

9: 'Voice' in Folk song

Quotes, Texts and Sources

The importance of 'Voice'

'Voice refers to the capacity to make oneself heard. Someone who can speak has voice; someone who cannot lacks voice. Someone who can make him- herself heard may be said to have a voice; someone who is unable to make him- herself heard lacks or is denied a voice' (Juffermans and Van der Aa 2013: 112)

Johnstone (2000) on voice:

Johnstone challenges the notion of voice as 'a strategically adopted way of sounding that a speaker designs and modifies as a result of analyzing the rhetorical or aesthetic task at hand. In this conventional view, the issue of how speakers "project themselves into discourse" (Cherry 1998) arises only in the context of relatively overt strategic choices in relatively planned discourse' (2000: 405)

...

'I am interested not in exploring differences in how speakers are connected to discourse and language in different ideological and material contexts (which can indeed vary widely, with diverse consequences), but in thinking about how speakers are always *necessarily* connected to discourse and language. I ask, in other words, what it is about language, about human beings, and about human interaction that connects particular individual human beings with particular utterances and ways of speaking and thinking? (2000: 406-407, emphasis added)

Frith's notions of voice

'The voice ... may or may not be a key to someone's identity, but it is certainly a key to the ways in which we change identities, pretend to be something we're not, deceive people, lie' (1996: 197).

... a singer's act ... is complex. There is, first of all, the character presented as the protagonist of the song, its singer and narrator, the implied person controlling the plot, with an attitude and tone of voice; but there may also be a 'quoted' character, the person whom the song is about (and singers, like lecturers, have their own mannered ways of indicating quote marks). On top of this there is the character of the singer as star, what we know about them, or are led to believe about them through their packaging and publicity, and then, further, an understanding of the singer as a person, what we like to imagine they are really like, what is revealed, in the end, by their voice. (1996: 198; emphasis in the original)

Voices 'in Song Practice'

The Conscientious Objector's Lament

Perhaps you wonder what I am, I will explain to you
My conscience is the only thing that helps to pull me through
Objection is a thing that I have studied thoroughly
I don't object to fighting huns but should hate them fighting me

Non-combatant bat talions are fairly in my line
The Sergeant always hates me and he calls me 'baby mine'
But, oh, I got so cross with him and rose to the attack
So when he called me 'Ethel' I just called him 'Beatrice' back.

Send out the army and the navy
Send out the rank and file
Send out the brave old territorials
They'll face the danger with a smile
Send out the boys of the old brigade
Who made old England free.
Send out me brother, me sister and me mother
But for Gawd's sake don't send me.

We have a nasty officer, he is a horrid brute
Last Friday he was terse with me 'cause I did not salute
But I cut him twice today and then he asked the reason, see
I said, 'I thought, my Captain dear, you were still cross with me.'

Send out the army and the navy
Send out the rank and file
Send out the brave old territorials
They'll face the danger with a smile
Send out the boys of the old brigade
Who made old England free.
Send out the bakers, and the blooming profit makers
But for Gawd's sake don't send me.

I was doing a fatigue the other day at half past two
A pal of mine got jealous of the job I had to do
When he asked me how I got it, well, I said, 'You must be dense,
I'm with the second Lieutenant, it's merely influence.'

Send out the army and the navy
Send out the rank and file
Send out the territorials
They'll face danger with a smile
Where are the boys of the old brigade
Who made old England free?
Send out my uncle and clean out every funk hole
But for God's sake don't send me.

Written by Davy Burnaby & Gitz Rice - 1917
Performed by Alfred Lester (1872-1925)

The Unfortunate Tailor

(trad.)

Oh list, oh list to me sorrowful lay,
And attention give to me song, I pray,
When you've heard it all you'll say
That I'm an unfortunate tailor.

For once I was happy as a bird in a tree,
My Sarah was all in the world to me,
Now I'm cut out by a son of the sea,
And she's left me here to bewail her.

Why did Sarah serve me so?
No more will I stitch and no more will I
sew;

Me thimble and me needle to the winds I'll
throw
And I'll go and 'list for a sailor.

Now me days were honey and me nights
were the same,
Till a man called Cobb from the ocean came
With his long black beard and his muscular
frame,
A captain on board of a whaler.

Well he spent his money both frank and
free,
With his tales of the land and his songs of
the sea,
And he stole me Sarah's heart from me,
And blighted the hopes of a tailor.

Well, once I was with her, when in came
Cobb
"Avast!" he cried, "you blubbery swab.
If you don't knock off I'll scuttle your
knob!"
And Sarah smiled at the sailor.

So now I'll cross the raging sea,
For Sarah's proved untrue to me.
Me heart's locked up and she's the key;
What a very unfeeling gaoler.

And so now, kind friends, I'll bid you adieu,
No more me woes shall trouble you;
I'll travel the country through and through,
And go and 'list for a sailor.

The Tailor's Breeches

It's of a brisk young tailor, a story I'll relate.
He lived at an inn called the "Ram and the Gate",
The "Ram and the Gate" was the place where he did dwell
And it's wine and women's company he loved exceeding well.
Oh! well, Oh! well. Oh! well, my boys, Oh! well.
It's wine and women's company he loved exceeding well.

Now this tailor he'd been drinking a glass or two of wine
And not being used to drink, it caused his face to shine.
It caused his face to shine just like the rising sun,
And he swore he'd have a bonny lass before he did go home.
Go home, go home, go home, my boys go home
And he swore he'd have a bonny lass before he did go home.

So he took her in his arms and he called her his dear honey
And as they both were talking, she was fingering his money.
She was fingering his money, when the tailor smiled and said,
"If you lend me your petticoats, I'll dance like a maid."
A maid, a maid a maid my boys a maid
If you lend me your petticoats, I'll dance like a maid.

The tailor pulled his breeches off and the petticoats put on
The tailor danced a dance and the lady sang a song;
The tailor danced a dance and they played a pretty tune
And they danced the tailor's breeches right out of the room.
 The room, the room, the room, my boys, the room,
 they danced the tailor's breeches right out of the room.

"Oh, have you ever seen a tailor undone as I'm undone?
My watch and my money and my breeches are all gone,
And now I am undone, I've become a 'garden flower'
And if I ever get my breeches back I'll never dance no more."
 No more, no more no more, my boys, no more.
 if I ever get my breeches back I'll never dance no more.

(From Marrow Bones, Purslow Collected from Jacob Baker, Bere Regis, Dorset and Robert Barrat, Dorset, 1905)

Voices in the ballad

Brown Adam

trad.

Oh who would wish for the wind to blow
Or the green leaves fall therewith,
And who would wish for a finer love
Than Brown Adam the smith.

Oh his hammer is of a beaten gold
And his anvil's all of steel.
Oh his fingers white they are my delight
And he blows at his bellows well.

But they have banished him, young Brown
 Adam,
From father and from mother.
And they have banished him, young Brown
 Adam,
From sister and from brother.

And they have banished him, young Brown
 Adam,
From the flower of all his kin.
And he's built him a bower in the gay
 greenwood
All between his lady and him.

And as it fell out all on one day,
Brown Adam he thought long.
And he is away to the gay greenwood
For to hunt him venison.

And he's taken his bow all in his hand
And his arrows one by one,
And he is away to the gay greenwood
As fast as he could run.

And he shot up and he shot down
The bird all on the briar.
And he sent it all to his gay lady,
Told her be all of good cheer.

And he shot up and he shot down
The flower all on the thorn.
And he sent it all to his gay lady,
Told her he would be home in the morn.

Brown Adam, he come to his own bower
 door
And he stood there a little way away.

And it was there that he spied a full false
knight
Come a-tempting his lady gay.

Oh the knight drew out a gay gold ring
That had cost him many's the pound.
“Oh grant me love, oh love, lady,
And this shall all be thine.”

“Oh I love Brown Adam well,” she says,
“And I know that he loves me.
And I would not give Brown Adam's love
For any false knight that I see.”

So the knight drew out a purse of gold
That was filled right up to the string.
“Oh grant me love, oh love, lady,
And this shall all be thine.”

“Oh I love Brown Adam well,” she says,
“And I know that he loves me
And I would not give Brown Adam's love
For any false knight such as thee.”

So the knight drew out his noble sword
And it flashed there all in her eye.
“Oh grant me love, oh love, lady,
Or through you this shall go.”

Then a-sighing says the lady gay,
“Brown Adam tarries long.”
Then up there jumped him Brown Adam,
He says, “Lady, I'm here at your hand.”

And he's made him leave his bow and arrow
And he's made him leave his brand. (sword)
And he's made him leave a far better thing,
Four fingers of his right hand.

Voices as I and You

I Just Can't Wait to Collect My Cards

Words: Ian Campbell, Music: John Dunkerley

I took this job when I left school and I thought it might be fun.
I signed the papers binding me till I was 21.

I just can't wait to collect my cards, I just can't wait to go..
For I can't get along with the people here and my work it bores me so.

I learnt a trade for what it's worth and the time has gone so slow,
But soon my birthday's coming up and I'll be free to go.

Now I think I'll wait till the wedding's over before I can break the tie,
For the girlfriend tells me we must save if a house we hope to buy.

Now I'll wait till the baby's born before I can be free,
But I understand a pregnant wife must have security.

Now I think I'll wait till the kid leaves school before I break away,
For growing kids eat money and I need the steady pay.

I think I'll wait till the house is mine before I say goodbye,
For the interest rates keep rising and the car it bleeds me dry.

Now I think I'll wait till retiring age before I risk a break,
For the pension scheme insures the wife and it's mainly for her sake.

Thank you for the gold watch, sir, the silver collection too,
But are you sure I have to go for I won't know what to do

I just can't bear to collect my cards, I just can't bear to go...
For I'm sure I'll miss the people here and my life it bores me so.

No Man's Land

Eric Bogle

Well, how do you do, Private William McBride,
Do you mind if I sit down here by your graveside?
And rest for a while in the warm summer sun,
I've been walking all day, and I'm nearly done.
And I see by your gravestone you were only 19
When you joined the glorious fallen in 1916,
Well, I hope you died quick and I hope you died clean
Or, Willie McBride, was it slow and obscene?

Did they Beat the drum slowly, did they play the pipes lowly?
Did the rifles fire o'er you as they lowered you down?
Did the bugles sound The Last Post in chorus?
Did the pipes play the Flowers of the Forest?

And did you leave a wife or a sweetheart behind
In some loyal heart is your memory enshrined?
And, though you died back in 1916,
To that loyal heart are you forever 19?
Or are you a stranger without even a name,
Forever enshrined behind some glass pane,
In an old photograph, torn and tattered and stained,
And fading to yellow in a brown leather frame?

The sun's shining down on these green fields of France;
The warm wind blows gently, and the red poppies dance.
The trenches have vanished long under the plow;
No gas and no barbed wire, no guns firing now.
But here in this graveyard that's still No Man's Land
The countless white crosses in mute witness stand
To man's blind indifference to his fellow man.
And a whole generation who were butchered and damned.

And I can't help but wonder, no Willie McBride,
Do all those who lie here know why they died?
Did you really believe them when they told you "The Cause?"
Did you really believe that this war would end wars?
Well the suffering, the sorrow, the glory, the shame
The killing, the dying, it was all done in vain,

For Willie McBride, it all happened again,
And again, and again, and again, and again.

References

- Juffermans, K. and Van der Aa, J. 2013. 'Analyzing voice in educational discourses', *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 44(2): 112–23.
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- Frith, Simon. 1996. *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.