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IMAGINED, REMEMBERED, GENDERED:

Narratives of cosy other in the media representations of female folk singers

This article examines the ways in which contemporary folk singers Julie Fowlis (Scotland), Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh (Ireland), Emily Portman and Kate Rusby (England) are constructed in the media as what I call the 'cosy other'. Discussed here in relation to these Western European artists, I argue that my concept of cosy otherness derives from the internal other that is both European and foreign (Bohlman 2000: 189–193; Gelbart 2007: 64; McKerrell 2016: 126; O'Flynn 2014: 238). Unlike the conventional definition of a post-colonial other and the concept of an internal other, the cosy other is not ominous, competing, or negative. Rather, it appears charming and unthreateningly different with singular cultural traits such as a performance language other than English, a discernible regional dialect, or a pronounced regionalism. The cultural baggage accumulated over time – for example the troubled history of both Ireland and Scotland with England – is wrapped up in cosiness, niceness and nostalgia. Studying this intermediate stage of otherness reveals the power structures within the popular music scene governing the female artists' access to the field as well as their representation in the media.

The material of the study comprises of articles, reviews and interviews written and published about these four singers who are all active and successful folk music artists, representing the 21st century Anglo-Celtic folk and traditional

music scene. By analysing this material I look for answers to how the multi-layered othering process becomes manifest and how it works especially in connection to female folk singers. Three narratives are retrieved from the research material through which the cosy other emerges. Firstly, the “narrative of origins” (Karjalainen 2017) consists of references to the singers’ places of origin, their sound, and their links to tradition, through which the singers are constructed as nostalgic. Secondly, the “narrative of authenticity” refers to the ways in which the singers’ origins and professionalism are associated, and which here places the folk singers in a marginal position in the wider popular music scene. Thirdly, the “narrative of performance”, constructed on the strongly gendered language in describing the singers’ voices, singerness (meaning the singers’ artistry combined with the act of singing) and music, others the singers not only to mainstream popular music artists but also engenders them specifically as female performers. In this context, cosy other works as an overarching concept that shows how these different components of the female folk singers’ media representation link together.

The narrative of cosy other combines the narratives of origins, authenticity and performance, which are connected in the active, creative process of remembering (Keightley & Pickering 2012: 6, 11, 41) and premediation (Erll 2009: 111, 114; 2011: 142–143). Thus, the narrative of the cosy other is also built on remembering and cultural memory, its individual and collective levels interacting and working together in the process. Memory studies scholar Astrid Erll defines premediation as “the use of existent patterns and paradigms to transform contingent events into meaningful images and narratives” (Erll 2009: 114; see also Erll 2009: 111; Erll 2011: 142–143). This means that media contents that already exist – memories and also mythology, religion, and stereotypes – are used in a given society as templates for making sense and interpreting new experiences (Erll 2009: 111). I argue that premediation is inherent to the process of active remembering. Memory is not static and does not simply exist unchanged, but it is actively shaped by individuals and social groups making sense of different phenomena (Keightley & Pickering 2012: 7, 20, 59). Therefore remembering, as a meaning-making act, including the process of premediation (Keightley & Pickering 2012: 6, 10, 41; Erll 2009: 111, 114), shapes the narrative of cosy other.

I use the concept of narrative to analyse the construction of cosy otherness, as well as the overall construction of the female folk singers' media representation. Following Huisman (2005: 36) and Cobley (2001: 3–7) I view narrative as a “particular, [selective] telling of a story” and “as part of the general process of representation”. In this context, the story is the way in which the singer is presented in the media, and the narrative is thus her othering in that media representation. Narratives make sense of and describe the reality, are culturally constructed and based on language, and thus influenced by the circumstances in which they are formulated (Mäntymäki 2015: 101). I agree with Cobley (2001: 6–7) that such selectiveness in the construction of narratives echoes in the media representation that contains the narratives discussed in this article.

I define the concept of cosy other by drawing from the conceptualisation of centre versus periphery (Chapman 1994: 36–42; see also O'Flynn 2014 and Young 1995), as the juxtaposition of dominant social and cultural groups and their minorities, and the closeness of the peripheral to the centre form the basis of the construction of the cosy other. Here the centre-periphery construct encompasses the genre of music that the singers represent, their nationalities and places of origin, as well as their gender. I also draw from strategies of assimilation and projection in diminishing the threat of the other (Middleton 2000), as the gender of the four artists studied further marginalises them in the sphere of popular music which is largely constructed on the norm of a male, professional, skilled artist (Davies 2001: 301–309; Kruse 2002: 135; Mayhew 2004: 150, 159; Whiteley 2000: 72–73).

I have used examples from twenty-six concert and album reviews, seven interviews and seven articles, which are part of a larger body of research material, a total of approximately two hundred articles, reviews and interviews, written about Fowlis, Nic Amhlaoibh, Portman and Rusby. The texts were published both in print and online, in newspapers, (folk) music magazines and webzines, music blogs, music promotion and review websites, and popular culture and music websites. The material was collected 2012–2016 and covers a time period from 2002 to 2016. The sources of the texts used here are listed in table 1 below:

Source/Text type	review (26)	interview (7)	article (7)
Newspapers & magazines	The Sentinel Dingle News The Observer The Sun	Boston Globe The Sentinel The Telegraph	The Sentinel Pittsburgh City Paper Time Magazine (2)
Music magazines	Fatea Magazine Folk Radio UK (2) Folk World Living Tradition The Mouth Magazine	Folk Radio UK	
Music blogs		Lucid Culture Song of the Isles	
Music promotion & review websites	allgigs.co.uk bbc.co.uk enjoythemusic.com forfolkssake.com 67music.net Bright Young Folk Spiral Earth		
Popular culture & music websites	buzzmag.co.uk popmatters.com (2) UK Vibe.org		
Other	rockpaperscissors.biz (5)	rockpaperscissors.biz	robadamjournalist.com Sage Gateshead events Womex 2013 performers

Table 1: Media text sources

Though the publication forums for these texts vary greatly, the text types of articles, interviews and reviews appear in all of them. In addition, linguistic expressions and issues highlighted tend to be repetitive. The narratives attached to Fowlis, Nic Amhlaoibh, Portman and Rusby are repeated throughout the texts, regardless of the sex of the writer. Kembrew McLeod (2002: 95) discusses this in connection to rock music journalism, stating that its “most significant aspect [...] is its role in maintaining the circulation of particular discourses, and the content of those discourses helps determine who feels comfortable [...] to participate”. Thus, genres of music and artists representing them are described in largely predefined ways in the music press, and both male and female professional journalists and critics as well as voluntary and amateur writers producing texts for various web platforms are expected to – and mostly do – adhere to those descriptions.

As music journalism as a profession has been conventionally a male-dominated field, and as the majority of the writers of the texts at hand are men

(nearly sixty percent, both with the total body of collected media texts and the smaller sampling used here), the dominantly masculine discourses of music journalism define the presentation of female artists and the aspects that are valued in female artists. Even though the study concentrates on media texts written by others, not the artists themselves, the artists' voice is heard through the interviews included in the research material. The artists identify with and reinforce the strong origin and authenticity narratives, but they generally contest the unnecessarily gendered and romantic descriptions of their persons, music, and performance. The uniformity in the language used, narratives and media representation of the four artists throughout the research material shows that there are patterns discernible in the media representation of contemporary female folk singers.

In what follows I discuss a synthesis of the above-mentioned theoretical framework in connection to the narrative of cosy otherness in the media representation of Fowlis, Nic Amhlaoibh, Portman and Rusby. I then examine the construction of the cosy other by analysing how the singers are presented in the media in terms of their places of origin, musical professionalism and gender.

Otherness in media representation of female folk singers

The basis of the othering process in this context is in the conceptualisation of centre versus periphery, as discussed by Malcolm Chapman (1994). He defines four processes that influence each other in the construction of the peripheral other in relation to the more dominant culture or phenomenon (1994: 36–42). The first process identifies opposing pairs: for example the perceived dichotomy between English/Celtic cultural products, as well as between mainstream popular music and folk music and male versus female artists. The second of each of these pairs is considered peripheral, and “the content of the second is primarily determined by the content of the first, and the requirements of dramatic symbolic opposition to the other” (Chapman 1994: 36). This definition echoes Gayatri Spivak's claim of the observed (colonized) other and the observing (colonizing) other coming into being simultaneously, the observing other defining itself against the observed other (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 169–171; Spivak 1985: 252–257). Chapman's second process provides new material for the first process; thus, the content of the paired

categories can change while the categories stay the same (Chapman 1994: 36–37). The third process involves a phenomenon, such as the media representation of the folk singers and their personal connection to the music. This media representation is constructed via the narrative content of what can be viewed as categories set in Chapman's first process – here the other popular music artists versus the female folk singers – the content of which may change over time (Chapman 1994: 36, 38–40).

As Chapman (1994: 40–41) states, the fourth process, Romanticism, “glamorises the ‘other’ that is constructed in processes 1 and 3. [...] Romanticism is a re-evaluation, in the centre, of peripheral features”. In this context I claim that this means nostalgizing the singers through the narratives of their origins, professionalism and performance, and thus constructing them as the “cosy other”. In post-colonial contexts the other is conventionally defined as threatening, strange and oppressed (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 169–171). Rather than othering the singers this negatively, they are presented and othered as something charming and unthreateningly different with interesting cultural traits. By describing these differences in the media and emphasising their importance to the artists' perceived authenticity the more negative cultural issues are wrapped up in cosiness and nostalgia. The singers' media representation exhibits them as nostalgic, authentic and gendered, as instigated by the narratives of their origins, professionalism and performance, the different facets of their otherness studied here.

The concept of the other has several subdivisions that are relevant in clarifying the definition of the cosy other. Philip Bohlman (2000: 189) divides the other of Western music into external and internal others, the latter of which, the other within Europe, is central here. According to Bohlman, such a close-by other exists in the same space as the self, and this creates competition between the two, not a sense of awe and wonder that a greater cultural and spatial distance usually produces (2000: 191). The four singers' otherness, as presented in the media in terms of their nationality and origins, their gender, and the genre of music that they represent, is internal. Scotland and Ireland have a long history of existing as the periphery to England's centre, as the colonised other to the colonising other of Great Britain. The stereotypes and marginalisation attached to these countries and nationalities run deep and also affect the presentations of music

and artists (here Fowlis and Nic Amhlaoibh) originating from and associated with those locations. As Scotland, and especially its Highland region, and the indigenous music by proxy, has since the 18th century represented the internal other, the noble, untamed and savage culture to the southern, metropolitan and culturally and economically dominant England (Gelbart 2007: 60–66, McKerrell 2016: 53–55), such connotations still affect the contemporary cultural memory in interpreting phenomena connected with Scotland. More recently, the Referendum for Scottish independence has underlined the relationship of difference between the two countries and has for its part added to the cultural connotations associated with Scotland and, here, the artists identifying with it. Similar internal othering produces Ireland and its culture, including folk and traditional music, in the media as romanticised, nostalgic and vaguely exotic, but with a degree of familiarity.

The two internally other nations, Scotland and Ireland, share the status of being “Celtic” in terms of their culture and its presentation in the media. I place the word “Celtic” in quotation marks, because in this context the term refers to the stereotypical, constructed, romanticised and exoticised idea of who and what the Celts may have been (as much as anyone can know anything about them as cultural groups). Thus, I claim that the cosy othering of the Scottish and Irish folk singers Fowlis and Nic Amhlaoibh on the basis of their origins is strongly connected to the connotation of this cultural memory of what is “Celtic”; according to O’Flynn (2014):

Celtic people are somehow outside the Anglo-American mainstream of white ethnicity and culture; at the same time the presumed naturalness and antiquity [...] of Celtic people bestows on them a degree of authenticity that has been lost by ‘mainstream’ white ethnicities. (252)

Rather than basing the concept of cosy otherness on this constructed “Celticity” (O’ Flynn 2014: 239), I see it here as one of the components building the origin narratives of the singers, and connecting to the label of “pastness” attached to folk music as a genre. Similar marginalising pastness and nostalgia are constructed in the origin narratives of Portman and Rusby by connecting them to the trope of “Merrie Old England” (Boyes 2010: 70–71), and at times

making out-dated references to the pagan origins of Englishness, wrapped up in the cosy presentations of rural past in the songs that these artists perform. According to Boyes, these idealistic images of “England-to-be” (2010: 71) and England “as it was” were the result of archetypal “Englishness and the [early 20th century] Folk Revival interact[ing], [...and they] still exert considerable potency” (2010: 99), as the analysis of the 21st century female folk singers’ media representation here shows.

Furthermore, I link the concept of premediation as discussed by Erll (2009: 111–114; 2011: 142–143) to what Richard Middleton (2000: 61–62) conceptualises as strategies of assimilation and projection in diminishing the possible threat produced by otherness. In assimilation the other is presented with the aesthetic norms of the dominant culture; thus any differences are assimilated into a false identity (Middleton 2000: 61, 78; Kärjä 2007: 203). In projection “the other is externalised in a sphere of apparent social difference” (Middleton 2000: 62). This strategy romanticises and exoticises the other, and thus projects the differences of the dominant culture outwards. Especially the latter strategy is relevant here, as the media representation of female folk singers is constructed on the observing other – the audience, the critics – defining itself, and simultaneously creating the observed other – the female folk singer – on the basis of how that other differs from it. Middleton’s strategy of projection thus circles back to how Spivak defines the othering process and how Chapman explains the processes included in the juxtaposition of centre versus periphery (Spivak 1985: 252–257; Chapman 1994: 36–42). This echoes also in the concept of “secured otherness” as discussed by Antti-Ville Kärjä (2007: 200–203) in connection to (visual) representations of culture, meaning that already existing and widely distributed presentations of cultural features and phenomena are used and recycled in those portrayals, regardless of the culture in question and its societal specifics. Thus, if a cultural feature or a phenomenon such as this is already presented as the other it will retain that status in the portrayal to which it is recycled. The process of premediation (Erll 2009: 111–114) is relevant here also, as the existing ideas and imagery already connected to a female folk singer are reapplied whenever such an artist is encountered and experienced.

The formation of the narrative of cosy other thus depends on what kind of a centre is formed and is in charge of the othering process, influenced by active and

creative remembering in a cultural context. In this case, the centre combines and shifts between the features of the singers' origins, professionalism and gender.

A distant land

For those of us who don't speak the language, Julie's records are like beautiful messages from another world. (Radcliffe cited in Rock Paper Scissors 2008)

The folk singers' places of origin, their sound and links to tradition are significant factors in constructing their overall media representation (Karjalainen 2017). In the construction of the singers' media representation through their origin narratives, the places of origin connected to the singers – even though real and existing – become imagined locations, fairytale-like settings. Therefore, the singers are located not only in terms of actual geography but also in terms of cultural memory, and imaginary place and time (Karjalainen 2017: 5–7). The genre of folk music – and folk singers by extension – is other to not only art music, made possible by “the reinterpretation and mythologizing of a natural and indigenous other” (McKerrell 2016: 55; Gelbart 2007: 62–64) but also to the various commercially popular and dominant genres of music, such as rock and pop. Because folk music as a genre is strongly origins-centred, the four singers are repeatedly constructed in the media as iconic characters inhabiting mythical places situated on the edge of Europe, and instigating imaginative reconstructions of those places (Karjalainen 2017: 5–7). Such media presentations show the singers as exotic but not too much; they are the other that is familiar but at the same time can be categorised as something that is “not us”, rather like a reverse of uncanny (Royle 2003: 9–10). The singers' cultural and national origins have therefore a part in the othering process, as for example Fowlis and Nic Amhlaoibh represent cultural minorities and perform in minority languages.

The Highlands and Islands region of Scotland and the west of Ireland appear in the research material parallel to “the highlands” (Stenhouse 2009), to “another world” (LaBrack 2006) and to “a magical world” (Horowitz 2012). In this way, the

singers' places of origin are recreated as fictional, and remembered through the storybook-like references to places existing long ago in the songs that they sing.

(1) Listening to Hatchling [Portman's second solo album] you feel that you are breaking into other worlds, plunging a thousand leagues beneath the sea or going through the back of the wardrobe in C S Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, ending up in another land. There is a dreamy feel to Portman's music which is irresistible and inviting. (Horowitz 2012)

(2) Julie Fowlis began proceedings with an evocative walking [sic] song [...] and one almost felt as though one had been transposed to the highlands. (Stenhouse 2009)

The examples 1 and 2 illustrate the distancing of the periphery from the centre by such reconstruction and imagining as described above. The singers, who are portrayed in the media as representing these peripheral locations, are thus also distanced from the centre of popular music. Though the examples above are only of Julie Fowlis and Emily Portman, similar, origin narrative constructing descriptions are also available of Nic Amhlaoibh and Rusby. The repeated references to Nic Amhlaoibh's childhood home and current place of residence in the Irish-speaking Gaeltacht region in the west of Ireland underline the significance of the place and its connection to the artist (see McBride 2013; "Dingle News 2010). Likewise, Kate Rusby's Yorkshire origins rarely go unmentioned; her pronounced regionalism is significant in the construction of her media representation (Hazlewood 2016; *The Mouth Magazine* 2014; Dawson 2016). Rusby's established monicker, "the Barnsley Nightingale" (see *The Mouth Magazine* 2014; *The Sentinel* 2011), both connects her to a specific place and also constructs a romantic and nostalgic image of her, nightingale being a much used symbol of "creativity, [...] nature's purity, [...] virtue and goodness" (Walker 2012: 150–151) in literature and poetry.

Moreover, Portman and Rusby's origins are marginalised in terms of what for example Georgina Boyes discusses as "Englishness" (2010: 96), their local origins and the genre of music that they identify with linking them with "the

preindustrial idyll, devoid of politics, urbanism, social disquiet and any contemporaneity” (Boyes 2010: 96). This otherness is constructed by the dominant, metropolitan British and American cultural and social groups represented by the journalists writing about the singers, the publications publishing those texts, and the implied readership interpreting and making sense of the artists through the media representation. Here the cultural minorities include England as rural idyll, the imaginary English village (Boyes 2010: 3, 7, 70; Winter & Keegan-Phipps 2015: 113) that Portman and Rusby are seen in the media to inhabit, as well as the Scottish and Irish cultures and the Scottish Gaelic and Irish speaking cultures. Whereas the two last-mentioned are marginalised from the Anglophone point of view for being distinctive nations and cultures with different languages and cultural histories, the marginalisation of the rural English idyll is done through what Winter and Keegan-Phipps call “strange England”, the underlining of the regional character of the artists and their music and discussing them as “discoveries” (2015: 118–119, 123–125). These representations of distinct cultures are reconstructed in the media and music press as distant, mythical and romantic, as opposed to the dominant Southern metropolitan culture in the British Isles, and to the Western Anglophone culture in general.

In connection to the process of remembering Keightley and Pickering (2012: 152) discuss retotyping, which they define as “a mode of stereotyping the past [with] a marked tendency to homogenise the traits of people in particular periods [...] or to heavily stylise the social experience of those periods”. Such selectiveness about the past events and experiences mediated through nostalgic reminiscence is a prominent feature of the folk singers’ narratives of origin. The examples 1 and 2 above, as well as the quote from Radcliffe at the beginning of this chapter go further than merely creating nostalgic recollections of past events or people. The recreation of the singers’ origins as imaginary, fabled places “build walls rather than bridges between past and present” (Keightley & Pickering 2012: 152), thus doing the opposite of what Fowlis, Nic Amhlaoibh, Portman and Rusby themselves attempt to achieve with their music, and resulting in the cosy othering of these singers.

The imaginary construction of the singers’ places of origin in the media reflects also through the origin narratives strand of sound – including the performance language, the sound of their voice, their music, and the values and

meanings attached to all these aspects (Karjalainen 2017: 7–8). The performance languages of the singers, especially the two minority languages Scottish Gaelic and Irish in which Fowlis and Nic Amhlaoibh sing, and the regional accents of English discernible in Portman and Rusby's singing, firmly link the singers to a specific location and thus to specific cultural connotations. The centre-periphery opposition and the resulting construction of the narrative of cosy other is especially pronounced in the references to Fowlis and Nic Amhlaoibh's performance languages: repeated references are made to the language barrier between the artists and their audiences, and the two minority languages are frequently described as sounds, not as languages conveying a message (Rock Paper Scissors 2008; de Bie 2012; Long 2007). Understanding the lyrics of Fowlis and Nic Amhlaoibh's songs is not important to the journalists; rather, the songs are "felt" (de Bie 2012) and these romantic and exoticised experiences of the music are recounted in the media texts.

Such descriptions deliberately marginalise the singers and reinforce the centre-periphery division at work in the othering process. The four singers are different enough to be constructed as the cosy other; the strand of sound in their origin narratives complements the strand of place. Cosy other shares some features with the uncanny but the mythical or weird characteristics the singers are attributed with are linked with cosiness, nostalgia and niceness covering any unsettling qualities. In fact, cosy other would be more synonymous to meanings given to the word "canny" than uncanny (Royle 2003: 9–11). The singers' origin narratives render them peripheral to the centre, which is, depending on the circumstances, either the popular music scene, the dominant metropolitan culture in opposition to rural, provincial, Scottish, or Irish cultures, non-Gaelic-speaking or non-Irish-speaking audiences, or a combination of any of these. The romantic, exotic and nostalgic connotations circulated in the cultural memory – premediated and attached to the singers' places of origin and their performance languages – are attached also to the singers.

Rare diamonds

“That Fowlis, the elfin beauty with a voice alternating between piper’s staccatos and flautist’s glissandos, should spend her days in a fire-lit croft house, learning songs in an all-but-departed language, is a testament to her passion for the music.” (Hopper 2008)

The continuum of tradition, of songs being passed on through generations, is a central theme for the narrative of musical professionalism. All the four singers studied here are frequently reported to have grown up with traditional and folk music (Booker 2016; Dougan 2003; Dryoff 2009; Gilbert 2008; Hopper 2008; Wood 2013; The Sentinel 2011; Sage Gateshead 2012). They learn their songs from family, friends, and neighbours (Adams 2012; Gilbert 2008; Hopper 2008; Wood 2013), research old manuscripts, stories and local folklore to understand the songs’ backgrounds and to write their own material (Gilbert 2008; Lucid Culture 2008; Dryoff 2009; Booker 2016; Dougan 2003; Bridge 2015). Their sense of responsibility for doing the songs justice in their performance is pronounced (Adams 2012; Hindmarch 2008), and such humility in their approach to music is also a feature of the narrative of professionalism that for its part constructs these artists as authentic folk singers in the media. This feeling of responsibility of the songs and folk music in general is a recurrent feature of the research material, and the singers are often quoted in relation to it as in the examples 3 and 4 below:

(3) And a lot of these songs are precious, and for me, part of it is about preserving them as well as taking them on as new songs for myself. So there’s a duality there that you have to be careful with regards to respecting them and treating them well, so I would spend a long time listening to other singers. (Nic Amhlaoibh in Wood 2013)

(4) People still tell me they don’t care for folk music, but that they like me, [...] but in the end that’s all I sing and play, folk in almost its truest form. I’ve never minded it being a minority music. It’s like a rare diamond; if everyone

looks at it, it might seem less special. I like it that people have to look that bit harder for it. (Rusby in Randall 2003)

Recounting the singers' own words regarding their connection to the music is not only constructing the singers' professionalism and origin narratives, and giving voice to their own agency in constructing their media representation. It also affects the othering process, in which the peculiarity of the singers' dedication to their craft is underlined and their enthusiasm for their chosen genre of music is pointed out via their own words, thus giving insight to the readers of what this constructed character of a 'folk singer' is like. Also, such detailed descriptions of the singers' dedication enforce their presentation as professional musicians. Accounts of their work including many of the same features as any popular music artist's work does, such as making albums in recording studios, performing live in front of a paying audience, going on concert tours, giving interviews for music magazines and other publications, and maintaining a social media presence and communicating with fans further solidify their professionalism in the media, something that in the genre of folk music is not a given as it has a status of being amateurish, part-time and inherently uncommercial (Finnegan 1989: 16–18; Miller 2016: 8–9), due to its marginal position in connection to more dominant genres of popular music.

In the media texts, certain features of the female folk singers' work and performance are repeatedly discussed and thus focus the attention on aspects of their artistry that eventually work in their media representation to construct them as the cosy other. Their work ethic, dedication and musicianship, namely the narratives of their professionalism, are exoticised and romanticised: aspects of these, their "manners and customs", merit frequent mentions in the research material. The discourse of manners and customs, applied for example in colonial travel literature as discussed by literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt, which is a normalizing discourse with a purpose of codifying difference (1985: 139) is at work in the descriptions of the female folk singers' musical processes, and it connects to the centre-periphery construct central to this article. The singers' passion for the music that they perform, and their personal connection with the songs is central to their marginalisation. Within the genre of folk music songs appear as more than hits or not: the artists cherish them because they reflect the

tradition and heritage of a place and culture, and the romantic descriptions (for example the Hopper quote on page 12) of the lengths that the artists are willing to go for their material underline their cosy otherness constructed in the media.

The music being personally meaningful and a part of the singers' identities is a contributing factor in constructing not only their authenticity but also the nostalgic representation of a folk singer aware of and connected to her own heritage. Such a representation, appearing uniform across a wide variety of media text sources speaks of premediation, of using such patterns and imagery that already exist (Erll 2009: 114) of categorising a folk music artist to define the contemporary singers. It also enhances the romantic image of a folk singer, one with her community, creating music that interprets the tradition in a unique way. This is what Chapman calls the process of Romanticism as a part of the centre-periphery opposition: the folk singers and their musical processes are presented in the media as "a fashionable and glamorous rarity" (1994: 40–41). The examples 5, 6 and 7 below, selected from concert and album reviews written about Kate Rusby and Emily Portman, display this process. Traditional and folk music is placed in opposition with modern life, implying that such music does not inherently belong to modernity but is in the past and has to be remembered and brought forward by artists such as Rusby and Portman. The romantic idea of these folk singers awakening "old stories and voices" and "innovat[ing] the old-time English folk" by approaching and performing it in a new, signature way is a repeated feature in all the research material studied for this article.

(5) Kate Rusby, reigning queen of the traditional English folk song, knows how to sing a story. [...]he weaves gold into folklore, making music that seems anachronistic, yet makes the listener want to join her on a journey to another world. (LaBrack 2006)

(6) Few artists can rival Kate Rusby's ability to bring traditional music to modern life, to infuse old stories and voices with all the sadness, violence and immediacy that more academic stylists lack. Nor can many rival her ability, with her own material, to write new songs that draw deeply, and effortlessly, from old forms. (Dawson 2016)

(7) Embracing traditional sounds and themes with open arms, she innovates the old-time English folk that she already wears so well in convention with a darkly, enchanting vibe akin to the feeling one might get from being lulled to sleep by a time-honoured fairy tale. (Frahm 2015)

It is notable, that in the examples above the narrative of a folk singer's musical professionalism and her passion for the music appears as set even with ten years between the reviews, as is the case with Kate Rusby in examples 5 and 6. The singers are presented in a nostalgic manner not only in connection with their places of origin and links to tradition but also in connection with those artists of the same genre that precede them. There are striking similarities in this narrative to the descriptions written about female folk singers over fifty years ago, when the "purity of [the singer's] voice suggest[ed] purity of approach" (Time 1962b: 54–60) and she "boast[ed ...] an uncanny ability to dream her way into the emotional heart of a song" (Time 1962a: 39–40). Even these few examples show how premediation (Erll 2009: 111, 114) and retrotyping (Keightley & Pickering 2012: 150–158) – of which the construction of the narrative of the cosy other is the result – shape the representation of a female folk singer.

Beguiling and innocent

"Her voice is butterflies and dappled light – especially in Irish." (de Bie 2012)

The descriptions of the singers' performances – their voice, singerness and music – construct the singers as feminine and thus as other to the male folk musicians and male musicians of other genres. These exotic and romantic descriptions nostalgize the singers, and furthermore such descriptions of the singers follow the genre norms of folk music scene and music journalism in general, which foster the gendered descriptions of female artists (Davies 2001: 301–302; Kruse 2002: 135–136; Whiteley 2000: 73), thus constructing them as authentic folk singers. The music press operating on the basis of a male norm of an artist appears here as the centre, constructing the female folk singer as peripheral. As Frith and McRobbie

(1991: 374) point out, “popular music’s images, values, and sentiments are male products”, and male artists are the norm (Kruse 2002: 135; Davies 2001: 302), to which female artists are constructed as other through the gendered language used in the media to describe their person and performance. This is true also within the folk music scene where Fowlis, Nic Amhlaoibh, Portman and Rusby work, and the domination and the genre-defining force of male folk music artists has, paradoxically enough, been noted and discussed also in the music press (Chipping 2014; Long 2016; Molleson 2017). As said, the majority of the writers of the media texts studied for this article are male, and both male and female journalists’ texts construct similar gendered presentations of the four singers. Thus, the dominantly masculine discourses of music journalism largely define the presentation of female artists.

As the vocabulary used by the journalists to describe the singers is noticeably similar throughout despite the variance in the sources, it can be argued that the process of premediation is at work here, enabling the singers to be constructed as cosy other in the media. The vocabulary constructs three narratives of female folk singers’ performance – those of seduction, innocence and professionalism – two first ones of which are relevant to the narrative of cosy other (the narrative of professionalism was partly discussed in the previous chapter). These narratives are the products of the romanticising and exoticising of the singers in terms of their origins, genre of music and performance. The female folk singers are thus made to appear nostalgic, authentic and specifically feminine in the media and this combination positions them as the other. Therefore, a division is constructed between the observer (audience, music critics) and the observed (the folk singers). The language used to describe the singers and the similar ways of doing it conform to genre norms but also homogenise the female folk singer into an iconic, created character. “Iconic” as a definer refers to what Webb (2009) describes as “a direct representation of something already known: the representation is like the referent in a recognisable way” (29, 47). In connection to this, Kärjä’s (2007) concept of secured otherness is also relevant, as there appears to be a premediated way of constructing the representation of especially female folk singer in the media. The consistently repeated romantic and exotic descriptions of the singers’ voices, singingship, and music – for example “silky” (McFadyen 2015), “siren”, “spritely” (Schaeffer 2009), “alluring” (Kidman 2015),

“elfin” (Hopper 2008; Montague 2009), “luminous” (McBride 2013; *The Mouth Magazine* 2012), “pure” (Leech 2012; Cosyns 2008; Hazlewood 2016; Stone 2006) and “pristine” (Keller 2008; Roberts 2009) – show that conformity to existing ideals of what is already known to describe a female folk singer recognisably. Such descriptions as the ones above would most often not be used of male artists, either of the same genre or any genre.

The performance narratives of seduction and innocence reinforce the representation available for female artists in the sphere of popular music, making them the cosy other in the process. The 1960–70s Folk Revival may have given opportunities to female performers – Fowlis, Nic Amhlaoibh, Portman and Rusby are descendants of the phenomenon in their own ways – but the ways that they are presented, over fifty years hence, still highlight the qualities of sensitivity, passivity and sweetness (Frith & McRobbie 1991: 377; Greig 1997: 174; Whiteley 2000: 72–73).

(8) An enchantress, using her cheerfully innocent sounding voice to lure you into a disconcerting world of dark imaginings, cruel deeds and surreal fairytales (Womex 2013)

(9) Kate tiptoes into the spotlight, all beaming cheeriness and charming beauty, and sweeps into an exquisitely heart-melting rendition (Jones 2010)

(10) Fowlis’s ethereal vocals that captivate, not least on a solo opener that reflects the elemental beauty of her Hebridean homeland (Spencer 2011)

The examples 8, 9 and 10, as well as the above quotes by de Bie (2012) and Hopper (2008) illustrate the performance narratives of seduction and innocence which for their part construct the singers as the cosy other in the media. Describing the singers as elfin and charming beauties, sirens and enchantresses who lure in and charm their audiences with voices that are like light and ethereal, singing heart-melting and fairytale-themed songs (Jones 2010; Hopper 2008; Womex 2013; de Bie 2012), positions them firmly into the premediated, pre-existing box reserved for female artists and female folk singers in the media and in the music business.

Constructing the female folk singers as the cosy other through the performance narratives of seduction and innocence is perhaps the most obvious way of marginalising female artists. However, it is a more complex issue than a simple male versus female artist duality. Because the folk singers studied here have close links to their places of origin, this means that any such attributes that are attached to that locality are also connected to the singer, and thus feature in the construction of her performance narrative. The highly romantic and nostalgic connotations attached to Scotland, Ireland and England are connected to Fowlis, Nic Amhlaoibh, Portman and Rusby in their media presentations. Thus their voices, singership and music are seen as the naturalised representations of their countries of origin. Their being female artists reinforces this convention, as singing is traditionally depicted as feminine, natural and undervalued as a skill (Davies 2001: 306). Even though the performance narratives include the laudatory narrative of professionalism, through which these singers are given credit for their musical skills and artistic achievements, the two other performance narratives of seduction and innocence are strongly gendered and other the singers as specifically feminine as opposed to the norm of a male artist. I argue that the dominance of the two marginalising performance narratives means that the female artist must first be rendered unthreatening to the dominant male canon of popular music (to which folk music, though marginal, does belong) via the traditional, naturalising presentations before they can be granted the credibility by acknowledging their professionalism (Davies 2001: 309).

According to Simon Frith (1996: 193–196), human voices, singing or otherwise, are heard and listened to as gendered. This means that certain connotations and attributes are linked to female singers' voices. Consequently, this affects the references to their singership in the media (their artistry combined with the act of singing), as there are preconceived ideas circulated in cultural memory of how women perform. The media descriptions of the music that the singers produce and perform connect to these premediated ideas of female artists and women's performances, and also to the premediated ideas of folk music, constructing the narrative of cosy other in the female folk singers' media representation. As Astrid Erll states, such mediated memories work as models or templates for constructing that representation "even before the choice for representing a matter in a certain fashion is made" (2011: 142). The narratives of cosy other are telling examples of this meaning-making process.

Conclusions

The origin narratives within the narrative of cosy other as constructed in the music press present folk music and folk singers in the media not as representing a living tradition, but as peculiar exponents of half-forgotten, past cultures, which exist in the cultural memory in order to be remembered fondly. On the other hand, such connections to the places of origins and the tradition preserved in the folk songs work as authenticators; these connections are needed for constructing a credible media representation of an authentic folk singer. Both these narratives romanticise and nostalgize the artists studied here, connecting them to a specific place and tradition. The singers themselves promote their local connections and are keen to talk about their approach to traditional material, thus reinforcing their cosy otherness in the media.

The female folk singers occupy a peripheral position to a centre, which shifts between the music press dominated by the normative male artist, popular music professionalism, and the dominant metropolitan culture in opposition to rural, provincial cultures. Thus, a single, fixed centre does not exist, but is a fluctuating combination of the above-mentioned, and dependent on the agents operating in the potential centre, observing and constructing the periphery. Such variance makes the artists both cosy and familiar and exotic and other, never settling on either one. A female artist singing folk songs is a familiar phenomenon, but these features, with features of the singer's origins, performance and professionalism are applied to construct them also as the cosy other.

Generally, cosy otherness is ascribed on folk musicians of both genders, thus emphasising the aspects of the nostalgia and authenticity instigated by the artists' origins and professionalism. However, as the discussion in this article shows, the female folk singers are marginalised as the cosy other also through their gender. I argue that such pointedly gendered and marginalising narrative defining the media representation of a female artist shows how (folk) music journalism follows closely the guidelines of popular music journalism which has conventionally placed female artists in a peripheral position in the scene. This and the position of folk music in the sphere of popular music as marginal and exotic makes the female folk singers the most evocative of cosy otherness. Thus, unearthing the structures behind this particular othering process and actively

pointing them out may eventually have an effect on how female artists are represented. For example the Fair Plé initiative (Fair Plé 2018) calling for gender equality in the sphere of folk and traditional music launched earlier this year by female artists in the Irish traditional music scene demonstrates the existence of a wider problem in many other aspects of professional music career besides media representation, and the artists' own awareness of it.

The consistency in the media representation of Fowlis, Nic Amhlaoibh, Portman and Rusby speaks of set expectations for a media presentation of a female folk singer. I claim that this is due to an active process of remembering and application of a premediated imagery adapted to understand new phenomena. The majority of the concepts discussed in this article – cultural memory, premediation, representation, other, stereotype, nostalgia, authenticity – are selective and closely connected meaning-making processes. Thus, the representation of a female folk singer in the media, influenced by all of these concepts, is very selective, highlighting those qualities in the artists' personae and performances that fit the deeply embedded image of a "folk singer". Though the centre that constructs the folk singer as the cosy other is not uniform, the narratives of cosy other in the singers' media representation build on and follow consistently similar themes.

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