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CHAPTER 4



SPATIALITY, PLACE, AND DISPLACEMENT IN TWO GAELIC SONGS

Lillis Ó Laoire

Henri Poincaré, an early but enduring theorist on spatiality, argued that “[a]bsolute space is nonsense, and it is necessary for us to begin by referring space to a system of axes invariably bound to our body.”¹ This chapter proceeds from a reading of this claim, arguing that it is culture, produced by acting bodies, which humanizes space and makes it into place. Recent critiques of space and place across a range of disciplines divide approaches to these concepts along two different lines, one of “the production of place by capital and global forces” and a second of the phenomenological and social, encompassing “senses” or [a] “more generally cultural construction of place.”² The latter is the primary methodology followed here, although the chapter partially attempts to recognize the “advantages of cross-fertilising these two currents.”³ The discussion centers on two songs from Tory Island, in County Donegal (Ireland), a subaltern Atlantic island culture, situated in what has come to be called the “Celtic Fringe.”⁴ I will show that both texts represent coherently localized expressions of spatiality, place, and displacement, while the implications of transnational global flows are also evident. In one of the texts, the notion of “home” is evoked in significant and striking detail. That concept depends on an idea of “away” that foregrounds a dispiriting trajectory of instability and insecurity, emphasizing its fatal danger

for those seeking their fortune abroad. This evocation longs vainly for the notion of the grounded, emplaced sense of belonging that characterizes home.

The memory of a way of life plays an important role in the second text, recalling hard labor, risk, and peril from personal experience, of a kind now past and little known to most of the present Irish generation. An aesthetic valorization of that past tacitly underpins the commemorative impulse in this text. Although the song also commends the prosperity of the present, a sense of unsettled disquiet at its debilitating effects is also apparent. Approaching song and singing from the perspective of space and symbolic expression therefore needs some grounding. A fascinating research paper about a South African culture provides a productive parallel from which to proceed. Angela Impey's claim that music may be perceived as an archive of experiences, a site of collective memory, or "a 'primary symbolic landscape' of a people"⁵ provides a compelling catalyst for developing this idea. Another persuasive statement by Impey suggests that "[s]ound, perhaps more than any of the other senses, has an enveloping, affective character that creates in us an awareness of proximity, connectedness and context and thus plays a significant role in the analysis of social, historical and political experience."⁶

I argue for a link between such claims and Gaston Bachelard's idea that all inhabited space must be considered a home.⁷ My work has explored how the habitation and affective configuration of space into place occurs through the enactment of music, dance, and song in Tory Island.⁸ In summary, space is turned into place through such enactments and performances, a mimetic process in Paul Ricoeur's sense of the reconfiguration and augmentation of reality according to culturally constituted horizons of understanding.⁹ Performance renews bonds of kinship and affection through the repeated engagement of music, dance, and song in a never-ending circle of reciprocal activities that re-create and affirm community. In the same way, such enactments can serve to minimize conflict and allow those dwelling in small communities to live with their disagreements and cohabit in relative cohesion. Although focused on Tory Island, a similar model operates in many small places throughout Europe, if Anthony Cohen is to be believed. The expression of symbolic boundaries helps to build communities; Cohen holds that rural communities throughout Britain and Ireland contain a complex array of symbols used expressively in order to convey aspects of community. As he says, "[T]he distinctiveness of communities, and thus, the reality of their boundaries . . . lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in

their structural forms . . . [T]his reality of community is expressed and embellished symbolically.”¹⁰

Musically keyed texts in performance represent one significant expression of such symbolic embellishment that, far from being passively decorative,¹¹ “provide[s] the means by which the hierarchies of place are negotiated and transformed, . . . constructing trajectories rather than boundaries across space.”¹²

One such example concerns a young Tory Islander who died shortly after emigrating to the United States in 1909. Though his death certificate records the cause of his demise as typhoid fever, narratives linked to a specific song in Tory connect his death explicitly with homesickness, *cumba*, in Irish, a pining or longing to return to his native place. Elsewhere I have explored in detail how and what that song means to its singers and listeners.¹³ Here, however, I examine how two other songs, dealing specifically with place in different ways, symbolically express ideas of belonging, emplacement, and displacement in disparate ways through the musically keyed texts. Additionally, the songs imply contexts beyond the local, which serve to further emphasize and valorize the importance of the native place.

“IS TRUA NACH BHFUIL MÉ IN ÉIRINN”

The first is known in Tory as “Is trua nach bhfuil mé in Éirinn” (“It’s a pity I’m not in Ireland”). The first line indicates dramatically that place and separation from it supply a dominant trope.¹⁴ It is useful to remember, however, that the song is a lyric rather than a ballad. It does not tell a linear story, but rather gives a series of interconnected impressions from different perspectives, a feature of many Gaelic songs. From these images, a story (in Irish, *bri*, *údar* or *scéal*) can be interpreted.¹⁵ The music links the impressions as does their performance in a sequential configuration approved by singers and listeners. Discussion around song texts is a common feature of island discourse. Much debate, often quite heated, centers on the correct enunciation and order of stanzas. Such debates represent another aspect of locality, in that the agreement or disagreement about form constitutes an intersubjective and collective way of knowing held among colocated individuals bound together by ties of kinship. Here is the original text followed by a translation into English:

*Is trua nach bhfuil mé in Éirinn san áit ar tógadh mé i dtús mo shaoil
Ná faoi bhruach na Binne Móire ná ag an Éirne lena taobh*

*Sin an áit a bhfaighinn t-aos óg ann, a thógfadh an brón seo
is an tuirse diom
Is dá mbeinn bliain eile arís níb óige go mbeinn ag gabháil leofa arís*

*Cheannóchainn garradh dá n-éireochadh liom
Chuirfinn mustard bbreá aird ann agus bláth bán ar chrann
Chuirfinn síol coirce, síol eorna, síol a ndéantar dó'n lionn
Gurb é síoról na gcartaí a d'fhág an mála ar mo dhroim*

*Bliain mhór agus an t-am seo bhí mé i mo chónaí i gCnoc a' Sciobóil
Bhí mo theach mór á dhéanamh ag saortha istigh i gCorcaigh
Bhí mo cheann ar bharr spice le gaoth mhór mhór agus le fearthainn
Má tá roinnt agam do Mháire an Phéarla m'anam gléigeal
nár thé na bhFlaitheas*

*Ag gabháil fríd an bhaile ó dheas dom nach mé a bhí lag tinn
Is ar philleadh arís 'na bhaile domb cha rabh duine ar bith liom
Bhí mo mhuintir uilig i gcorraí liom nuair a bímse amuigh go mall
Is go bhfuil a fhios ag mo mhuire mháithrín gur mar seo
mar a bhí an geall*

*Mar éirios an ghealach, ná mar luíos an ghrian
Nó mar théid an lán mara sí na cuanta seo siar
B'fherr liom i mo luí i bhfiabhras ná bheith i bpianta móra báis
Ná boltaí a bheith ar mo dhianchorp is cead a bhfáscadh go cruaidh*

*A' gcluín sibh mise a mhná óga, go deo deo i mo dhéidh
Ná bigí ag ól leis na fearaibh óga ná ag creidbheáil a scéil
Seachnaigí i dtigh an óil iad is in gach gábh a mbeidh siad ann
Nó beidh siad arís 'bhur mbréagnú i dtigh na cúirte ag
an ribbage man.*

*'Dheartháir, a Rí na Páirte, tabhair mo chás leat uilig 'na bhaile
Mo stocáí agus mo bhróga agus mo chlóca atá dubh daite
Tabhair scéala ionnsair mo mháithrín tá faoi dhólas go mór sa bhaile
Go bhfuil rópa cruaidh cnáibe ag gabháil in áit mo charabhata.¹⁶*

Translation:

It's a pity I'm not in Ireland, where I was raised at the start of my life
Or below the bank of Binn Mhór¹⁷ or at the Erne by its side
There I'd find the young people, who would lift the
sorrow and gloom from me
And If I were only another year younger, I'd be going out
among them again.

I would buy a garden if I could succeed
 I'd plant fine tall mustard in it and the trees would bloom fair
 I would plant oats there and barley, the seed from which beer is made
 And it's the ceaseless drinking of the quarts that left
 the bag on my back.

This time last year I was living in Cnoc a' Sciobóil¹⁸
 My spacious house being built by craftsmen in Cork
 My head atop a spike exposed to stormy winds and rain
 If I have dealings with Máire an Phéarla, may my spotless
 soul not go to Heaven

As I went through the southern village how weak and sick I was
 And when I returned home again, nobody was with me
 My family were all angry with me because I was out so late
 And my dear mother knows that this is how the wager was.

As the moon rises or as the sun sets
 Or as the tide flows toward the bays to the west
 I'd prefer to be lying in a fever than to be in great pains of death
 Than to have locks restraining my body and allowed to squeeze it hard.

Do you hear me young women forever behind me
 Don't be drinking with the young men or believing their yarns
 Avoid them in the taverns and in each difficulty they may be in
 For they will deny everything you say later in the court
 with the ribbage man.¹⁹

O brother, by the King of affection [God], bring my situation
 home with you
 My socks and my shoes and my black-colored cloak
 Bring the news to my mother who is grieving greatly at home
 That a hard hempen rope will replace my cravat.

The above local variant is known in multiple forms in many parts of Ireland. This complex of texts generally alludes more or less to the male speaker's misfortune and his poor situation.²⁰ The speaker usually refers clearly to his encounter with the law, and states that he has been accused in the wrong. The speaker also awaits his hanging in the morning; the striking difference between the *rópa crua cnáibe*, the hard hempen rope, that will replace his cravat is especially graphic. The beginning of his misfortune is linked to the incessant drinking that has turned him into a vagabond, which is another trope common to male speakers in these songs.²¹ The mood is one of abject misery, being

contrasted with his carefree youth just a short time previously. The disparity is emphasized in terms of place. When he was in Ireland, he was prospering with a big house being built. The reference to his head on a spike is unclear, suggesting perhaps an ill omen. This temporal blurring, however, only adds to the sense of the speaker's confusion and numbing fatigue.

In Tory Island, the accompanying narrative of the text relates that the speaker of the song is in America. Clearly, he is an Irishman, an identity foregrounded in the first line and in the language in which the song is composed, Irish. He is in jail for a crime he says he did not commit. The offence, according to the Tory narrative, centers on a sexual assault or rape of a woman, *Máire an Phéarla* (Mary of the Pearl). In fact, he denies having had any dealings with her, but his fate is sealed; he is to be hanged. It is a gripping scene projecting a strong didactic message. The story of unhappy love carries the added twist of a criminal conviction for a sexual crime. Such a scenario reminds us of other similar situations in Irish folklore and history. One well-known example concerns Sir Séamus Mac Coitir, a seventeenth-century Cork Jacobite, hanged on a trumped-up charge of ravishing Elizabeth Squibb, a Quaker. Another Ulster story concerns an outlaw, Séamus Mac Murchaidh, the subject of a fine song also known in Tory, whose betrayal to the authorities was popularly attributed to a jealous sweetheart.²² My focal narrative and the others I have referred to briefly above encompass unofficial tellings of history where the abject, prostrate body facing annihilation acts as a site through which power, resistance, and victimhood are enacted.²³ The song “Is trua nach bhfuil mé in Éirinn,” then, gives us insight into what Guy Beiner calls a “complex and decentralized historical model,”²⁴ or, in Paul Carter’s terms, a “ground truthing,” where “the spatial history of a society” may be read.²⁵ Such orally transmitted narrative operates at the level of an emplaced community history, often an alternative to official history,²⁶ linking the outward trajectory of displacement by emigration with misfortune and death. The discussion and debate that emanate from deep memory remain a central element of “history telling,” a discourse engaged in throughout Ireland.²⁷

However interesting the relationship may be between such songs on a wider level, which may also be regarded as an emplaced, culturally contextualized, and localized history, I am more interested here in those characteristics that express the special identity and selfhood of the Tory Islanders and of their particular place in the world. Those traits can be recognized in the local peculiarities of dialect, in the singers’ musical style, and in the story attached to the song. All such

features may remain implicit without connecting them specifically to Tory Island, but they may also be highlighted as specific embedded markers of identification, because of the numerous occasions upon which the song has been performed at various events over the years. The lively “dynamic of presence, audience and exchange” means that the song is well known to many islanders, if only because they recognize it and are able to follow it from beginning to end as they listen to it being sung.²⁸ They acknowledge it as an element in their island heritage so that, when it is performed, community may emerge, a specific structuring of space through symbolic expression. The performance and multisensory reception of the song greatly augment its polysemy over and above what is available from the text alone. Group identity constitutes a symbolic interpretation of spatiality, eking out a locus for dwelling that recognizes a specific body of narrative and a community history. As Lauri Honko claims, identity constitutes “a set of values, symbols and emotions joining people, through constant negotiation, in the realization of togetherness and belonging.”²⁹

Therefore, following Cohen, community identity and sense of emplacement are most strongly distinguished in the symbols used to differentiate themselves from others.³⁰ Songs and singing are not the only ways through which symbolic difference is constituted, but the understanding is nevertheless important. In addition to the meanings attributed to songs as symbolic boundary markers, they also constitute an important element in the endless argument essential to any vibrant community. Each participant in this debate asserts that their own interpretation of the matter at hand, be it song or narrative, is the best and most correct. Undoubtedly there is a measure of audacity, not to say bluster, in some of these claims, but these are necessary qualities in order to thrive and provide variety in the monotony of island life. The sense of hopefulness and optimism generated from such lively discussions assists in supporting people to overcome the many struggles they face as islanders. A salient example of such optimism in the face of adversity may be found in Róise Uí Ghrianna’s autobiographical story, *Róise Rua*.³¹

Although it accesses the narratives of the past, such debate is centered firmly on the present. It negotiates and appropriates change in ways amenable to community norms. This element of tradition is constituted as a “modern dialogue,” with an emphasis on current matters and an orientation toward the future.³² Gadamer’s view of tradition as a fusion of old and new into something of living value is particularly apposite here.³³ Symbolic spatial concerns are also enmeshed in their temporality. Songs and other elements of culture, both material

and intangible, participate in creating, through symbolic expression, “a strategy to produce community.”³⁴

Much symbolic expression happening in a specific space concerns conversation, repartee, disagreement, oral history, storytelling, singing, music, and dance, revealing the fundamental locality of language to such concerns; in Appadurai’s terms, these are “complex social techniques for the inscription of locality onto bodies,” leading to “the production of ‘natives.’”³⁵ Their power was especially evident in the way that the Tory community deployed these symbols when threatened with evacuation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in line with State policies. The argument was economic: island life was too costly to maintain levels of services that could be better and more cheaply provided by relocating the community to the mainland. This powerful reasoning, one that has become current again in our age, almost succeeded in having the island abandoned, but some islanders resisted and stayed. The “islandness” of the culture provided a powerful symbolic weapon in the mounting of the counterargument to the dominant economic narrative.

Assisting the islanders was the mythology of the Blasket Islands (located off the southwest coast of Ireland) that had provided a central idea for strategies of nation-building in the early part of the Irish state’s history. Tomás Ó Criomhthain’s iconic book, *The Islandman*,³⁶ provided a heroic archetypal model of the struggle against destructive forces, a symbol that other islanders drew upon. This work had achieved international fame in translation in the 1930s and 1940s and had been appropriated by the Irish state to form part of its founding narrative. Such rural imagery remains inextricably bound to official national mythology, however subconsciously. Indeed, it may be argued that the state’s guilt is also enshrined in the contradiction that it celebrated Blasket Island literature, on the one hand, while failing to prevent the population of inhabitants who produced it from being depleted and dispersed by emigration, on the other. The last permanent inhabitants left the Blaskets in 1953, while evacuation of Tory is still a potential reality. Despite the provision of services, the population has never recovered its size, and there is a constant struggle to maintain numbers at the school. In this context, the Blasket Island Heritage Centre may be mentioned as a symbolically relevant space. A beautiful building, constructed on the mainland directly opposite the Great Blasket in Dún Chaoin, County Kerry, it houses substantial cultural collections related to Blasket and West Kerry literature and folklore. This impressive structure and its holdings stand as a fitting tribute to the literary flowering that characterized cultural activities

on the Blaskets in the early twentieth century. However, the monument also enshrines an irony as a mark of respect to a way of life that expired under a native government based in Dublin, whose founding myth appropriated an authenticity provided by Blasket writers. This incongruity was not lost on the writer Brian O’Nolan, who satirized the contradictions of cultural nationalism in his 1941 work, *An Béal Bocht*, even though the work was received generally as a mocking of the writers themselves.³⁷

In discussing songs from a historical perspective and fitting them into a framework of cultural agency, as instances of symbolic expression closely linked to spatialities, places, and displacements, lapsing into romantic idealization about a past would be easy. Although the entertainments of the past were organized according to strict aesthetic principles calculated to inspire the best performances, and although they did frequently achieve the physical and symbolic integration that characterized a big night, these entertainments were few and occurred in the context of lives challenged by the circumstances of subsistence farming and fishing, and necessarily supplemented by seasonal migration undertaken in order to earn scarce and much-needed cash.

This first song that I have discussed reveals intimate connections between the individual, community, and language in the place where it has been held and transmitted over the years as an element of symbolic expression. Additionally, the song contains general ideas about a historically affected consciousness in localized tropes found elsewhere in Irish tradition. This understanding resides in no one item but in the whole ever-shifting corpus of performance, both of song and narrative. A focus on particular items, however, can serve to illustrate the whole. The continuance of composition in a community could be regarded as a sign of cultural vibrancy. Although not as prolifically as song-making practices in Connemara in County Galway (in the west of Ireland), the Tory community has seen the making of a number of recent songs.

“BÁDAÍ NA DTRÍ SEOIL”

Our second song is another of those referred to above, titled “Bádaí na dTrí Seoil” (“The Three-Sailed Boats”). In it, the poet, Éamonn Ghráinne Mac Ruairí (1928–2010), alludes briefly but significantly to the great changes that have swept through his community since his youth in the 1930s. His song memorializes that time and its practices, through the choice of the now-obsolete sailing yawls as a symbol of his theme. Despite the hardships he endured, he pays tribute to his own

past and to his predecessors, making a plea for a distinctive emplaced identity tied to a culture and a way of life. This song received immediate acclaim when first performed publicly in Tory in 2003. Strikingly, although most of the assembled listeners were hearing the song sung for the first time by its maker, as I watched, they were able to finish some of the song's lines before they had been sung. On hearing the song, those who remember the days of sail, before motorized engines, think of their parents and others of the older generation, and the song brings the topic of social and cultural change into conversation as part of a continuing commentary on the community's life. As before, I give the full text with English translation in the following:

*Anocht is mé ag meabhrú liom thart siar fán Ghaineamb Mór
Ar na curaigh is ar na bádaí ar na rámbaí is ar na seoil
A Rí nár mhéanar dá bhfeicfinn iad ag gabháil síos an Camas Mór
Is an fhoireann ag teannadh an éadaigh orthu is ag cur an
sprait insa tseol mhór.*

*Nár dheas dá bhfeicfeas muid na bádaí seo arís ag teacht anoir
ag Uambaigh an Toir Mhóir
Cuid eile acu ag Carraig an Mhullacháin is iad istigh
in imeall an chobhair,
Fear na Binne ag Ulaidh Mhórada is a bhearad go hard ina láimh
Is na scadáin ag déanamh srotha is iad istigh ag an Bhoilg Bhán.*

*Nár mhéanar a tchíftheadh na bádaí seo arís agus iad faoi trí seoil
Fear na stiúrach is an scód ar a ghlúin aige is é ag amharc
amach faoin tseol
Na two pins ar thaobh an fhoscaidh ag cur na farraige go hard
Is fear eile i bpoll an taomtha is an capán ina láimh*

*Nach iomaí sin lá breá garbh bhí muid ag tarraingt ar tír mór
Le jib is le seol tosaigh is le cos déanta den tseol mhór
An Corrán ar Ghob an Iarthair againn is an ghaoth ag éiri ard
Is muid ag brath a ghabháil an Clochán ach bhí an fharraige rómhór*

*Le smaointiú siar ar an tsaol atá ann tá an t-am i bhfad níos fear
Níl bád le cur síos ná aníos againn ná curach le cur ar snámh
Níl bairneach le baint de chloch againn tá an t-iasc sna siopaí le fáil
Níl móin le tabhairt as tír mór againn tá an gual níos fusa a fháil*

*Ach caithfidh smaointiú ar na fir seo anois mar go
bhfuil siad uilig ar lár
Nach iomaí sin lá mór fada a chaith siad amuigh ar an aibhléis mhór*

*Ag roiseadh is ag cornadh le sruth líonta agus le sruth trá
Tá súil as Rí na nGrást agam go bhfuil áit acu níos fearr.*

Translation

Tonight as I continue to reminisce round west by the Gaineamh Mór
On the currachs and on the boats, on the oars and on the sails,
O Lord, how happy I would be if I were to see them going
down the Camas Mór
With the crew making fast the sails and putting the *sprait*
into the mainsail.

How nice it would be if we saw these boats once more coming
westward at Uamhaigh an Toir Mhóir
Still others at Carraig A' Mhullacháin at the verge of foam
The cliff watchman at Ulaidh Mhórada with his cap held
high in his hand
The herring coursing with the current inside at the Boilg Bhán.

How happy for those who would see these boats again arrayed with
their three sails
The steersman with the sheet on his knee looking out under the sail
The two pins³⁸ to the leeward side sending the sea skywards
And another man in the bailing pit with the bailer in his hand.

Many's the fine blustery day we left to go to the mainland
With a jib and a foresail and the mainsail partly furled,
Horn Head aligned with Gob an Iarthair and the wind rising
And though we expected to go by the Clochán the sea
was too agitated.

When one thinks now of life today, times are much better;
We don't have to launch or beach the boats, nor even float a currach
We don't have to harvest limpets from the rocks, the fish can
be found in the shops,
We don't have to bring turf from the mainland, coal is
much more readily available.

But we must now remember these men because they have all fallen
How many long days they spent out on the great ocean,
Unfurling and furling sail again with the flooding and the ebbing tide.
I hope to God in Heaven that they have a better place now.

Conceived of as a memorial for a way of life now completely transformed, the song also serves as an intangible monument to its maker,

since his death in 2010. The author was one of the island's prominent arbiters who commanded respect from all, and the song is an authoritative statement on the worth and value of that life. It does not idealize the past and its hardships, although it values cooperation and resilience in the face of adversity. It assumes familiarity with the place-names of the island, and their quality heightens the chronotopic effects of the song, evoking locations intimately familiar because of the long days of fishing mentioned.³⁹ In verse four, the song refers to the three-pointed alignment of the boat, Corrán Binne (Horn Head) and Gob an Iarthair, respectively. The latter place-name refers to the northernmost point of Inis Big (Inishbeg), off Inis Bó Finne (Inishbofin Island), the position representing the halfway mark on the nine-mile crossing between the mainland and Tory. This reference metonymically represents the traditional method of navigating by triangulation, before radar, requiring extensive familiarity with local conditions and the landmarks of the coastline in order to be able to sail safely. This anthropocentric system places the sailor and his craft at the center of the universe, at one with his place and at home there.

The present-day context accentuates consumerism: all necessities are available in the shops and no more back-breaking labor is necessary to acquire fish or fuel. Far from condemning the ease of modern life, the song says life is *níos fearr*—better. However, one gets the obliquely expressed impression of a dilemma. We gather that the speaker feels that unearned ease is not necessarily a good thing, since it has reduced identification with the island and the sense of community solidarity brought about by enduring a shared level of hardship. It has also curtailed resourcefulness. The song intimates that a consumerist lifestyle contributes to a lack of memory, condemning those who lived lives of hardship and toil to being forgotten by their descendants. Foregrounding a gendered view once again, the song exhorts listeners to remember these men who worked so hard and expresses the hope that they now inhabit a better place in the afterlife. All in all, this powerful text speaks to and for islanders whose lives it commemorates, conferring dignity and meaning on them in a way perhaps not achieved since the early twentieth century when Éamonn's grandfather, Éamonn Dooley Mac Ruairí (1855–1931), made a number of similar songs. Consequently, the song invokes both a temporal historical trajectory and a sociocultural one, a stimulus to the debate about the sustainability of local communities in the face of modern living conditions. In this way, it resonates closely with the first item discussed in this chapter, since both are connected to each other through their intensely local mode of expression and to trajectories of time and space

that continue to influence the lives of those who perform and listen to them. The sentiment differs from Tomás Ó Criomhthain's famous phrase *mar ná beidh ár leithéidí arís ann* ("for the like of us will never be again"),⁴⁰ in that it accepts the conveniences of modernity, while rejecting the willful shedding of historical consciousness.

An additional comment may be made about the air. Like many poets, Éamonn chose an air that already existed, but he chose his tune very carefully, having considered and rejected other metrically suitable melodies. The tune he selected is the one used for a Galway song made by a poet from An Trá Bháin on Garumna Island in Connemara. Known there as "Amhrán an Bhá" or "The Song of the Drowning" it is also known as "Curracháí na Trá Báine" ("The Curraghs of Trá Bháin").⁴¹ Made in Boston, it laments a nineteenth-century drowning tragedy that remains an emotive anthem of place and people there, achieving fame far beyond its local area through the singing of well-known traditional singers.⁴² Éamonn's choice was an acknowledgment of the song's power and thematic affinity, accessing its symbolic position in the repertoire of Gaelic oral poetry to augment the efficacy of his own.

"Badaí na dTrí Seoil" transmutes a deep well of experience into a lasting testimony of place, space, and vivid expression, showing the close connection between environment, the surroundings in which the life was lived, and the individual and the community. It reveals the connectedness that community members felt toward their way of life and their place. Additionally, through its music, it universally expresses solidarity with other communities, who share livelihood, collective experience, and language with the Tory islanders and who, like them, are confronted with the trials and predicaments of modernity. The emotions engendered by such performances instill and augment strong feelings of attachment to place. This may be even more intensely felt in the present day when the community is much depleted and when a majority of young people have left the island to find employment and educational opportunities elsewhere. Islanders' feelings of longing for (*cumha*) and belonging to (*dúchas*) home are heightened because of the rapid flux in which today's society functions, with the question of the future of the island very much in the balance.⁴³

NOTES

1. Henri Poincaré, *The Foundations of Science* (Lancaster, PA: Science Press, 1913), p. 257.

2. Arturo Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization," *Political Geography*, 20, 2001: 152–53.
3. Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places," 153.
4. Robin Fox, *The Tory Islanders: People of the Celtic Fringe* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
5. Angela Impey, "Sound, Memory and Dis/placement: Exploring Sound, Song and Performance as Oral History in the Southern African Borderlands," *Oral History*, 33, Spring 2008: 35.
6. Impey, "Sound, Memory and Dis/placement," 34.
7. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 5.
8. Lillis Ó Laoire, *On a Rock in the Middle of the Ocean: Songs and Singers in Tory Island, Ireland* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2005).
9. Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 80–85.
10. Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 98.
11. According to the OED, an obsolete meaning of "embellish" is "to brighten (in feeling)" or "cheer." It is useful to invoke that particular signification in this context, despite its outmoded status in the dictionary, <<http://www.oed.com.libgate.library.nuigalway.ie/view/Entry/60839?redirectedFrom=embellish#eid>> [accessed August 27, 2014].
12. Martin Stokes, *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), p. 4.
13. Ó Laoire, *On a Rock*, pp. 183–231.
14. For a traditional sean-nós rendering by Éamonn Mac Ruairí, see *Seoda Sean-nós as Tír Chonaill* (CD), CICD 118, (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 1996), track 2. For a version with accompaniment by Micheál Ó Domhnaill and The Bothy Band, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Wa4lF4MeSo> [accessed August 27, 2014].
15. Hugh Shields, *Narrative Singing in Ireland: Lays Ballads, Come-All-Yes and Other Songs* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), p. 74.
16. This setting of the words is from the recitation of Teresa McClafferty, a great authority on her family's songs, which she acquired at home from older relatives in her youth during the 1930s.
17. The place-names database <<http://www.logainm.ie>> names at least six locations bearing this toponym, one in Donegal, one in Limerick, three in Mayo, and one in Roscommon [accessed August 27, 2014].
18. The database <<https://www.logainm.ie>> lists five places with this name in Ireland: in Carlow, Clare, Kildare, Mayo, and Dublin [accessed August 27, 2014].
19. I am at a loss to understand this term.

20. This is a song found in many other variants throughout Ireland and which is related to songs such as “Príosún Chluain Meala” from Munster and to another song sung in Munster, “Amárach Lá ‘le Pádraig.” See Margaret Hannigan and Séamus Clandillon, *Londubh An Chairn: Songs of the Irish Gaels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 44, for a version of “Príosún Chluain Meala.” “Amárach Lá ‘le Pádraig” may be heard on *Seosamb Ó hÉanaí, Ó Mo Dhúchas, Sraith 1 & Sraith 2* (Baile Atha Cliath, Gael Linn, 2007), disc 1, track 10.
21. See Sean Williams and Lillis Ó Laoire, *Bright Star of the West: Joe Heaney, Irish Song Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 159–76.
22. See Colm Ó Baoill, *iar-eag.*, *Ambráin Chúige Uladh* (Muirtheadhach Méith, *eag.*, Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2009); Breandán Ó Buachalla, “The Making of a Cork Jacobite,” in Patrick O’Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttimer (eds) *Cork: History and Society* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1993), pp. 469–98, and Pádraigín Ní Uallacháin, *A Hidden Ulster* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), pp. 246–49. Seosamh Mac Grianna’s excellent story, “Seamus Mac Murchaidh” is also important here; see Mac Grianna’s, *Pádraic Ó Conaire agus Aistí Eile* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Gúm, 1936).
23. Caroline Magennis, “What Does not Respect Borders: The Troubled Body and the Peace Process in Northern Irish Fiction,” *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 36, 1, 2010: 89–91.
24. Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 169.
25. Paul Carter, *Ground Truthing: Explorations in a Creative Region* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2010), p. 9.
26. Henry Glassie, *The Stars of Ballymenone* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 126.
27. Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French*, pp. 81–85.
28. John Miles Foley, *How To Read an Oral Poem* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 85 and *passim*.
29. Lauri Honko, “Traditions in the Construction of Ethnic Identity and Strategies for Ethnic Survival,” *European Review*, 3, 2, 1995: 131–46, p. 134.
30. Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 11–21.
31. Lillis Ó Laoire, “Augmenting Memory, Dispelling Amnesia: The Songs of Róise Uí Ghrianna,” *Dublin Review of Books*, 17, Winter/Spring 2011, <<http://www.drbb.ie>>.
32. Sharon MacDonald, *Reimagining Culture: Histories, Identities and the Gaelic Renaissance* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), p. 11.
33. “In a tradition this process of fusion is continually going on, for there old and new are always combining into something of living value,

- without either being explicitly foregrounded from the other,” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 306.
34. Sharon MacDonald, *Reimagining Culture*, p. 213.
 35. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 179.
 36. Tomás Ó Criomhthain, *An tOileánach*, Seán Ó Coileáin (ed) (Dublin: Talbot Press, 2002).
 37. Myles Na gCopaleen (aka Brian O’Nolan/Flann O’Brien), *An Béal Bocht* (Cork: Mercier, 1997); English translation by Patrick C. Power, *The Poor Mouth* (London: Paladin, 1988).
 38. Pronounced *tuppins*.
 39. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84–85.
 40. Ó Criomhthain, *An tOileánach*, pp. 327–28. Thomas O’Crohan, *The Islandman*, translated from the Irish by Robin Flower (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 244.
 41. Máirtín Mac Donnchadha, “Amhrán na Trá Báine,” *Bliainivris*, 104–27.
 42. See, for example, the version sung by Joe Heaney from Carna, Co. Galway, in the Joe Heaney Archive: <<http://www.joeheaney.org/default.asp?contentID=781>> [accessed August 28, 2014].
 43. Peter McQuillan, *Native and Natural: Aspects of the Concepts of Right and Freedom in Irish* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004), pp. 20–54.

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