience contribute to the lived meanings of this very particular aesthetic encounter. It should be clear at this stage why I have not presented a collection and comparison of personal narrative descriptions of the 'ballad experience.' Only now are we in a position to be able undertake such a research project, and I look forward to a venture of this nature in the future.

Contribution to Scholarship

This work provides an innovative application of current approaches in studies of expressive arts to the field of ballad studies. The utilisation of an original theoretical framework opens up a new and previously unchartered direction of research. It has explored a dimension of experience that scholars of expressive culture (and performers or audiences) are aware of all the time but for which we rarely account in research, a dimension which *can no longer* be ignored. Embodied experience cannot be overlooked, and no longer can it be dismissed as idiosyncratic or viewed as something opposed to the shared frameworks of culture. Rather, embodied experience must now be seen as absolutely central to the process of meaning- making in aesthetic encounters.

One significant contribution this work has to offer is an insight into where apparently archaic expressive cultural forms derive their power to *move* us, as well as an insight into why such traditional forms remain relevant in our contemporary world. Understanding the *meanings* that an aesthetic experience has for those people who produce and receive it has always been a fundamental task for scholars of expressive culture; from the author to the text, the context and the audience, the routes into understanding those meanings have been many and varied. In the past, the role of scholarship has been to locate, organise, contextualise and interpret a collection of texts, and in so doing, figure out what they mean to those who perform and receive them. This research concentrates on how we actively bring cultural forms into our lived experience, how we engage with them with both body and mind, how we make sense of these experiences and make them meaningful.

In attempting a paradigmatic shift in terms of the way that traditional song is understood, this research itself embodies an alternative to the pre-suppositions common to Western twentieth century engagement with the world, highlighted early in this chapter. In challenging entrenched cultural and philosophical assumptions, this work moves beyond the position that assumes an external, objective reality and a separation of subject from object, and opens to a phenomenological understanding of being-in-the-world. We are now in a position to move beyond outmoded assumptions to a more nuanced understanding of the deep structures which are at work in such cultural experiences.

Another major contribution to the field is the synthesising of a diverse range of critical models into one multifaceted interpretative approach. Expressive culture has always attracted attention from various disciplines, yet there has been little work

that is truly interdisciplinary. By transcending disciplinary separation and specialisation, theories of embodiment, cognition, phenomenology, somaesthetics, reception theory, and theories of interstitially have here been synthesised into one multifaceted and layered approach. Disciplines hitherto perceived as separate camps —each with their own take on traditional forms—are seen to be both complementary and highly effective when notional barriers are broken down. The cognitive and the affective dimensions of cultural experience are seen to be inextricably linked. The utility of perspectives in phenomenology and embodied cognition are mutually informative, and together they can provide a useful toolbox for scholars of traditional song and other expressive cultural forms.

Future Work

If this work provides a toolbox, what other kinds of aesthetic cultural forms are open to this kind of exploration? It is my hope that this work will speak to anyone interested in the study of expressive culture—those that work in the fields of ethnomusicology, folklore, popular music studies, anthropology, or performance studies. That traditional expressive culture has this power must surely be at the very heart of future concerns of studies in ballad studies, folklore, ethnology, ethnomusicology and all fields that examine such aesthetic encounters. I advocate the potential role for phenomenology in the (re)imagining of language and experience, exploding dualisms and fostering intersubjective, intercorporeal experience. The phenomenological understanding of the 'world' is one in which we experience our world, and participate in the world(s) of others. As we imaginatively embody other beings, it becomes easier to recognise that the perceiver is also the

perceived, hence the intersubjective nature of perception. David Abram (1996) believes that it is because of our disengagement with the world—by our theorised separation and abstraction that divides us from the realms of actual perceptual existence—that we have lost touch with our own experience. Future work must 'fill the gaps' in comprehending expressive culture that has resulted from decades of textualising practices. As shown in the survey of literature here, the emphasis *is* slowly moving from representation towards an appreciation of embodied experience. If this small exploration of new ideas can provide others with theoretical models to apply to other performative genres, then this research will have served a worthwhile purpose.

As has been noted, any attempt to bring about a paradigmatic shift in a field of study is often not achieved in isolation. Rather than being entirely new, it would seem that the research aims of this thesis reflect something of an emergent zeitgeist and fundamental change in the academic landscape: a shift in focus towards the recognition of corporeality as a *vital* part of understanding expressive culture. Out of necessity, pursuing this direction of study—opening up new theoretical terrain—must lead into areas of study that join cognition, experience and culture, with every point of entry requiring cross-disciplinarity. Heightened attention to lived experience and corporeality will allow scholars to make richer interpretations of expressive culture and delve more deeply into their subject matter. Work is needed which will 'keep the whole' in view, 'because life, at least, is interdisciplinary' (Kostlin 1997).

Concluding Remarks

This thesis has attempted a paradigmatic shift in the focus of ballad study, moving from 'representation' towards 'experience' and with an emphasis on 'process,' as opposed to 'product.' The development of ideas has been concerned with describing how our embodied experience of the world informs the processes of meaning-making, how human cognitive capacities are at work in the ballad experience and how the structure of the ballad reflects and shapes these capacities. One of the central aims has been to find a legitimate way of talking about the ephemeral, intangible yet real quality of the ballad experience—conceived of as ballad 'presence,' —within a secular, humanistic framework. The aim has not been to demystify this experience in a reductionist sense, but to offer an interpretation that is less about 'transcendence' and more about the creative processes present in the ballad experience.

What has been explored has been the construction of bodily and worldly realities using musical and narrative resources. The ballad experience is no mere response to an aural stimulus, nor is it in any way in a straightforward sense an act of symbolic representation. It is, however, invariably, an embodied practice. Cultural forms like the ballad have the potential to tap into and resonate deeply and richly with our own life experience, leaving us with a vivid and extraordinary sense of being. This sense consists of a vividly experienced unity of sound, body, and the world as lived. Its resources are sonorous, corporeal, cultural and experiential.

It was the *Maysie* who *inspired* this thesis. I hope it has been shown that a study of the ballad experience, the *Maysie* and the phenomenon of 'presence' yields new insights into the ways that meaning and affect emerge in performance. One of the

central convictions in this thesis is that the significance of such cultural forms to human culture is considerably more important than most conventional explanations would allow. Part of what I have been advocating here is that we recognise the profundity of the somatic presencing moment in human embodied cognition, and that we view instances of ballad singing as celebrations of this moment; of our here and now, embodied mode of being. Foremost among the reasons why music has meaning and truly matters is its participatory, enactive and embodied character, and its consequent capacity to highlight the co-origination of body, mind and culture. Aesthetic experiences such as the 'ballad experience' give us a way of being in the world, a way of making sense of it.

The significance of these points for our understanding of the ballad singing experience is momentous, for they suggest that musical experience is about much more than symbolic representations of feeling. According to an enactive embodied account of human cognition, mind, culture, body and action partake each of the other, co-constructing the only 'realities' available to human experience, through the creation of new narratives and imagined worlds.

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Appendix One:
Interview with Stanley Robertson, Edinburgh, July 1 2008

Mairi McFadyen: Hi Stanley, thank you for coming today!

Stanley Robertson: It's nice to be here Mairi.

MM: We're here to talk about the ballad the Dowie Dens of Yarrow.

SR: Well, the ballad the Dowie Dens o' Yarrow, my mither aye tell'd me was a medieaval ballad. I never ever learned it fae a book, I just heard it orally sung. And because I was brought up by a kind o' folk, we used to, it was almost like, ken, being intoxicated with the ballads. And all these wonderful ballads stay inside you. And if when they'd teach you to sing them they used to say the ballads, there's hundreds and thousands o' ballads in the air and ye ken how they call the waves the micro waves and the radio waves all go through the air, and when you want one, you just concentrate on it and [inhales deeply] breathe it down. Take it inside you 'til it becomes part o' your living soul and then, my auntie Jeannie aye ways said 'tak it oot bonnie'—she doesnae mean tae say that you've tae be the finest singer in the world tae sing it, she meant to say, sing it with the feeling and love that's been handed down with the oral tradition. So I've often been misquoted by scholars. People often think Jeannie said 'tak it oot bonnie, you must sing it good' but that's not what she said. An' also amongst my people, ken, none o' my folk can hardly read or write ye ken, they're illiterate. But they're literate illiterates, wonderful form of scholaring and teaching and a' that. And they used to say, that in these waves, up here, floats yer melody and down here floats yer words, so ye've got the melody and the words, and the space that's in between that is where the [maisee] lives, maisee is the Traveller name for the muse. So if you invoke the muse, you will have a ballad experience. And you'll get a shiver, comes down your spine when she's present. And i'm sure you've often done that. There's people come down from the Western Isle also have it. People coming down from the Western Isle and you're Travelling you should be quite intuitive about these things. And, this is a ballad I have recently taught a class. And when I sing it, I'll go over the words wi' ye and let you know what's actually happenin' because a lot o folk hear things and they canna quite comprehend what's actually going on the ballad, because sometimes old wording gets [mistrewed] ye can. I'm very very fond o' this ballad. I think I better stand up for this. My Auntie Jeanne said 'never sit doon when ye're singing a ballad

MM: What about the ballad story?

SR: Well ye just ken. It's some o' the things that a lot o' scaldy folk know. Ye ken it's aboot knights, they're sayin nine gentlemen but they are knights. She dressed him like her ain dear knight sae he's nae made a fool of. Now he was just a poor wee laddie, ken, just a poor wee lad, a slim lad. And you could see his hygiene wasna the best cos she's had tae wash his face and kaim his hair. Looked like a [?] But she's given him colours an' that tae wear, which dressed him up. At least he had the honour to go out. See, he couldna use a lance, he couldna use an arra, see he wasn't trained in the rules o' armoury. But his trusty sword—he was a

ploughboy. And ploughboy could knock the hilts aff o' trees that stuck in the field, so he was a good, he could smack weel, though he was little and slim he could smack weel. And he says, and this is a very important part to the actual battle scene, 'and three he slew,' so he killed three o' them, and 'three withdrew,' now the three that withdrew didnae withdrew out o' cowardice, they withdrew because he made them feel ashamed, ken, the other knights fightin' a bit o' a laddie. So oot o' the laws o' chivalry, they left. And the three he wounded sairly. But the false brother john, see he was ashamed o' his sister, dear lookin'.She'd a' these knights courtin her but she was pickin up wi a ploughboy laddie, and he was shamed. And that's where, he was comin up tae congratulate the laddie and that's where he sleekitly stabbed him in the back. Sayin' 'well done now' and stabbed him maist fouly. So was a false brother John. And then, it was an affa shamin' as well for the father that one o' these plooboy lads had been killed by his son fa was a night, a noble man ye ken. So efter, she has this affy dream, this the element o' the supernatural comin in. She tells her father , 'o faither dear i dream a dream, I dream o' doul and sorrow,' doul and sorrow's aye bad, ye ken. 'I dreamt that I shewed winding sheets'—shewin, that's the old word for sewin'— 'I dreamt that I shewed winding sheets' which is burial sheets, shrouds—ken that other ballad, they call it and she says

I will buy my love some flannel
And I will make my boy some shroud
And every stitch i put it in it
The tears would flow down
And every stitch i put in it
The tears will flow down
Cruel fate put an end tae his growin'

Cos 'shewin' is quite a— 'I dreamt o—things o' sadness and old ancient lore is shewing windin sheets. Or pulling hair bells or blue bells. Travellers never ever pu'd a flooer. An there's another flooer called neverdie and you were never ever allowed to touch that. I was brought up surrounded by superstitions. Every day o the year there were superstitions. It was great fun. Ken ah've got mair stories than the days o the year! And ah've got mair songs than the days o' the year.

MM: Well, why do you like this one particularly, would you say?

SR: I like this as a training ballad. I like to teach it, it's nae an easy ballad tae sing. Very few folk could actually gie it justice. I taught a laddie an ancient ancient version o a song cried the great silkie o sule skerry but he didnae know it as a supernatural ballad. But the tune i have, is tuneless. And it breaks into a weirdness, but if you listen carefully you will here like narrow whales waling through the background 'cos you've that sea effect. And ah taught him how to sing it like this

[sings]

Now I taught him this version and I'm no kidding you he really caught it. He just caught it. I have a jewish friend I think he is, he works at Cecil Sharpe house. So if you're ever in London go and look for this laddie. Wonderful singer and very handsome, pure Adonis to look at as

well ye ken. He fell in love with my singing aboot a year ago so I mentored him. Wonderful singer he is. Nearly a' the folk that have taken special time wi me has become expert singers.

MM: So why is this one a good one to start off with?

SR: It's a good yin for the advanced class, fin ah do big ballads, it is big ballads. They did twelve ballads at the last class, then I did a course which is smaller songs. Some of the smaller songs are harder to sing than the big ballads. Oh aye. See songs like lovely Molly an' a' that—very very difficult to sing! It's no the type o' song that a'body could stand up and sing, you've got to take inside.

Ye get some ballads that have natural resting places. And ye get ither verses key to reminding the story. Balladry is an art, an old old art, and I was very fortunate to be brought up in family. I do like ballads. Folk say to me, 'fit's your favourite ballad? And it's the one I'm singing at that particular time. Cos they're a' my bairns ye ken. And when I teach folks ballads I say, 'you're being stewards over my bairn and if you bad use them I'll come back and hunt you!' I tell them that. But I tell them a story naebody kens aboot the ballads.

I've hundreds o recordings here. Hundreds and hundreds here. I've also videos. I just enjoy doing what I do. I ken folk singers who wouldna dare teach ye a verse o a ballad. Oh no, [posh voice] oh no you can't do that, that's my song! I mean it's me that learned it them in the first place! It's something that I enjoy doing.

Appendix Two:
Chapter Six Case Study

This case study displays many of the themes discussed in Chapter Six, which developed the idea that the function of metaphor explained and explored by Ó Laoire (2005 can be seen as a part of a larger cognitive process at work in cultural experience. The idea of 'gaps of indeterminacy' is crucial to this argument. Arguably, such lacunae require a more personal relationship with the ballad, because the subject is obliged to fill in the gaps with their own personal experience. The example below explores one person's personal relationship with one ballad, the 'Silkie of Sule Skerry'

. Jean Bechoffer was brought up in Shetland. She moved away and lived in England for many years before moving back to Scotland; shortly after moving back to Scotland she became involved in the Scottish Folk Revival of the sixties and seventies. An American friend gave Jean the *Joan Baez Song Book* (1977) and in it was a ballad called the 'Selkie of Sule Skerry.' This song immediately resonated with Jean, and continued to do so for many years. It is her song, and her story:

> The selkie ballad is my own favourite ballad certainly. You know I grew up in Shetland, but you see at that point, the singing tradition was very dormant. There weren't many songs, there weren't many singers, I didn't know them. Plenty fiddle music going on!...So the silkie ballad—I sought it out and when I moved back into Edinburgh I got in contact with the School [of Scottish Studies] and in *Tocher* I found out a lot about it there. And of course, there are many selkie legends which I discovered after. And so it became my favourite ballad...And I felt it went so well in the dialect—I usually sing it in the dialect. The version I sing is not a particularly long one, but it just tells the whole story well enough. I discovered the older tune, which was the tune that was sung in Shetland, so I'd sing that tune—it's very easy to get the two muddled because they're not dissimilar, they're not; the Bronson tune I think is a misheard version of perhaps the one that was original. It's thought of as an Orcadian ballad but there is a version that was collected in Unst. I think I sense in the tune a kind of echo of the seal singing. It's a very powerful tune, especially for the last verse. It's a great ballad, the tune is just, oooh. And I think it is an old tune, it's not a major/minor tune, it just wanders about. It's unresolved; it's a

> strange scale. But I really do identify with this ballad and get upset when I think it's incorrectly performed!
>
> My family weren't a Shetland family—I was not in touch through my Grannies, because we were an incoming family so I didn't have that contact…That's why I think I got so particularly caught up in [the ballad], but also I think there are bits in it about the strength of mother love which is, certainly, something I feel very strongly, you know. From my own children, and I lost my own mother when I was only seventeen. So, you know, there's a lot in there that kind of hits buttons I think.

Identifying with a song provides people with a mediating context—or 'space'—to comprehend personal experience more deeply. In this case, Jean identifies with the experience of motherly love and the memories of losing her own mother when she was young. Meanings like this created by individuals build up cumulatively over an extended period and can be more intensively interpreted than is possible from a single performance. The experiences of our past, our history, the natural world around us, deeply personal experiences and the experiences of family and friends all play a part in the processes of meaning creation in the ballad experience. The striking difference between our idiosyncratic personal narratives and the narratives of the song, in Ó Laoire's view, must constitute what he calls the 'tensive core' of the metaphor, suggesting that it is this 'tension' between the similarities and the differences of the two cases which lend the metaphor its expressive power.

Later in life, Jean began to explore a different level of meaning in this ballad, from an academic perspective:

> I thought, why did this ballad arrive? Why did it happen? I' don't think I'm the only person who's had this idea but…the selkies may well have been northern, Norwegian or even inuit people in kayaks who got drifted by tide or what have you away from there, survived the crossing—you know, because Shetland's fairly far north but you can island hop from the Faeroes to Shetland—it's a long way but it's possible. And they may have arrived in kayaks, and of course, if you take the kayak away from them they can't get away, and the kayaks were made of seal skin, so you see where my mind goes? That that's how the legend may

> have arisen. It's not important at one level because the ballad exists for itself, but it's instinct to think of why it might have arisen in that way, and that's the source of one of the selkie explanations. I mean you can see while they're in the water why people might have thought seals were people because they look very human in the water—you just see the head and the way they swim. I think it's the anthropomorphic thing, because they are kind of human we try and relate to them. The selkie song about the guy who comes, he may well have been and Icelandic visitor or something…But it's also a human myth. The shape changers…I need to be careful and not make it too realistic because there is a myth element in there as well. That's what makes it powerful as well.

Such meanings can *unfold a world* which exists independently of any one enactment, increasing their emotional power with every successive performance. In such cases, accumulated meanings exceed the ostensive reference in their revelation of another world (Ó Laoire 2005: 204). Later in life, Jean began to connect her relationship with this ballad to a distant memory, which, in her view, 'completed her seal story':

> When I was about fourteen I spent a holiday on Papa Stour with a family who were teachers there and they were friends of my mother's…It was 1947, a very hot summer and even on Papa the water dried up. It was beautiful weather most of the time and I went out fishing with this old man…and—I can still see it, the sun was setting, gorgeous red setting sun in the west—and we heard this noise. And it was spine chilling! That put the shivers up my spine, certainly. And I said to him, "What on earth is that?" and he said "Ah that's the trowie folk." And I don't know whether he was pulling my leg or if he was being serious—he could have been. He was of a generation.
>
> …Then, of course, many many years later I worked out that it was probably a seal, because they do have a song and they like singing. So I reckon that that was my sort of first connection to the seal folk. When we on holiday in the West—Plockton—we went out on a seal watching cruise with Callum the boatman. 'Guaranteed to see seals!' So we were out there and right enough and there were seals on the rocks. And he said, "now it's said that if you sing to them they will come to you and they will listen. Would any of you like to sing to the seals?" So I thought, alright, I'll pick up the challenge and I said "Aye, I will!" And he said, "what will you sing?" And I said "I'll sing a seal calling song, what else?!" So I belted out this song and one of the seals on the rock definitely started listening—it didn't get off his rock and swim to the boat, which would have been absolutely brilliant, but it definitely listened. It was just a noise. But it was quite a thrilling moment for me! So I got a free whisky…It completed my seal story…you know, it sang to me and sixty years later I sang to it!

An earthly mither sits and she sings
And aye she sings ba lilly ba
Little ken I my bairny's faider
Still less the land that he lies in

For Jean, the ballad's emotional power is increased with every successive performance. Artworks, regardless of their age, can endlessly renew themselves by taking on contemporary meanings:

> The fact that a work stretches out of a past into the present as enduring moments still does not mean that their being is an object of aesthetic or historical consciousness. As long as they fulfil their function they are contemporaneous with every age (Gadamer 2004: 120).

Through a process of creative blending, past and contemporary reality can be experienced *together*. Gadamer believes that it is in narrative that these become unified. In the many worlds of the imagination, time is not subject to the same constraints as in the quotidian life experience of the outer world. In our imagination, we can travel backwards and forwards in time; we can be in different places and times simultaneously; the structure of time appears chaotic compared with that of the everyday life-world. Present, past and future seemingly entangle.

In my view, this case study exemplifies the idea that ballads are not just figuratively and linguistically metaphorical: the actual *experience* of the ballad is a metaphorical embodied *process*, at work on a 'complex matrix of several levels' (Ó Laoire 2005: 255).

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