

TRANSCRIPTION

Stanley Robertson sings “Are You Sleeping, Maggie?” with comments

ScottishVoicesProj.0590

[This recording was made in July 1984 in the sitting room of Stanley Robertson’s house in Aberdeen. Present at this point in the session were just Robertson and John Niles.]

Chorus: O, are ye sleepin, Maggie?
O, are ye sleepin, Maggie?
For wild the wind blaws through ma veins
And drawn ower yon warlock craggie.

1. Dark is the night and wild the winds are blawin,
No a starn ower aa the cairry,
The howlets cry ower bourtree bank
And drawn ower yon warlock craggie.

[starn: star. cairry: sky
[howlet: owl.
[bourtree: elder tree

Chorus

2. Mirk is the night and wild the winds are blawin
Ah trudge the road for tae meet ma dearie
The iron getts clank rude and weel
And drawn ower yon warlock craggie.

[getts: gates

Chorus

3. She’s opened the door an she’s let her laddie in
He’s taen fff his dreepin plaidie
An he’s taen aff his dreepin plaidie
The wind blaws ower yon warlock craggie.

Chorus

4. O noo that you’ve let me in, Maggie,
O noo ye’ve let me in, Maggie,
O whit care I for howlet’s cry,
Or bourtree bank or the warlock craggie?

O, are ye sleepin, Maggie?
O, are ye sleepin, Maggie?
For wild the wind blaws through ma veins
And drawn ower yon warlock craggie.

SR: See, in these songs you've got to feel for the —. See, I see it in my mind. I see it like a play like a film being acted. I could direct — just everything — if I was given this as a film I could direct the whole thing cause I see how it should be done. Can you see fae your ain mind exactly what should be done in the ballad? So if I'm singin that ballad I transport — even though I'm lookin at the audience, I try to keep my eyes open if I'm lookin tae the audience — I transport myself away, I'm never here wi them. It's almost a trance-like feelin with the ballad, and I've known that one since I was a wee boy. [*Whispers:*] It aye terrified me. And I saw a fillum when I was a wee laddie, and it was a story of devotion, the story of the Brontes, and she was Emily Bronte, and she used tae look up this big Warlock Craggie and she saw death comin doon on a horse. It's a story of devotion. At the end an untimely death comes for her. And it minded me — every time I see the Warlock Craggie. It 's almost like a Wuthering Heights feelin an all, you get, you got this Warlock Craggie feelin through it. A really super ballad.

JN: It is. It is that. It's a great ballad.

SR: You can feel the eeriness to it.

[Some of the preceding transcription of Robertson's speech is a bit speculative, as not every word is easily heard.]

Note 1

What follows, for the sake of comparison, is the text of Robert Tannahill's poem "O, Are Ye Sleeping, Maggie" as printed in *The Book of Scottish Song* (1843), here taken from the web:

O, are ye sleepin', Maggie?
O, are ye sleepin', Maggie?
Let me in, for loud the linn
Is roarin' o'er the warlock craigie!

Mirk and rainy is the night;
No a starn in a' the carie;
Lightnings gleam athwart the lift,
And winds drive on wi' winter's fury.

Fearfu' soughs the boor-tree bank;
The rifted wood roars wild and drearie;
Loud the iron yett does clank;
And cry o' howlets maks me eerie.

Aboon my breath I daurna speak,
For fear I raise your waukrife daddy;
Cauld's the blast upon my cheek;
O rise, rise, my bonnie lady!

She oped the door; she let him in;
He cuist aside his dreepin' plaidie;
Blaw your warst, ye wind and rain,
Since, Maggie, now I'm in beside ye!

Now, since ye're waukin', Maggie,
Now, since ye're waukin', Maggie,
What care I for howlet's cry,
For boor-tree bank and warlock craigie?