

<https://boomkat.com/products/lamkin-versions-variants-across-the-northern-hemisphere>

Death is Not the End teams up with folklorist Derek Piotr once more for this bumper archive of North American folk music, this time focusing on every version they could find of the ballad 'Lamkin'. It's a fascinating study that displays how a standard was able to shift and evolve as it moved from person to person over the decades.

The first recording of 'Lamkin' Piotr discovered for this archive was dubbed in 1937 in New Jersey, and featured 93-year-old Lydia Gyderson. Her vocal performance is gloriously imperfect, enhanced by recording artifacts and the room itself, but it sets the pace for a set of versions that enshrines the lore of a song that passed through communities across the USA. Many of these renditions haven't been heard by anyone but the original recordists since they were taped, as they're an archival project rather than an exploration of aesthetic perfection. So on 'Beau Lamkins', we can hear a 1939 recording of 73-year-old Aunt Nancy Prather, who stops to chat and cough between pitchy, muffled verses.

The newest recording was made by Piotr himself last may, and having a contemporary version - sung by 69-year-old Bobby McMillon in North Carolina - gives us at least a reference for the rest of the material. It's a tough proposition to listen to from beginning to end, but an invaluable resource with a fascinating narrative.