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Fire and Skye: The Magic and Mayhem of Filming Traditional Music Videos in Scotland

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FIRE AND SKYE: THE MAGIC AND MISADVENTURE OF FILMING
TRADITIONAL MUSIC VIDEOS IN SCOTLAND

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts
with Honors College Graduate Distinction at
Western Kentucky University

By

Katie Lynn Daniels

April 2019

CE/T Committee:

Professor Walker Rutledge, Chair

Professor Jeffrey Rice

Professor Chris Keller

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ABSTRACT

As part of my study-abroad experience during the fall of 2018, I was awarded a Benjamin H. Gilman Scholarship. One of the components of this nationally competitive scholarship was to complete a follow-on service project to share my experiences abroad with a wider audience and give back to the community. My project was to bring my harp and a DSLR camera and film 4-5 music videos, contextualizing Scottish music in the Scottish landscape and capture, at least a little bit, a sense of what it was to be abroad.

The final project consists of four videos, each one highlighting a story, song, or place that I discovered while in Scotland. The first one is *Thomas the Rhymer*, a border ballad filmed in the Eildon Hills. The second is a Gaelic lullaby, *Ba ba mo leanabh* or ‘sleep, sleep my child’ in English. The third is a 12th century Latin hymn from Orkney, and the final video is an original composition setting the words of Sir Walter Scott’s *Lay of the Last Minstrel* to music.

KEYWORDS: study abroad, Scotland, harp, music, traditional, folk,

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- Daniels, K. (2019, February). *Melrose by Moonlight and other stories from Scotland*. Performance presented at the Kentucky Honors Roundtable. Louisville, KY.
- Daniels, K. (2018, March). *The Devil You Know*. Short story presented at the Sigma Tau Delta International Honors Society Conference. Cincinnati, OH.

CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	iv
Abstract.....	vi
Vita.....	vii
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Illustrations.....	x
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Thomas the Rhymer.....	6
Chapter Two: Ba ba mo leanabh.....	11
Chapter Three: Hymn to St. Magnus.....	14
Chapter Four: Melrose by Moonlight.....	17
References.....	20
Appendix A: Full Text of Thomas the Rhymer.....	21
Appendix B: Full Text and Translation of Nobilis Humilis.....	24

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Eildon: Center Peak.....	7
Figure 2: Rhymer's Stone.....	8
Figure 3: St. Andrews, West Sands.	12
Figure 4: Windmills off the coast of Aberdeen.	13
Figure 5: St. Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall.	14
Figure 6: Original text of Nobilis Humilis.....	16
Figure 7: Melrose by Moonlight, by John Christian Schekaty (1808).	18
Figure 8: Scott McDonald spins a fire sword at a bonfire.	19

INTRODUCTION

Most people, when they go abroad, plan to take a camera, a guidebook, maybe a traveling gnome. When I went to Scotland for a semester last summer, I brought my Celtic harp. I have been playing harp for twelve years, usually in a Scottish context. For five years I was a regular performer at the Glasgow Scottish Highland Games in Glasgow, Kentucky. I have received multiple awards from Scottish Harp Competitions and, when asked, generally told people that I was a Scottish folk harper. There was no way I was going to *actual* Scotland and *not* bringing a harp.

The harp I ended up bringing was purchased particularly for the journey. It is a 26-string natural maple Harpsicle, produced by Reese Harps in Rising Sun, Indiana. I named it Skye—a tribute to the Isle of Skye in Scotland—and created the tagline Fire and Skye to use for my travel blog, Instagram photos, and as a hypothetical band name while abroad. Before leaving the United States I brought Skye to a couple of social events and let my family and friends sign their names, draw pictures, and write good-will messages. This collection of harp graffiti would continue to grow the farther Skye and I traveled.

I had applied for, and received, a Benjamin H. Gilman scholarship for my trip abroad. Part of the application process included a proposal for a follow-on service project to be completed upon my return to the US, with the purpose of giving back to Gilman and the community a little of what I had experienced and learned in Scotland. My proposal was that I would bring my harp and a DSLR and film a series of music videos, placing Scottish music in Scottish context, and bringing an authentic picture of Scottish culture to the United States and the world-wide internet community. I did not have a plan in advance for what songs I would perform, or where, and gave little thought to the difficulty of being a solo

artist and also the sole camera operator. My plan was to get myself and my gear to Scotland, see what there was to see, and take it from there.

Most harpists, when asked their advice for flying with harps, will tell you: don't. A brief google search on circumventing carry-on baggage limitations turned up very similar results. The dangers of flying with musical instruments was highlighted in 2008 when a previously obscure band rocketed to internet fame with the release of their song "United Breaks Guitars."¹ Taking the advice of Canadian songwriter Dave Maxwell, whose Taylor guitar was broken on a United Airlines Flight, I flew Delta.

Delta's policy on musical instruments is unsettlingly vague when it comes to harps, but Skye was shorter in length than a guitar, and only about an inch wider at the top. I made a case, including a shoulder strap, and set off for the airport, hoping for the best. On my very first flight passengers were asked to gate-check their carry-on luggage so that there would be enough space in the overhead bins for small personal items. I left Skye, with some trepidation, in the gangway with the rest of the baggage. Fortunately, I got her back in one piece and found that there's more than enough room in a Boeing 747 for a slightly over-sized musical instrument to fit comfortably in the overhead storage.

Due to the way that SCOTCATS convert to US credit hours, I was only taking two modules (classes) at the University of St. Andrews. Both were in my major (English Literature), leaving no room in my schedule for electives. During my first week, I emailed the instructors of Scottish Music and asked for permission to audit the lecture section of that class. The instructors were more than happy to let me sit in, and I used the class as a spring-board to plan the execution of my Gilman project. I learned the difference between

¹ Dave Maxwell, "United Breaks Guitars," Dave Carroll Music, accessed April 22, 2019. <https://www.davecarrollmusic.com/songwriting/united-breaks-guitars/?v=7516fd43adaa>.

a harp and clarsach, the role that the Protestant Reformation played in the development of court music, met guest lecturers from all over Scotland, and had tea with a professor in folk music from the Royal Conservatory in Edinburgh. The information I learned in lecture helped me recognize contemporary Scottish composers when they appeared on concert programs, understand the close relationship between music and religion, and gave me the confidence to arrange and perform medieval polyphony for the third video in my series.

What I didn't know, when I chose the University of St. Andrews for my study-abroad program, was how large the local music scene was. While the university doesn't offer a degree in music, it has been endowed with a large music center where students can take lessons, borrow instruments, use practice rooms, and attend concerts. The university is host to dozens of music societies with everything from a ukulele orchestra to multiple a cappella groups. I joined the Folk and Trad society almost immediately and attended their events throughout the semester, including jam sessions, public performances, and open mics. I also fell in with the Shire of Caer Caledon, a medieval reenactment society which hosted storytelling bonfires and regular medieval feasts. Live music was to be found everywhere, from the weekly chapel services sung by St. Salvator's Chapel Choir to the folk music jam sessions hosted each Tuesday night by the Whey Pat Tavern. My society involvement allowed me to experience Scottish music first-hand, and to learn how important it still is in the everyday lives of the people who live there. I played in jam sessions, sang in a church choir, and learned to recognize the names of popular bands. I performed at open mics, danced at ceilidhs, and brought Skye to bonfires and feasts.

The videos I eventually created to fulfill my obligation to Gilman reflect this diverse background. The first was filmed three weeks after my arrival in Scotland when I

impulsively went back to Melrose to climb the Eildon hill. I didn't bring my harp on this adventure, but I did bring a penny whistle, camera, and tripod. I was enamored with Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and thrilled to perform one of my favorite ballads, "Thomas the Rhymer," on location where the events are said to have actually happened. The second video was a Gaelic lullaby I'd long known and performed for a Folk and Trad open mic but never recorded. I hauled Skye out to the beach at low tide and filmed among the rocks and tide pools left by the dangerous, yet beautiful, North Sea.

After my experience in Scottish Music lectures, I knew that I needed to include a religious song in the series. Religion has been a major shaping force in the music and politics of Scotland. The Protestant Reformation took a serious toll on Scottish religious music and architecture. Of ten pre-Reformation cathedrals only two remain standing: St. Mungos in Glasgow and St. Magnus in Kirkwall, Orkney². After visiting Kirkwall and hearing the story of St. Magnus I decided to do an arrangement of a 13th c. Orcadian hymn in his honor as the third video in the series.

My original Gilman proposal was much more limiting than I would have liked. I had promised songs that were Scottish, not Irish or original, and traditional, not contemporary. I had promised harp music, locking me out of other instruments or bands, and I had promised myself as the performer, preventing me from creating a series of videos highlighting other performers. If I could do it over again, I would give myself much more flexibility. I would propose to make myself an observer, rather than a performer, getting permission from locals to film their talent and publicize it. And rather than locking myself

² Hubert Fenwick, *Scotland's Abbeys and Cathedrals* (London: Robert Hale Unlimited, 1978), 17.

into a box of “traditional Scottish music,” I would endeavor to showcase the music that is being performed and listened to and celebrated in Scotland today, in all of its forms.

As a result of these thoughts, when I adapted my Gilman proposal to a Capstone Experience, I added a fifth video to the series, one of the first things I ever recorded in Scotland. It’s an original song that I wrote after being in Scotland for only a few weeks, which I performed at both an open mic and a bonfire event. The lyrics are from Sir Walter Scott’s *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and describe a scene set in the ruins of Melrose abbey at moonlight. It is a mystical, liminal moment that encapsulates the experience of being abroad, surrounded by both living culture and historical ruins.

I returned to the US in January. I brought Skye safely back, having navigated the airport security of four countries, five airlines, and seven individual flights. I had left the US with only a few weeks of experience in photography and practically none in video. I returned with 300 GB of photos and videos. In addition to my Gilman project I had completed an internship with my study-abroad program and been adopted as the unofficial photographer for several of the societies I participated in.

CHAPTER ONE: THOMAS THE RHYMER

Two weeks after arriving in Scotland I went on my first field trip, organized by my program organizer University Studies Abroad Consortium. USAC had changed tour companies at the last minute, and so we were treated to a day trip to the borders by Rustic Tours. Our first stop was Roselyn Chapel (one of the locations of the Da Vinci Code); then, we went on to see Melrose Abbey, and on the way home we stopped by the Falkirk Selkies.

My group and I spent most of our time in Melrose looking for somewhere to get fish and chips, and very little time in the abbey. Our tour guide mentioned that there was a path leading out of town and up into the hills, and that people had been known to see fairies there. But it wasn't until we were driving back north that she pointed out the town of Earlston, formerly known as Ercildoune, and mentioned it as the home of Thomas Learmont, or Thomas the Rhymer. I had never heard of Eildon or Melrose before, but I knew Thomas the Rhymer. I knew it was a ballad about a harper who met the queen of the fairies, went with her to fairyland for seven years, and returned with the gift of prophecy and a tongue that could not lie. I did not know that he had a last name, an ancestral tower, or that a commemorative stone stood where the fateful meeting took place. I didn't know, until we were driving away from the place, that Melrose was really part of fairyland.

When I got back to St. Andrews, I checked out a copy of Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders*. I developed a fascination with the turmoil of the border counties and the myths and tales associated with them. Within days of returning from my first trip to Melrose, I was already planning to go back. Fascinated by Sir Walter Scott's description of Melrose by moonlight from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, I decided to book a hotel room and stay overnight in hopes of photographing the abbey ruins by the light of

the moon, which just conveniently happened to be full. I also hunted down a traditional tune for the ballad “Thomas the Rhymer” and started learning it.³ I brought a copy of Sir Walter Scott’s ballad text and one of my penny whistles. I wasn’t planning to film a music video, but I thought it best to be prepared.

I arrived in Melrose at lunch time. I walked from the train station to the village along the river Tweed (for which the famous woolen company Harris Tweed is named). I went back to the abbey first, because I had seen a photograph of the tomb of Michael Scot (a fourteenth-century astrologer and wizard who also features in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*), and I wanted to see if I could locate it on the abbey grounds. Most of the afternoon I set aside to climb the Eildon hills.

Eildon is a volcanic formation. It is technically a single hill with three peaks, all formed from the lava flow of a nearby dormant stack. Rumors of caves underneath the hill

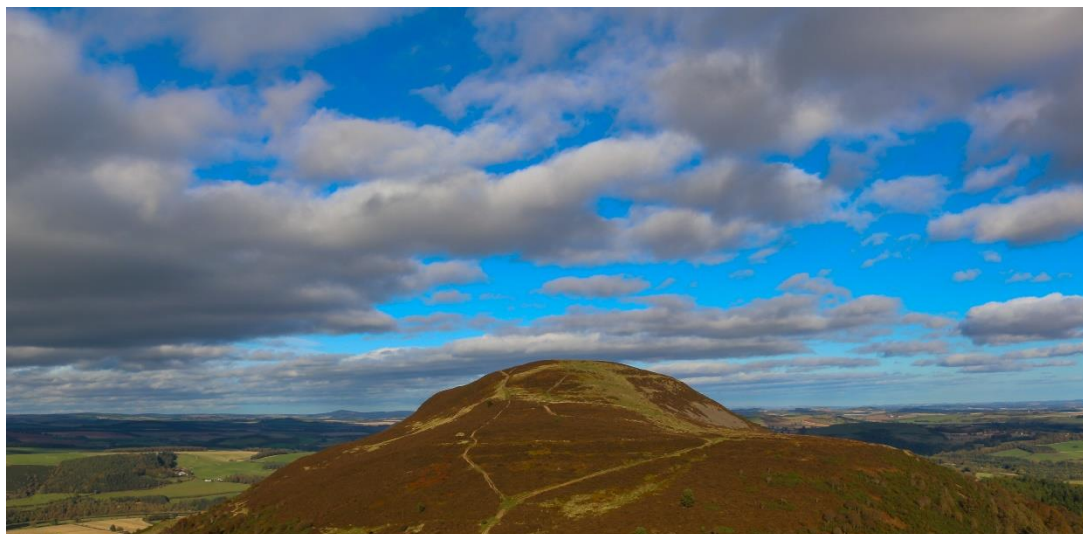


Figure 1: Eildon: Center Peak



³ Bertrand Harris Bronson, *The Singing Tradition of Child’s Popular Ballads*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 159.

abound, one of which is said to contain a sleeping King Arthur and his knights. There are also supposedly several holy wells scattered around the base of the hill, and the remains of a Celtic hill fort at the summit. I found neither caves nor wells nor hill forts, but I did reach the summit of the central peak where the wind was so strong I was afraid I would lose my footing and slide back down the steep, rocky hillside.

Halfway up the second peak I stopped to take a break, set up my camera and tripod, and filmed the first take of what would become the first video in the series. I took the long way around the second peak and down the hill, coming out onto the road next to the Rhymer's Stone. This monument was erected on the site where the Eildon Tree was said to stand. The tree was a favorite spot of Thomas's and, according to the ballad, the place where he met the fairy queen.

A nearby plaque tells the story of the meeting, and a look-out platform has been



Figure 2: Rhymer's Stone



created, inscribed with the first verse of the ballad and one of Thomas's more famous prophecies. The prophecy states that: "At Eildon tree if you should be/a brig o'er Tweed you there may see." The Gattonside Suspension Bridge was constructed in 1826, and if you have very good eyes, you can just make it out from the look-out point. I made the decision to record a second take of the ballad here, which turned out to be fortuitous. When making later videos in the series I was careful to get multiple locations and plenty of b-roll, but for Thomas the Rhymer those two locations are almost the sum total of footage I had available when editing the final music video.

Later that night I completely failed to photograph Melrose by moonlight, as I had failed to account for both the fickleness of the Scottish weather and the locked gates and walls that surround the abbey by night. In the morning I traveled to Earlston, the ancient village where Thomas the Rhymer was said to have lived out the rest of his life. A stone in the local church commemorates a family by the name of Learmont. Although the church isn't nearly old enough to be contemporary with the ballad, it is thought that the stone came from an older building and has been carefully preserved throughout the centuries. Rhymer's Tower, the remains of the ancestral home of the Learmont family, can still be seen from the patio of Rhymer's Tower Coffee Shop.

I spent the rest of the afternoon hunting down another ballad character who was kidnapped by fairies—Tam Lin. I took the coach to Selkirk, the home of Sir Walter Scott, of which he said: "in no part of Scotland, indeed, has the belief in Fairies maintained its ground with more pertinacity than in Selkirkshire."⁴ I walked four and a half miles to

⁴Sir Walter Scott, *Minstrelsey of the Scottish Borders*, (London: George G. Harrap and Company LTD, 1931), 326.

Carterhaugh Forest and found the place where some enterprising farmer has marked a possible location for Tam Lin's Well.

The single biggest challenge I faced in creating this video was working with the footage. While the setting was gorgeous and the ballad was exactly the kind of thing I wanted to create when I originally conceived the project, I was severely limited by my inexperience and the poor options for editing. To make matters worse, the strong wind on Eildon hill made the audio completely unusable. I hadn't brought my harp to Melrose, so I had to choose between adding a harp track later or leaving it a cappella. Even the whistle sections had to be re-recorded, which turned out to be trickier than I'd hoped. Eventually though I was able to find a recording environment that sufficiently mimicked the video and not be jarring. I embraced the wind aspect by including a lot of wind sounds as the intro, including birdsong, wind chimes, and the particular, ethereal sound of wind on harp strings. I also shortened the song considerably. Of the original twenty stanzas of the ballad, I had recorded only ten, but the finished video includes only five of those. The result is a three-and-a-half-minute video that tells the story without dragging on too long, featuring scenes from Eildon and the surrounding countryside and leaving the viewer with a little bit of the sense of what it was to really walk through fairyland.

CHAPTER TWO: BA BA MO LEANABH⁵

Right away, I knew that one of the videos I wanted to do had to be about the sea. Coming from a land-locked state, I was utterly fascinated by the proximity of the North Sea. Being on an island, I knew the importance of the sea to the culture of Scotland and the entire UK. I also wanted to do a song in Gaelic. Gaelic was the original language spoken by the Celtic inhabitants of Scotland prior to the Norman invasion. As a language it nearly died out but has recently been making a comeback. My love for the sea and interest in Gaelic came together in a lullaby I'd known before coming to Scotland but had never done anything with. "Ba ba mo leanabh" is a lullaby from the Outer Hebrides, islands on the west side of Scotland. The Gaelic lyrics translate to "Sleep, sleep my child, and may the men return home safely from across the sea." It's a lullaby for the child of a fisherman, who may or may not return safely from the fickle and dangerous sea. I had performed the song in Scotland at an open-mic event, and knew that it would be perfect for the second video in the series.

In early October I took a clear afternoon and went down to the beach at low tide. The beach I chose was West Sands, famous for being the location of the opening scene in the film *Chariots of Fire*. You won't recognize it in my video, however, because I didn't choose to film on long, open stretches of sand. Instead I climbed over some rocky outcroppings that had been hollowed out by the waves. The video shows the sea behind me, seagulls flying overhead, the rock outcropping that I'm sitting on, and the tide pools in the foreground.

⁵ Lyrics and tune are taken from *Scotland in Song: a compilation of the greatest in Scottish folk songs and ballads--from the Highlands, the Lowlands, and the Hebrides*, (New York: Remick Music Corp, 1953). Arrangement by the author.

St. Andrews is located in County Fife. It is also known as the Kingdom of Fife, as it is said to be one of the old Pictish kingdoms, before the coming of the Celts to Scotland. The Fife Coastal Path is a walking trail that runs 117 miles, from the Firth of Forth, just north of Edinburgh, to the Firth of Tay, just south of Aberdeen. From St. Andrews, the trail runs about half a mile to a formation known as the Maiden Rock, and a mile farther on is a unique volcanic stack called Rock and Spindle. In late October Geographic Society hosted a hike along the coastal path between two smaller villages: Crail and Anstruther. It was a bitterly cold day, with the wind blowing straight in off the sea. Over the course of the two-mile walk I shot video of the sea in one of its most tumultuous moods, of sea caves stranded above the current sea level, and of sea gulls and late autumn flowers along the coast.



Figure 3: St. Andrews, West Sands.

Over the course of my fall break I spent a week in the Orkney Islands. To get there I took the train to the port city of Aberdeen, and then a seven-hour ferry ride to the city of

Kirkwall on Mainland Orkney. Fishing and the sea have always been incredibly important in Aberdeen, and the local maritime museum gave a history of the relationship between the inhabitants of the city and the sea, ending with the modern involvement of oil rigs based in the North Sea. Both Orkney and Shetland are only accessible by ferries or airplanes, and so Aberdeen is an important center for travel between Britain and the islands to the north. As we set sail in the early hours of the evening, I got additional video and photos of the harbor, the lighthouse, and the windmills off the coast. Seagulls followed us for an hour or more until we were out of sight of land and the fog closed in.



Figure 4: Windmills off the coast of Aberdeen.

When editing the footage for my music video, I included clips of the sea from my walks along the coast of Fife, the harbor of Aberdeen, and the ports and ferries in Orkney. While the day that I chose to film was clear and beautiful, the sea is ever-changing and dynamic, and I wanted to portray its fickleness and danger as well as its beauty and serenity.

CHAPTER THREE: HYMN TO ST. MAGNUS

Over fall break (or Independent Learning Week as it was called at St. Andrews) I took a five-day trip to Orkney. The Orkney Islands lie to the north of Scotland and are reached by a seven-hour ferry service that runs from Aberdeen. We docked at Kirkwall at eleven thirty on Thursday night. The morning of my last day in Orkney I checked out of my hostel and spent the day wandering around Kirkwall. Kirkwall's greatest monument is the 12th c. Cathedral of St. Magnus, one of only two Medieval cathedrals in Scotland to survive the Protestant Reformation. It is made from red and white sandstone in a striking design, and home of the annual St. Magnus music festival held every April.



Figure 5: St. Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall.



Magnus is a Viking saint. So, like a Viking, his story begins and ends in blood. Magnus was Earl of Orkney, together with his cousin Haakon. Unfortunately, they did not get along. The conflict ended with the friends of both contenders insisting that they meet for a peace talk. Each earl would sail to the island of Egilsay with one ship carrying unarmed men. While Magnus kept to these terms, Haakon arrived with eight ships, fully armed. When Magnus came up to the beach after Mass, the decision had already been made. Haakon's cook

was given the role of executioner, and Magnus was killed for the sake of peace in Orkney. Later, a strange light was seen over Magnus's grave, and miracles began to be associated with him. His body was moved, first to the palace at Birsay on the mainland, and finally to Kirkwall, where his nephew Rognvald built a cathedral in his name.

I learned Magnus's story that afternoon in the cathedral from two books: the guidebook sold by the cathedral custodians and the novel *Magnus*, by local author George Mackay Brown. I found the story strangely compelling and fell in love with Brown's retelling. From my first arrival in Scotland, I knew that I needed one of the songs in my series to be religious in nature. Religion has had a profound effect on the procession of Scottish history, from the conflict between the Celtic church and Roman Catholicism to the almost universal support for John Knox and Protestantism that left centuries of art and tradition in ruins. By the time I left Kirkwall that night I had decided that this strange Viking saint and his cathedral needed to be a part of the story I was telling through music about Scotland. It not only met the need I felt to represent Scotland's religious tradition, but it also provided some representation for Orkney and Scotland's Viking heritage. Accordingly, the third video in my series is a Latin hymn, composed in Orkney at least as early as the twelfth century, and possibly as early as the completion of the cathedral. It is known by the first line of the Latin words *nobilis, humilis*, or simply by the dedication *Hymn to St. Magnus*.



Figure 6: Original text of Nobilis Humilis. Photo courtesy of the Orkney Image Library.

Returning to St. Andrews, I was confronted by the problem of where to film. I hadn't brought my harp to Orkney, so filming in the cathedral the hymn was written for was not an option. I initially wanted to film in the ruins of Blackfriar's Chapel, but after a brief conversation with Historical Scotland, who managed the site, I realized that was impractical. Finally, I received permission from the University of St. Andrews to film in their fifteenth-century chapel, St. Salvator's. Although dated later than St. Magnus's, St. Salvator's is still an ancient and beautiful site, immaculately preserved. I had originally planned to incorporate video I had of Scotland's sacred sites, including prehistoric monuments and cathedral ruins. Ultimately, I decided to simply focus on St. Salvator's chapel. The simplicity of the setting and the video speak much more than a complicated tapestry of ruins could, and *Hymn to St. Magnus* still provides a touching tribute to the religious history and diversity of Scotland.

CHAPTER FOUR: MELROSE BY MOONLIGHT

Sir Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* contains a ghostly scene in which a monk, aided by a servant, opens the tomb of the legendary wizard Michael Scot to recover his books of magic. Although he had never seen Melrose Abbey, Scott immortalized the ruins in his description, beginning Book II with an invocation to the reader:

*If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright
Go visit by the pale moonlight
for the gay beams of lightsome day
gild but to flout the ruins gray.*⁶

Although, as previously described, my efforts at *photographing* Melrose by moonlight had dramatically failed, I had, in fact, *seen* the sight described by Scott. It was a ghostly night, with rain clouds intermittently obscuring the full moon as it set over the tombstones. When I returned to St. Andrews, I was unable to shake the experience. Haunted by both the incredible beauty of the Eildon hills as well as the mysterious midnight escapade into Melrose, I set the opening lines to Scott's poem to music.

⁶ Sir Walter Scott, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," *The Poems and Plays of Sir Walter Scott*, Volume 1, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd, n.d.), 356.

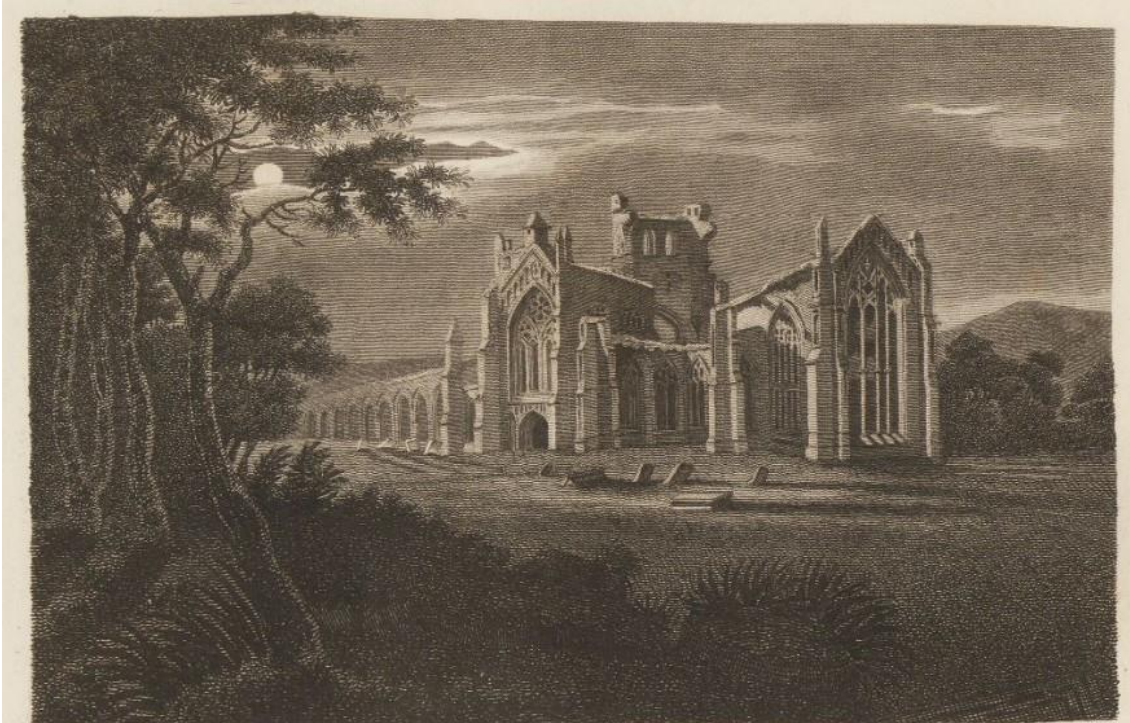


Figure 7: Melrose by Moonlight, by John Christian Schekaty (1808).

I did not have an immediate plan for turning my song into a music video, as it didn't fit within the scope of my original proposal to Gilman. I did make a simple recording to upload to Youtube, and subsequently performed it at an open mic hosted by the Folk and Trad society as well as a Samhain bonfire hosted by the Shire of Caer Caledon. I brought my camera to the latter, inspired at the thought of photographing fire. While the video I recorded was insufficient to create a music video, the visuals were striking, especially of my friend Scott McDonald, who brought his awesome fire-sword.

I eventually recorded a full version of the song in the front yard of my Kentucky home, by the light of a campfire, wearing the same clothes I wore at the bonfire. The magic of the fire as well as the haunting melody capture a little bit of the feeling of traipsing around a ruined monastery at midnight. In addition to the footage from the bonfire, I included other night-time activities from my time in Scotland, most of which occurred on St. Andrews Day—the evening of Scotland's national holiday.



Figure 8: Scott McDonald spins a fire sword at a bonfire.

Melrose by Moonlight remains one of my favorite videos in the series and one of my favorite songs I've ever written. When presenting this series at conferences I bring my harp along with me and perform this piece live at the end of the performance. It is a beautiful bringing together of traditions, bringing together new and old, light and darkness.

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APPENDIX A: FULL TEXT OF THOMAS THE RHYMER⁷

When I originally recorded the ballad of Thomas the Rhymer, I cut it in half, from twenty stanzas down to ten. In editing I cut it down even further, to only five. For the sake of reference I have reprinted the entire text of the ballad here. Verses used in the final version of my video are marked with an asterisk.

*True Thomas lay on Huntlie Bank,
A ferlie he spied wi' his eye
And there he saw a lady bright,
Come riding down by Eildon Tree.

Her shirt was o the grass-green silk,
Her mantle o the velvet fyne
At ilka tett of her horse's mane
Hang fifty siller bells and nine.

*True Thomas, he pulld aff his cap,
And louted low down to his knee
"All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
For thy peer on earth I never did see."

"O no, O no, Thomas," she said,
"That name does not belong to me;
I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
That am hither come to visit thee."

"Harp and carp, Thomas," she said,
"Harp and carp along wi' me,
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your bodie I will be."

"Betide me weal, betide me woe,
That weird shall never daunt me;"
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
All underneath the Eildon Tree.

*"Now, ye maun go wi me," she said,
"True Thomas, ye maun go wi me,
And ye maun serve me seven years,
Thro weal or woe, as may chance to be."

⁷Scott, 580-582.

She mounted on her milk-white steed,
 She's taen True Thomas up behind,
 And aye whenever her bridle rung,
 The steed flew swifter than the wind.

O they rade on, and farther on--
 The steed gaed swifter than the wind--
 Untill they reached a desert wide,
 And living land was left behind.

"Light down, light down, now, True Thomas,
 And lean your head upon my knee;
 Abide and rest a little space,
 And I will shew you ferlies three."

"O see ye not that narrow road,
 So thick beset with thorns and briers?
 That is the path of righteousness,
 Tho after it but few enquires.

"And see not ye that braid braid road,
 That lies across that lily leven?
 That is the path to wickedness,
 Tho some call it the road to heaven.

"And see not ye that bonny road,
 That winds about the fernie brae?
 That is the road to fair Elfland,
 Where thou and I this night maun gae.

"But, Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,
 Whatever ye may hear or see,
 For, if you speak word in Elflyn land,
 Ye'll neer get back to your ain countrie."

O they rade on, and farther on,
 And they waded thro rivers aboon the knee,
 And they saw neither sun nor moon,
 But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was mirk mirk night, and there was nae stern light,
 And they waded thro red blude to the knee;
 For a' the blude that's shed on earth
 Rins thro the springs o that countrie.

Syne they came on to a garden green,
And she pu'd an apple frae the tree:
"Take this for thy wages, True Thomas,
It will give the tongue that can never lie."

"My tongue is mine ain," True Thomas said;
"A gudely gift ye was gie to me!
I neither dought to buy nor sell,
At fair or tryst where I may be.

"I dought neither speak to prince or peer,
Nor ask of grace from fair ladye:"
"Now hold thy peace," the lady said,
"For as I say, so must it be."

*He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And till seven years were gane and past
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

APPENDIX B: FULL TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF NOBILIS HUMILIS

The full text and translation of Nobilis Humilis were taken from the Grapevine⁸: the newsletter of St. Magnus Cathedral. The verses I used in my version are marked with an asterisk.

Latin text:

*Nobilis humilis
Magne martyr stabilis
habilis utilis
Comes venerabilis
et tutor laudabilis
tuos subditos
serva carnis fragilis
molis positos

*Preditus, celitus
Dono sancti spiritus
Vivere temere
Summo caves opere
carnis motus premere
studes peritus
Ut carnes in carcere
Regnet Spiritus

Socia regia
Tibi viri nescia
Traditur subditur
casta casto iungitur
Nam neuter illuditur
Sic decennio
Rubus non comburitur
In incendio

*Turbidus invidus
hostis Hako callidus
Stenere terere
tua sibi subdere
te cupit et predere
doli spiculo
Iuncto fraudi federe
Pacis osculo

⁸*The Grapevine*. Issue 85, Summer 2015. Web, stmagnus.org.

Gravia tedia
 Ferens pro iusticia
 Raperis, traheris
 Demum ictu funeris
 Ab ymis extolleris
 Ad celestia
 Sic Christo coniungeris
 Persupplicia

*Cetera Gloria
 Signorum frequentia
 Canitur, agitur
 Christus benedicitur
 Et tibi laus redditur
 in ecclesia
 O quam felix cernitur
 Hinc Orchardia

Omnibus laudibus
 Tuis insistentibus
 Gratiam, veniam
 Et eternam gloriam
 pecum per instantiam
 Pater optine
 Hanc salvatis famulam
 A discrimine

English translation (by Alistair B. Fulton):

Noble man, humble man, steadfast martyr Magnus skillful man, useful man, Venerable Earl, praiseworthy defender; save your subjects, weighed down by the burden of fragile flesh

Endowed by Heaven with the gift of the Holy Spirit, you guard with all your might against rash living; you skillfully strive to suppress the stirrings of the flesh so that the spirit may reign in the prison of the flesh.

A royal companion, who has never known a man, is given and made subject to you; woman to man in joined, each chaste, neither has been sullied these ten years since. The bramble is not burned in the fire.

Crafty Hacon, a violent envious enemy, wants to flatten, crush and subdue to himself what is yours, and also to destroy you with the arrow of guile, having sealed a deceitful pact with the kiss of peace.

Bearing the heavy weight of troubles for the sake of justice, you are taken away by force at last by the stroke of death. You are raised from the depths to heaven; thus you are joined to Christ by suffering.

By sign upon sign your glory is sung, is acted; Christ is blessed and praise is duly given to you in church. O how fortunate Orkney is seen to be because of this.

Since all devote themselves to your praises, Father, obtain thanks, favour and eternal glory through the urging of our prayers. You save this handmaiden from danger.