

Da Merry Boys O Greenland:

Explorations into the Musical Dialogue of Shetland's Nautical Past

Introduction

Much of the instrumental and vocal repertoire of the Shetland Islands has been subsumed into the tradition as a result of the islanders' long associations with the sea, seafarers, and seafaring. Indeed, as a predominately oral tradition, most of the song and tune material learnt and performed by Shetlanders previous to the twentieth century (and the introduction of the phonograph in 1910) was done so through person-to-person contact and, as I will demonstrate in this article, the occupational world of Shetland sailors was particularly conducive to musical exchanges. Musicians, and in particular fiddlers, were often sought after as employees in the fishing and whaling industries, and it was these men who returned with a wealth of new musical material which was learned and composed during their travels. In addition to this, Shetlanders contributed to the profound impact of European influence on indigenous populations across the Arctic during the times of the whaling industry and fur trade. This was particularly manifested in the adoption and indigenisation of instrumental music and dance traditions by Inuit and other aboriginal groups.

In this article, my main aim is to explore the concept of musical migration, particularly in terms of transatlantic musical flow, as an important aspect of both the Shetland musical tradition and the musical traditions of indigenous populations outside Shetland who have been influenced by the transatlantic nature of the music. In doing this, I will attempt to start drawing together two separate music histories, that of the Inuit musicians and dances influenced by European whalers and fur traders across the arctic, and that of the Shetlanders who sailed to the regions and, for many years, shared a performance milieu with this indigenous groups who lived there. While there has been separate (albeit limited) research conducted into both the music of whalers and fur traders in the arctic, and the performance traditions which grew amongst indigenous groups as a result of these social interactions, there has been little attempt to draw together these two parallel music histories. In this article, I will be interrogating the role of music as a historical resource from which we can learn much about the cultural history, not only of Shetland, but of the places to which Shetlanders have been linked through seafaring. In so doing I would like to demonstrate how the Shetland performance tradition resonates with modern historian Graeme Milne's observations on British shanty singing - while the repertoire is symbolic of a particular mono-cultural identity, the music is in fact surprisingly cosmopolitan in its origins.¹ The sea is not a boundary but a highway,

¹ Currently senior lecturer in modern history at the University of Liverpool, Graham Milne discusses this in his conference paper, 'Authenticity, Identity and the Sea Shanty in the Early Twentieth Century', presented at *Atlantic Sounds: Ships and Sailortowns*, University of Liverpool, 14-15 March 2014.

and in this context a musical highway with the music providing a remarkable role in reflecting and reinforcing the identity, concerns, and observations of Shetlanders in terms of their nautical world view.

The topic of musical migration, and especially transatlantic music flow and its resultant inter-cultural processes within performance practice, has caught the attention of a number of ethnomusicologists in recent years and featured prominently in associated scholarly work. In 2008, the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention chose the theme of ‘Crossing Over’ for its conference at Memorial University in Newfoundland; the subsequent book publication featured papers examining the conveyance of fiddle music and dance across the North Atlantic between Europe and America.² The theme of musical migration has also been the subject of recent journal publications including *the world of music (new series) [sic]*, which had transatlantic music flows in the lusophone world as the subject of its 2013 issue,³ and a special issue of *MUSICultures*, which emerged from one of the themes of the 2011 International Council for Traditional Music’s biennial conference in St. John’s, Newfoundland, was published in 2013 with the title ‘Atlantic Roots and Routes’.⁴ In 2014, the University of Liverpool hosted a conference ‘Atlantic Sounds’ and the 2015 BFE/SFE conference built on the theme of what constitutes a border in music, ‘Boundary Crossing/Border Maintenance’, with its first theme set to ‘explore how music crosses boundaries, and is inhibited from doing so: how practices, genres, instruments, ideas, and musicians themselves move between contexts as well as how they are resisted and shut out’⁵. All of these themes relate closely to the Shetlanders’ musical fluidity within their nautical world. A number of recent book publications likewise reflect the theme of musical migrations and transcultural musical practices, including Toynbee and Dueck’s *Migrating Music* and Madrid-González’s *Transnational Encounters*, both published in 2011. By examining transatlantic musical flow and its historic role in both the development of Shetland music and the contribution it has made to other musical cultures, this article adds to a growing body of knowledge in this recent ethnomusicological endeavour.

Most of the material I draw from in this article is archival, gathered from resources including *Tobar an Dualchais* (an online database containing thousands of field recordings made across Scotland from the early twentieth century) and Peter Cooke’s excellent archive resource, *Whalsay’s Heritage of Song*, which contains approximately 132 of the 205 recordings which he made of ballads, songs, rhymes, and riddles collected by Cooke on the island between 1969 and

² Ian Russell and Anna Kearney Guigné, eds, *Crossing Over: Fiddle and Dance Studies from Around the North Atlantic*. Vol. 3 (Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen in association with the Department of Folklore, MMaP and the School of Music, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2010).

³ Barbara Alge and Birgit Abels, eds., *Transatlantic Musical Flows in the Lusophone World. the world of music (new series) [sic]* 2 (2) (2013).

⁴ *MUSICultures* special edition, ‘Atlantic Roots and Routes’, 40 (1) (2013)

⁵ Joint Conference BFE/SFE, ‘Boundary Crossing/Border Maintenance’, Musée Du Quai Branly, Paris, 2-5 July 2015. conference programme, p.2

1984.⁶ The material is not restricted to that which has been performed and associated with arctic seafarers but with Shetland seafarers in general. Cooke writes of his collected material as follows:

What was striking about all the songs and ballads was how they powerfully resonated with the life experiences of the islanders themselves no matter what their provenance. The fathers and uncles of the men who sang for me were often away at sea for months, even years, enduring the dangers of foul weathers, while their wives and girl-friends wondered if and when next they would see them safely back home again. The uncertainty of fate was equally true of the men who went off for shorter periods to the fishing grounds in small craft to cope with the vagaries of the tidal races of the local waters.⁷

Of the examples on Cooke's website at the time of writing, less than 20% were sung in the Shetland dialect. Most were songs and ballads of Scottish, Irish, English, and American origin, over half of which had nautical subject matter. Many of the songs were learnt by men and women from others working the fishing and whaling industries, either onboard ships or in the harbours and fish gutting yards. While a detailed analysis of the material is not within the scope of this article, a small number of pieces from the collection will be explored within the context of musical migration among Shetland musicians.

Musical migration reaches back many years in the Shetland Islands, and ties in closely with the prevailing industries at the time. For example, there is a well-known story in Shetland, collected from Unst fiddler John Stickle in the mid-1900s, recalling the arrival of his great-great grandfather and the origins of the Stickle family (which has comprised generations of fiddlers) on the island of Unst, the most northerly island of the Shetland archipelago and of the British Isles.⁸ It is related as follows: at some point in the late 1700s, a sailor is found washed ashore there by an old woman. He is carrying very little except a violin. He is given shelter by the old woman and lives with her until she dies, later marrying an Unst woman and starting a family. His name is Friedemann Cristopher Von Stichel and he is from Saxony in Germany. He stays on Unst for the remainder of his life, the first in a long line of celebrated musicians.⁹ His son, also called Friedemann, is born in the 1780s

⁶ *Tobar an Dualchais* (2008) www.tobarandualchais.co.uk [accessed 23 July 2015]; Peter Cooke, *Whalsay's Heritage of Song* (2014). <http://www.petercookie.com> [accessed 23 July 2015]. Peter Cooke, personal communication, 6 August 2015.

⁷ Peter Cooke, 'Songs from the Island of Whalsay', in *Tobar an Dualchais: Ulaidh Nàiseanta Kist of Riches: a National Treasure*. Edited by Chris Wright. (2014, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig), p.1.

⁸ Two versions of this story were collected, and referred to here - Patrick Shuldham-Shaw in 1946 and Calum Iain Maclean in 1955

⁹ John Stickle, 'Stickle Family History', interview by Calum Iain Maclean in Baltasound, Unst, 1955. SA1955.103. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31939/132> [accessed 23 July 2015].

and becomes acclaimed as the ‘finest fiddler in all Shetland *in the first position*’.¹⁰ He is credited as having composed a number of tunes which are still played in Shetland two centuries later, including ‘Da Brig’, ‘Da Wheena Burn’, ‘Christmas Day i da Morning’ and ‘Da Trowie Burn’. The tune, ‘Christmas Day ida Morning’, was said to have been performed by Stickle for the Laird of Bunes annually on Christmas morning in exchange for rent-free accommodation during the year. Tom Anderson clearly states his belief that this tune travelled from the continent on Hanseatic trading ships which came directly from Hamburg as follows:

TA - ‘This travelled from the continent with the German, probably on German ships or something like that

AB - And therefore they probably come to Shetland and into this [..]

TA - Of course, and then they - they’re continental I think to begin wi

AB - They’ve definitely got that soond about them.

TA - And then of course there was this big hanseatic trade between Shetland and Hamburg, and of course that’s where a lot of these continental tunes come from you see. and they were used for the polka. It probably would have been the continental schottische you see that suited the Shetland polka thing.

AB - And that would have gone away back, that, wouldn’t it?

TA - Yes, of course, that would have gone away about 1830 thereabout.¹¹

John Stickle, when interviewed by Shuldham-Shaw, thought that the tune was an original composition by Friedemann Stickle, but Shuldham-Shaw suggested that it may in fact be older. Shuldham-Shaw commented on the poetic quality of these tunes, especial the latter ‘Trowie Burn’ as being ‘quite remarkable for their time’.¹² Stickle is said to have been press-ganged at one time, and taken to sea where ‘his only duty was to play his fiddle to the men on board’.¹³ His son, Robert Stickle, was also a fiddler and grandfather of the aforementioned John Stickle, who learned much of his grandfather’s repertoire as a young boy.¹⁴

The earliest known inhabitants on the Shetland Islands were Neolithic farmers, from around 3000BC. Christianity reached the islands at some point between around 500-600AD, at a time when Shetland was part of the Pictish cultural world. Picts are believed to have been inhabiting the

¹⁰ Patrick Shuldham-Shaw, ‘A Shetland Fiddler and His Repertoire John Stickle, 1875-1957’, *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Dec., 1962), pp. 129- 147. p.129.

¹¹ Tom Anderson, ‘Christmas Day ida Morning’, interview by Peter R. Cooke in Edinburgh, 15 May 1970.

SA1970.088. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/97564/11>. [accessed 23 July 2015].

¹² Shuldham-Shaw, 1962, p.129.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Shuldham-Shaw, 1962, p.129-30.

islands immediately before the Viking invasions in c800AD.¹⁵ From this time until the transfer of ownership to Scotland in 1469, Norn was the spoken language of Shetland. After Shetland became part of Scotland, Norn was gradually replaced by the Shetland dialect of Scots, which is spoken in the islands to this day.¹⁶ The islands formed part of the Scandinavian Empire until 1468 when they were presented to Scotland by Denmark as part of a marriage treaty. Because of this shared history, and also because of the high volume of seasonal workers from around the North Sea fringes who visited Shetland, not to mention the many Shetland men who travelled across the North Atlantic in the fishing and whaling industries, the islands share strong cultural and occupational links with Scotland, Scandinavia, the Arctic, and Northern Europe.

Primarily members of a fisher society, Shetland men traditionally held occupations within fishing and related industries during the summer months while their wives worked the crofts in their absence. The fishing and whaling industries enabled a culture of exchange between Shetlanders and other workers from the North Atlantic and North Sea fringes, and music was an integral aspect in these exchanges. Indeed, a number of well-known Shetland fiddlers of the nineteenth and twentieth century, including Gible Gray (1909-1989) from the island of Unst and Bobby Peterson (1916-??) from Tingwall, spent their working lives at sea and often took their fiddles with them onboard ships.¹⁷ Shetland's location, at the crossroads of the North Sea and Atlantic Ocean, has also placed the islands as a stopping-off point for many seafarers, particularly merchant seamen, fishermen, and herring industry workers from Scotland and Northern Europe including the aforementioned Freidemann Von Stickle. Men arrived with their own song and tune repertoire, adding to the richness and variety of the musical tradition already present. Indeed, it was the Hanseatic traders who are believed to have introduced the modern-day violin to Shetland in around 1700, and this remained the primary musical instrument in use in the islands (indeed, Cooke describes Shetland as a 'single-instrument society') until the outbreak of the First World War and the introduction of pianos, guitars, and melodeons.¹⁸ Previous to the introduction of the violin, a one-stringed bowed instrument called the *gue* is believed to have been played by Shetlanders. It was mentioned by A. E. Edmunstone in his book, *Zetland*, published in 1809, and quoted by Otto Andersson in 1970 as follows:

¹⁵ 'History', *Shetland: Pride of Place* (2015) <http://www.shetland.org/about/history> [accessed 29 July 2015].

¹⁶ Anne Sinclair, 'Song in Shetland: A Personal Perspective', *The Bottle Imp* Issue 9 (May 2011). <http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue9/Sinclair.html> [accessed 28 July 2015].

¹⁷ Anon, 'Gibby Gray', *Shetland Music* (2006) http://www.shetland-music.com/prominent_artists/artists_of_the_past/gibby_gray/ [accessed 25 July 2015]; Peter Cooke, *The Fiddle Tradition of the Shetland Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.15.

¹⁸ Cooke, 1986, p.12.

Before violins were introduced, the musicians performed with an instrument called a *gue*, which appears to have had some similarity to a violin, but had only two strings of horse-hair and was played upon in the same manner as a violoncello.¹⁹

This instrument, considered by Andersson to be a bowed harp with similarities to the *Haar-Gie* from Norway, and the ‘*harp, giga* and *fiðla* of the Northern singers and sagas’, thus links the islands musico-historically with Scandinavia and Iceland.²⁰ The Inuit, too, constructed similar instruments called *Tautiruut*, which have been found in the vicinity of fur trade posts across the Arctic. Arima and Einarsson draw parallels between these instruments and the Icelandic *fiðla* as well as the Shetland *gue*, suggesting that the contact made through Orcadian workers in the Hudson’s Bay Company, who in all likelihood (although it is not recorded) had their own version of the Norse instrument, resulted in a culture of exchange whereby Inuit may have made copies of these instruments still in use in the eighteenth century.²¹

The Unst Boat Song

¹⁹ A. E. Edmunstone, in his book *Zetland* (1809), quoted by Otto Andersson in ‘The Bowed Harp of Trondheim Cathedral and Related Instruments in East and West’, *The Galpin Society Journal*, Vol. 23 (Aug., 1970), pp. 4-34, p.20

²⁰ Andersson, p.22

²¹ For more information on the *Tautiruut*, see E. Y. Arima and Magnús Einarsson, ‘Whence and When the ‘Eskimo Fiddle’?, *Folk* Vol. 18, 1976, pp. 23-40.

<p>Starka virna vestalie Obadeea, obadeea Starka virna vestalie Obadeea moynie</p> <p>Stala, stoita, stonga raer O whit says du de bunshka baer O whit says du de bunshka baer Litra maevi drengie.</p> <p>Saina papa wara, Obadeea, obadeea Saina papa wara, Obadeea monye.</p>	<p><i>Strong wind from the west'ard Trouble, trouble Strong wind from the west'ard Trouble our men</i></p> <p><i>Put in order and support the mast and yards Do you think the boat will carry her sail Do you think the boat will carry her sail I am pleased with that boys.</i></p> <p><i>Bless us, our Father, Trouble, trouble Bless us, our Father, Trouble our men.</i></p>
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The Shetlanders' long association with the sea is illustrated in the lyrics of the oldest song in the Shetland repertoire, The Unst Boat Song. It is in the Norn, an extinct north Germanic language, which was the everyday language of many Shetlanders until the mid-eighteenth century.²² It is also one of only two traditional songs that originated in Shetland and still retains Norn words, the other being the refrain of the *King Orfeo* ballad.²³ The Unst Boat Song was first collected on the island of Unst in the late nineteenth century by Jacob Jacobson from the singing of J.J. Stickle, a member of the same aforementioned fiddle-playing Stickle family, and transcribed by Jacobson's colleague, William Ratter.²⁴ An indicator of Shetland's earliest nautical world, the song tells of a mounting westerly gale and the sailors' efforts to secure the sails and rigging while their families pray onshore for their safety. Although the song has been described as a lullaby or ballad, it was most likely sung as a prayer for safety. Unfortunately only two or three verses remain, but it is obvious that this is a fragment of a much longer ballad.²⁵ It may also have been one of the Norn 'visicks' (old songs or ballads) which were witnessed in 1774 as accompaniments to circle dances in Unst, but by the end of that century had almost totally disappeared

Tunes from Afar: The Arctic Whaling Industry

We have already seen the influence of Hanseatic traders on the Shetland fiddle tradition, through the remarkable arrival of Freidamann Von Stickle on Unst in the late 1700s, not to mention the

²² E. Y. Arima and Magnús Einarsson, p.36.

²³ For more information, see Kitty Anderson, 'King Orfeo', recored by Francis Collinson in Lerwick, September 1959. SA1955.145. *Tobar an Dualchais* (2008) <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/47965/1> [accessed 1 August 2015].

²⁴ Ratter 1951.

²⁵ ; Kitty Anderson, 'Unst Boat Song', recorded by Francis Collinson in Lerwick, September 1959. SA1955.145.1. *Tobar an Dualchais* (2008) <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/47851/373> [accessed 23 July 2015].

introduction of the actual instrument, the modern-day violin, in around 1700.²⁶ There has been some speculation among scholars as to the origins of certain tunes in the Shetland repertoire, and similarities have been drawn between traditional Shetland tunes and dances, and others from around the North Atlantic and North Sea rim. For example, Shuldham-Shaw asserts that the traditional tune, 'Auld Swaara', which he collected from the playing of John Stickle, is Norse in origin, continuing that 'this type of tune makes far more impact on Norwegian listeners than British'.²⁷ 'Da Flooer o Taft', another tune collected by Shuldham-Shaw from the playing of J. J. Stickle, has, according to Shuldham-Shaw, an 'undoubted likeness to the tune for the Danish dance "Syvspring", the dance at one time known commonly across North-West Europe and called 'Seven Jumps' in England.²⁸ In my own experience as a fieldworker in the sub-arctic region of Canada, my playing of the Shetland tune 'Wullafjord' (also discussed in depth later in this article) to Cree fiddle players in the town of Moose Factory, northern Ontario, immediately gave rise to the response that the tune sounded like an Inuit melody. After some research into the James Bay repertoire, I also came across the tune 'Log Cabin', written by fiddler James Stewart of Chisasibi, which bears notable similarities to 'Wullafjord' in terms of phrasing and structure. [transcriptions - Wullafjord and Log Cabin]

The Arctic whaling industry commenced in the early 1700s and continued until the early twentieth century. It was common practice for whaling companies to hire extra crew in Lerwick, the last port of call for many British ships before continuing their journeys westwards toward the whaling grounds. Many Shetland crew members played the fiddle and were popular additions to ships as they could double up as entertainers, and this tradition of carrying a fiddler onboard ships continued into the early twentieth century when the Arctic whaling came to an end.²⁹ Evidence of the abundance of fiddle players in the whaling industry can be seen in frequent acknowledgements of the purchase of fiddle strings recorded in whale company ledgers such as those of the Lerwick-based Hay and Company, and various copies of these documents can be found in the Shetland archives in Lerwick.³⁰ From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the fiddle was the main instrument being played among Shetlanders. It was hugely popular among islanders and, by the early 1800s, it was reported that one in ten Shetlanders could play the instrument.³¹

In the Arctic fringes during the time of the whaling industry, Shetland men mixed regularly with Scottish, Scandinavian, and Danish crew members, and in particular the indigenous Inuit population. In addition to songs, there was a lively exchange of tunes and the Arctic whaling

²⁶ Cooke, 1986, pp.1-2.

²⁷ Shuldham-Shaw, 1962, p.132

²⁸ Shuldham-Shaw, 1962, p.134.

²⁹ L. G. Johnson, 'Lawrence Williamson of Mid Yell, Lerwick', 1971, p.125, quoted in Cooke, 1986, p.12.

³⁰ The Shetland Archives are situated in The Shetland Museum, Lerwick.

³¹ Arthur Edmonstone quoted in Peter Cooke, 'Notes and Comments: The Fiddle in Shetland Society', (London: Royal Musical Association, 1976), p. 69

became known as a great source of music for Shetlanders, Scandinavians, Europeans, and Inuit alike.³² It was considerably influential to the musical world of the Inuit who mixed with the whalers, and spurred on a whole new musical and dance genre for the indigenous populations based on fiddling, and later button box player, and dancing. Before European contact, Inuit in the Polar regions had a musical tradition of throat singing and drum dance, described by John Lehr as ‘a unique repertoire of songs and dances that in their lyrical content and instrumentation reflected an intimate relationship with the arctic environment’.³³ However, according to ethnomusicologist Maia Lutz, who conducted fieldwork in Pangnirtung, Baffin Island in 1973-4, ‘The impact of Western civilization on the rest of the world is nowhere exhibited more clearly than in the Arctic’.³⁴ Whalers became all-encompassing in Eskimo society and the Inuit quickly abandoned many of their own traditional ways, including musical traditions, and took on the ways of the whalers. The whalers became known to the Inuit as the ‘Arctic postmen’ because they would bring a variety of goods with them, including musical instruments, each time they returned.³⁵ In terms of oral history, a wealth of material has been collected relating to this time period, including Dorothy Harley Eber’s, influential publication, *When the Whalers were Up North*, and Flora Beardy and Robert Coutts *Voices from Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory*, which relates in particular to the fur trade era.³⁶ Ethnomusicological research is thinner and consists mainly of fieldwork conducted in the late twentieth century by the aforementioned Maia Lutz and Jim Hiscott who wrote about his experience of accordion playing in Repulse Bay in 1996.³⁷

Some of the pieces learned by Shetlanders during this time are described in Shetland as ‘whaling’ tunes, tunes believed to have been learned from whalers or composed aboard whaling ships. Common tunes played at this time included Scottish tunes ‘Soldier’s Joy’, ‘Deil Among the Tailors’ and ‘The Flowers of Edinburgh’.³⁸ There was also a tune which entered the Shetland repertoire called ‘Souters of Saltry’, named after a Scotsman living in a place called Saltry in Alaska and perhaps written by a Shetlander involved in the fur trade there.³⁹ One of the most

³² James Laurenson, ‘Popular Shetland Tunes; Scottish Tunes Introduced through Whaling Contacts’, recorded by Peter R. Cooke in Fetlar, 31 May 1971. SA1972.102. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/77463/903> [accessed 28 July 2015].

³³ John Lehr, Jeff Tabvahtah, and Julie Bartlett, “Identity and Environment in Contemporary Inuit Music”, *Prairie Perspectives* Vol 07 (2004), pp.11-20, p.11.

³⁴ Maija M. Lutz, ‘Music of the Sea Come Ashore: Whaling Music in Eskimo Society’, unpublished conference paper (Mystic Seaport Museum Second Annual Symposium on Traditional Music of the Sea, 30-31 May 1981).

³⁵ Dorothy Harley Eber, *When The Whalers were Up North* (Oklahoma: Univeristy of Oklahoma Press, 1989), p. xvii.

³⁶ Eber (1989); Robert Coutts and Flora Beardy, eds. *Voices from Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory* (Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996).

³⁷ For more information see Lutz (1981) and Jim Hiscott, ‘Inuit Accordion Music - A Better Kept Secret’, *Bulletin de Musique Folklorique Canadienne* Vol. 34 (1/2), pp. 16-19.

³⁸ James Laurenson, 1971.

³⁹ Andrew Poleson, ‘Souters of Saltry/Da Scalloway Lassies/O’er Bogie/The Bottom of the Punch Bowl’, recorded by Peter Cooke in Nesting, 12 June 1971. SA1971.220.

<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/gd/fullrecord/100414/1;jsessionid=F07CC2FFE7BF7BBCA080743CEEA29FAE> [accessed 29 July 2015].

popular tunes for dancing the Shetland reel was the tune, ‘Merry Boys o’ Greenland, described as a ‘whaling reel’ and with possible musical links to Terchelling Island, on the Frisian Islands, where ethnomusicologist Peter Cooke notes ‘Rielen’, a tune with a similar second turning, which was collected there by ethnomusicologist Jaap Kunst.⁴⁰ The tune later was used as the inspiration for a song about the Greenland whaling, from the perspective of a Shetlanders, written by naturalist and musician Bobby Tulloch from the island of Yell in the mid-late twentieth century. The words were as follows:

Da Merry Boys O Greenland⁴¹

<p>Da news is spreadin trowe da toon: A ship is lyin in Bressa Soond. Tell da boys shö’s nortward boond Ta hunt da whale in Greenland. A’ll get me sea böts fae da laft, Rub wi oil until dey’re saft, Get wurd ta Lowrie ower at Taft Ta pack his bag fir Greenland</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Up aloft an set da sail, Hingin on wi teeth an nail; We’re goin nort ta hunt da whale, Da Merry Boys o Greenland.</i></p> <p>Dir plenty paets ta pit you by, Plenty maet ta feed da kye; Da wind is fair, da mön is high; We sail da moarn fir Greenland. Da night we’ll gadder fir a foy, So tune du up da fiddle, joy. He’ll come back a man at goes a boy Ta hunt da whale at Greenland.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>chorus</i></p>	<p>Da boats ir oon: we tak wir place, Caald sweat apon wir face; Da fecht is on - hit’s dem or wis, Nae quarter, boys, in Greenland. “Dere shö blows,” we hear da cry. Waters tresh an lances fly; Fir wis ta live a whale maan die Ita da sea o Greenland.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>chorus</i></p> <p>We hunt an shaste, we fecht an slay Fae Davis Strait ta Baffin Bay Trow aa da endless Arctic day Aroond da shores o Greenland. Bit happy is da day at last; Da holds ir foo, an aa made fast Afore da Winter’s icy blast Can freeze da seas o Greenland.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>chorus</i></p>
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In the following extract, Robert Bairnson explains how the two reels, ‘Oliver Jack’ (sometimes also known as ‘Ollefjord Jack’)⁴² and ‘Wullafjord’, were picked up during whaling trips, when Shetlanders joined boats from the mainland bound for Greenland and the Davis Straits.

⁴⁰ James Laurenson, 1971; Cooke, 1986, p.64-5.

⁴¹ Bobby Tulloch, ‘Da Merry Boys O Greenland’, in *Da Sangs At A’ll Sing Ta Dee*, edited by T. A. Robertson and M. Robertson, (Lerwick: Shetland Folk Society, 2013), pp.54-5.

⁴² Cooke, 1986, p.139.

‘Ollefjord’ may refer to Olderfjord, a coastal village in the very northern part of Norway, in Porsanger, a municipality in Finnmark County.

There’s two tunes. They call them the Greenland tunes. In olden times, some of the Shetland men went away to the whaling fishing in Greenland about the Davis Straits and way up in the Nor-Wast. Nova Scotia and like that. And they always carried a fiddler. Sometimes when that Shetland man came off the voyage, they were playing tunes and nobody really knew whether they composed them on the voyage, or had they heard them played somewhere a way out there, because the same tunes is been heard played in Nova Scotia and [St.] John’s and aa like that. Well, the name of the first one is Oliver Jack. Another one is Wullafjord. Wullafjord. I can’t spell it, but it’s a sort of a Norse or Norwegian or something.. but I suppose they just call them the Greenland tunes.⁴³

The latter tune, ‘Wullafjord’ was introduced to the Shetland repertoire by fiddler, Bobby Peterson, after one such voyage to the Davis Straits. Considered a Shetland tune, it became so popular that it is now not only in the Shetland repertoire, but played by fiddlers throughout the British Isles and globally. Born in c1886, Peterson had been a deckhand on an Arctic whaling ship in the early twentieth century and had at one time been shipwrecked in the Arctic. He had played the fiddle from a young age, performing at weddings whilst at home, and took his instrument with him whilst working in the whaling industry, first to the Davis Straits and later to South Georgia. He often played music in the mess room with other men from Shetland, Scotland (particularly Dundee), England, and Norway, and his son, also Bobby Peterson, believed that much of his father’s repertoire had come from the whaling days as he explains in the following extract of an interview with Peter Cooke:

P.C. Did he ever pick up and Norwegian tunes?

B.P. No, but he picked up a lot of - fae further afield, you know, like away up when they were in the Davis Straits - and around that quarter you see. they used to - you ken - get tunes. A lot of them they reckon come, came fae there.

P.C. Are there any that you mind?

B.P. Ah, I can’t say. As I say, he had so many, you understand, and of course this same tune that I played first - this Wullafjord, I think that was picked up.⁴⁴

⁴³ Robert Bairnson, ‘Oliver Jack/Willafjord’, recorded by Prof. Tadaaki Miyake in Southvoe, Dunrossness on 14 December 1972. SA1972.240. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/50889/945> [accessed 28 July 2015].

⁴⁴ Cooke, 1986, p.16.

[Ollefjord jack and Willafjord transcriptions]

Laurence Williamson of Yell writes with regards to the fiddlers that:

Each Greenland ship used to carry a fiddler, sometimes a Southerner, sometimes a Shetlander, to play to the men while at work to enliven them. And sometimes the fiddlers from several ships would meet and try their skill. And I think I have heard of a Shetland fiddler competing with the Dutch from a buss or ship. No wonder that tunes are so abundant. Several of them are fairy tunes, and are likely very old; many are of Norse origin and many Scotch; and many of them must have been learned from the sources indicated above. There is even a Yaki, i.e. Eskimo tune.⁴⁵

These 'Yakki' tunes were believed at the time to have been learned from Inuit musicians. While Cooke suggests in his 1986 ethnography that these tunes have been totally forgotten, there are two recorded tunes which have been attributed to this category.⁴⁶ These are the reel, 'Hjogrovoltar' and the listening tune, 'Da Greenland Man's Tune', which were recorded on the island of Fetlar.

[Hjogrovoltar and Greenland Man transcriptions] Both tunes were suggested to have originally had Inuit words to them.⁴⁷ While in Shetland, 'Yakki' tunes are considered most likely to have been composed by whalers who were too modest to claim authorship (with the assumption that the Inuit had no fiddle tradition of their own at that time), I would like to suggest that this was not necessarily the case.⁴⁸ Hudson's Bay Company journals from across the Arctic and Subarctic dating back to the late 1700s show a vibrant tradition of music and dancing ashore, and there are a number of references to Inuit and Cree fiddlers and melodeon players in areas where whalers and fur traders visited. The modern day violin has been played on the west coast of James Bay for nearly as long as it has been played in the Shetland Islands, the earliest reference to fiddling and dancing being in

⁴⁵ L. G. Johnson, 'Lawrence Williamson of Mid Yell, Lerwick', 1971, p.125, quoted in Cooke, 1986, p.12.

⁴⁶ Cooke. Yakki is also the name given to the now extinct herding and guard dog from Greenland which was kept by Shetland whalers during their time in the Arctic and were brought back to Shetland and interbred with Shetland sheepdogs. See Stanley Coren, 'The President and the Sheltie', *Psychology Today*, 17 October 2012. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/canine-corner/201210/the-president-and-the-sheltie> [accessed 22 June 2015].

⁴⁷ James Laurenson, 'Hjogrovoltar', recorded in 1959. SA1959.087.091. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008.

<http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/gd/fullrecord/98439/1;jsessionid=76CEC895E705A038624C07C59F89416D> [accessed 29 July 2015]; Tom Anderson and Pamela Swing, *Hand Me Doon Da Fiddle*. 2nd edn (Stirling: Department of Continuing Education, University of Stirling, 1981), p.27.

⁴⁸ Cooke, 1986, p.50. Please see Charlie Simpson (2006) where he writes of the Inuit connection, 'These tunes, like the 'Trowie tunes' said to be learnt from contact with Shetland's population of trows - little people who dwelt in the misty hills - are more likely to be the efforts of modest composers on whaling ships, for the Inuit had no music or dance tradition at this time.'

1749, only around half a century following the introduction of the violin to Shetland.⁴⁹ There are also numerous references to indigenous women dancing with male whalers and fur traders, and indigenous men accompanying fiddlers on drum and later fiddling themselves.⁵⁰ As most dances were couples' dances, it was common for aboriginal women to be invited to dances, and they became adept in their knowledge of European dance customs.⁵¹ Laxer, who has researched in depth the introduction of European instruments and dancing to Northern Canada by Arctic fur traders, who often operated in the same areas as whalers, expands by suggesting:

Dances seem to have been optimal social situations for bridging racial, linguistic and class divisions, and indeed served as one of the few contexts when the rivalry between the trading companies was put aside.⁵²

The fiddle music in James Bay was suggested by ethnomusicologist Lynn Whidden to have been a 'language of exchange' between fur traders and the Cree population living there, and this is likely to have been the case across the Arctic and Subarctic.⁵³ Laxer also writes of the music as a means of bridging the cultural and linguistic gap:

By the onset of the 19th century, European musical instruments such as flutes, bagpipes, and particularly violins or *fiddles* had begun making their way along the trading routes to the west and northwest in significant numbers, allowing for European-styled sonic spaces to emerge inside and around the trading posts, while also offering the potential for new combinations of musical traditions that variously bridged divisions of race, language, and class.⁵⁴

Fiddles were relatively easy to acquire in these regions as they were sold in Hudson's Bay Company stores at which indigenous hunters and trappers traded their goods annually. In addition to this, many Scots fur traders married indigenous women and music and dance traditions became integrated into indigenous culture from the early days of the fur trade.

⁴⁹ Anne Lederman, 'Fiddling', *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* (2010)

http://www.annelederman.com/EMC_article.pdf [accessed 29 July 2015]. Also see Frances Wilkins, 'The Fiddlers of James Bay: Transatlantic Flows and Musical Indigenization among the James Bay Cree', in *MUSICultures* 40/1: 57-99.

⁵⁰ For one example, see J. W. Anderson, *Fur Trade Days* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, 1960), E.93/29 fos. 1-296, p. 31. quoted in Wilkins, 2013, p.70.

⁵¹ Daniel Laxer, 'Instruments of Change: Music in the Fur Trade and the Arrival of European Instruments into the Canadian West 1760-1821' (University of Toronto, 2011. unpublished paper), p.13.

http://www.muscan.org/images/docs/laxer_compressed.pdf [accessed 27 July 2015].

⁵² Laxer, 2011, p.18.

⁵³ Lynn Whidden, *Essential Song: Three Decades of Northern Cree Music* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007), p.40.

⁵⁴ Laxer, 2011, p.3.

It is certainly true that the Inuit picked up the fiddle (and later button box) from Scottish whalers and fur traders, and today there is a vibrant music and dance tradition across the Arctic derived from the musical exchanges of this time period. In fact the Scottish-derived fiddle, accordion, and dance tradition is so deeply ingrained into Inuit culture that it is now described by the Inuit themselves as the traditional music of the Arctic. This music became firmly established during the second half of the nineteenth century when there was regular contact between the whalers and the Inuit through the operation of year-round whaling stations and the employment of Inuit in the whaling industry.⁵⁵ So it almost goes without saying that there was an exchange of tunes between the Shetlanders and the Inuit, although it is normally assumed that the exchange went only one way with Inuit fiddlers learning from the Shetlanders. This is illustrated in the following recollection from William Hunter, from the parish of Nesting, who had been aboard the *Scotia* in 1908-9 on its trip to the Davis Straits.⁵⁶ In this story he recalls an occasion when shipmate and fiddler Robbie Leask persuaded him to go ashore in the Davis Straits and hear the Inuit playing Shetland fiddle tunes and performing Shetland dances:

DH - You said you were first time at - where was this at? at Greenland?

WH - Davis Straits

DH - Davis Straits, yes. And there were this man that said you would go ashore

WH - Yes

DH - Robbie Leask, is it?

DH - Aye. I asked him where we would get the boat fae the skipper, and I got the boat and we goed oot. As we come ashore we heard a fiddle playing. You see, aa Shetland tunes. This Robbie was a fiddler you see, his faither was a fiddler. I said til wis, well I see your faither was aboard one of these year. We gaed up and doon this wis the Eskimos something playing and dancing. So I telt this fiddler that this Leask wis a fiddler. So he took the fiddle, he set out and he started to play. It wir a job tae win oot again.

DH - What was it the man said to you? he got his gansey off

WH - Aye, he got his gansey off and he said, 'coola coola coola'

DH - Yes, that means?

WH - That means a wife, you see, come and dance wi me

DH - What was the word for a man?

⁵⁵ Lutz, 1981. p.2.

⁵⁶ William Hunter was born in 1890s and was described as a crofter. There is no suggestion that he was any relation to the well-known Shetland fiddle players Willie Hunter Snr and Willie Hunter Jr from Lerwick. William Hunter, 'Shetland Tunes and Dances Among the Eskimos', recorded by Dr Albert Hunter in Nesting, 1966. SA1966.124. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/27592/625> [accessed 29 July 2015].

WH - Isaaki.

DH - I see, very good. And what sort of dances though would they be?

WH - It was like a Shetland dance you see

DH - A sort o Shetland reel type thing?

WH - Yes yes yes. But if you had a.. well, there were ten there, in the tent. Man it wasn't pretty to see them. It was something other. [...]

DH - Good sorta - rhythm?

WH - Oh man, I tell you they had the step.⁵⁷

The adoption of European-style dance music by the Inuit has been all-encompassing in some parts of the Arctic. By the time the first missionaries arrived in the Arctic, the Inuit were participating in fiddle music and dancing by choice, and this, along with button box and accordion playing, had completely replaced traditional Inuit music in many areas by the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ It would be no surprise, therefore, if Inuit fiddlers were also composing tunes which were then learnt by Shetland whalers and incorporated into the Shetland performance tradition. More research on this would need to be done to establish the extent to which this may or may not have been the case.

In the recent book/CD publication, *Bellows and Bows, Historic Recordings of Traditional Fiddle and Accordion Music From Across Canada*, Sherry Johnson has uncovered some valuable recordings of Inuit button accordion players who were directly influenced by the music of Arctic whalers, from the collections of Lutz and Hiscott.⁵⁹ Most notably, Simeonie Keenainak from Pangnirtung, probably the best known of contemporary Inuit button accordion players. Born in 1948, he initially learned to play the accordion from the elders in his community who, he says, learned from the whalers on whaling ships. Since they had no way of listening to tapes or recording music at that time, everything they learned was from listening first hand to other musicians.⁶⁰

In addition to tunes, there were many opportunities for Shetland whalers to exchange songs with others aboard Arctic whaling ships, especially with those, such as the Scottish, English, Irish, and Americans, who shared their language. It seems likely that some of the repertoire collected by Peter Cooke on Whalsay (1969-1984) is from this time period and include Scots ballads and bothy ballads, nautical disaster songs, hymns, songs about the whaling, American civil war songs, military

⁵⁷ William Hunter, 'Shetland Tunes and Dances Among the Eskimos', recorded by Dr Albert Hunter in Nesting, 1966. SA1966.124. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/27592/625> [accessed 29 July 2015].

⁵⁸ Lutz, 1981, p.7,11.

⁵⁹ Sherry Johnson, ed., *Bellows and Bows: Historic Recordings of Traditional Fiddle and Accordion Music From Across Canada* (St. John's, NL: Research Center for the Study of Music, Media & Place, Memorial University, 2012), Book and CD recording.

⁶⁰ Johnson (2012), track ??

songs, Jacobite songs, Irish and Scottish music hall songs, Scottish national songs, and the odd sea shanty.⁶¹ One song which was sung in Shetland and is specifically related to this era is 'The Greenland Whale Fishery', which describes the hunt for the whale. Hugh Cumming, from the West Coast of Shetland and whose grandfather had been a whaler in the Arctic, learnt this song from his father and recordings of him singing the some were made by Tom Anderson in 1960 and again in 1970.⁶² The song was first collected in Lancashire by Anne Gilchrist in 1906 and appears to have been first published in the *Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* in 1959, suggesting that the song was passed down through oral tradition rather than the printed word.⁶³ Another song, 'Cam Ye By the Salmon Fishin', also known as 'My Son John', was believed to be of Jacobite origin and entered Fetlar's song repertoire via the Greenland whalers. The song was recorded from James Laurenson by Alan Bruford in Fetlar in 1970.⁶⁴ One whaler, the father of Robert Irvine from Nesting, reportedly returned from Greenland with numerous songs including 'Sally Munro' and 'Beware of the Bonny Bunch of Roses' (stemming from a time when the French addressed the English as the 'Bunch of Roses'), in addition to songs relating to shipwrecks.⁶⁵

One piece of particular interest from this time period, and concerning an event which may have been witnessed by some Shetland men, is *The Resolution*, related the story of three crewmembers on the whaling ship, *Resolution*, who were stranded when the ship was unexpectedly freed from pack ice. There is no historical reference to this event, and the song has not been found in any other collections. *Resolution* was finally lost in pack ice in the Davis Straits in June 1830 along with eighteen other vessels.⁶⁶

The Resolution

From Peterhead the Ressie sailed; a fine old ship was she;
Away to Greenland she did steer in the year of 53. [23?]
Mong'st streams and packs of flaking ice she east and west did steer,
Until the first of April when the seals they did appear

⁶¹ Cooke, 2014

⁶² Hugh Cumming, 'The Greenland Whale Fishery', recorded by Peter R. Cooke and Tom Anderson in Walls and Sandness, 17 September 1970. SA1970.257. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/79854/426> [accessed 28 July 2015].

⁶³ 'The Greenland Whale Fishery', *Mainly Norfolk: English Folk and Other Good Music* (2014), <https://mainlynorfolk.info/lloyd/songs/thegreenlandwhalefishery.html> [accessed 29 July 2015].

⁶⁴ James Laurenson, 'Cam Ye By the Salmon Fishin'?'/My Son John', recorded by Alan J. Bruford in Fetlar, 22 September 1970. SA1970.246. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/68066/794> [accessed 28 July 2015].

⁶⁵ Robert Irvine, 'Robert Irvine Names Songs Sung by his Father', recorded by Alan J. Bruford in Nesting, 8 October 1974. SA1974.217. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/48679/1329> [accessed 28 July 2015].

⁶⁶ Andrew Poleson, 'The Resolution', recorded by Peter Cooke in 1972. SA1972.196.7. *Whalsay's Heritage of Song* (2014). <http://www.petercookie.com/resolution-the/> [accessed 28 July 2015].

We sail'd in among the pack where numerous they lay
And cheerful was our merry crew and high in hope that day.
But oh how short our human hope of earthly joys always
No pleasure felt, each heart did mourn; that night brought grief and pain.
For three of our most noble crew, as fate would have it so,
That very night played on the ice; sad is this tale of woe.
The sun had sunk in western skies and keenly blew the wind;
Our ship went drifting through the pack and they were left behind.

Maritime disaster songs featuring in Peter Cooke's Whalsay song collection include 'The Bold Ramillies', 'The Fate of Franklin', and 'The Loss of the Vestris', unsurprisingly as they relate so closely to the experiences of Shetland sailors.

The Arctic whaling industry had petered out by the early 1900s and was replaced by the Antarctic whaling which lasted from 1904 until 1963. Men travelled by ship to South Georgia towards the end of the year, often overwintering and spending two consecutive winters [summers] stationed there. Again, there was a lively exchange of music - this time particularly with Norwegian and Scottish men, and a number of tunes were picked up and adapted by Shetlanders from this time.⁶⁷ One tune, 'The Norwegian Waltz', (better known as 'Life in the Finland Woods') is significant of this time period.⁶⁸ Another tune is entitled 'Antarctic Ice', a variation of the Scottish tune, 'MacPherson's Lament', although the sentiments of the title are markedly different.⁶⁹ One of the most interesting songs from this time period is the Shetland version of the tune, 'Barbara Allan'. Demonstrated to Peter Cooke by James [Jeemsie] Laurenson from the Island of Fetlar, the Shetland version is markedly different, to such an extent that Laurenson considers the song to be a Shetland composition [[transcription of this song, compare to printed version?](#)]⁷⁰

Music of the Herring Industry

As with the whaling industry, the Scottish herring industry, which began in the mid-nineteenth century, was another major source of material for Shetland musicians, both male and female. Fishing fleets followed the herring shoals annually from May to November, starting in the

⁶⁷ More detailed information on Shetland musicians in the Antarctic whaling industry can be found in Frances Wilkins, 'The Fiddle at Sea: Tradition and Innovation Among Shetland's Sailors since the Eighteenth Century' in *Crossing Over* (Elphinstone Institute and Memorial University, Newfoundland, 2010) pp.12-15.

⁶⁸ Robert Peterson, 'Life in Finland Woods', recorded by Peter R. Cooke in Shetland in 1974. SA1974.003. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/36654/1082> [accessed 20 July 2015].

⁶⁹ 'Antarctic Ice' was recorded by Patrick Shuldham-Shaw from Peter Scollay on East Yell for the BBC archiving project in the early 1950s and later released on CD. *Da Mirrie Boys* (Folktrax 1978) edited by Peter Kennedy. FTX-068. Track 14. For more detailed track listings, see 'Shetland Fiddle Music', *Folktrax* (2009) [accessed 29 July 2015].

⁷⁰ James Laurenson, 'Barbara Allen', recorded by Peter R. Cooke in Fetlar, 1 June 1972. SA1972.105. *Tobar an Dualchais* 2008. <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/78105/925> [accessed 23 July 2015].

far North and West of Scotland (Shetland and the Outer Hebrides) and working clockwise around the coast of Britain until they arrived in East Anglia towards the close of the season. During the herring industry the roles of Shetland and Scottish women from fishing communities changed dramatically and many unmarried women worked in harbours alongside herring fleets as ‘gutting quines’ processing and packing fish into barrels for export. A major contribution on the subject of the annual migration of Scottish ‘fisher lassies’ or ‘gutting quines’ is Jane Liffen’s PhD thesis, completed in 2007, which is also discussed in Pickering et al. *Rhythms of Labour*.⁷¹ Girls usually entered the industry as teenagers and left when they married, typically in their mid-twenties.⁷² During the early 1900s approximately three thousand females and most of the adult male fishing population worked in the herring industry.⁷³ The outbreak of the First World War, the closing of foreign markets and the introduction of ice used to preserve fish signified the end of the herring boom, although the industry continued until the 1960s.⁷⁴ Fish gutters at the herring industry stood at ‘farlens’, which were long trough-like workbenches situated in the open air and filled with fish. Placed in teams of three, two women gutted and sorted the fish while the third packed them into barrels with salt ready for exportation.⁷⁵ Singing was an integral aspect of the job and it was more common for women to sing together as they worked rather than talk to one another or work in silence.⁷⁶ In Lerwick during the 1930s there are recollections of the singing from the yards being heard throughout the town.⁷⁷ The songs’ rhythmic qualities helped women keep a steady working pace, and it was a prime occasion for women to learn songs which they could then incorporate into their own repertoires. While there were a high number of women singing from the gospel hymn repertoire at that time, owing to the religious fervour present among North-East Scottish fisherfolk,

⁷¹ Jane Liffen, ‘“There was Nothing Else for Us – We were Just Fisher Quines”’: Representations of Scots Girls in Great Yarmouth’ (Unpublished PhD, Loughborough University, 2007); Marek Korczynski, Michael Pickering, and Emma Robertson, *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 100-103.

⁷² Reginald Byron, ‘Scottish Fishing Communities’, in *Scottish Life and Society: The Individual and Community Life*, ed. by Owen Hand John Beech, Mark A. Mulhern, Jeremy Weston, John Donald (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2005), pp. 283–98, p. 295.

⁷³ Margaret Bochel, ‘The Fisher Lassies,’ in *Odyssey: Voices from Scotland’s Recent Past*, ed. by Billy Kay (Edinburgh: Polygon Books, 1982), pp. 33–43 (p. 34).

⁷⁴ Jane Nadel-Klein, ‘A Fisher Laddie Needs a Fisher Lassie: Endogamy and Work in a Scottish Fishing Village’, in *To Work and to Weep: Women in Fishing Economies*, ed. by Dona Lee Davis Jane Nadel-Klein (St. John’s, Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1988), p. 201; Jane Nadel-Klein, *Fishing for Heritage: Modernity and Loss Along the Scottish Coast* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), p. 75.

⁷⁵ For more information on women in the herring industry, see Margaret Bochel (1982), pp. 33–43 and Jane Nadel-Klein (1988).

⁷⁶ This is discussed in the following interviews: William Cordiner, interview on gospel singing in Peterhead, 14 November 2006, Peterhead, unrecorded, fieldnotes by Frances Wilkins; Adelaide Cowe, interview on gospel singing in Fraserburgh, 17 January 2007, Fraserburgh, tape recording: EISA, EI 2007.178, 21:26; Maureen Stephen and John Geddes, interview on gospel singing in Peterhead, 14 November 2006, Inverugie, tape recording: EISA, EI 2006.095, 35:56.

⁷⁷ Freda Leask and Joyce McDill, interview on gospel singing in Shetland, 14 May 2007, Quarff, tape recording: EISA, EI 2007.056, 62:46.

those who were less religious tended to sing the popular songs of the day, including well known Scottish and Irish folk and music hall songs.⁷⁸

One song collected by Peter Cooke from Whalsay singer Jeannie Hutchison in 1974 is titled 'The Foolish Young Girl'. Like many others, Jeannie worked as herring gutter as a young woman before she married.⁷⁹ She learnt the song from other girls who she worked with in the gutting yards, and it was also well know in Aberdeen. 'The Foolish Young Girl' is a Scots lament from the perspective of a woman who fell in love with a sailor as a young woman and has now been deserted by him. It has a number of alternative titles including 'I wish, I wish', 'The Student Boy', 'Died for Love', and in the USA it was published in Broadsheds under the title 'The Butcher Boy.'⁸⁰ 'Logie o Buchan' is another song which was learnt by Jeannie Hutchison, most likely from Scots girls working in the herring industry. The song is from Aberdeenshire and is another lament - this time from the perspective of a girl who has fallen in love with a gardener, 'Jamie', the name of a real person who had been in the employment of Aberdeenshire schoolmaster George Halket, the composer of the song.⁸¹ The tune name, 'Gutters o Skeld', presumably comes from this time and refers to a fiddle tune normally know by its more common name, 'Sleep Soond ida Morning'.

In addition to songs learnt during the gutting, there are others related to this period of history. For example, 'Shame Faa da Laird', which is a traditional Shetland song about the herring fishery which laments all the boys and young men who have gone away. The chorus goes as follows:

Oh, shame faa da Laird, fir he's shörelly ta blame
Fir no keepin mair o wir laadies at hame!
If da herrin wid bide an da whaals dey wid caa,
Dan aa wir boannie laadies wid no ging awa.⁸²

Conclusion

There are many other examples of pieces in the Shetland repertoire related to the various aspects of the nautical world of sailors and fisher lassies, but those which I have discussed in this article are

⁷⁸ For a thorough discussion of the role of gospel hymnody in the gutting yards, please see Frances Wilkins, 'Sacred Song at Work: Gospel Songs and Psalmody in the Workplace Along Scotland's North-East Coast', in *Rethinking the Sacred: Proceedings of the Ninth SIEF Conference in Derry*, ed. by Ulrika Wolf-Knuts and Kathleen Grant (Derry: Åbo Akademi University, 2008), pp. 125-38.

⁷⁹ Peter Cooke, 'Jane ("Jeannie") Hutchison', *Whalsay's Heritage of Song* (2014) <http://www.petercookie.com/hutchison-jane/> [accessed 29 July 2015].

⁸⁰ Jeannie Hutchison, 'The Foolish Young Girl', recorded by Peter Cooke in 1972. SA1972.13.3. *Whalsay's Heritage of Song* (2014). <http://www.petercookie.com/foolish-young-girl-the-2/> [accessed 28 July 2015].

⁸¹ Jeannie Hutchison, 'Logie o' Buchan', recorded by Peter Cooke in 1980. SA1980.03.12. *Whalsay's Heritage of Song* (2014). <http://www.petercookie.com/logie-o-buchan/> [accessed 29 July 2015].

⁸² 'Shame Faa Da Laird', noted down from Mrs A. Sandison, Altona, Mid Yell. *Da Sangs At A'll Sing Ta Dee* (Lerwick: Shetland Folk Society, 2013) p. 47.

significant of a particular transcultural process of musical exchange, acquisition and infiltration into an already vibrant performance culture. In this way, the strength of the identity of Shetland traditional music is juxtaposed in a sense by the cosmopolitan nature of the music's origins and early history. And it did not work just one way. In my preliminary research into Inuit whaling-influenced musical traditions and James Bay Cree fiddle music, I have come across a performance tradition rooted strongly within the historical context of the fur trade. In terms of transatlantic musical flow, it is clear from the small amount of research into the musical history of Shetland and other whalers, and fiddling, button box playing and dancing across the Arctic and sub-Arctic, that there has been little dialogue between the two cultures in terms of shared musical histories. The study of Inuit music is an area which is key to understanding more not only about the sustained cultural, and thus musical, contact through the whaling industry but also about transatlantic musical dialogue as well as one key aspect of Shetland performance history.

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