8 Voices in the Folk Song

> People's classifications of songs by form and by function may provide important evidence of musical and extramusical transformation processes that are acceptable in a culture. They may also be relevant in assessing the effects of music. (Blacking 1973: 43)

Voices in Performance

The following four chapters are devoted to the sociolinguistic analysis of folk songs in various performance contexts. The current chapter and Chapter 9 focus on decisions made by singers in delivering different entextualisations of the song 'text', or 'blueprint,' occasioned by different types of performance (relational or representational, staged or impromptu, rehearsed or unrehearsed). The sociolinguistic model of song performance in Chapter 2 presents it as a social process enacting a ritual occasion. As such, it is distinct in different degrees from everyday social interaction, first of all in being $song_2$[1] and secondly in being carried out primarily to create or strengthen relations between the participants (performers and audience) or to represent to an audience specific aspects of human social experience. Folk song has the function of bonding participants through performance into communities of practice, several instantiations of which help to create a historically durable discourse community.

In Chapter 2 we discussed the need to key into the performance mode (PM) and, once the performance is over, to key out of it again in order to return to everyday social interaction. The purpose of this and the following chapters is to discuss what goes on and why, in performances involving folk songs, between keying into the performance mode (PM) and keying out.

[1] See the distinction between $song_1$ and $song_2$ made in Chapter 1.

Frith's Voices

In Chapter 5, we introduced Frith's hypothesis that all songs are, at the very least, 'implied narratives', by which he means narratives that are only hinted at, are only partly narrated or that can be derived from the account given in the rest of the lyrics. The majority of folk songs are in fact explicitly narrative, giving the audience access to different kinds of story. Other songs appear to have very little to do with storytelling. But, as Frith says, the central character in any song is the singer with 'an attitude' and 'in a situation' (albeit a fictive situation), 'talking to someone'. In the context of an 'implied narrative' , the listener needs to use her/his imagination to generate a story from what is heard. As Frith maintains, the lyrics of a song 'let us into songs as stories', and this is just as much the case with work songs like 'The Herrin's Heid' and 'Sally Brown' or cumulative drinking songs like 'The Barley Mow' or 'The Bargeman's Alphabet' ♧95 as it is with explicit stories like 'A Sailor's Life' or 'Geordie'. However, we disagree with Frith when he posits that the central character of a song is the singer her/himself. Singers ventriloquise[2] the voices of others, even when the story is a personal story, and we adopt this point of view on the grounds that a performance is primarily characterised by the feature of 'fictionality' .

To make such distinctions between different voices in a song, Frith (1996) suggests a set of levels, or layers, at which song performers function, which is reminiscent of the literary stylistic approach to 'voice levels'. It implies that the listener has to 'peel off' an upper voice layer to find deeper layers below. The theory we outline below allows for creative flexibility on the part of the singer to switch from one voice to another within a fictional world and to stylise the differences between voices in whatever way seems most appropriate. A singer always takes on the role of a performer, even in the work song settings discussed in Chapter 3. In the presence of an audience, in relational or representational performance, s/he sets her/himself up for evaluation. An evaluation of the singer is an evaluation of the singer *in that role* and *not* an evaluation of the singer as a person outside the performance mode. To use Schechner's definition (1985), the singer is not her/himself but is simultaneously not not her/himself in performance. Frith also contends that '[t]he 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). In this sense, the real key to his concept of 'voice' is contained in the following quotation, in which he appears to contradict the assumption that the singer is the central character of the song:

[2] We defined 'ventriloquism' in Chapter 4, following Middleton (2006), as 'giving a voice to someone, the Other, who is otherwise silent'.

> . . . 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. (ibid.: 198; emphasis in the original)

There are at least five voice levels to be accounted for here: (1) the singer/narrator = the implied person controlling the plot; (2) the character = the protagonist of the song; (3) a 'quoted' character = the person the song is about; (4) the character of the singer as a star; (5) the singer outside the performance situation as a person. Presenting voices as different layers of fictionality or reality, however, cannot account for the immensely more creative options offered by song lyrics in presenting different voices for the singer to ventriloquise. A socio-cognitive understanding of voice is superior to viewing it as a layer or lamination of analysis, and we argue in favour of voice conceptualised as *an instance of languaging adapted to a particular interactional context*, which a speaker (or in our case, singer) can internalise as a part of her/his 'self'.

Voice and Voicing

The terms 'voice' and 'voicing', defined in this subsection within a socio-cognitive theory of languaging and musicking such as that outlined in Chapter 1, are central to our discussion in this chapter. Psycholinguistic theories of language acquisition informed by the socio-cognitive orientation in much of present-day cognitive psychology posit that post-natal infants react to, among many other forms of contact with caregivers, instances of languaging[3] by significant individuals. For the pre-linguistic infants themselves, of course, instances of languaging are instances of voicing, and one of the central indices of personhood beyond the 'I' is the embodied voice that represents for the infant the Other (see Bertau 2007). Since different caregivers have physically distinct voices, infants learn to 'identify' members of the social group to which they belong through their voices. In addition, they quickly realise that acts of voicing involve themselves as well as the vocalisers, i.e. that voicing is a dialogic addressive activity demanding some form of response.

[3] This way of looking at 'voice' is directly traceable to the influence of Bakhtin (1981) and the group of Soviet researchers associated with Bakhtin (e.g., in particular, Voloshinov and Vygotsky). For Bakhtin, 'language' refers to the system of language, but the dialogic nature of using language can only be properly studied by means of what he calls 'speech', i.e. by what we refer to as 'languaging' in the present book.

It is, in other words, social. Whenever a caregiver vocalises with an infant (i.e. whenever s/he voices), the infant takes this as an index to engage socially with the vocaliser. Voice is therefore a physically embodied index of the need to engage in social interaction.

Pre-linguistic infants internalise as part of their cognition a range of different voices indexing different identifiable persons, and although, at the very early stage of their lives, they are not physically equipped to imitate the Other, they become aware that the Other imitates them and that they need to imitate the Other in order to be able to function adequately as social beings.[4] Internalised voices, the kinds of social practice engaged in with each voice and the identities constructed from voicing and then later languaging thus become an essential part of a notion of the 'self'. No 'self' is possible without the Other. Because identities and relationships between the internalised voices change through time, the 'self' can never be a consistent cognitive entity but is subject to constant shifts in changing interactional contexts.

Since the ontogenetic development of human language beyond roughly one year of age is dependent on a phylogenetically adaptive mutation in *Homo sapiens*, voicing mutates into, but still remains the basis of, languaging. The voice retains the ability to sing but gains the ability to construct, transform and transfer information. 'Voice' remains, in other words, crucially involved in forms of social interaction between the self and the Other.

In literary analysis, the term 'voice' implies different perspectives on the action represented in a text and can be used to index multiple levels of interaction. This is particularly the case in the analysis of the novel and likewise in texts that focus on narrative from various interpretative perspectives, such as different forms of folk song. In sociolinguistic research, voice quality is one focus of sociolinguistic research (e.g. Keating and Esposito 2007), but 'voice' is also used metaphorically as a concept. For example, the three first sentences of the introduction to a special issue of the journal *Anthropology and Education* run as follows: '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). We prefer to call this concept 'having a voice' rather than simply 'voice'.[5]

The closest we have come to work in sociolinguistics that views 'voice' in much the same way as we are viewing it here is Johnstone (2000). Johnstone challenges the understanding of voice as 'a strategically adopted way of sounding that a speaker designs and modifies as a result of analyzing the

[4] Middleton (2006) calls the use of one's own voice to imitate the voice of an Other 'ventriloquising', and the ability to ventriloquise will become an important factor in the PM.

[5] This understanding of 'voice' can also be found in Maybin 2001, Hornberger 2006, Heller 2007, Blommaert 2008, Creese and Blackledge 2012, etc.

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' (Johnstone 2000: 405). She states that she is not interested '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' (ibid.: 406–7; our emphasis). We therefore define our understanding of *voice* as, in Johnstone' s words, the connection of 'particular individual human beings with particular utterances and ways of speaking and thinking' (ibid.: 407). We define voicing as *an instance of languaging adapted to a particular interactional context* and the self as *a continually changing indefinite number of distinct voices internalised by an individual*. This implies that the activity of voicing constantly involves potential changes in the ways in which 'individuals' are connected to 'particular utterances and ways of speaking and thinking' in emergent socio-communicative interaction.

Performance Voices

Within the performance mode in which languaging is a central mode of communication, the nature of the performer's voices changes in accordance with four features that distinguish performing from simply interacting.[6] The four features are as follows:

(1) *Fictionality*: Regardless of whether or not the performer sings about or tells about a personal experience, the performance mode is always governed by the assumption that the events have been fictionalised (i.e. that they do not conform to an exact representation of what happened factually).
(2) *Representation*: The PM is used by the performer to *re*present a story or state of affairs to an audience.
(3) *Ritualisation*: The PM always involves participants in an interaction that is characterised as a sequence of acts that are performed in the same way and set apart from everyday social interaction.
(4) *Uni-directionality*: During the period of time in which the PM is in force, performers have the right to address an audience, but the audience has waived its own right to address the performers.[7]

[6] We need to bear in mind at this point that because the performance mode requires the consent of the non-performers to waive their rights to contribute to the interaction (unless encouraged by the performers to participate), the potential performers need to key into the PM explicitly and to key out of it once the PM is concluded.

[7] This does not of course mean that audiences are always inactive. They may assist the performer in accomplishing the performance or they may heckle or vocally encourage a performer.

A performer's voices (as instances of languaging) must therefore be adapted to these features of the interactional context of social practice in the PM, which renders the voices heteroglossic, hybrid and largely ventriloquistic.

$Song_2$ entails a performance that releases the song from being caught in amber to becoming a social process. It uses instances of languaging, i.e. the use of heteroglossic, hybrid and ventriloquistic voices in a PM, and music, which has the function of evoking in the audience emotional states accompanying those instances of languaging. Performing a song thus opens a window onto a hybrid, multi-voiced, fictional world in which hybrid, fictional voices are ventriloquised by the performer with the intention of evoking emotional responses to the story, implied story, story protagonists or simply the social situation represented in the song.

In both relational and representational performances of folk song, however, we have a situation in which a performer shifts, within the fictional PM, from voices within the performance world of each song to voices outside that world. The performer, in other words, shifts from playing the role of a ventriloquist for the fictional voices of others to using her/his own voices, i.e. s/he shifts from representation to relation, and can invite the audience to participate in the singing. In relational performance types (cf. Figure 2.4), those shifts may be very marked, whereas in representational performance types the audience's ability to engage in addressivity with the performer decreases the further we move towards the apex of 'maximal audience affect' in Figure 2.4. Figure 8.1 indicates the relationship between the song performances (on the representational level) and interaction with the audience via languaging without song (on the relational level).

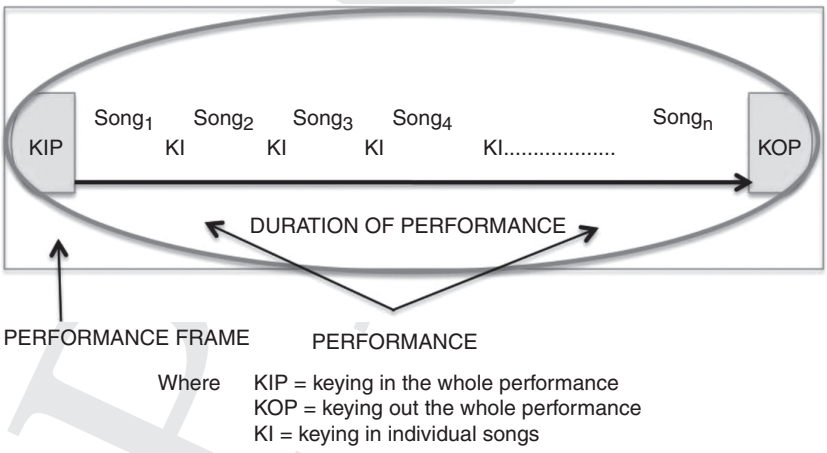


Figure 8.1 *The 'typical' structure of a folk performance*

Most of the time – but certainly not always – the shift from the representational to the relational level of communication with the audience entails the keying-in of the next song, and it may also contain a comment on the song that has just been or is about to be sung. For this reason, we have labelled each of these interpositions KI, i.e. 'keying-in'.

Exemplifying Performance Voices

We give a concrete example of a folk song performance here. F.A.M. agreed to participate in 2014 in a British Embassy event billed as a 'talk and performance' to commemorate the centenary of the beginning of the First World War in 1914 in a small theatre in Bern. The audience invited to the occasion was composed of diplomats, political and economic contacts, academics and British expatriates; it was, in other words, not strictly a public event but a hybrid performance consisting of lecture elements and concert elements. As a 'lecture', the performance raised a number of academic expectations, but as a concert it presupposed a relatively high level of musical and vocal proficiency on the part of the performer and a carefully devised selection of songs.

For the performer, F.A.M., this meant presenting the voice of an academic researcher, which was certainly one aspect of his own range of voices, i.e. it was not a ventriloquist's voice, but the audience was composed in such a way that the voice needed to be shaped so that both academics and non-academics could be addressed. It also meant adopting the role of the artist as a credible ventriloquist of the voices of the protagonists presented in the songs, as a director of the material and as a competent musician. Two further voices from beyond the PM were that of the activist protesting against the futility of the war and assessing its socio-political implications and that of the private person enjoying the activity of performing while worrying over the effect it was having on the audience. Switching between or combining these various voices, many of which composed valid aspects of F.A.M.'s sense of self and some of which, in particular in the song performance, were ventriloquised, is a first indication of the complexities of the social practices needed to carry out a successful performance.

The non-ventriloquised voices took on a different weight at different moments in the performance. In the design of the performance, the relational voices, e.g. those of the *academic*, the *activist* and the *private person*, were more detailed in view of the lecture character of the evening. They came to the fore in different forms and at different times, with the *artist* being on display as a ventriloquist's voice during the songs, but again intermingled with the *activist* and the *private person* whenever there were lapses in the *artist's* control. In the songs themselves, there were various fictional voices in

evidence, e.g. in 'The Conscientious Objector's Lament' 96, a music hall song depicting its subject as a camp coward. This song suggested a very high degree of 'being camp' that had to be stylised by the *artist* as a representative of the genre in a first-person voice. At the same time, however, the desire of the activist and private person was to distance himself from the homophobic and generally unjustified stereotyping of conscientious objectors in World War I. This example indicates the complexity of the interaction between the various voices, but it also clearly demonstrates that these are not layered hierarchically. Rather they vie with each other for various degrees of prominence at different times in the performance.

Voices and Music in Narrative Songs

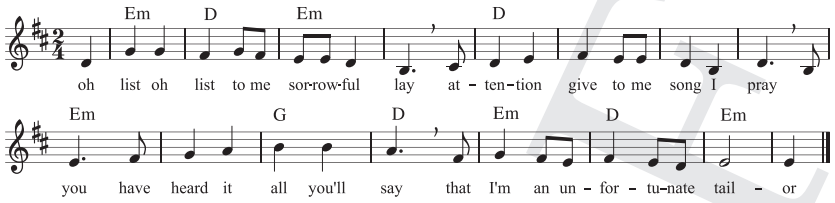
In this section we give an analysis of two songs about tailors using Labov and Waletzky's model but focusing explicitly on the evaluative elements in each story and how these correspond with the musical structure of the songs. We argue that before performing the songs, the performer considers how knowledge of the song voices, modes of ventriloquising them and the music might be used to gain the maximum effect on the audience.

Exemplifying Fictional Voices: Two Songs about a Tailor

When songs are performed, they are released from whatever amber they happen to have been perpetuated in to become processes within the performance mode. At the same time the complexity of voices that a performer can manipulate by ventriloquising them is also released. In this subsection, we discuss two songs about a tailor, 'The Unfortunate Tailor' (TUT) 97 and 'The Tailor's Breeches' (TTB) 98. Until the twentieth century a tailor's profession was felt to be much less 'manly' than that of, for example, a blacksmith, a ploughman, a factory worker, a sailor, a fisherman, etc., even though a tailor produces the clothes we wear. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the type of venue containing an audience listening to this kind of song might have been a raucous bar in the seedy red-light district of a port, say, London, Liverpool, Bristol, a gathering of musicians in one of a number of pubs, rural or urban, across the country, a gathering of neighbours enjoying this kind of musical entertainment at someone's house, a sing-song on board ship in the very rare moments in which sailors were able to relax, a family sing-song, etc.

The first song, TUT, is a story supposedly told by a tailor who has been jilted by his girl and, as a consequence, resolves to try his luck at sea:

The Unfortunate Tailor



1. oh list oh list to me sorrowful lay
   attention give to me song I pray
   you have heard it all you'll say
   that I'm an unfortunate tailor

2. oh once I was happy as a bird on a tree
   me 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

3. why did me 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 as a sailor

4. now me days were honey and me nights were the same
   till a man called Cobb from the ocean came
   with his coal-black beard and his muscular frame
   a captain on board of a whaler

5. well he spent his money both frank and free
   with his tales of the land and his songs of the sea
   stole me Sarah's heart from me
   and blighted the hopes of a tailor

6. well once I was with her when in came Cobb
   avast he cried you blubbering swab
   if you don't knock off I'll stubble your knob
   and Sarah smiled at the sailor

7. so now I'll face the raging sea
   for Sarah's proved untrue to me
   me heart's locked up and she's the key
   of a very unfeeling jailer

8. so now kind friends I'll bid you adieu
   no more me woes will trouble you
   I'll travel the country through and through
   and I'll go and list as a sailor

No one in the audience would have been, or would now be, likely to equate the singer with a tailor. Nor would a tailor ever have been likely to sing in so public a fashion about his 'sorrowful' plight. The first stanza is a meta-discursive comment on keying into a performance situation. It lies outside the framework of the story proper and refers to the discursive context in which the 'tailor' needs to call the audience to order so that he can sing his song to them. But there is a significant difference from the usual utterances that commonly function as means of keying-in a performance. The keying-in in stanza 1 is not only part of the song itself. It also characterises a 'tailor' who wants to sing 'a sorrowful lay' and who feels that the audience will feel sorry for him when he has finished. From a narrative point of view, it thus includes an abstract (see the discussion of Labov and Waletzky's narrative categories in Chapter 5), a brief statement about the theme of the song. If we imagine someone singing the song in one of the disreputable taverns along the Ratcliffe Highway in London or in a pub near the Albert Dock in Liverpool in the early nineteenth century, the first thing the singer would have done is to call for the audience's attention, regardless of what s/he wanted to sing. However, there is one major difference here; the keying-in would not normally be part of the song.[8]

But why would anyone in such company be willing to listen to the story of a jilted tailor? The tone of the whole song is set in the first stanza, in which the singer places himself (or perhaps herself!) in the fictive tailor's shoes, in full knowledge of the fact that tailors were frequently despised by other members of the working classes. It can only function as a performance if it plays on the joke of a tailor publicly intoning a 'sorrowful lay' about losing his girl to the captain of a whaler – which is exactly what it does. In the second stanza the tailor 'bewails' his lost love. In stanzas 3 and 4, a contrast is set up (by the singer/narrator/tailor) between someone who uses thimbles and needles to make his living and the captain of a whaling ship who uses his muscles. In stanza 5, the 'tailor', wallowing in self-pity, complains that his hopes have been 'blighted', and the hiatus of the humour (unnoticed by the fictive tailor, but certainly noticed by the singer and the audience) is reached in stanza 6 in which Captain Cobb bursts in, physically removes the tailor, to be greeted by a smile from Sarah. The final two stanzas provide a coda in which the tailor expresses his intention to give up his profession and go to sea, and stanza 8 is an elaborate keying-out from the performance mode. From a modern-day perspective, TUT is a 'macho' song, but within the social context of female and male role models in the early nineteenth century, its greatest appeal has

[8] It is for this reason that we might call it a 'performance song', i.e. a song which makes explicit reference to the performance mode, e.g. by asking his audience to listen to his tale of woe and to commiserate with him afterwards.

always been the humorous way in which a bond is created between the performer and the audience during the performance itself. The orientation in TUT consists of the first two lines of stanza 2 and the first line of stanza 4.[9] The complication is that his true love's affections have shifted to Cobb.

TUT is tightly constructed in terms of lyrics and music, but judging by the fact that no broadsides are in evidence during the nineteenth century, it cannot have had much currency. The Roud Index lists just one song with the title we have used, Roud 1614, collected by Alfred Williams from John Webley of Arlington, Gloucestershire, and two with the title 'Oh List, oh List to my Sorrowful Lay', one collected from George Lovett in 1906 by Gardner and Gamblin and the other, also collected by Gardner and Gamblin, from Alfred Oliver near Basingstoke in 1907. As we would expect, all three versions are relatively similar, although adaptation has taken place in the course of time. Lovett's version omits the final stanza, Oliver's version has eight stanzas but adds a fourth stanza contravening what we take to be the point of the song, i.e. ridiculing tailors – 'Sarah was the daughter of a publican / a generous kind good sort of man / who spoke very plain what he thought of a man / but he never looked crow at the tailor'[10] – and omits our stanza 7. Webley's version has eleven stanzas, the eight that we sing, Oliver's fourth stanza and two further stanzas, in one of which Sarah's beauty is extolled and in the other of which the tailor explicitly proposes to Sarah and is turned down. Webley also uses stanza 3, as given above, as a chorus, which may account for the fact that it appears a little displaced as a stanza. We have eight stanzas, with lines 1 to 3 of each stanza rhyming together and the fourth line rhyming with the fourth line of every other stanza, leaving the following sequence of fourth lines that underscore the tailor's laughable lament at the loss of his love:

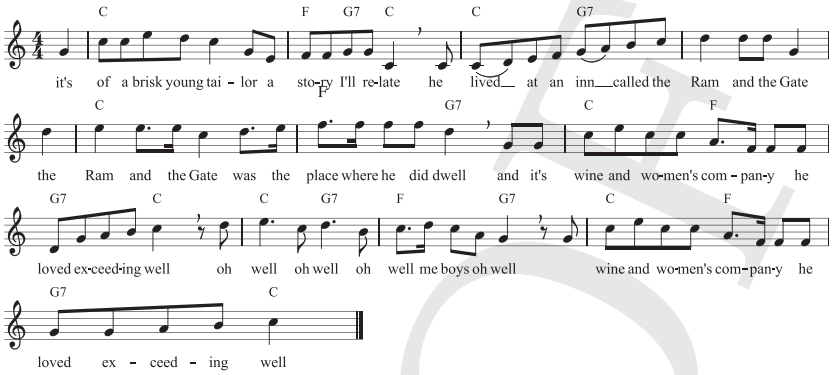
that I'm an unfortunate tailor > and she's left me here to bewail her > a captain on board of a whaler > and blighted the hopes of a tailor > and Sarah smiled at the sailor > of a very unfeeling jailer > and I'll go and list as a sailor > and I'll go and list as a sailor

The second song about a tailor, entitled 'The Tailor's Breeches' (TTB), ventriloquises an implicit third-person voice and also aims to generate humour at the expense of the fictive protagonist presented by the narrator:

[9] Which, as we argue in the next section, would incline us, in performing the song, to shift stanza 3 to just before present stanza 7.

[10] 'To look crow at' is an idiomatic expression meaning 'to exult gloatingly, especially at the distress of another' (Merriam-Webster; www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crow, accessed 12 February 2017).

The Tailor's Breeches



1. it's of a brisk young tailor this 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 wine and women's company he loved exceeding well

   Chorus: oh well oh well oh well me boys oh well
   and wine and women's company he loved exceeding well

2. now this tailor he'd been drinking a glass or two of wine
   and not bein' 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 the night was done

   Chorus: was done was done was done me boys was done
   he swore he'd have a bonny lass before the night was done

3. he took her in his arms and he called her his dear honey
   and as they were a-talking she was fingering of his money
   she was fingering of his money when the tailor smiled and said
   if you'll lend me your petticoats I'll dance like a maid

   Chorus: a maid a maid a maid me boys a maid
   if you'll lend me your petticoats I'll dance like a maid

4. the tailor pulled his breeches off and the petticoat put on
   the tailor danced a dance and the lassie sang a song
   the tailor danced a dance and they played a merry tune
   they danced the tailor's breeches right out of the room

   Chorus: the room the room the room me boys the room
   they danced the tailor's breeches right out of the room

5. have you ever seen a tailor undone as I'm undone
me watch and me money and me breeches are all gone
I can't go out dressed up like this they'll call me 'garden flower'
and if ever I get my breeches back I'll never dance no more

Chorus: no more no more no more me boys no more
and if ever I get my breeches back I'll never dance no more

The same effect is achieved if a first-person narrator is present (as in TUT), but in the case of a third-person narrator the protagonist is fully under the control, and therefore the implied criticism, of the ventriloquising singer/narrator. The first stanza is an abstract without the need to key into the performance mode, and the orientation is in the final line of this first stanza and the whole of stanza 2, in which the tailor gets drunk. It is also an evaluation of an aspect of the tailor's character that will ultimately lead to his 'downfall' in the song. The complication in TTB is that, in a state of drunkenness, the tailor makes a fool of himself by taking off his breeches, putting on the 'bonny lass's' petticoats and having his breeches (together with his watch and his money) stolen.

The whole of the final stanza, in which the third person narrator withdraws behind the first-person voice of the tailor himself, functions as a coda. There is no switch to a first-person narrator throughout the song until this final stanza is reached. In addition, the song is designed for audience participation with a chorus at the end of each stanza. The fictional third-person narrator, through his/her comments and through his/her incitement to the audience to join in, controls the way humour is generated at the expense of the tailor. The narrative voice assumed by the singer is in full control of manipulating the audience's reactions. Narratives often end without a positive resolution to the complication (cf. the analysis of 'A Sailor's Life' in Chapter 5), and that appears to be the case in both these songs. In each case the tailor decides to change his lifestyle, in TUT by giving up his profession and going to sea and in TTB by deciding never to dance again – although he says nothing about giving up drink.

Voicing and Ventriloquising

As a performer, a singer entextualises his/her song text/song-blueprint to achieve the maximum effect on his/her audience in a performance mode.[11] This involves recognising the voices that go to make up the 'self' of the narrator and the protagonists, while remaining aware of the feature of fictionality that characterises a stretch of verbal social practice as a performance and not simply as an instantiation of everyday interaction. Simultaneously, both singer and audience know that beyond the performance mode each performer and each audience member has internalised a wide range of voices that go to make up a person's fluid and

[11] In Chapter 9 this notion will be discussed theoretically in more detail.

changing conceptualisation of the 'self', as well as the ability to 'give a voice to the Other', to ventriloquise. In the fictional situation of folk song performance, that 'Other' will remain silent until a performer has given her/him a voice.

Earlier in this chapter we argued that folk song performances are unique in allowing the singer to introduce a selection of her/his own genuine voices in the presence of an audience as well as ventriloquising the voices of narrators and fictional participants in the (implied) narrative of the song. This is generally accomplished through a brief commentary on the song just sung, the keying-in of the next song, or both, but, as we see later in this chapter, the fictional narrative voices of the song itself may also provide access to one or more of the singer's own personal voices.

With respect to the fictional situation in TUT, the song can only be successful if the singer stylises her/his ventriloquism of the tailor's voice to represent a character unsure of himself and his standing in the eyes of the opposite sex. How this might be done convincingly is part of the performative art of singing the song. To sing it as if it were a sea shanty – which would be possible given the strong 2/4 time signature with a stress on the first beat of every bar typical of a sailor's hornpipe – would hardly achieve the kind of stylisation necessary to convey the ironic effect in the audience that a performance of TUT requires. The fictional third-person narrative voice telling the story in TTB is used to evaluate the tailor, cf. line 2 of stanza 2 ('and not bein' used to drink it caused his face to shine'), lines 2 and 3 of stanza 3 ('and as they were a-talking she was fingering of his money / she was fingering of his money when the tailor smiled and said'), and the singer's stylisation of a narrator poking fun at a tailor can be based precisely on these evaluations and in particular on the switch to the tailor's voice in the final stanza.

Looking for Voices in the Ballad

The type of song generally considered most closely related to storytelling is the ballad (cf. Scott, Child, etc.), but ballads are unusual in terms of the voices that they reveal. Storytelling involves the narrator in ventriloquising, even in the case of natural narratives, such that the narrator positions her/himself with respect to the events of the story and the protagonists involved in it. The positioning of a voice with respect to an event, state or character is equivalent to evaluating that event, state or character. When a third-person narrator controls the storytelling in a song, evaluations are assumed to be those of the narrator. Hence, when the narrator in 'The Tailor's Breeches' follows the comment that the tailor has drunk some wine with the remark 'and not being used to drink it made his face to shine', we can infer that s/he creates a bond of complicity with the audience. It is as if the audience were being invited to smile complacently at the tailor for not being able to hold his drink. As we have seen,

the success of the complicity between narrator and audience in TTB is vital for generating the inference that tailors are somehow 'unmanly'. Labov and Waletzky's narrative category of evaluation is not therefore equivalent to the instantiation of an event within a narrative, as is a complication or a resolution. Evaluation permeates the whole narrative, revealing different stances assumed by a narrator towards events, states and characters in the song. In the ballad, however, narrative voices hardly evaluate and do not seem to ventriloquise – which does not of course mean that there is no evaluation.

Telling or implying a story in the ballad involves different degrees of interpretative work on the part of the audience. Information that links narrative clauses or those clauses implying a narrative often has to be inferred by the listener. For this reason, identifying the voices is one of the first steps in shaping the performance in such a way as to enable the audience to 'enter' the song. Ballads not only reveal high degrees of formulaic linguistic expression (cf. Chapter 9); they also reveal voices whose only apparent function is to carry the events forward, any evaluation generally being through formulaic linguistic expressions and quoted speech from protagonists in the story with either a minimum of tagging ('he said', 'she said') or no tagging at all. The singer's job in the ballad is to present to the audience a non-committal narrative voice and to allow the drama to arise through quoted speech.

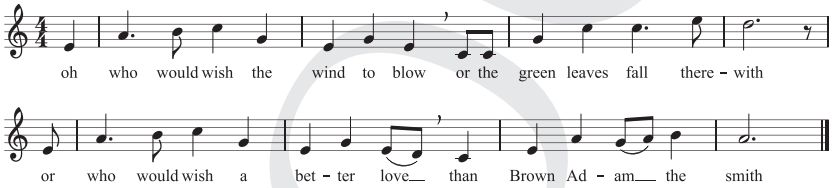
In a very real sense, the withdrawal of the narrative voice links the ballad to other types of folk song – and indeed to other genres of song. Our analysis of 'A Sailor's Life' in Chapter 5 revealed that the most effective and moving versions of the song were those in which the audience needed to 'fill the informational gaps' in the story. Sandy Denny's version opens in stanza 1 with a third-person narrative voice openly assuming a negative evaluative stance towards the behaviour of sailors towards their 'young girls', after which the voice withdraws and leaves the floor open to a female first-person narrative voice openly praising her lover in stanza 2. In stanza 3, this voice opens the narrative events of the story by asking her father to build her a boat with which she can go to sea to search for her lover. The third-person narrative voice continues the story in lines 1 and 2 of stanza 4 but withdraws again in lines 3 and 4, in which the question–answer sequence between the first-person narrative voice and the sailors on the ship (stanza 5) reveals the complication, i.e. the fact of her lover's death. The final stanza, in which we assume that the girl commits suicide by smashing her boat against a rock, is taken up by the third-person narrator, who appears to be confirming, at the end of the song, her/his negative evaluation of what it means to fall in love with a sailor. Voice structure here is very similar to that in the ballad, as we see in the next subsection, and what is left unsaid but can be inferred by the audience from direct verbal interaction between protagonists and song characters is as

significant as what is explicitly told. The stanzaic structure of the song, however, is different from that of a ballad. Each line has four major beats, with assonance or rhyme in lines 1 and 2 and lines 3 and 4.[12]

Voice Complexity in Ballads

Ballads form part of the discussion in Chapter 9, but we begin that discussion in this section by presenting the complexity of voices in ballads with a song that is not often performed, 'Brown Adam' ♧99.[13] There are a number of shifts from an assumed third-person non-committal narrator to quoted speech from the protagonists in the narrative. But things are not quite so simple in ballads. If we take Labov and Waletzky's model, there appear to be two stories in BA, the first – implicitly – the reason for the second, but there is no abstract to either story at the beginning of the ballad.

Brown Adam



1. oh who would wish the wind to blow
   or the green leaves fall therewith
   and who would wish a better love
   than Brown Adam the smith

2. his hammer's of the beaten gold
   his study's of the steel
   his fingers white are my delight
   he blows his bellows well

3. but they banished him Brown Adam
   from father and from mother
   they banished him Brown Adam
   from sister and from brother

9. when he came to his lady's bower
   he stood a little foreby
   and there he heard a full false knight
   a-tempting his lady gay

10. he's taken out a gay gold ring
    had cost him many a pound
    oh grant me love for love lady
    and this shall be your own

11. I love Brown Adam well she says
    I know that he does me
    I would not give Brown Adam's love
    for no false knight I see

[12] Comparing 'A Sailor's Life' with the ballad 'The Cruel Mother' in Chapter 6 is also instructive. Just as much explicit information can be missed out of the more powerful versions of 'A Sailor's Life', so too can much explicit information be omitted in performances of 'The Cruel Mother' with an experienced 'folk' audience.

[13] We present our adaptation of the A version of this ballad below. The tune is Child 98, Number 2 in Bronson's tunes. Cf. also the analysis of 'Brown Adam' given in Buchan (1997: 107–8).

4. oh they have banished Brown Adam
from the flower of all his kin
but he's built a bower in good greenwood
between his lady and him

5. as it fell out upon a day
Brown Adam he thought long
that he would to the greenwood go
to hunt some venison

6. he's ta'en his bow all o'er his arm
his sword unto his hand
and he is to the greenwood gone
as fast as he could gang

7. then he's shot up and he's shot down
the bird upon the briar
and he's sent it home to his lady
bade her be of good cheer

8. then he's shot up and he's shot down
the bird upon the thorn
and he's sent it home to his lady
that he'd be home the morn

12. and he's taken out a purse of gold
was full right to the string
grant me love for love lady
and this shall be all thine

13. I love Brown Adam well she says
and I know that he does me
and I would not be your light leman
for more than you'd give me

14. then he has drawn his long long sword
and he's flashed it to and fro
now grant me love for love lady
or through you this shall go

15. then sighing said that lady gay
Brown Adam tarries long
and up then starts her Brown Adam says
I'm just at your hand

16. he's made him leave his bow his bow
he's made him leave his brand
he's made him leave a better pledge
four fingers from his right hand

The first story begins with a voice in stanza 1 putting two rhetorical questions, the first a metaphor for the second. But whose voice is this? There is no explicit statement of what the song is about, but we do have information that Brown Adam the smith is at the centre of the song – for the voice in stanza 1, that is.

The second stanza metaphorically extols the (sexual) virtues of Brown Adam ('his hammer is of the beaten gold / . . . / he blows his bellows well'), and it locates for us a first-person narrator in the third line – 'his fingers white are my delight' – who, we can now infer, is a female first-person voice. Stanzas 3 and 4 tell us that Brown Adam has been 'banished' from his family by a group of people referred to as 'they', and that he has found refuge for 'his lady and him' in the greenwood. Are we to infer from 'his lady' in the fourth line of stanza 4 that the voice has now become a third-person narrative voice? Or could the lady be referring to herself in that line? Everything else that the audience can infer from the first four stanzas remains speculative. Was Brown Adam at the royal court with his family? Did he begin a sexual liaison with a lady of the court and was banished for that reason? And has his lady gone with him? The first story thus lacks an explicit complication and therefore gives no resolution. For this reason it can be taken to fulfil the function of an orientation for

the whole ballad, which thus effectively begins in the middle of quoted speech by a female voice.

The second story begins in stanza 5 in typical formulaic fashion – 'as it fell out upon a day' – and introduces the narrative clauses representing Brown Adam's hunting expedition in the wood. Since the lady and Brown Adam are referred to by the use of third-person reference, we have a narrative persona from this point on, but not one who evaluates Brown Adam's actions. The complication begins in stanza 9 when Brown Adam arrives home to overhear a 'false knight' trying to seduce his lady. Is this false knight someone from the court who has found out where Brown Adam and the lady are hiding? The complication consists of two quoted offers to the lady to tempt her to have sex with him, but the lady refuses each offer. The third attempt is an overt threat to kill her, after which Brown Adam resolves the complication by appearing, disarming the false knight and hacking off four fingers from his right hand as a pledge (probably never to appear again, but also to render him incapable of wielding a brand or sword). We can conclude from this that the first four stanzas of the ballad are filtered through the female voice of Brown Adam's lady, and that the rest of the ballad is told by a third-person narrator with dramatic effect provided by the quoted direct speech of his lady and the false knight.

Voice complexity in 'Brown Adam' thus arises from the fact that the primary narrative is derived from a secondary, sketchily outlined narrative preceding and determining what follows in the ballad. But voice complexity is determined by switching between voices during the song rather than by embedding one narrative into another.

Voicing and Ventriloquising in Ballads

Our discussion of 'Brown Adam' reveals a third-person narrative voice whose major function is to unfold the thread of the narrative events. In taking on that voice, the ballad singer becomes a narrator, but unlike narrators in natural narratives or songs in which there is a regular abstract, that voice is not used to evaluate either the characters in the story or the events.[14] The singer ventriloquises only to the extent that s/he gives a voice to the ballad, i.e. becomes a non-committal narrator; the ventriloquised voice does not offer evaluations or opinions to the audience.

[14] This fact represents a clear distinction between the third-person narrative voice in 'Brown Adam' and that in 'A Sailor's Life'.

On the contrary, the audience is expected to infer from the events, the actions of the characters and their frequent dramatic speech exchanges some moral, cultural or social message. Whatever the mythical background might be to this ballad, two things are clear to the audience through its performance: (1) that Brown Adam has been banished from his family, a fact that is lamented by a female voice in the first four stanzas; and (2) that 'a false knight' takes advantage of the fact that Brown Adam has gone hunting to try and seduce his 'lady'. No explicit link is offered between these two situations, but it can be assumed that an audience steeped in the performance tradition would infer the explanations needed.

The discussion also reveals that, rather than the ballad beginning with the third-person non-committal narrator, it begins *in medias res*, offering a woman's voice lamenting the fact that Brown Adam, represented by her, via metaphorical means, as her sexual partner, has been banished by an ambiguous 'they' from his family. The audience is thus encouraged to take this as the reason for his banishment and possibly also the reason for the false knight turning up to seduce his lady. The quoted altercation between the false knight and the lady offers the drama of the ballad, but this is presented in a thoroughly conventional way with two offers by the knight, two refusals by the lady, a threat from the knight followed by a third refusal by the lady, in other words the typical 'incremental repetition', whose last reiteration precipitates the event(s) that follow.

The Role of the First-person Narrator in Implied Narratives

The distinction between song schemata and macro song schemata made in Chapter 5 is significant in assessing the role of first-person narrative voices in folk song. We began our discussion of voices in songs with 'The Unfortunate Tailor', which is a first-person narrative relying on the ability of the audience to separate the voice of the singer ventriloquising a character and the character her/himself. TUT thus has a unique song schema allowing for such adaptations in added or deleted stanzas (cf. Chapter 5), different wording in the stanzas and variation in the melody, deriving from similar types of song blueprints for different singers. In the case of a song such as 'The Four Loom Weaver' (sung by June Tabor and Maddy Prior at the Cecil Sharp House concert), which also has a first-person narrative voice, similar forms of adaptation are in evidence,

although the story takes second place to a criticism of the social situation of Lancashire cotton weavers in the mid-nineteenth century.

In Chapter 5, we defined a macro-schema as a macro-narrative indexing social groups rather than individual characters (cf. the examples given there, 'The Shoals of Herring', 'Go, Move, Shift'), and the 'stories' of those social groups provide a platform for different forms of answering back. So it is hardly surprising that songs containing first-person voices lend themselves more readily to indexing the lifestyles of social groups than third-person voices (e.g. in 'Shoals of Herring' and 'The Four Loom Weaver').

When such songs are performed, the singer needs to empathise with the representative 'I' of those social groups in such a way that the audience can suspend its disbelief for the length of the song. We present two modern songs here, the first of which, 'I Just Can't Wait' ⓐ100, contains the first-person voice of a worker, who, very early in his working life, is bored with his job but is unable because of social and socio-economic pressures to cut free until he is finally pensioned off, at which point he finds it difficult to imagine how he will spend the rest of his life. The singer's job in 'I Just Can't Wait' is to present that type of character as genuinely and effectively as possible. The second song ('No Man's Land' – NML ⓐ101) simulates a person hiking through Flanders and visiting one of the huge cemeteries containing the graves of those killed in the First World War. He sits down by a graveside and imagines a 'you' to fit the name on the gravestone. As in the first song, the singer's job is to present a convincing narrator, but, in singing NML, we find that identification with the first-person narrator in performance is so natural that it is extraordinarily difficult to sing the song without becoming emotionally involved with the situation. In this kind of song, separating the two voices that make up the self of the singer from those of the fictive protagonist is imperative in opening up a fictional yet frighteningly realistic world for the audience.[15]

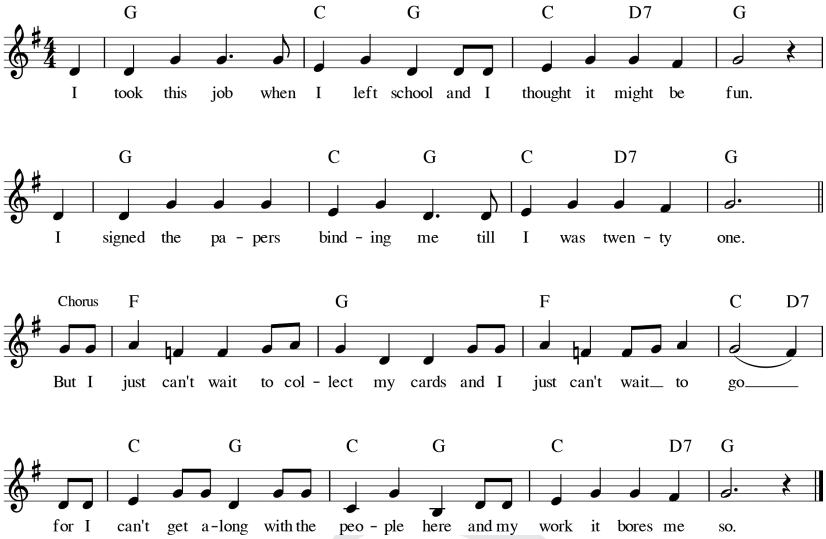
Presenting a Representative 'I'

The first song, 'I Just Can't Wait (to Collect My Cards)' (IJCW), was written by Ian Campbell and put to music by John Dunkerley.

[15] The song could be called a 'pin drop' song, in which the audience becomes so involved with the imaginary situation described that, as a singer, you could hear a pin drop.

I Just Can't Wait (to Collect My Cards)

Words: Ian Campbell Music: John Dunkerley



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

   Chorus:
   but I just can't wait to collect my cards
   I just can't wait to go
   I can't get along with the people here
   and my work it bores me so

2. so I learnt the 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

3. well I think I'll wait till the wedding's over
   before I say goodbye
   for the girlfriend tells me we must save
   if a house we hope to buy

4. now I'll have to wait till the baby's born
   before I can be free
   for I understand a pregnant wife
   must have security

5. now I'll have to wait till the kids leave school
   before I break away
   for growing kids eat money
   and I need the steady pay

6. now I think I'll wait till the house is mine
   before I break the tie
   for the interest rates keep rising
   and the car it bleeds me dry

7. now I'll have to wait till retiring age
   before I risk the break
   for the pension scheme insures the wife
   and it's mainly for her sake

8. well thank you for the gold watch sir
   the silver collection too
   but are you sure I have to go
   I won't know what to do

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

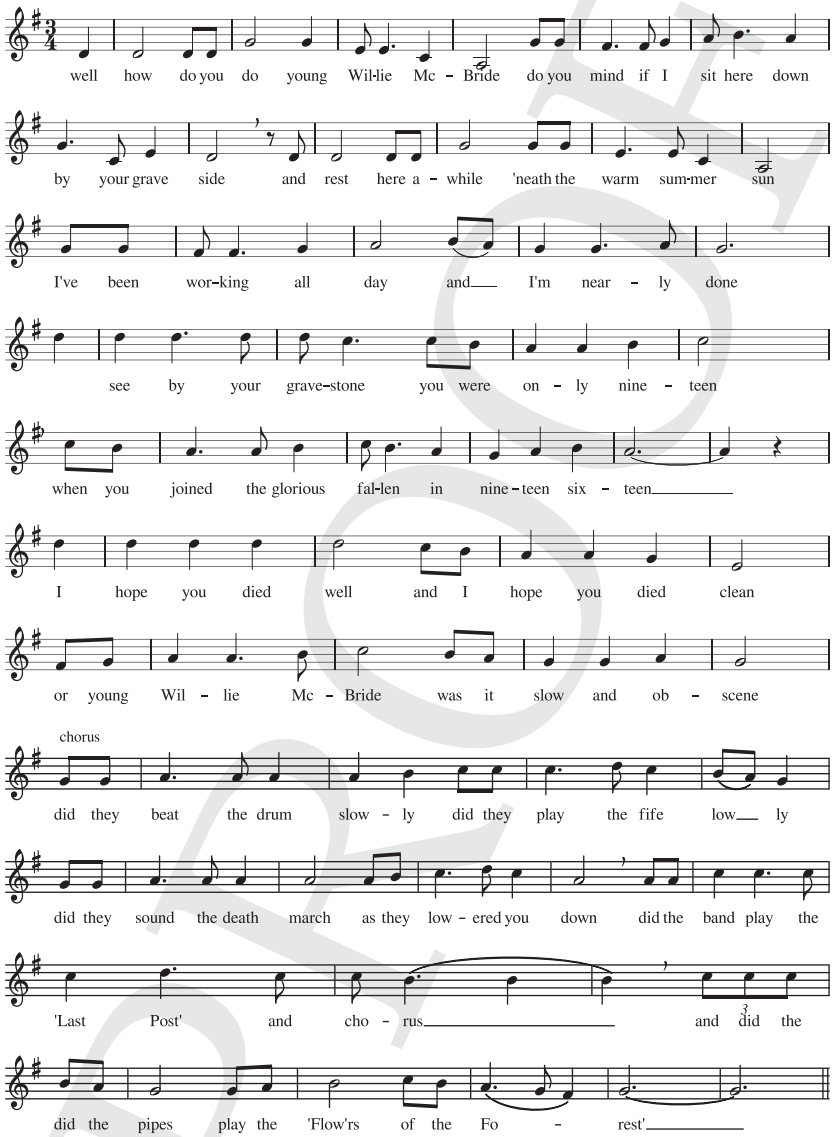
The major difference between IJCW and NML is that the addressee in the former appears to be the audience, whereas the addressee in NML is the narrator's imagined soldier, the audience being the witness of the narrator's imagination. The point in IJCW at which it becomes clear that the audience is not being addressed is stanza 3. The narrative past tense of the first two stanzas (*took, signed, learnt*) gives way completely to the present tense of verbs like *think* and *understand* and to ratiocination rather than narration for the rest of the song. The protagonist indulges in a series of decision-making processes at different stages through his adult life, all of which prevent him from doing what he really wants to do, i.e. give up his job and find something more interesting to do. But because these processes span the protagonist's working life up to retirement, we still have an implicit narrative. The audience can even imagine themselves to be the addressees of the protagonist's verbalised thoughts – until the final stanza, in which he addresses his employer on the occasion of his retirement. The first-person voice of the song is not a narrative voice despite the fact that we can infer a life narrative from it. The 'I' of the song represents a large number of real-life 'I's who have found themselves in a similar predicament. The singer ventriloquising the protagonist thus needs to embody himself as authentically as possible in the role of the protagonist, which in this case might tend to preclude a female singer.

Imagining a 'You'

The song 'No Man's Land', which also goes under the title 'The Green Fields of France' or 'The Flowers of the Forest', was written by the Scottish songwriter Eric Bogle, who emigrated to Australia in 1969. It appears to be adapted from the song schema of 'The Unfortunate Rake' ('The Young Sailor Cut Down in His Prime') ♧102 in which a sailor (or a cowboy in American versions, e.g. 'The Cowboy's Lament'/'The Streets of Laredo' ♧103) comes across a comrade on his deathbed lamenting his early death, presumably from syphilis, and instructs the narrator to prepare his funeral. Bogle's melody is similar to that of 'The Unfortunate Rake', but he has extended it quite considerably. The chorus shows a number of close affinities with the 'The Unfortunate Rake' song schema.

No Man's Land

Eric Bogle © Robertson Brown & Associated



1. well how do you do Private Willie McBride
   do you mind if I sit here down by your graveside
   and rest for a while in the warm summer sun
   I've been walking all day and I'm almost done
   I see by your gravestone you were only nineteen
   when you joined the Glorious Fallen in 1916
   oh I hope you died quick and I hope you died clean
   or Willie McBride was it slow and obscene

   Chorus: did they beat the drums slowly did they play the fife lowly
   did the rifles fire o'er ye as they lowered you down
   did the bugles play 'The Last Post' in chorus
   did the pipes play 'The Floo'ers o' the Forest'

2. did you leave a wife or a sweetheart behind
   in some faithful heart is your memory enshrined
   and though you died back in 1916
   to that loyal heart are you forever nineteen
   or are you a stranger without even a name
   forever enshrined behind some glass pane
   in an old photograph torn tattered and stained
   and fading to yellow in a brown leather frame

3. the sun's shining now on these green fields of France
   the warm wind blows gently and the red poppies dance
   the trenches have vanished long under the plough
   no gas and no barbed wire no guns firing now
   but here in this graveyard it'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

4. and I can't help but wonder 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[16]

The first-person voice in NML addresses the dead soldier directly from the very beginning of the song and continues in that vein till the end, imagining how Willie McBride might have died (stanza 1) and whether he left a sweetheart behind or is just one of innumerable nameless young men caught in the sepia of a fading photograph before their deaths on the battlefields of France (stanza 2). In the third stanza, the voice muses on 'man's blind indifference to his fellow man' that led to the senseless butchering of 'a whole

[16] At this point we would like to thank Eric Bogle warmly for allowing us to use 'No Man's Land'. We are happy to print his 1975 version of the lyrics, as requested, although we have followed the conventions for representing lyrics as outlined in the Introduction.

generation' in World War I, and, in the final stanza, he addresses Willie McBride to ask him whether he, like others, felt that this war would end all wars. His conclusion is a damning evaluation of those who believe that war can solve deep-rooted problems.

As in IJCW, the audience becomes a witness to this process and, even more than in IJCW, is unable to provide any answers. But members of the audience have no difficulty in empathising with the voice, even if it has been 'fictionally' created to carry the song. Bogle's live performance of the song at the Stonyfell Winery outside Adelaide in 2009, which has now been produced as a DVD, is a study in how to sing a song with as much emotional impact as NML. Throughout most of the song Bogle keeps his eyes closed, as if imagining what he is singing about, and in the first half of the final stanza he opens them and moves into a set of stressed, almost non-sung questions to Willie McBride – although of course they are sung – and then closes his eyes to sing his final moving evaluation. Singing this song involves the singer in 'becoming' the fictional 'I'-voice, basically in becoming Bogle himself (cf. June Tabor's fine rendering of the song on her CD *Ashes and Diamonds* with piano accompaniment[17]). Songs involving first-person voices thus present difficulties in deciding the extent to which those voices are presenting a narrative – and if so, whether the narrative is about that person or someone else – or an implied narrative. The singer, who in cases such as NML is never the experiencer of what is sung,[18] nevertheless needs to evoke credibility in inducing the audience to suspend its disbelief.

Song Voices

The ontogenetic cognitive development of a human being from birth until adulthood is like a genetic blueprint, which every human being follows, given the appropriate social conditions and barring individual genetic defects that may hinder that development. It reflects hundreds of thousands of years of evolutionary adaptation in the species *Homo sapiens*. We argued in Chapter 1 that musical vocalisation precedes the acquisition of human language; $song_1$, in other words, must precede $song_2$. But $song_1$ was – and in the case of pre-linguistic infants still is – carried by different voices through which infants not only recognise caregivers and others as distinct individuals but also position and identify them as having distinct attributes with respect to the self.

[17] Tabor's solution in the final stanza is to sing the questions in the first half more quietly and then to raise the volume level and to stress the evaluation with more emphasis, particularly the final line 'and again and again and again and again'. She also uses the same strategy in the second half of the third stanza.

[18] Cf. the features set up in the first section of this chapter, which, we maintain, determine the voices used in the performance mode. A performance mode always implies fictionality.

In the first section of this chapter, we accepted Johnstone's interpretation of voice as an index of and connection to 'particular individual human beings with particular utterances and ways of speaking and thinking' (Johnstone 2000: 407). We hypothesised that even pre-linguistic infants develop a notion of voice regardless of the fact that at this stage in their development they are not yet able to recognise 'utterances' as indices of 'ways of speaking and thinking' but only of different ways of vocalising that signal various emotive contents. Once language begins to develop, even at the stage at which comprehension of what is spoken is present prior to speech production, those voices, already internalised in the infant's cognition, index different instances of languaging adapted to different interactional contexts. In this sense, children learn not just language but also the strategic use of different voices, and the ways in which they use those voices constitute a fluid notion of 'self', to which new voices may be added and from which redundant voices may be deleted.

Performance in the widest sense thus involves the use of different voices in the presentation of instances of song$_2$. Some of those voices may be those of the performer *qua* person, even when singing rather than simply keying-in to the singing, but many are likely to be fictional voices interpreted from the song blueprint and adapted to the audience on the occasion of performance and to the social conditions of the ongoing performance mode. Both singers and audiences are aware of these facts, although perhaps not on an overtly conscious level. Since folk performance is geared towards the construction, transformation or confirmation of a sense of *communitas*, it stands to reason that the evocation and recognition of voices is equivalent to the construction of identities that represent the values and aspirations of the community of practice under construction and, by projection, of the wider discourse community.

Singing 'The Unfortunate Tailor' is very different from singing 'No Man's Land'. In both songs we have a first-person voice, but whereas in TUT the singer needs to make a distinction between her/himself as an individual and the identity of a nineteenth-century tailor lamenting the fact that his girl has jilted him, in NML it is imperative that the singer's identity should be indistinguishable from the 'I' musing over the identity of Willie McBride.[19] It is not important that Eric Bogle wrote the song and might actually have gone on a hike in Flanders. In point of fact, Bogle could simply have used this fictional situation as a way of raising the issues in the song. So Bogle the songwriter, Bogle the performer and other performers of his song are all fictionalising, and the important point in performing the song is to create a community of practice that is, as the voice of

[19] In fact, it is precisely this that makes it so difficult to sing NML and still to retain enough distance from it to present the issues to an audience while not being swept away by the emotion the song raises.

the activist, united in its condemnation of war. But singing TUT is also different from singing 'The Tailor's Breeches'. The third-person narrator in TTB fulfils the same purpose as the first-person narrator of TUT, i.e. getting the audience to laugh at the tailor. The difference is that the voice is that of a fictional person singing about an incident that s/he claims to have witnessed, and the abstract in the first stanza begins with an address to the audience – 'it's of a brisk young tailor this story I'll relate'. Here at least the tailor is 'brisk' and 'young', and the story might easily have been told as a natural narrative, except that the final stanza is quoted speech by the tailor. The irony is far stronger in TUT than TTB, and the criticism, as a result, is more stringent.

Voices in the ballads appear to be used largely to carry the story forward, and the narrative personality of the voice is less significant than the drama enacted through the quoted speech of the characters. The general trend here is towards unevaluated story building in which the characters are presented almost as pawns in a wider social cosmos. This is not to say that issues are not raised for the audience to evaluate, but those issues are less commonly personal and more generally social and moral. In 'Brown Adam', the implicit issue appears to be one of the social inappropriateness of a sexual relationship between a smith and a noble lady set against the loyalty of the two lovers to one another.

Identifying voices in the folk song is thus a means of identifying characters and also indexing social and moral problems. Performing types of song as different from one another as 'No Man's Land' and 'I Just Can't Wait', on the one hand, and 'Brown Adam', on the other, requires the singer to use the songs to allow the audience to create its interpretations, and this primarily depends on distinguishing between different types of voice in performance.