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12 Scots Songs

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The Scots yield to none of their neighbours in a passionate attachment to their native music; in which, to say the truth, they seem to be justified by the unbiassed suffrage of foreigners of the best taste [...] Many ingenious reasons have been assigned [...] chiefly drawn from the romantic face of the country, and the vacant, pastoral life of a great part of its inhabitants; circumstances, no doubt, highly favourable to poetry and song.¹

INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to define the rather fluid category of 'Scots song'. Aspects considered include its historical development, collection and canonisation, as well as the way the term has been understood by different audiences at different times. Particular attention is paid to the key period for national song definition starting in the mid seventeenth century and continuing until the present. Herd's observations, quoted above, reflect the assumptions that tend to underpin the adoption of a national canon. The chapter describes patterns in current research and offers a list of possibilities for future research, together with resources to encourage reflection and debate.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF SCOTS SONG

It should be said at the outset that the term 'Scots song' is highly resonant and rather ambiguous. Loaded with 'national' connotations, it has various synonyms: 'Scottish song', 'the songs of Scotland', which are often (at least in the modern period) mediated by the addition of 'traditional' or 'folk'. This group of terms is both period- and context-specific, with various meanings for collectors, performers and audiences. 'Scots song' can have strong geographical and/or linguistic connotations or, at times, refer to very particular forms. Emic (from the point of view of 'insiders' to the tradition and to Scotland) and etic (from the perspective of external audiences, collectors and performers) understandings vary considerably too.

Scots song, as a blanket term, covers the whole range of genres within Scotland. The main genres in Scots song are outlined here; however, there is no space to review these in detail in this chapter and, arguably, this kind of definition is not particularly helpful. Probably the most studied genre, in terms of Scotland, is ballad: a dramatic narrative form with distinctive structural and stylistic charac-

teristics. It is associated with a range of formulaic language and phrases and is not overtly emotional; emotions are expressed through performance and responses.² These features were determined by collectors and critics, working from the early nineteenth century, and combined scholarship from Scotland, Europe and North America in particular. Francis James Child (1825–1896) in his *The English and Scottish Popular Ballad* (1882–98) canonised – some would say ossified – notions of what constituted a ballad, which still shape definitions of the form today. In the Scottish context, in terms of ballad collecting, the dominant work is *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–3), followed by a series of national and regional collections, some mentioned below. Lyric, too, is an almost equally dominant form, broadly speaking addressing topics around love, but ranging from the sentimental to the pragmatic to the bawdy (all are well represented in the pervasive work of Robert Burns within this genre).³ Other significant genres include political (from the Jacobite form to the modern protest songs associated with songwriters like Mary Brooksbank (1897–1978)⁴ and singers like Dick Gaughan and Brian McNeill), religious, work-related, urban-based (associated with song writers like Adam McNaughtan)⁵ and children's song, along with particular types connected with temperance or sport – including football and the linked category of sectarian songs – in Scots. Apologies are given at this stage, too, for the omission of many collectors and performers who deserve mention here; readers who seek comprehensiveness are advised to start by browsing some of the web resources on song and music listed at the end of this chapter.

Scots song is, without question, a medium in which text and music are crucially related. As Emily Lyle has commented in relation to ballad as a sung form: 'to gain a full appreciation, every opportunity should be taken of listening to live or recorded performances'.⁶ Developing a similar line of argument, of particular relevance to Scots song and, again, in relation to ballad, James Porter identified:

a bifurcated existence in the modern world. They are read, in anthologies and scholarly editions, as literature; and they are sung, in homes, ceilidhs and folk clubs as performative genre [...] the function, communication, and nature of the audience are markedly different in these two modes of production and consumption.⁷

In drawing attention to the ways in which silent reading differs from the dynamic interaction between singer and audience in performance context, Porter privileges neither, but the distinction is well worth noting. Arguably, the last-mentioned way of receiving texts is significantly different from the others, particularly if listening is within communicative company. These points are highly relevant when approaching Scots song as a form.

So, too, the characteristics cited in Chapter 11 'Traditional Music', and defined by the International Folk Music Council, are as crucial to understanding Scots song now as they were in the past. 'Continuity' (the sustained existence of a traditional practice) determines the songs which survive within folk canons (whether based within narrow 'folk groups', to use Oring's term, like families,

or regionally, nationally or internationally defined);⁸ 'variation' (the changes which inform traditions over time) are hugely important to the development in particular song texts, written and sung; 'selection' (how the song survives in its performance contexts) is as crucial to Scots song and its evolutions, as they are to the music. 'Community', of course, is a contested term which can refer, in its 'traditional' sense, to a location-focused group, but also to contexts like family or even, in its modern usage, a community focused around YouTube. Performance is vitally important particularly to developing an understanding of particular textual 'events' at which Scots songs have been consumed (public or private, 'live' or 'passive'). Along with an appreciation of formal and structural elements, such observations are crucial to understanding the function and meanings of Scots songs. These are variable both for those who sing them and to those who listen.

Bearing this in mind, and turning now to more specific definitions, by far the commonest and earliest use of the term 'Scots song' is to indicate a song's point of origin within the physical nation. David Herd, for instance, uses 'Scots song' in this sense in his published collection of 1776, indicating subsets of 'heroic ballads or epic tales', 'sentimental, pastoral and love songs', 'comic, humorous and jovial songs'. 'Scots song', taken this way, refers solely to songs produced in Scotland, minus the Gaidhealtachd. This division entered into the critical discourse and, in general, has remained there; it was recognised, for instance, in a recording made as late as 1960 which brings together, yet distinguishes, Gaelic and Scots folk songs.⁹ In a parallel way, in modern discussions, the term 'Scots song' usually excludes the traditions of, most recently, minority language groups living in Scotland – a rich area for musical cross fertilisation. Rich examples of recent culture exchanges range from the implicit notion of what can be considered 'Scots song', expressed in the growth of Scottish bhangra in bands like Gtown Desi, to the stated desire of the organisers of the Wickerman Festival of 2011, and documented in their then-current online publicity, to embrace the musical traditions of Poland. The area of Scots song and its travel, both within Scottish culture and to external audiences, would also reward further investigation.

The term 'Scots song' can also be used to refer to songs produced by Scotland's diaspora communities, past and present. However, in terms of collecting, the song traditions of the Gaelic-speaking diaspora have received a great deal more attention than those of the Lowland Scots, reflecting, arguably, a glamorisation of 'exotic' traditions of the Gaidhealtachd, and a 'Highlandisation' of emigrant communities. This process is evident in the tradition of holding Highland Games from the late nineteenth century onwards in 'Lowland' areas, as well as the assumption sometimes made by certain members of emigrant communities that Scotland equates with the Highlands. A similar process leads to a sometimes overriding interest in the past of the country, particularly in the periods of intense emigration.

Cross-fertilisations, through shared performance and transmission contexts (particularly in the digital age), are also to be taken in relation to diaspora Scots.¹⁰ For instance, modern performers known for their 'Scottish' identity in the North

American context often blend Scots song with diverse items of repertoire. Glasgow-born Alex Beaton, for instance, who emigrated to the United States in the 1960s and had Scottish and Irish parents, not only records solely Scots material, like a CD of Robert Burns songs, but also mixes Irish and Scots-derived items in performance and recordings.¹¹ Counter-examples, of course, could be mentioned. The Aberdeen-born Norman Kennedy, for instance, who has lived in America since 1966, mixes expertise in craft performances (weaving) with an extensive repertoire of Scots songs from his home culture, from 'Drumdelgie' to the Byron-derived 'There was a Jolly Beggar'.¹²

Defining Scots song by place, then, while superficially simple and therefore appealing, is problematic. Songs – and more importantly singers – tend not to recognise national boundaries, or indeed even boundaries between Scots and non-Scots. Cecil Sharp, for instance, noted in 1905 that 'the Scottish ballad [...] is no other than the English ballad in Northern dress'.¹³ Cross-cultural contacts have had indelible impacts on Scots songs in the case of particular items and as a corpus. In the case of South West Scotland, bordering England by land and Ireland by sea, as well as Ayrshire to the north, songs often reflect on connections. 'The Galloway Packman', collected by Phyllis Martin in the Isle of Whithorn in 1995 from Charlie McGuire, is about a young man who strays into England, 'I met wi' refusals in maisten ilk place, / They shook their heids at me, slammed doors in ma face', based on his being 'frae wild Gallowa'. To take two further examples from Martin's collecting, 'The Ayrshireman's Lilt' casts aspersions on the neighbours: 'Whaur ir ye ga'in tae? My bonnie Ayrshireman! / A'm gaun awa tae steel a wee coo'. 'The Irish Boy' explores linguistic confusions in an area where 'Galloway Irish' blurs accent and vocabulary: 'An Irish boy he may well be, / But he spake broad Scots when he coortit me'.¹⁴ Traces of Irish-influenced performance styles – a peculiarly lilting delivery, a gentleness in the attack – can also be noted. This is a regional tradition which would merit more study.

There is sometimes a naturalisation process, rephrasing extraneous material into acceptable Scots idioms. International cross overs can lead to instances where prototypes generate songs perceived to be 'Scots'. Examples include the Scandinavian 'Death at Sea of John Remorsson', domesticated as 'Sir Patrick Spens' (Ch 58), with a reimagining of the original situation as a Scots-Norwegian experience: 'The king's dochter o Norrowa / It's thou must bring her hame'.¹⁵ Subtle cross-overs include the adaptation of the Picardian New Year begging song 'aguillaneuf' within the Scots-language notion of appropriate behaviour at Hogmanay.¹⁶

Songs in the Scots tradition, too, are found in international forms: 'The Twa Sisters' was known by the late nineteenth century in versions from England, Scotland, Wales, Denmark, Iceland, Faroe, Sweden and Finland.¹⁷ Singers too, are influenced by international pieces, in the past by face-to-face transmission, in the modern period through recordings and, latterly, new media, adapting the 'foreign' into acceptable local idioms. For instance Jane Turriff (b.1915) brings North East style, combined with influences from Western films, to country pieces like 'Empty Saddles'.¹⁸ A parallel example would be the performance of the Newfoundland song by Ron Hynes, 'Sonny's Dream', by Scottish performers

like Calcutta-born Hamish Imlach (1940–1996), or Jean Redpath (b.1937); both add a Scots inflection.¹⁹

Scots song generated among, or for consumption by, diaspora communities have particular characteristics. Like those within the parallel Gaelic-language tradition, they are often infused with a sense of exile and a nostalgia which is less obvious – although sometimes present – in songs generated by the physical nation. For instance, the Nithsdale-born stonemason and writer Allan Cunningham (1784–1842) expressed feelings he no doubt experienced as an exile in London in 'My Ain Countrie': here, the narrator is a Scot living in Bordeaux, who 'left my hert ahint me' in Galloway.²⁰ Similarly, 'The Canadian Boat-Song', probably by D M Moir and first published in 1829 in the 'Noctes Ambrosianae' series of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, exemplifies the wistful exile lamenting what is left behind, as Christopher North (John Wilson) sings a piece supposedly transmitted and translated by a friend in Upper Canada, and typical of 'Highland oar-songs' in Gaelic:

From the lone shieling of the misty island
Mountains divide us and the waste of seas
But still the heart is strong, the blood is Highland
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.²¹

The context here is important: 'Noctes Ambrosianae' is very much tongue-in-cheek and, it seems, Moir may be satirising a trend already in play.

Recent songwriters, among them first-generation diaspora Scots, often show (dark) humour, in engaging with traditional forms of exile discourse. For instance, the Peebles-born Eric Bogle (b.1944), who has lived in Australia since 1969, in 'The End of an Auld Song', references the alleged remark of the Earl of Seafield at the ratification of the Union of the Parliaments in 1707, placing the piece firmly in the line of descent for Scots song. He refreshes it in reflecting on his personal past in a Scotland at once 'a bonnie Border toon, / A grey and ugly housing scheme', combining 'Castlemilk and Brigadoon' into a whole which is 'a state o' mind'.²² So too, Ed Miller, born in Edinburgh and living in Austin, Texas, since 1968, muses on his 'Home Away from Home', in the guise of *The Edinburgh Rambler*.²³ Scottish-based singers, too, have had success in producing Scots songs in this vein, focusing on the experience of exile. Take, for instance, the thoughtful responses of The Proclaimers, in their 'Letter from America' to the experience of 'the blood that flowed away / across the ocean to the second chance'. This piece, appreciated by Scots within the nation as much as by emigrants, is infused with a sense of exile from within, in their case from the former industrialised nation: 'Bathgate [. . .] Linwood [. . .] Methil no more'.²⁴

What is considered 'Scots' outside of the physical nation can differ from domestic definitions. Scots, Gaelic and Irish materials are often considered together as 'Celtic' song (sometimes conjoined to the songs of 'Celtic' language areas, like Brittany) – in itself, a highly contestable term, linked to post-Romantic national definitions.²⁵ Similarly, in the context of communities with Ulster-Scots connections, the term 'Scotch-Irish' is used. Examples include the National Public

Radio (USA) show 'Thistle and the Shamrock', or the online station, 'Celtic Radio' (which also includes traditional English songs).²⁶ Sometimes the Scotch-Irish category is popularly associated with specific diaspora communities, such as those of the Appalachian area of North America, including eastern Tennessee, as well as North Carolina, and other areas including western Pennsylvania and northern New England.²⁷

In short, 'Scots song' is a floating term internationally, with particular resonances that are absent for indigenous audiences although often, it has to be said, skilfully explored by Scottish performers on tour. Events from the Clear Lake Celtic Festival in Houston to the 'Celtic Colours' festival in Cape Breton offer opportunities for interactions within a broadly 'Celtic' area. To take the latter, the 2011 festival included Appalachian, Acadian, Irish and Scottish – from Scotland and Nova Scotia – performers, including well-known exponents of Scots song like Karine Polwart, Dougie Maclean and Archie Fisher.²⁸

Songs generated in England, similarly, are often adapted using Scots language for performance within Scotland, or seen as representative of Scotland in the wider English-speaking world. From the eighteenth century onwards, there was a vogue for 'Scotch song', a lyric form with specific characteristics. As Matthew Gelbart noted:

in England, the so-called 'Scotch songs,' whether [...] of Scottish origin or faked by English theater composers [...] came to be taken as lessons in simplicity and moral attitudes, or as pastoral satire. When Scots began to publish these songs, they had the same focus (though, with their own dignity at stake, the moral aspect was obviously stressed and the pastoral satire much rarer).²⁹

Examples in England include those by Thomas D'Urfey (1653?–1723) in Henry Playford and John Young's *Wit and Mirth; or Pills to Purge Melancholy*. Many were his own compositions, such as 'Twas within a furlong of Edinborough town', first published in 1696 in *Deliciae Musicae*, in which 'Bonny Jocky blithe and gay' attempts to seduce 'Jenny making hay' on the premise that marriage is now no longer à la mode.³⁰

The 'Scotch song' was just as influential in Scotland. Several of D'Urfey's publications, 'Gilderoy' for example, were included by the Leadhills-born Allan Ramsay (1686–1758), of whom more below, in his *Tea Table Miscellany* of 1726 as well as the *Orpheus Caledonius* of 1733. Drawing on broadsides (see Chapter 21), this is a lament from the foot of the gallows by an about-to-be-bereaved woman to her Perthshire freebooter husband who was hanged c.1638; it was later polished and published by Thomas Campbell. The Scotch song crossed the Atlantic with ease as can be seen in settlers' collections, such as that of the Charles Carroll family of Maryland; examples include 'Katherine Ogie' (known as a broadside, set by Burns, and included in *Pills to Purge Melancholy*) and Francis Sempill's 'Maggie Lauder'.³¹

The term 'Scots song', furthermore, can be broken down into pieces with specific regional connotations. For instance, Walter Scott (1771–1832)'s *Minstrelsy*

of the Scottish Border (1802–3) suggests that the Border region – which, in this context, is centred on the historical Middle Marches around Eskdale and Liddesdale, with a focus, too, on Selkirkshire and Roxburghshire – had a distinctively martial national muse (volume I) with related interests in the supernatural. He does not use the term ‘Scots song’ explicitly in that collection, although ‘Johnnie Armstrong’ (Ch 169) is described as an ‘Anglo-Scots ballad’. Indeed, his collection, taking account of a dividing line in its title, is based on the premise of a cross-border culture, although most of his examples are from the Scots’ perspective.

Antiquarian collectors and their creative descendants were often interested in defining the region, with examples including [J Paterson’s] *The Ballads and Songs of Ayrshire* (1846–), and Malcolm McLaren Harper’s *The Bards of Galloway* (1889). Later critics, like David Buchan in *The Ballad and the Folk* (1972), pointed to North East Scotland as another border region (this time between Highland and Lowland culture) and, in responses to Walter Scott, as a focal point for song generation. Like Scott, Buchan privileged ballad as a significant national genre, and the people of the North East as ‘a distinctive breed’ with innately ‘moderate spirit’: ‘they found their aesthetic form in the ballad, where emotions were objectified in near-ritualized terms and subordinated to the dramatic recounting of factual event [...] the ballads served a cathartic function’.³²

Language usages, in addition, are crucial to determining what is understood as ‘Scots song’. The term generally includes any song wholly in the Scots language or tempering Scots with English (often, during the editing or re-writing of orally-transmitted songs for publication, ‘formalisations’ into English occur; similarly, singers mediate Scots songs with English either because of aesthetic preferences or audience demands).³³ Using Scots in the modern period, and particularly after the Union of the Parliaments, as David Buchan points out, ‘helped maintain a sense of native identity against the pervasive threat of alien anglicization’; Mrs Brown of Falkland, for instance, ‘composed ballads in Scots because Scots was for her the language of *real* speech and *real* feeling’.³⁴ Thoughtful modern songwriters from Adam McNaughtan to Brian McNeill also use Scots language as an integral part of their compositions, involving (often tongue-in-cheek) cultural definition and political protest.

However, a tight definition based around purely or largely Scots language pieces could be misleading. Take, for instance, songs composed in related language groups like that of Ulster Scots.³⁵ Audiences and critics often assume this is ‘Scots song’, transposed into an Irish context; this impression can be upheld by examples of shared repertoire. The Ulster Scots Agency features a selection of Ulster-Scots children’s songs on its website, many of which would be equally familiar in Scotland, from ‘Bobby Shaftoe’ to ‘Auld Lang Syne’. Others, however, would not be, like ‘The Belfast Titanic Song’ and ‘The Big May Fair of Ballyclare’.³⁶ The situation is more complex, too, than that of locally based repertoires sharing language and musical features. As Willie Drennan explained in 2009, Ulster Scots music is not just ‘Scottish music played in Ulster’; for one, it has been mediated by localisation over generations of performance; for another, much is self-generated and influenced by ‘other parts of Ireland [...] England or [...] America’ through exchange with the Ulster diaspora in these places. In short:

Ulster Scots folk music is the music that has been played by people who see themselves as being Ulster Scots. Some of the tunes that we play have been played all over the British Isles or played in North America for many generations [...] it's the music that has been played here traditionally.³⁷

Similarly, notionally 'Scots' songs sometimes feature passages in the other languages of Scotland, mainland and island. There are traces of Norn, for instance, in the 'Unst Boat Song' from Shetland. Gaelic language elements can be found in, for instance, 'Erin go Bragh' and 'The Russian Jew'.³⁸ Indeed 'Scots' can be used, in one of its senses, to refer to the 'Gaelic language, supposedly spoken by the Scots before they arrived in Ireland, and then believed to survive as Basque'. Here, for reasons of space, the more commonly-held definition of Scots as 'the language of lowland Scots' is understood; historical and literary references to 'Scottis metir' and 'Scottish poesy', along with more contested examples such as 'Scots-jiggs' being sung to mock the Covenanters, make this a quite acceptable and precedented definition in the present context.³⁹ Such linguistic composites and resonances add depth and meaning to the corpus, although they are often ignored by all but specialist collectors.

Popular perceptions of what constitutes a 'Scots song' are, to complicate matters further, more inclusive. Audiences from furth of Scotland, from social groups who are unfamiliar with traditional-style source singers or prepared to suspend their own knowledge, often define Scots song in relation to performance conventions, by performers perceived to be particularly Scottish. From the late nineteenth century onwards, those familiar with music hall, later variety and film, stars like Harry Lauder (1870–1950) and Will Fyffe (1885–1947), would associate 'Scots song' with comical and sentimental pieces such as Lauder's 'Roamin through the Gloamin' and 'A wee Deoch-an-Doris' and Fyffe's 'I belong to Glasgow'.⁴⁰ Broadcasters associated with Scots songs include Robert Wilson (1907–1964), featured in the influential BBC television *The White Heather Club* (1958–68). Most of its cast members, incidentally, were formally trained either as singers – Kenneth McKellar (1927–2011), associated with pieces from 'Song of the Clyde' to 'The Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle'; Bill McCue (1934–1999) and Moira Anderson (b.1938) – or as actors, like Andy Stewart (1933–1993), known for his compositions like 'Donald, Where's your Troosers' and 'Campbeltown Loch (I Wish You Were Whisky)'.⁴¹

More recently, there have been, arguably, more sophisticated media representations of Scots song through the BBC's *Hogmanay Show* and, in the past decade, *Hogmanay Live*. In this context, 'Scots song' would be associated with performers (often focusing on Burns songs) like Paolo Nutini and Karine Polwart (2006) and Amy Macdonald (2007). Radio, too, has been influential in constructing popular understandings of what Scots songs means. In this context, it is worth mentioning broadcasters with long careers, like Robbie Shepherd (b.1936) and Archie Fisher (b.1939), along with specific and thoughtful programmes, like Ewan MacColl (1915–1989)'s 'Singing the Fishing', part of his *Radio Ballad* BBC series. Scots song in its popular sense, then, encompasses a wide variety of popular, 'art', and cross-generic styles.

Another factor is the manner of generation and consumption of song, related to distinctions amongst audiences. In *Society and the Lyric*, Thomas Crawford distinguishes 'artificial song' and 'popular song'. The former is:

a particularly insipid variety, often sung by professional singers [...] a peculiar sub-class of art-song [...] associated with a particular social group, the 'polite', and above all with the women of that group [...] their idea-content was often that of the mid-eighteenth-century cult of sentiment.

The latter is as:

a generic term [...] (1) composed songs by popular writers of certain conventional types, sung to Scots or popular English tunes; (2) slip or chapbook songs [...] (3) 'Broadside' or 'stall' ballads [...] (4) folk-songs, subject to the laws that govern oral transmission.

Crawford suggests that these categories of songs 'appealed to all of lowlands Scotland', without the socio-economic biases one might assume between 'the "masses" and the "educated."' ⁴² If this categorisation is accepted, then the means of composition and preferences in consumption are elements to be considered too.

'Scots song', finally, is period-specific, as Hamish Henderson noted in 1964 – his article, featuring performances by Jeannie Robertson, Jean Redpath and Matt McGinn, is in itself a revealing snapshot of songs and singers in Scotland at that time. ⁴³ Today, 'Scots song' tends to be understood in a somewhat inclusive sense, covering a variety of generic categories and musical styles. This can be seen by surveying current websites such as www.youtube.com, where a search for 'Scots Song' leads to hits from Gaelic mouth music to military pipe bands to songs by Robert Burns to Eurovision entries. In the case of retail platforms, such as www.Musicinscotland.com, the topic is defined simply as 'music from Scotland and its Celtic cousins'. ⁴⁴ Other interactive sites, including the forum www.mudcat.org, take a similarly inclusive approach.

To summarise: 'Scots song' can reflect a point of geographical or ethnic origin, language, collectors' nation-building agendas, stylistic characteristics (the 'Scotch song') and popular understandings. It is understood differently in various historical contexts, and from varying geographical perspectives. For the rest of this chapter, for convenience, I use it primarily to refer to songs with significant Scots language elements which have been generated within Scotland.

COLLECTION AND CANONISATION

The corpus of Scots song, as it stands today, was shaped from notions of perceived necessity: to preserve what were seen as dying traditions, and to identify a national or regionally-based canon. From the seventeenth century onwards, collectors from Scotland and beyond sought to define the nation, often in the context of Enlightenment attitudes to Scots language materials: theirs was a

counter movement to anglicisation. Richard Dorson in *The British Folklorists*, while addressing the phenomenon of national self-definition within Scotland, considers Walter Scott to have been the first national 'literary folklorist'.⁴⁵ In fact, although the term 'folklorist' is, of course, anachronistic, the study (or at least itemisation) of Scots song as a phenomenon began somewhat earlier than the nineteenth century.

While there is little direct evidence prior to the seventeenth century, the *Complaynte of Scotland* (1549) includes references to Scots songs from 'Tam Lin' to 'Froggy would a-wooing go', including the earliest mentions of several well known ballads, in the 'Monologue Recreative', 6th chapter. James Wedderburn (1495–1553)'s *Ane Compendious Booke of Godly and Spirituall Songs collected out of sundrie partes of the Scripture, with sundrie of other Ballates changed out of prophaine sanges, for avoyding of sinne and harlotrie, with augmentation of sundrie gude and godlie Ballates not contenit in the first editioun* (1567) – usually referred to as the *Gude and Godlie Ballads* – was a collection of Scots songs circulated in broadside form which had been reworked to ensure that they were religiously appropriate for the time. They suggest vibrant activity in Scots song at this period. There are examples, too, of Scots songs known as broadsides in the seventeenth century – Child notes a 'Blow ye winds blow' (Ch 2), for instance, of this type. However, it was not until the eighteenth century that collectors and editors – in particular, those who framed their collections as 'national' – started the process of delineating, in print, a tradition of poetry and song in Scots.

James Watson, in *A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems Both Ancient and Modern* (1706–1711), identified a burgeoning trend to publish collections of poetry in Scotland's 'Neighbouring Kingdoms and States' and claimed his was the first to be published in Scots dialect. Beginning with James V's 'Christis Kirk on the Green', the collection includes a number of Scots songs such as 'The Blithesome Wedding', William Clelland's 'Hollow My Fancy' and 'Old Long-Syne'. Watson's pioneering identification of a 'Scots' tradition' was closely followed by the work of Allan Ramsay (1686–1758). Ramsay's *Scots Songs* (1719) and *Tea Table Miscellany: A Collection of Scots Songs* in three volumes (1723, 1726 and 1727) with an additional volume in 1737, were hugely influential in asserting the significance of Scots language songs and in inspiring later collectors, as was his *Evergreen: being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious before 1600* (1724). Linguistically, Ramsay played a vital role in invigorating interest in Scots language songs (as well as poetry), rehabilitating what was often seen as an inferior, vernacular means of expression. Neil Grobman notes that Ramsay's work 'gave actual folksong collecting in Scotland its initial influence' in an article which also draws attention to David Hume's important, if indirect, role in this respect.⁴⁶

Account should also be taken of nominally 'external' influences, such as the Ossianic reconstructions of James Macpherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Fingal* (1761/2) and *Temora* (1765). Despite or perhaps because of their controversial provenance and Macpherson's precise level of reworking of collected sources, these undoubtedly inspired those interested in song to collect pieces in Scots. Macpherson certainly influenced the composition of national epics in Europe

and the United States, and while his reception there has been considered in depth, it remains to be fully explored as to what his precise impact was on Scots song collectors and songwriters.⁴⁷

The establishment of a Scots song canon has also to be seen in the British context. David Herd (1732–1810), in his *Ancient and Modern Scottish songs* (1769, revised and expanded 1776) produced his work at least partly in response to the English collector Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), itself a response to Macpherson. Herd's collection of over three hundred items aimed to establish the seniority, and superiority, of the Scottish song tradition. The English antiquarian Joseph Ritson (1752–1803) should also be mentioned here. Dismissing John Pinkerton's *Select Scottish Ballads* (1783) in a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1784, and having already produced *A Select Collection of English Songs* (1783), Ritson's Scottish works include *The Caledonian Muse: A Chronological Selection of Scottish Poetry*, 1785. Unfortunately, the introductory essay, in manuscript, was destroyed in a fire and the text itself was not published until 1821. Ritson's *Scotish Songs* [sic] (1794) proved influential and again refuted Pinkerton; in response to Pinkerton's notion that the Picts founded Scotland, Ritson's *Annals of the Caledonians, Picts, and Scots* offered a line of Celtic origin to the Scottish nation. As Janet Sorenson has established, both Herd and Ritson showed particular understandings of the relationship between orality and printed texts, and of the assumed musicality of Scottish texts.⁴⁸

These undertakings and debates need to be understood in the context of European collecting and cultural transmissions, with the work of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), for instance, playing an influential role. Herder's collection *Von Deutschen Art und Kunst* (1773), which included a piece by Goethe, was highly influential in the formation of ideas around national character for European nations including Scotland. The ballads of Gottfried Burger (1747–1794), too, were influential on Walter Scott's understanding of the ballad genre and, as Robert Crawford has noted, on the way he approached Scots language ballad texts.⁴⁹

To return to material generated within Scotland by Scots, it is vital to consider the work of James Johnson (1753–1811), editor and compiler of the *Scots Musical Museum* (1787–1803). This is important both for its comprehensiveness, at around six hundred songs, and for the possibilities it gave Robert Burns as a platform for collecting and reworking traditional material in the Scots language. Donald Low described this as 'the most comprehensive and valuable of all Scottish song collections', partly because it includes unornamented music.⁵⁰ This is an opinion shared by many. Ellen J Stekert, for instance, noted, 'it is a collection of almost unparalleled scope in the eighteenth century, reflecting the early conscious recognition by the Scots of their cultural heritage'.⁵¹ Parallels should be drawn with its contemporary musical collecting initiatives, such as that around James Oswald (1710–1769)'s *A Curious Collection of Scots Tunes* (1740) and the multi-volumed *Caledonian Pocket Companion* published from 1745 onwards and containing over 500 tunes, many setting well known Scots songs from 'The Mucking of Geordie's Byre' to 'The Bonny Earl of Murray'.⁵² Burns used several of these airs – 'Go Fetch to me a pint of wine' and 'It is na Jean, thy bonny face', for instance, were both set to Oswald-published airs. Also worth mentioning is

George Thomson (1757–1851) and his *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs* (1793); he played a major role in introducing Scots songs to composers from Haydn to Beethoven, whose settings gave international exposure to the songs of James Hogg and Robert Burns, for instance.

'Scots song', in the collections mentioned previously, is an inclusive term – songs are sometimes grouped by category (as outlined with Herd) but there is no concentration on one particular genre. One of the first genre-based sets was Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–3), which marked a major shift in identifying ballad as the most characteristic and important of Scottish genres. Influenced by Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* as well as by family song repertoires, Scott's work was, of course, in line with the post-Enlightenment drive towards epic and 'national' styles, shifting Scotland – with Scott playing a prominent role – towards a romantic conceptualisation of its past and its literature, oral and written. The *Minstrelsy*, in its first volume, focuses on the historical, on the 'military' characteristics of writers and audiences, and the 'valour' expressed, particularly on the territories of the Middle Marches of the Borders. The later multiple-edition volumes added more romantic texts and included 'imitations' by Scott and his circle. This began the process of defining the precise characteristics of ballad, later confirmed by Child. Scott has sometimes been accused, most spectacularly in the apocryphal remarks of Margaret Laidlaw, of undue tampering with texts but, as I have argued elsewhere, although sometimes 'heavy handed', he performed a valuable service in encouraging interest in and knowledge of ballad texts and, more generally, Scots songs.⁵³

Other collections featuring Scots songs include Robert Cromeek (1770–1812)'s *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway song* (1810), which offered a contrasting interest in the lyrical, assisted by the zealous collecting – and re-writing – of Allan Cunningham. James Hogg (1770–1835)'s *The Jacobite Relics* (1819–21), commissioned by the Highland Society of London, was seminal in identifying a category of Jacobite song, some translated from the Gaelic, with Scots idioms. He sometimes includes 'amendments' alongside source texts – in some instances, as in 'Charlie is my Darling', this shows the robustness of the original song in Scots – for 'brawly weel he kend the way / To please a Highland lass' (II, L). Bawdy songs in Scots, incidentally, were vastly underrepresented in printed collections, with the exception of the privately circulated (Burns-related) *Merry Muses of Caledonia*, although, more recently, work like Peter Buchan's *Secret Songs of Silence* has gained new attention.⁵⁴

Influenced by Scott, William Motherwell (1797–1835) produced the influential collection of *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern* (1827) which is unusual for its period in advocating the minimum of editorial intervention in the presentation of texts. The Peebles-born Edinburgh publisher Robert Chambers (1802–1871) in *The Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (1826), *The Scottish Songs* (1829) and *The Songs of Scotland Prior to Burns* (1862), played an important role in preserving and transmitting repertoire. More recent collectors of Scots song include Gavin Greig (1856–1914) whose *Folk Songs of the North East* (Peterhead, 1914) and *Last Leaves of Traditional Ballads and Ballad Airs collected in Aberdeenshire* (Aberdeen, 1925) were seminal regional collections. The full extent of his work with James Bruce

Duncan (1848–1917) was brought to public attention more recently through the eight-volume *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection* (1981–2002). John Ord's *Bothy Songs and Ballads* (1930)⁵⁵ cross-references well with this, foregrounding farm-related pieces in Scots.

The pioneering work of the School of Scottish Studies (f.1951) and their peers drew attention to a hitherto neglected tradition of Scottish Travellers' repertoires, anchored in the Scots language. *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland* (1977) was highly praised for its scholarship, as was *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon, the Folklore of a Family of Scots Travellers*, and the *Scottish Tradition* series, featuring recordings from many of the finest Traveller singers, including (with apologies to those omitted from this necessarily truncated list) Jeannie Robertson (1908–1975), her daughter Lizzie Higgins (1929–1993) and Jimmy Macbeath (1894–1972). Hamish Henderson introduced the American collector Kenneth Goldstein (1927–1995) to Lucy Stewart; the latter's recordings feature on her eponymous release of 1975. More recently, Travellers have published their traditions, such as Sheila Stewart (b.1935)'s *From the Heart of the Tradition* (2000), Elizabeth Stewart (b.1939)'s *Binnorie* (2004) and the late Stanley Robertson (1940–2009)'s *The College Boy* (2009). Elizabeth Stewart has recently published *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen*, compiled and edited by Alison McMorland.

Recordings worth mentioning in this context include the entire *Scottish Tradition* series (Greentrax) which showcases material from the School of Scottish Studies Archive; the Serge Hovey collection of the songs of Robert Burns featuring Jean Redpath; and the monumental contribution of Fred Freeman, including the Linn twelve volume series of *The Complete Songs of Robert Burns* (1995–2002) and the current project to publish the works of Robert Tannahill (2006 ongoing), whose well known songs in Scots include 'The Braes o' Balquhiddy' (also known as the 'Wild Mountain Thyme'). The Tobar an Dualchas / Kist o Riches website, too, integrates a range of archival recordings which form a searchable resource of great depth; the term 'Scots song', for instance, yields thirty pages worth of hits, ranging from field-captured material to radio recordings.

Genre-specific collections include recent work on children's songs in Scots. Pioneering work like James Ritchie's *The Singing Street* (1964), focusing on urban transmission contexts in Edinburgh and in the vein of the Opie's *Lore and Language of Children* (1959), and *The Singing Game* (1985) have been followed by Ewan McVicar's *Chokit on a Tattie* (2006) and *Doh Ray Me, When Ah Wis Wee* (2007). As defined by McVicar, in *Doh Ray Me . . .*, the distinctive characteristics of Scottish children's song and rhyme include 'vigour and bounce, direct language, the Scots voice, implied humour and the topics of childhood, home life, dance, parental actions that include an element of archaic control over women, courting, violent events and a surreal touch'.⁵⁶ He identifies a distinctively 'female' voice to this, too.

The current role of children's performers *The Singing Kettle*, deserves mention: they have played a vital role in introducing and reinforcing knowledge of traditional repertoire among the under-fives and their families; Cilla Fisher reflects on their active programme of recording and touring in a set of extracts accessible through the Tobar an Dualchas / Kist o Riches website. Modern trans-

mission contexts outwith the playgrounds and family situations that have been studied in the past include input from the 'Book bug' (formerly 'Rhymetimes') weekly sessions run by the Scottish Book Trust, which teach traditional songs to parents and children through local libraries, with librarians often incorporating local repertoire preferences into this formal context.⁵⁷ This is a hitherto unstudied context which could yield interesting results: it is certainly a path to invigorating knowledge of children's songs and traditions.

CURRENT AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In terms of present activity, there are a number of active academic projects which encompass Scots song within their remit. Examples include the bringing together of the archival collection of the American folklorist James Madison Carpenter as a joint project between the Universities of Aberdeen and Sheffield and the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress; these holdings contain substantial elements of Scots song. The Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches project, mentioned above, makes accessible substantial amounts of material which will be immensely useful to students in this field, drawing on the archival materials of the School of Scottish Studies Archive at the University of Edinburgh and other collections. The Elphinstone Institute at the University of Aberdeen, too, has archival resources, and an ongoing collection and publication remit, and provides a platform for the study and performing of songs in Scots, from ballad to religious songs. The work of the Royal Conservatoire, formerly the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, through their BA (Scottish Music) and related programmes, is also providing a valuable service in educating a new generation of skilled performers of Scots songs and highly competent fieldworkers.

The University of Glasgow's Centre for Robert Burns Studies is engaged in a major reassessment of his songs in Scots and English as part of the Burns' *Songs for George Thomson* project. Similarly, the songs of James Hogg are currently undergoing reassessment as part of a joint project between the Universities of Glasgow and Stirling linked to the Stirling/South Carolina edition of the *Collected Works of James Hogg*. This will lead to a new publication of Hogg's songs, and has already yielded a searchable online index and CD. The University of Glasgow holds the substantial collection relating to political song made by Norman and Janey Buchan, which was formerly part of the Centre for Political Song at the Glasgow Caledonian University. Its new home makes it part of a project to promote an understanding of political song on the national and international arenas. The work of grassroots organisations like the Traditional Music and Song Association (TMSA) of Scotland plays a vital role in promoting Scots song in performance contexts, both during showcase festivals and through its network of active local branches throughout Scotland. Scottish Culture & Traditions (SC&T) is active in the North East of Scotland promoting song along with music and dance. Online resources which provide a comprehensive listing of performances and festivals where it is possible to hear Scots songs include www.scottish-folk-music.com.

The work of the ethnologist can have both beneficial and detrimental

effects. Certain traditions are foregrounded to the near-exclusion of others. Ballad, for instance, is extremely well studied, with an International Ballad Commission (Kommission für Volksdichtung) ensuring sustained and detailed study of Scots balladry within a European context. These 'muckle sangs', which have rather macho and medieval associations at times, seem to appeal to the romantic side (as well as the aesthetic wonderment) of the modern collector, just as they did in the nineteenth century. Children's song, despite the sterling work of dedicated collectors, is somewhat denigrated except in the context of promoting literacy within the pre-school and school environment, despite the evident richness of this area for research. The cross-fertilisation with the popular, too, can be marginalised – the 'crossover' work of Eddi Reader in relation to Burns, for instance, frowned on by the purist academic; the lingering distaste at the likes of Harry Lauder interfering with the need to intelligently assess the impact of the music-hall Scot on Scots song and perceptions of the Scot (outside of popular cultural practitioners).

Traveller traditions have been brought to the fore, following on from the pioneering collecting work of Hamish Henderson and the fieldworkers of the 1950s, providing a rich national resource for Scots song. However, other areas, such as South West Scotland, have been neglected for reasons I have suggested elsewhere.⁵⁸ Equally, while the School of Scottish Studies archive collection is well promoted and well used, there are other significant collections of Scots song in manuscript and printed form which are much less well recognised: one of the best examples is Broughton House in Kirkcudbright, managed by the National Trust for Scotland, home of a substantial song-related collection, including the correspondence between William Macmath and Francis James Child, as well as many rare publications relating to Scots song. The Carnegie Library in Dunfermline has interesting material relating to bawdy song, including an annotated transcript of the first edition of *Merry Muses of Caledonia*. An audit of all such material, perhaps trawling, too, for material in private collections, would be immensely useful to future scholars of Scots song.

FUTURE PATHWAYS

Given the discussions above, future pathways for ethnological enquiry in relation to Scots song might include some of the following:

- The cross-fertilisation of Scots song with the songs of other language groups, whether of long-standing use in Scotland (Gaelic and English, for instance) or related to immigrant groups (often of long standing) including Asian, Polish and Italian Scots. This could include considering linguistic and cultural cross-overs and exchanges.
- The impact of areas of long-standing cultural contact on the growth and development of Scots song, e.g. Ireland and England, particularly in Border areas, and the impact of 'being Scottish' on first and later generation emigrants, in terms of repertoire and new compositions; what constitutes Scots-language 'Celtic' song

- * Considering how the 'foreign' is adapted into the context of Scots songs, for instance, broadcast and related imports and exchanges from and into American and Canada
- * The impact of collectors and performers of Gaelic song on collection and performance in Scots, and *vice versa*
- * The notion of the 'regional' in relation to the 'national' to collecting in Scots, and the traditions of 'undercollected' areas, such as South West Scotland
- * The meaning of popular song in Scots to Scots and non-Scots: how this defines the nation: beyond purism
- * The usefulness of language or geographically based distinctions (and indeed distinctions based round academically-recognised genres) and their relationship to singers' definitions of what constitutes a Scots song
- * Exploring under-appreciated genres, such as children's songs, and sporting songs, and examining their modern transmission, in a variety of public and private contexts
- * Compiling an audit of material relating to Scots song, including manuscript and privately-held resources, in collections within Scotland and, ideally, beyond.

NOTES

- 1 Herd, 1776, vi.
- 2 See Hodgart, 1950; Buchan, 1997; Porter, 2009.
- 3 See Crawford, 1979.
- 4 See Livingstone, 1994.
- 5 See too McVicar, 2010.
- 6 Lyle, 1997, 12.
- 7 Porter, 2003, 24.
- 8 Oring, 1986.
- 9 *Gaelic and Scots Folk Songs*, 1960.
- 10 See Shapiro, 1990.
- 11 Beaton, 2008 and 2010.
- 12 Kennedy, 2010.
- 13 Quoted in Olson, 1998, 431.
- 14 I am extremely grateful to Phyllis Martin for allowing me access to her typescript collection. See too *Songs Collected Frae Aw the Airts*, 2010 and Stravaig, 1994.
- 15 Cowan, 2000, 10.
- 16 Murison, 1964, 45.
- 17 See Philipose, 1990.
- 18 See Turriff, 1996.
- 19 Narvaez, 1992.
- 20 Recorded Stravaig, 1994.
- 21 Moir, 1829.
- 22 Bogle and Munro, 1997.
- 23 Miller, 1998.
- 24 Proclaimers, 1987.
- 25 See Porter, 1998.

- 26 See <www.thistleradio.com> [accessed June 2012]; <www.celticradio.net> [accessed June 2012].
- 27 See Leyburn, 1962.
- 28 The Association of Highland Games includes a listing of Scottish festivals in the US, at <<http://www.asgf.org/>> [accessed June 2012]; parallel information online relating to Australian and Canadian festivals, for instance, is more ad hoc.
- 29 Gelbart, 2007, 45.
- 30 D'Urfe, 1791, 79–80.
- 31 Hildebrand and Hildebrand, 1991.
- 32 Buchan, 1972, 15–16.
- 33 *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, 2004 (online).
- 34 Buchan, 1972, 69.
- 35 *Ulster-Scots Agency*.
- 36 <<http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com/weans/library/music/UlsterScotsSongs.pdf>> [accessed June 2012].
- 37 Drennan, 2009.
- 38 Greig-Duncan, 1981–2002, VIII.
- 39 *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, 2004.
- 40 See Maloney, 2003; Irving, 1968.
- 41 *The White Heather Club*, 2005.
- 42 Crawford, 1979, 8–9.
- 43 Henderson, 1964.
- 44 <http://www.musicinscotland.com/acatalog/About_Us.html> [accessed June 2012].
- 45 Crawford, 2000; Dorson, 1968.
- 46 Grobman, 1975, 18.
- 47 See Stafford and Gaskill, 1998; Gaskill, 1996; Gaskill, 2004; Bold, 2001.
- 48 Sorenson, 2007.
- 49 Crawford, 2001, 140.
- 50 Stekert, 1991, I, 1.
- 51 Stekert, 1966, 33.
- 52 See Concerto Caledonia, 1999; Oswald, 2006–7.
- 53 Bold, 2000.
- 54 Barke et al., 2009.
- 55 Ord, 1995.
- 56 McVicar, 2007, 1–2.
- 57 *Scottish Book Trust, 'Babies and Early Years'*.
- 58 Bold, 2009.

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