

**The Vocal Construction of Self: Icelandic Men and
Singing in Everyday Life**

Volume One

**Thesis submitted by
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In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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October 2005

Abstract

Musical identity and music in everyday life have both enjoyed increasing popularity in recent research and discourse. The present study is related to both these themes and investigates the nature and function of singing in men's everyday lives.

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the study looks specifically at vocal lives constructed in interviews with 13 men from northeast Iceland. Additionally these men and sixteen others, who sing in the same choir, kept one-week vocal diaries in order to facilitate the sampling of their everyday vocal experience. Interpretations of this data are situated contextually by the critical use of historical, anthropological, sociological, and ethnographical data.

Emerging themes suggest that these men see singing as a central concept of Self. Furthermore, these themes appear to correspond closely to the psychological theory proposed by Robert Weber in his recent revision of William James's seminal, triadic model of Self. Men in the study locate Self in singing: their vocal behaviour appears to be an important technology of Self; that is, a forming agent and defining concept in elements of physical, social and spiritual Self. Findings illustrate singing's agency in the changing Self and in the maintaining of core and unitary Selves. They exemplify ways in which vocal behaviour configures personal and social life and how personal and social identities can be vocally constructed, performed, and celebrated. Additionally, men's vocal behaviour and men's narratives about them, construct complex and at times contradictory masculine identities. The study argues for the importance of phenomenological paradigms and in particular, for a music psychology of individuality which attempts to build theory from individual case studies towards the nomothetic. These research frameworks are shown here as being able to provide unique perspectives on the nature of musical and vocal function.

Acknowledgements

Many people are owed a great debt of gratitude for their assistance, inspiration, and encouragement in this research project and in the writing of the thesis presented here. Foremost amongst them is Professor Jane Davidson, my supervisor at the University of Sheffield, who by her encouragement, constructive criticism and not least, by the example she has set in her own prolific research, has inspired me in mine. Similarly I acknowledge a huge debt to all my Icelandic friends who have made this research possible: to Jón Ásgeir Hreinsson, for his collaboration in providing visual perspectives of interpretations of men's vocal behaviour and to Hróbjartur; to Borgar for help with editing recordings; to Jón Baldvinsson, presently Bishop of Hólar, and to his family, Margrét, Sigrún and Rósa – getting to know them in London all those years ago, was the catalyst for my long field trip to Iceland that has now lasted nearly twenty years; to Jón's brother, Baldur, and to all the men in the Men's Choir Hreimur, especially to those who made direct and often very personal contributions to this project – Guðmundur, Erlingur, Jón Gauti, Guðmundur í Grímshúsum, Úlfar, Sigvaldi, Eiður, Magnús, Þórarinn, Gunnar, Kjartan, Ólafur, Baldur, Áslaugur, Guðmundur Árni, Sveinn, Ómar, Hafliði, Friðrik, Jón Sig, Jón Þ., Óskar Óli, Jónas, Einar, Bensi, Þorgrímur, Sigurður, Stefán and Ingólfur – I hope that their voices are clearly heard here; to colleagues at both Hafralækjarskóli in Aðaldal and at the University of Akureyri for their encouragement and advice, especially to Eýglo for her invaluable help with formatting and proof-reading; to my wife Juliet, and to our children James and Nanna for their tolerance and unselfish encouragement and for the part they play in my “unordinary” everyday life.

Publications from this research

- Faulkner, R. & Davidson, J. W. (2004). Men's Vocal Behaviour and the Construction of Self. *Musicæ Scientiæ* VIII (2), 231-55.
- Faulkner; R. & Davidson, J. W. (In press). Men in Chorus: Competition and Collaboration in Homo-social Vocal Behaviour. *Psychology of Music*.
- Faulkner, R. (In press). Men's ways of singing. Paper presented at The IV Phenomenon of Singing International Symposium, 2003. *Sharing the Voices: The Phenomenon of Singing IV*. Memorial University, St. John's Newfoundland, Canada.

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Recordings on Compact Disc: List and Notes

1. "Tvisöngur in rehearsal". Ísland Icelandic folksong. Words: Jónas Hallgrímsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, September 2005, Ýdalir Community Hall.

The most well known of Icelandic *tvisöngur*, it was sung on 17th June 1944 at the declaration of the Icelandic Republic at *Pingvellir* by the Festival Choir of the Icelandic Union of Male Choirs. Whilst it became emblematic for Icelandic identity, it was, and still is, mostly sung for foreign dignitaries or on overseas tours! Most performances use a transcription from Þorsteinsson's 1906-9 collection. Ingólfsson however, suggests that the melody was being sung at the cathedral in Skálholt by the early 17th century and discusses its possible relationship to earlier works, particular the tenor line of polyphonic pieces (2003: 143-46). The strongly nationalistic text, recalling Iceland's former glory and fame, was written by Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807-1845) in 1835 and is seen as one of the first and most influential calls for national rebirth (see p. 21). Because of the insight that this poem provides into many of the contextual themes of this study's setting, the translation is given here in full.

Iceland, fortunate isle! Our beautiful, bountiful mother!

Where are your fortune and fame, freedom and virtue of old?

All things on earth are transient: the days of your greatness and glory
flicker like flames in the night, far in the depths of the past.

Comely and fair was the country, crested with snow-covered glaciers,
azure and empty the sky, ocean resplendently bright.

Here came our famous forebears, the freedom-worshipping heroes,
over the sea from the east, eager to settle the land.

Raising their families on farms in the flowering laps of the valleys,
hearty and happy they lived, hugely content with their lot.

Up on the outcrops of lava where Axe River plummets forever
into the Almanná Gorge, Althing convened every year.

There lay old Þorgeir, thoughtfully charting our change of religion.

There strode Gissur and Geir, Gunnar and Héðinn and Njáll.

Heroes rode through the regions, and under the crags on the coastline
floated their fabulous ships, ferrying wealth from abroad.

O it is bitter to stand here stalled and penned in the present!

Men full of sloth and asleep simply drop out of the race!

How have we treated our treasure during these six hundred summers?
 Have we trod promising paths, progress and virtue our goal?
 Comely and fair is the country, crested with snow-covered glaciers,
 azure and empty the sky, ocean resplendently bright.
 Ah! but up on the lava where Axe River plummets forever
 into the Almanna Gorge, Althing is vanished and gone.
 Snorri's old site is a sheep-pen; the Law Rock is hidden in heather,
 blue with the berries that make boys – and the ravens – a feast.
 Oh you children of Iceland, old and young men together!
 See how your forefathers' fame faltered – and passed from the earth!
 (Translation: Ringler, 2002)

2. “Tvisöngur in rehearsal”. Ó mín flaskan fríða. Icelandic folk song. Words: Eggert Ólafsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, September 2005, Ýdalir Community Hall.

Drinking song from Eggert Ólafsson's 28 stanza “bottle verses”, 1832. The transcription comes from Þorsteinsson's 1906-9 collection. Cited by Ingólfsson (2003: 150) as a secular contrafactum to two popular Marian texts, possibly pre-Reformation. The text uses sexual imagery to describe the drinking of alcohol from “my beautiful bottle” – kissing its hot mouth and being surprised upon discovering its contents! (see p. 21)

3. Rímur. Indriði, September 2005, Ytra-Fjall. (see p. 20)

a) Battle scene from Hálfðánarímur.

This rímur recalls an ancient battle, long before Iceland was settled, told in the epic saga *Heimskringla*, and recounted in this rímur by Hannes Bjarnason (1776-1838).

b) Skálfhendinga

This particular form of rímur is known as *skálfhendinga* (lit. “shaking phrases”). The first verse here is from *Hálfðánarímur*; the second was made up by Indriði's father for his children and concerns the comings and goings of imaginary people who lived on imaginary farms all over the family's farm!

c) A folk tale

This poem recalls an old folktale of a man that escaped judgement and the death penalty (?), presumably in the middle ages.

Whilst Indriði does not sing with the Male Voice choir, he is one of the only remaining practitioners of *kvæðaskapur* in the locality. I have taken the liberty of including the three extracts here from his repertoire of thousands. Taken together with Þórgrímur's two

examples they illustrate something of the great diversity in vocalising *rímur* and indicate a far less homogenous and far more individual style than studies appear to suggest.

4. *Rímur* and folk melodies. Þorgrímur, August 2005, Húsavík. (see p. 20)

a) *Stökur*

Two verses from *Númerímur* by Sigurður Breiðfjörð (1798-1846). Sigurður is widely considered Iceland's best poet of this most popular and prolific form – *rímur*. These verses describe sunrise on a summer morning, the sun combing its hair, and animals waking up. The two melodies heard here were taught to Þorgrímur by Margrét Hjálmarsdóttir (see p. 234)

b) *Átján hrossa afl sem bér*

Þorgrímur was taught this *rímur* by his grandfather; its subject is a larger than life “18 horsepower” figure from ancient times. He is unsure of its origin, but its subject matter suggests one of the classic sagas of heroism and strength.

c) *Sumri hallar*

d) *Vögguvísa*

Two Icelandic folk tunes: the first, describes the passing of summer and the arrival of snow in the mountains – the melody sung here has some slight variations from the one more usually sung. The second is a children's verse (*Vögguvísa*, lit. “cradle song”) that Þorgrímur learnt from his aunt and, he claims, was once widely sung. The text talks of somebody bad being outside the bedroom window, perhaps an outlaw or evil spirit.

5. “Mother & Son”. *Sestu í hornið hjá mér*. Music: Jónas Þorbergsson. Words: Stephan G. Stephansson. Baldur Baldvinsson & Sigrún Jónsdóttir frá Rangá, 1965(?).

Family recording of Baldur aged 17(?) singing with his mother. (see p. 68)

6. “Song brothers”. Baldur Baldvinsson & Baldvin Kr. Baldvinsson, accompanist: Ulrich Ólafsson, 1986, Hafnafjörður.

a) *Hríslan og lækurinn*. Music: Ingi T. Lárusson. Words: Páll Ólafsson.

The song was written by Ingi T. Lárusson (1892-1946), an amateur composer from the Eastern fjords. The text is concerned with the lover-like relationship between saplings and streams. The saplings are woken to life by the spring's hot kiss. Recording: Sigurður Arnason.

- b) *Gras*. Music: Sigfús Halldórsson. Words: Úlfur Ragnarsson.
 Written by one of Iceland's most prolific composers of popular, light and dance music (1920-1996) from Hafnarfjörður near Reykjavík, the sentiment is best expressed thus: being clever means knowing that summer comes after winter! Recording: Sigurður Árnason. (see p. 69)
7. *Rósin*. Music: Friðrik Jónsson. Words: Guðmundur G. Halldórsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur & Baldur Baldvinsson, April 1999, Ýdalir Community Hall.
 Friðrik Jónsson (1915-1997) was a local amateur composer and church harmonium player/choir director for many decades. *Rósin* (The Rose) is one of his most popular melodies. Arrangement: Robert Faulkner. Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. HR002. (see pp. 192 & 214)
8. *Bí, bí og blaka*. Icelandic folk melody and text. Male Voice Choir Hreimur & Baldur Baldvinsson, April 1999, Ýdalir Community Hall.
Bi, bí og blaka is the most well-known and well-used of Icelandic lullabies. Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. HR002.
9. *Wedding Dance*. Estonian folksong. Translation: Friðrik Steingrímsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, November 2003, Hólakirkju, Reykjavík.
 Inviting people to a wedding feast – drinks, good cakes and a great night ahead for the bride and groom. Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. HR003. (see p. 142)
10. *Mamma ætlar að sofna*. Music: Sigvaldi Kaldalóns. Words: Davíð Stefánsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, April 2002, Ýdalir Community Hall.
 A popular lullaby – the sister is encouraged to sleep, because mother is so tired and needs to rest. (Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. HR003. (see pp. 113 & 211)
11. "A song for a funeral". *Lengi grét alda ein*. Music: Russian, unknown composer. Words: Einar G. Einarson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur & Ólafur Kjartan Sigurðarson*, accompanist: Juliet Faulkner, November 2003, Hólakirkju, Reykjavík.
 This Russian song is concerned with a storm at sea and its tragic impact on a ship's crew. Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. HR003. (see p. 183)

12. Kvöldblíðan lognværa. Music: Fredrich Silcher. Words: Guðmundur Guðmundsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, April 1999, Ýdalir Community Hall.

A German piece sung to an Icelandic poem describing a still Icelandic summer evening and a vision of rural idyll! Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. HR002. (see pp. 77, 81, 214 & 258)

13. Á Sprengisandi. Music: Sigvaldi Kaldalóns. Words: Grímur Thomsen. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, April 1999, Ýdalir Community Hall.

This song, one of Iceland's most well known, is about the uninhabited Icelandic highlands and outlaws. It also reflects belief in *úlagablettir* – haunted or deadly places. Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. HR002. (see pp. 111 & 181)

14. Í Ásbyrgi. Music: Aðalsteinn Ísfjörð. Words: Þorgrímur Björnsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, accompanists: Erlingur Bergvinsson, Aðalsteinn Ísfjörð, Þórarinn Reynir Illugason & Juliet Faulkner, April 1999, Ýdalir Community Hall.

Aðalsteinn, who plays here on the harmonica, composed this song about a romantic encounter in the natural monument of Ásbyrgi. The text is by the same Þorgrímur Björnsson who sings the Icelandic rímur above. Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. (see pp. 106, 111, 161 & 191)

15. "Singing in the power station". Úlfar, Laxárvirkjan hydroelectric power station, September 2005. (see pp. 102 & 154)

a) Engi grætur Íslendinginn. Icelandic folk melody and text.

Another text to the popular *Hólastemma* melody, widely sung, though normally in 2-parts, especially by men when under the influence of alcohol....

b) Erla, góða Erla. Music: Sigvaldi Kaldalóns. Words: Stefán frá Hvítadal.

Another popular lullaby, composed by Sigvaldi Kaldalóns nationally acclaimed as "Iceland's Schubert".

16. "A night in the mountain hut". Icelandic sheep-farmers, Icelandic highlands, September 2004. (see p. 119 & 152)

a) Sveini kátur syngja. Music: unknown (German?). Words: unknown.

This exhortation to "happy lads to sing" is well known and often sung informally at parties and gatherings like this. The men have to spend two nights in the mountain hut whilst

rounding up sheep and despite the need for an early start the morning after, singing and drinking may carry on into the night.

b) Yfir kaldan eyðisand. Icelandic folk melody and text.

Yfir kaldan eyðisand or “Hólastemma” is probably a 19th century tune (see Ingólfsson, 2003: 191). Though sung in 2-parts, it has nothing stylistically in common with tvísöngur, but remains one of the most popular songs at informal gatherings – especially when Icelandic *brennivín* is consumed!

17. “In the coach on the way home after the concert.” Nú máttu hægt. Music: Heinrich Pfeil. Words: Þorsteinn Erlingsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, October 2004, Skagafjörður.

A romantic import from mainland Europe, Still ruht der See, by the German composer Heinrich Pfeil (1835-1899), is a great favourite among Male Voice Choirs in Iceland where it is known as *Nú máttu hægt* – a lullaby for a “gentle, bright July night”. Several notes in the published Icelandic version are not apparently the same as Pfeil’s original melody. This is fairly typical of a large amount of repertoire here that has depended upon oral transmission. (see p. 145)

18. “Singing children to sleep”. Bensi, September 2005, Hólmavað. (see pp. 109ff. & 208ff)

a) Bí, bí og blaka. Icelandic folk melody and poem.

An intimate, private version of the lullaby sung publicly above by Baldur and Hreimur.

b) Sofðu unga ástin mín. Icelandic folk melody. Words: Jóhann Sigurjónsson.

Local poet Jóhann Sigurjónsson wrote the text of this nationally well-known lullaby. The melody is an old Icelandic folk tune.

c) Dvel ég í draumahöll. Music: Thorbjörn Egner. Translation: Kristján frá Djupalæk

This song comes from the Norwegian children’s musical *Animals in the Woods* by Thorbjörn Egner, but is traditionally sung for almost all Icelandic children

d) Jésu bróðir besti. Music: A. P. Berggreen. Words: Páll Jónsson.

One of Iceland's most popular children's hymns, even though the melody, by Berggreen, is not Icelandic.

e) Fljúga hvítu fiðrildin. Icelandic folk melody. Words: Sveinbjörn Egilsson.

This folk melody is sung to dozens of different texts in this *ferskeytlur* form.

19) Úr útsæ rísa Íslandsfjöll. Music: Páll Ísólfsson. Words: Davíð Stefánsson. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, accompanist: Juliet Faulkner, April 1992, Ýdalir Community Hall.

This song by Páll Ísólfsson (1893-1974), a pupil of Max Reger, was originally written for solo voice. It is far more regularly performed by male voice choirs, and is almost compulsory repertoire for them. Its themes of Icelandic mountains appearing on the horizon, glaciers, the importance of the Icelandic language, rural settings, and the farming class, all echo the main constructs of the Icelandic nationalist movement. Recording: Sigurður Rúnar Jónsson. HR 001. (see p. 77)

20) "Stretching musically". Sólskin í Dakota (excerpt). Music: Örlygur Benediktsson. Words: Káinn. Male Voice Choir Hreimur, April 2002, Ýdalir Community Hall.

One of two short "stemma", written by the son of one of the men in Hreimur male voice choir. The text is taken from *Sólskin í Dakota* – "Sunshine in Dakota" by Káinn, one of the thousands of Icelanders who emigrated west across the Atlantic. (see p. 275)

* Unlike the singers who are the central focus of this study, Ólafur Kjartan Sigurðarson is a professional singer. Ólafur lives in Reykjavík and has sung with Male Voice Choir Hreimur as a guest soloist in both concerts and recordings. Trained at the Royal Academy of Music in London and Royal Scottish Academy in Glasgow, Ólafur has sung many roles in opera both in Iceland and in Europe notably with English Touring Opera and Holland Park Opera.

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Notes on Icelandic orthography, language and names

Icelandic is generally considered to have changed little from the original language spoken by Nordic settlers in the ninth and tenth centuries. Icelandic uses the Latin alphabet and generally speaking matches a great deal of English pronunciation. It does, however, have several special diacritics and two letters of its own: Þ or þ is unvoiced and pronounced as th in “thing” and Ð or ð is voiced and pronounced th as in “clothes”.

Most people in Iceland have patronymic names rather than a family surname as in Baldvinsson or “the son of Baldvin” and Baldvinsdóttir or “the daughter of Baldvin”.

Except where otherwise indicated, translations are by Robert Faulkner.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On Being a Singer

I am a singer. I have been sure of that fact since I was about 9 or 10 years old when I sung solo to an audience of around one hundred of my primary school peers. As I remember it, all the other children at this end-of-year cabaret show, told jokes or mimed to popular songs on 45 r.p.m. gramophone records. I clearly remember feeling different, feeling special, singing a song called "Country Boy". The impact of that vocal epiphany, and the subsequent and continuing influence that my vocality has had throughout my life, and on all aspects of my Self, is something that I have often thought about, but have come to understand more fully as I have been investigating the role of singing in the everyday lives of other people.

This is not though an autobiographical study, but a study of other singers and singing in ordinary, everyday settings. Through vocal biographies and ethnographies, I shall attempt to examine vocal behaviour and the meaning that is made of it, in investigating psychological perceptions of singing's role in the creation of personal and social identity and its function in daily life. Because of this work's psychological focus and my undeniable implication in the symbolic interactionist paradigm I have adopted, some kind of psycho-self-analysis seems appropriate, if only to recognise my own subjectivity openly. The vocal incident recalled above from my childhood, my memories of it and many other vocal experiences are relevant to my position in this study as ethnographer, researcher, and interpreter of other people's experiences. They raise important epistemological questions that have come to the fore in recent ethnographical discourse and in phenomenological research theories. For now, I ask the reader, especially those of more logical-positivist persuasions, to humour my apparently anecdotal indulgences a little longer.

Reflectively analysing my own experience above, I have noticed that there was a synonymy for me between being a singer and being a performer. A singer is somebody special and my identity as a singer enabled me to differentiate

positively between others and mySelf by projecting Self as vocal performer. In her discussion of solo performer's identity, Davidson notices a similar "projected self" in reflections about her own developing musical identity and relates this to Goffman's theory (1959), where the ability to use this "mask" or "projected self", is seen as essential to effective social interaction and to public discourse, which vocal performance undoubtedly is (Davidson, 2002b: 102). This was the kind of Self that dominated the next twelve or thirteen years of my life. Following the vocal event recalled above I was soon singing solos regularly with a church choir; it was especially popular to have a boy soloist at the many weddings held in this busy parish church. In addition, I sang the title role in a production of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and sung both sacred and secular repertoire at occasional concerts. Through puberty, adolescence and early adulthood I aspired to construct and maintain an identity as vocal performer, a singer. Without doubt, this was a vision of the "functional", professional singer, not the singing as everyday life in social or culture theory. Popular music, often seen as more representative of the aesthetics of everyday and social sites of the expressive, as in Willis's seminal study *Common Culture* (1990), was not played in my teenage home at all. Listening to it elsewhere always felt like an illicit act of my alter ego, though never sufficiently tempting to distract me from the single-minded pursuit of becoming a professional singer.

Research looking at all aspects of the professional singer can be found in abundance in a wide range of paradigms including vocal physiology, vocal acoustics, teaching and training strategies, and vocal identity. Individuals in this corpus have a particular role or "function" to play as specialist singers in modern Western society and in capitalist systems. Even their repertoire – a great deal of which was certainly never intended for "functional" singers and which originally had much more in common with everyday life than contemporary recital hall performances of it suggest – has been researched and analysed from a myriad of musicological, literary and technical perspectives. Academic and popular biographies of professional singers abound, and with the aid of modern marketing strategies, some of these individuals have been elevated to almost mythical celebrity status. This status is even made accessible, by the same capitalist structures, to the everyday man himself, as the worldwide proliferation of Pop Idol singing competitions has clearly illustrated. Even Iceland has its own

franchised version! Pop Idol's search for the latest and best marketable vocal commodity unashamedly reinforces the notion of singer as "functional professional performer". In itself, it would make for an interesting subject for ethnographic or social-psychological research, just as the karaoke phenomena has before it (see Welch and Murao, 1994. Lum, 1996).

It becomes clear very quickly therefore, that theories of everyday life and of special events are dialectical and not as discreet as some might imagine or as my own story of early vocal experience suggests. As Abrahams (1997) and more recently Berger and Del Negro (2004) have pointed out, the concepts can be more useful when they are seen as reflecting a continuity of interpretative frameworks. Defining and developing these concepts as they relate to an individual's vocal behaviour will be one of this study's concerns.

Even allowing for the obvious problems with definitions of everyday expressive practices, very little research can be said to address the issues of singing in contemporary Western societies except via the professional or aspiring professional singer. Notable exceptions have been concerned with singing, infancy, and early musical development and with questions relating to music and vocal education generally. A growing literature reports on investigations into early infant-carer interaction and looks at the very special role of vocal behaviour in the everyday life of adult female carers and infants. Trevarthan's concept of communicative musicality and other research by Malloch, implicate vocal interaction as a fundamental socializing agent (Trevarthan, 1999, 2002; Malloch, 1999). Looking at an older age group, Campbell has adapted her considerable ethnographic experience to the urban setting of the everyday American playground in her study of *Songs in Children's Heads* (1998).

With the exception of the karaoke phenomena – subject of some considerable research, academic conferences, and publications – adult vocal behaviour has fared far worse in research literature. What little there is has tended to look almost exclusively at the choral experience. In the language of cultural studies, the choral experience is normally interpreted as a special event in special spaces, rather than as the everyday. It nevertheless plays an important part in the vocal experience of individual men whose stories will be related here later and the choral element helps to illustrate the dialectic between, rather than the diametric opposition of, these two theoretical positions.

In social settings where concepts of the functional singer are less dominant, though by no means innominate, ethnographical studies have looked at songs and singing in daily routines of work, play and ritual, and located them firmly in specific social contexts in ways not dissimilar to Campbell's playground study. Leppert and McClary offer an explanation for the absence of these frameworks for studies closer to home in their observation that:

...the findings of ethnomusicology have been acceptable to historical musicology only insofar as they concern other cultures. In other words, recognizing that other musics are bound up with social values does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that our music likewise might be: more often, it simply results in the chauvinistic, ideological reaffirmation of the superiority of Western art, which is still widely held to be autonomous.

(Leppert and McClary, 1987: xviii)

Shortly after completing a course of professional vocal training at the Royal Academy of Music, including two years in the Academy's Opera Class, I am invited to a house in London S.W.19, on a Saturday early in December 1984, to visit a family, newly moved to London from Iceland. My partner and I are going to partake in an old northeastern Icelandic ritual of making Christmas "leaf-bread". The family is soon seated around a large kitchen table, tallow candles lit. They cut and fold incredibly thin circles of dough, already rolled out, to create intricate, lace-like, symmetrical patterns. It reminds me of paper- or lace doilies. Sometimes, instead of these patterns, the same techniques are used to produce their own initials or even representations of some symbol linked to Jól, perhaps a Christmas tree or star. After brief immersion in boiling oil, they resemble a sort of plain puppodum; but each one is a unique, edible work of art. This ritual, which I now know to be part and parcel of Advent preparations in the vast majority of homes in the north east of Iceland – its products being the *unmissable* accompaniment to the traditional Christmas fare of smoked lamb – is interspersed with, and sometimes accompanied by singing in Icelandic. The mother, father, and two daughters aged around 11 and 13 sing together, often in three-part harmony. I do not recognise any of the tunes, though some clearly bear a resemblance to the Lutheran chorale tradition, others to liturgical modes, including I am told, some indigenous tunes from early Icelandic sources. One

exception is a version of the three boys' song from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, which I now know as a popular Icelandic carol enjoying folk song-like status. I have subsequently learnt, sung and even taught many of these tunes

Here was another of those seminal vocal experiences; the realisation that this family were all singers and, more importantly, that a mother and father and their two daughters could sing in harmony a whole repertoire of songs in a manner that seemed to be as natural to them as eating and drinking. The "socialness" of musical experience as a corporate and democratic activity shared in a very specific social context outside of what I had assumed to be singing's natural setting of the concert or recital hall, opera-house or church, caused me to question very seriously what it was that I had always thought a singer to be. As an aspiring "functional" singer, it struck me that the rest of the populace could not simply be dismissed as dysfunctional ones.

Having lived in Iceland for almost twenty years, I have seen plenty of evidence that, for members of this particular extended family, and for many others – some of whose stories are told here – singing plays a fundamentally central part in everyday behaviour, and that the meaning they make of singing, and of the songs they sing, appears to have strong social and personal significance. I have no evidence to suggest that everybody in this sparsely populated area of N.E. Iceland sings, but having witnessed the prolific use of song in the everyday lives of these people, I have felt compelled to investigate their vocal behaviour and its social and personal function more fully and systematically.

1.2 On Being a Man

It is not only my vocal identity that implicates me in this study: I am a man and this study is specifically about men's vocal behaviour. Ignoring questions about the gendered nature of vocal behaviour and vocal identity is not an option. The fact that that it was ever possible at all, illustrates the kind of masculine hegemony which feminism and gender theories have attempted to challenge. This research might justifiably be seen as belonging to the realm of men's studies, enquiring into the social and psychological functions that singing plays in men's lives at the beginning of the third millennium; how does sex and gender – seen either as social constructions or as biological determinants – impact men's vocality? What

difference does being a man make to being a singer, or being a singer make to being a man? How, what, where and why do men sing?

Some people in the West may feel that men's singing in everyday life is an endangered phenomenon. Certainly, the apparently increasing problems of getting boys to sing in schools are well known to many working in education (Adam Adler, 2003; Hall, 2005). As an educator myself, and as a conductor of mixed children's choirs, it is my contention that what goes on here, to use a concept from a classical psychological theory of gender, is *masculine protest* (Al. Adler, 1992). Whilst striving to emphasize or even achieve masculinity is more commonly linked with aggression or highly competitive behaviour, boys refusing to sing can be seen in similar terms as the denial of the feminine and the accentuation of the masculine. Feminine associations with the soprano voice in particular and, since we are talking here about unbroken voices, by implication with song in general, can easily lead to the establishing of a value-judgement system that makes singing, especially for boy's with unbroken voices, a highly undesirable activity. In any case, when the need arises, modern technology can compensate for the absence of personal vocal skills: contemporary Western man can pay others to sing for him. He can store a whole range of vocal repertoire to suit the moods and demands of everyday life, instantly accessible at the press of a button on identity accessories like the iPod. Instead of wooing potential partners by singing sexual sentiments, like Don Giovanni's "Deh vieni alla finestra", he is much more likely to revert to a CD compilation for affective impact over a candle-lit supper. The music is custom chosen to make an impression, to "sing" something about the men. If, as James (1892) claims, man has as many different Selves as there are people whose opinion he cares about, then he may have a CD collection to match, enabling him to try out different songs with different kinds of visitors, despite the limitations or even the absence of a real, personal, physiological voice. Perhaps this is where the cliché "Come on round and let me show you my record collection" really comes from.

Reflecting on my recent first visit to an international rugby match, I remind myself that, regardless of the problems that have been observed in getting boys to sing, men do in fact still sing. Hearing tens of thousands of men singing the spiritual, "Swing Low", and phrases from Parry's nationalistic hymn, "Jerusalem", raised questions in my mind about collective vocal behaviour and

identity. Similar displays of collective masculinity can be heard on the terraces of certain Italian football clubs, as fascist Mussolini songs are sung; vocally untrained, male “non-performers” do use their singing voices, and they clearly use them as agents in the construction of all kinds of social identities. Furthermore a wide range of ethnographic research, including studies into the Barber Shop tradition (Stebbins, 1996) the South African male vocal tradition of “Nightsong” (Erlmann, 1996), of men singing in Crete (Magrini, 2000), Bulgaria (Rice, 1994) and Albania (Sugarman, 1997), all appear to underline the importance of gender in vocality and of vocal behaviour in the performance of gender identity.

1.3 Methods and Theoretical Frameworks

I have no intention however of pursuing a generic theory of men’s vocal behaviour, even though cross-cultural comparisons may be made when they seem appropriate. I shall in fact be following an essentially idiographic paradigm and employing fundamentally different methods to those used in the studies mentioned above. The individual singers featured here live in the north east of the remote North Atlantic island of Iceland, just south of the Arctic Circle; their voices and life histories will be the main focus of discourse. Through informal and extensive interviews, thirteen men have engaged in autobiography: they have shared very personal stories of their vocal behaviour and of singing’s role in their lives. Additionally they and sixteen other men kept vocal diaries for a week, making regular note of their vocal behaviour, of its content and context and reflecting upon the function and agency of vocal events in their everyday lives. Once I have completed an exposition of theoretical and local contexts in the next three chapters it is my aim that these men’s voices, and in particular that belonging to one man, Baldur, should never be far from our ears and minds. This is consistent with a phenomenological power hierarchy and through a detailed analysis of interviews and diaries; I hope to be able to develop provisional theories about men’s vocality by listening very carefully, to what they themselves say about their voices and about their singing. This is an open study about real people who really exist: no attempt is made at keeping their real identity secret. It would be impossible and would serve no useful purpose. The men whose stories are told here have given their consent to such an approach and I trust that their open collaboration is respected here in proper ethical terms. Whilst many of my

interpretations of their stories have been shared with the men in the study, they remain the researcher's interpretations of other people's lived experience; the demarcation between the two will hopefully become clearer as the study develops.

Generally speaking, it is seen as essential to academic status and validity to limit a study to a singular, clearly defined framework within a clearly defined discipline or even sub-discipline. Whilst having already announced my intention to focus on phenomenology, I feel that this needs to be qualified from the outset. Essentially, I suggest, phenomenology is not a paradigm-specific method or theory, but an interpretative one, applicable to any manner of phenomena across the whole range of disciplines and, no less so, to our understanding of the structure and nature of musical experience – to the social sciences of music like ethnomusicology, music sociology and music psychology. In addition, interpreting perceptions of phenomena rather than just quoting them requires contextual knowledge. As I shall explain later, it is possible to make a case for the unmediated reporting of Baldur's or any other individual's perceptions of vocal behaviour, but interpretative methods recognise the explicit role of the researcher in developing meaning and theory. This is not objective empiricism – though I do intend to make a case for its legitimacy as a rigorous academic method – the researcher knows things and has experienced things that prejudice his interpretation. The wider and more thorough the knowledge, that can be brought to bear on such an interpretation, the greater the potential to develop deep and rich theories, however contingent such theories inevitably remain. Yet even this knowledge, it should be recognised, is firmly situated in specific contexts and locales, and further dangers lie in the over-reading of the contextual factors upon which I shall expand in the following chapters.

It is for this reason that I wish to postpone the adoption of phenomenological methods and turn first to methods more traditionally associated with musicology, ethnomusicology, or sociology of music. In doing so, I am attempting to share what *I* think *I* know about this study's specific setting, so that the reader might understand how this has informed the interpretation *I* make and the theories *I* attempt to develop. My interpretation is phenomenological too: it is not exhaustive and it is not impartial. In any case I think that it is fair to say that phenomenological methods have underpinned an enormous range of research projects, especially, though not exclusively in the social sciences of music like

ethnomusicology, music sociology and music psychology and in music education, without their being properly acknowledged or theorized; such studies may be theoretically the weaker for it. It is for this reason that I reserve a whole chapter of this thesis to the theorizing of phenomenology and to explaining its potential as a tool for understanding musical meaning and behaviour. In the same chapter, I shall expound in detail the specific method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which is, in spite of the qualifications above, my main tool of enquiry.

Whether this study might fit more neatly into ethnomusicological, sociological, or psychological paradigms is not then, my chief concern. Efforts at developing a comprehensive theory of Icelandic men's psychological perceptions of their vocal behaviour must surely attempt to gain as many perspectives of it as possible and use whatever tools and methods are at our disposal to do so. At the heart of phenomenology is Husserl's claim that every perception of a real thing provides only a partial, perspectival adumbration of it (cited in Giorgi, 1995: 29). The more profiles we are able to add to our portfolio of the thing, the richer our view of it will be. My perspectives on men's singing and my interpretation of their perspectives on their singing have been formed by data that I have collected by applying historical, musicological, ethnomusicological, sociological, and psychological methods. This process does not sit easily with the singular noun "framework", nor its metaphorical connotations of containment and therefore of exclusion, typical of many descriptions of specifically *chosen* research methods. Inclusive, contingent, and organic theoretical *networks* might be more useful in terms of developing post-positivist research methods. Moreover, it is my contention that re-thought music psychologies, in particular a soundly grounded conceptualisation of phenomenological music psychology, might facilitate the reconstitution of the comprehensive study of the structure, content, and meaning of musical behaviour. Such a re-framing of music psychology might challenge, or at least compliment, the simplistic reductionist sub-disciplinary approach, in favour of a holistic and individualistic model. These are claims I intend to develop later. Initially though, and in the following two chapters of this study I will attempt to develop profiles of men's vocal behaviour in Iceland by casting this theoretical network over the disciplines of ethno-musicology, music psychology, musicology, and the sociology of music. When we turn our attention to the analysis of the lived vocal experience of men in northeast Iceland, in search for

the *eidos* of that experience, any worthwhile interpretation needs to be grounded, not just in these men's symbolic interactionist reconstruction sites, but also in perspectives of their singing's unique situatedness, and of the musical objects themselves. These perspectives will be gleaned and developed from the various sub-disciplines of musical study. Recognising, as interpretative phenomenology must, the role of the researcher in both the forming and the analysis of data, and in the building of theory, requires that the researcher acknowledge the many and various perspectives – his view of the things in question – that inform his interpretation. This is the precarious route to a rich and multi-layered theory of men's vocal behaviour that is my aim here.

1.4 Structure

Attempting to exhaust as many possibilities of the data as possible demands that I engage with what Berger and Del Negro describe as the “chronic dialectic of theory and data” (2004: 38). The various chapters of this dissertation reflect an effort to engage dialectally with Icelandic men's vocal behaviour; presenting their perceptions of, and reflections upon, singing; providing enough contextual evidence to enable the reader to understand my interpretation of these men's voices; and developing contingent theories about the practice and meaning of men's vocal activity.

The second chapter contextualizes men's vocal behaviour in Iceland by providing details of the settings from which their vocal behaviour has emerged and some of the musical artefacts which have often been seen as peculiarly, and perhaps even uniquely, Icelandic. Whilst preferring the phenomenological route of lived experience and psychological perceptions of vocal experience, rather than traditional ethnographic, musicological methodologies, there is still a real need to consider to what extent pursuing a psychology of individuality excludes the significance of culturally specific and historically emergent themes. Many of these themes are subject to brief exposition in this chapter, reminding us of the situatedness of all lived experience and the distinctive setting of this particular vocal behaviour. Context like this is an essential element in the informed interpretation of the men's voices that I shall provide later. I fear that given the limitations of space, and the problems of deciding what context is relevant and what is not, the reader might be left with superficial, general impressions at best,

and at worst, stereotyped or highly selective ones. In problematizing some commonly held beliefs about the specific setting of the present study, and about the homogenized contexts quite widely adopted in ethnological and anthropological research generally, we are reminded that any claims about the homogeneity of cultural settings, or about the proclivity of members of a group because of *it* – this perceived cohesion and uniformity – need to be thoroughly tested. In doing so, we find ourselves exploring the dialectic between the idiographic and the nomothetic, the collective and the individual.

Whilst talking of a psychology of individuality has been increasingly common in general psychological discourse for more than a decade, a music psychology of individuality seems still far removed. Efforts at maintaining certain qualities deemed prerequisite to academic respectability for a discipline still on the periphery of music studies might perhaps have denied us important perspectives on musical phenomena and limited our understanding of musical meaning and behaviour. Rethinking some of the basic tenets of music psychology, we might find that there is an alternative model, not bound to the natural sciences but to hermeneutics, and in particular to the kind of hermeneutics based on introspection and reflection. Whilst still maintaining an appropriate academic rigour, the application of such methods might enable the development of theories of musical meaning which truly recognise musicians or more specifically in this instance, singers, as persons and not as natural objects. This is the kind of model I have attempted to develop in order to investigate Icelandic men's vocal behaviour. In chapter three, I review some of the literature and theories that have been central to the development of this general psychology of individuality and make a claim for its fuller integration and wider acceptance in the psychology of music along the lines of the present study. In chapter four, I wish to turn attention to concepts of the everyday, identity, and idiography, and to some innovative work from music sociology that is particularly relevant to the present study. A recent publication by Del Negro and Berger attempts to rebalance what they perceive as the under-theorization of concepts of the everyday and identity (Berger and Del Negro, 2004); many of the theoretical issues they raise are relevant to the discussion of men's vocal behaviour here. Other seminal work on music and the everyday has been produced by DeNora in a series of rich, idiographic ethnographies of music in everyday life (DeNora, 2000) and in the theoretical

frameworks she has developed from music sociologist Adorno (DeNora, 2003). At this stage, the theoretical framework for this study should be well established at last. If the journey seems a long one it is because of the importance I attach to examining men's singing from as many perspectives as possible: phenomenological psychology is essentially the lens through which I hope to be able to illuminate and focus upon various sociological, ethnological, anthropological and psychological facets of men's vocal behaviour.

If I am to remain faithful to the phenomenological psychology paradigm, then nothing is more important than my maintaining the clarity and authority of men's own voices, of their perceptions and of their making of vocal life histories. In chapter five therefore I briefly expand on the significance of life histories as research method, explaining the particular methods used here in their collection and in the collection of other personal data about men's vocal behaviour. The chapter focuses primarily though on the story of one individual Icelandic man – Baldur. In doing so, I move Baldur's voice to central stage, telling his vocal biography in as much detail as possible, providing some local context where necessary, but as far as possible without my mediating or interpreting. Chapter six turns to the building of theory: firstly, I hope to clarify a dichotomy between *real* things and *perceptions* of them, as they relate to Baldur's life history. Secondly, I wish to look at one more apparent dichotomy that may have relevance for our understanding of Baldur's perception of singing: the *solo* performer and the *everyday* singer. Thirdly, we shall look at emerging themes, in particular those relating to singing and the construction of social and physical Self and to the vocal performance of gender. The importance Baldur attaches to singing as a central to his construction of Self will lead to a tentative hypothesis about the role of singing as a core element of his personal identity, for which I borrow frameworks from William James (1890,1892,1902) and from Weber's recent revision of James's seminal theory of Self (Weber, 2000). The chapters following examine this hypothesis in more detail, constructing its extension by looking at other men's narratives and vocal diaries. Brief biographical profiles of these men are provided in chapter seven, and chapters eight, nine and ten look respectively at how singing has agency in each of the three central constructs of James's Self. Singing's central role in creating, regulating, maintaining and changing Social, Physical and Spiritual Selves is clearly evidenced by Baldur's narrative, without the imposition

of this interpretation *a priori* onto the data. Many of Baldur's thoughts have very clear implications for the construction of gender identity and it would seem wholly inappropriate to write about his and other men's singing, without tackling gender issues head on. This study can in many senses, be described as belonging to the realm of "men's studies". Chapter eleven examines vocal behaviour from the interpretative framework of masculinities and gender studies.

Agency implies change. If music, or more particularly, singing has agency in personal and social life, then it needs to be illustrated clearly how and what it is that singing changes. Chapter twelve looks at how men perceive singing as having the potential to change Self in all sorts of directions and senses. Sometimes this is a question of regulating mood in everyday life, whilst other examples indicate how vocal behaviour is seen as life transforming or, of having the potential to change national mood and national identity. In looking at some of these vocal incidents, I return again to work by DeNora, using her model of musical events to analyse men's perceptions and developing it to look at vocal events over whole life spans. The final chapter summarizes the study's various findings, recognises its limitations, and discusses the potential for developing some of its major themes in future research.

Providing the reader with an experience that provides anything more than the most superficial of insights into a foreign community and its vocal practices is a difficult challenge. Reading Magrini's research of Cretan men and their vocal practice was interesting in 2003, but a year later, having visited the area in western Crete of which Magrini speaks, I rushed back to her study, reading it with the landscape, history, and people fresh in my mind to discover *It* greatly changed. Few readers of my study will have had cause to visit Iceland in the north Atlantic and long before my visit to the Mediterranean island of Crete I had considered how the huge gap in the reader's experience might be bridged. The visit encouraged me to pursue an unconventional solution that I had been experimenting with for the past year or so. Music recordings accompany many ethnographic studies – I have kept with that tradition, in providing both studio and field recordings that might prove enlightening. The recordings reflect a wide range of settings and repertoire that men in the study implicate in the study or that I consider important to an interpretation of their perceptions. On reflection, the main omission is the absence of one or two examples of the popular songs

performed by “functions” groups, in which several members of the choir play and sing for balls and dances. As we shall see, this would have made the recording collection even more eclectic, and more faithful to the variety of many of these men’s experiences. It should be stressed however, that it is not an aim of this study to provide analytical study of musical performances or of any of the wide range of vocal genres that appear here. Other ethnographic publications often contain a few plates of black and white field trip photographs, providing some kind of perspective, however limited, on often-exotic locations. I decided to remain closer to the interpretative phenomenological framework in collaboration with long-standing friend, artist, and photographer, Jón Ásgeir Hreinsson: the photographs that are included here should be seen as interpretations of data, thought out, and selected from an analytical perspective. Some of the photographs are realistic snap shots, others are carefully produced and selected images: all are offered as yet another perspective on men’s everyday vocal behaviour in the north of Iceland and an effort to situate this study in a specific context through visual senses. I have no more control over the viewer’s interpretation of these pictures than I have over the interpretation of the 100,000 words that accompany them, though in academic circles there is a tendency to think we have. It is in the nature of the theoretical framework adopted here to question such presumptions. Whatever, both the viewer and reader must reflectively and critically sort out the epistemological issues for themselves.

Notes on quotations in the thesis:

Ellipses between brackets [...] indicate that part of the original quotation is omitted. Ellipses without brackets ... indicate pauses by the speaker. Italics between brackets indicate explanations or translations added by the author to clarify quotations. Other italics are indicated by “My italics” and are used for emphasis, the narrator’s original emphasis in speech, or the author’s. In the case of the former, this is stated.

2 DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL BASIS FOR INVESTIGATING MEN AND SINGING IN ICELAND

If ever there was a bounded, self-contained society, it might be Iceland. It is a moderately large island in the middle of the North Atlantic with a small and relatively homogeneous population descended from ninth-century refugees from the unification of Norway. If ever there was an island of history, it, too might be Iceland. The settlers had hardly disembarked when their descendants in the twelfth century began writing about their histories, family relationships, hardships, and victories. Iceland presents an image of a homogeneous island population with a long, well-recorded history – an apparently ideal subject for anthropologists looking for neat boundaries, self-contained cultures, and natural laboratories (Durrenberger and Pálsson, 1996: 1).

The quotation with which I begin this chapter, is the opening paragraph from a volume edited by Durrenberger and Pálsson, that actually goes on to challenge these simplistic and essentialist notions in a collection of anthropological images of contemporary Iceland, covering such diverse themes as fishing, whaling, tourism, mountain women and the woman president, literacy, domestic violence, and housework and wage work. A tendency for researchers to homogenize is not limited to the traditional anthropological studies of which Durrenberger and Pálsson are critical. In appropriating the practices of other cultures and environments, scholars, and perhaps anthropologists, sociologists and ethnographers in particular, have often shown a proclivity to generalise about patterns of normative behaviour, to construct objective narratives about ethnicity and identity, and define neat, homogenous social systems. As Berger and Del Negro point out, “It can be difficult to avoid the essentialist error of reducing the diverse everyday experiences of an entire population to one underlying world-view” (2004: 128).

The same is surely true of a great many ethnomusicological studies that present remarkably discreet and consistent music systems and behaviours in preference to a more problematical kaleidoscope of musical experiences that may

more accurately reflect everyday life for many members of any given society. Bruner's observation that the focus of foreign scholars on certain dance and music forms in Bali and Java has led Indonesians themselves to "privilege those forms" (1993: 20), serves as a warning about the researcher's implicitness in the field. Our work may affect more than the academic audience for whom we write, especially, it appears, when cohesive and neatly packaged findings are presented from positions of power without appropriate efforts at problematizing them, or at emphasizing their contingency. Fortunately, a reflexive re-positioning of the researcher in the field, and an acknowledgement of her/his impact on it, in anthropological and ethnographical literature generally, and in ethnomusicology specifically (see Titon, 1994), were already reflecting Bruner's concerns. As Rice acknowledges in his study of Bulgarian music, these developments made it far "less possible to write musical ethnography unselfconsciously and without embarrassment" (Rice, 1994: 9).

Discourse surrounding the relationship between researcher and *his subjects* raises epistemological questions which make it far less tempting to claim that neatly formalised analyses and homogeneously defined systems are based on impartial observations of a social groups' behaviour in a natural laboratory, as if they were somehow inherently cohesive or even congenial. Individuals may not simply be the product of culture as both Erchak (1992) and Morris (1994) have suggested. Cohen (1985) has explained how such theories controversially treat society as a reified object, ontologically independent of its members, rather than Self as an ontology that informs and creates society. Nevertheless, Erchak's theory does give proper regard to the constrictions and expectations that cultures may place upon individuals, and Lubart (1999) has illustrated how different communities may encourage or restrain individual creativity both in general and in domain specific spheres and behaviours. It may well be the case then, that theories which recognise both possibilities and which desist from a simplistic dichotomy prove a far more fruitful, if far more complex path, for those of us wishing to deepen our understanding of music's agency and meaning in society and in the individual lives of those who, in making music, *make up* those societies.

Notable among ethnomusicological efforts to balance an understanding of situated musical traditions with the agency of lived musical experience is Rice's

study of Bulgarian music through the Varimezov family (1994). His study illustrates one of the most difficult conundrums challenging all those who engage in research in the social sciences – the dialectic between the idiographic and the nomothetic, the individual and the collective. In a similar manner, a common and consistent theme in Durrenburger and Pálsson's anthropological studies of contemporary Icelandic society is the notion of every Icelander as a special case. If every Icelander is special though, what is it – if it is anything – that makes him or her Icelandic? Speaking the Icelandic language? Eating sheep's heads, soured ram's testicles, and shark at the Mid-Winter Feast? Or singing? Moreover, even if this is true of Icelandic society as a whole, to what extent, how and why is it true for any individuals that make up that society?

So it is with this particular project that, rather than concentrating on supposedly representative styles, genres or traditions, I prefer to focus on individual people and their vocal behaviour, singing's functionality in their social agency and in their personal and collective identities – singing's role in their everyday lives.

None of this necessarily undermines the importance of historical situatedness, nor those vocal styles and traditions that are in some ways at least, peculiar to Iceland. What it does, is to caution against an over-reading of their importance without grounding them thoroughly in somebody's experience. As the quotation at the beginning of this chapter suggests and even with the reservations expressed above, this remote and exotic North Atlantic island might be expected to provide a richly fecund setting for music research adopting traditional ethnomusicological or historical perspectives. A case could be made for a study of men singing in Iceland following a similar kind of journey as recent studies about Cretan men singing, by Magrini (2000), or Erlmann's survey of men singing in South Africa (1996), both of which focus centrally, though in very different ways, on the ethnography of music in their respective settings. Whilst choosing to adopt a different method of investigation - that of phenomenological psychology – it is still essential to place individual perceptions and experience in historical and social context. What follows then, sets the scene for an informed, contextualised interpretation of Icelandic men's perceptions of vocal experience presented later in this thesis. In the rest of the present chapter I describe some of the apparently generic vocal and social practices from which these men's vocal life histories

have emerged and within which, to some extent at least, they are still situated. In doing so, I shall be drawing upon more traditional ethnomusicological, anthropological, musicological, and historical paradigms. Listening to individuals' voices in the chapters that follow, and then trying to interpret them, will, I hope, provide us with dialectic between this historical situatedness and the reality of individual vocal behaviour and perceptions of it. At the core of an informed interpretation of individual perceptions of vocal behaviour and the building of theory about it, is the understanding of relationships between the idiographic and the nomothetic, the particular and the general, the homogenous and the heterogeneous, individual voices and collective choruses: how have individuals acquired singing voices, what voices were acquired and what processes of vocal enculturation were at work, what songs are sung and what does this vocal behaviour mean in the specific places in which it is practised?

2.1 Icelandic Voices

Just as we talk, both literally and metaphorically, of individuals having a voice, so too, of course, do social groups, collectives and nations (see Stokes, 1994). But thinking of an individual's voice or the voice of a nation can be misleading: it is probably rare for large groups or even individuals, to use a singular, consistent and cohesive voice – metaphorically or literally – and when a social group, subject to myriad novel influences, re-establishes long lost independence, reconstructs national identity and enjoys phenomenal change in economic fortune, it might need a very good ear indeed to hear exactly what song it is that is being sung and by whom. Many voices may be heard and many songs sung by all kinds of vocal groups, even by the same group or individual, for all kinds of reasons. Analysis of these voices might as I have suggested above, reveal a complex, even dissonant polyphony, rather than the neat counterpoint of closely related harmonious voices, and much less so the singular voice or idiosyncratic vocal genre unique to a particular social setting or group. This is typical, I suggest, both of contemporary Icelandic vocal life and of the individual and collective identities that it helps to construct and represents. Whilst it could be argued that given the remarkable fusion of world cultures, primarily through changes in media and mobility, this plurality is true too of many modern Western societies, I would suggest that Iceland's experience is special for two reasons in particular: the first

relates to its small population which has mitigated against the proliferation of significant sub-cultures (though they are clearly and increasingly evidenced in the rapid and continued growth of the conurbation centred on Iceland's capital city) and emphasizes the *specialness* of being Icelandic. Traditionally the country's small population demanded individual versatility as opposed to specialisms; there has been a tendency therefore for Icelanders to play many roles – having more than one job, for example, was extremely common until very recently. Similarly, there is a clear tendency for Icelanders to claim joint ownership of all outstanding achievements by Icelanders, especially when any individual Icelandic plays a successful role in an international arena. Secondly, Iceland's transformation in the twentieth century has been a particularly dramatic one and followed a period of isolation without parallel in Europe at least. During 500 years of famine, pestilence, colonial trade monopolies, a mini Ice Age, and volcanic activity, that has no equal in the modern world; Icelanders appear for the most part to have clung to voices from their distant past. As systems theories of creativity would predict, expending almost all energy and resources simply in order to survive these extraordinary hardships, combined with isolation from larger cultural centres and over-riding pessimism, would hardly have facilitated the development of new songs or of significantly individual voices (see Lubart, 1999: 345ff). Nevertheless, in terms of Icelandic poetry or *rímur*, a great number of variant stanzaic forms developed from the original quatrain form. Furthermore, in spite of great material hardship, this particular literature genre was passed on as a written tradition and not just as an oral one.

2.1.1 Ancient Voices and Vocal Styles

Two vocal genres in particular appear to have dominated Icelandic singing for more than half a millennium until the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The most famous of these, the Icelandic Epic song or *kvæðaskapur*, is concerned with the performance of narrative metrical tales or *rímur* whose earliest extant texts date back to the fourteenth century (Steingrímsson, 2000). Iceland is universally renowned for its literature; from the Viking sagas,¹ to the works of Nobel prize winner Halldór Laxness,² the status of Icelandic literature belies the fact that there are probably little more than half a million speakers of the Icelandic language worldwide. In spite of the worldwide popularity of the many Icelandic

sagas, no Icelandic literary form has been produced in greater quantities than *rímur*, and from the available evidence it appears that *rímur* were rarely, if ever, simply read aloud (ibid.). Based on pre-existing sagas, romances, or novels, *rímur* are typically declaimed within a limited melodic range of around a minor third, using a narrow, bright, upper chest register, constricted pharynx and idiosyncratic tremolo or *dillandi* on final notes of phrases or *seimur* (ibid.). Expert *kvæðamenn* appeared to have enjoyed almost professional status even in difficult times, often moving between isolated turf farmsteads where they would be offered hospitality in return for the reciting of these epic stories to extended families and farm labourers living there (ibid.). Whilst essentially a solo form, it seems that members of the wider audience would often join in the sustained final cadences or *seimur* of each stanza. Nevertheless, even as the *kvæðamaður* was reciting, the audience was expected to be working, making ropes from horsehair, mending nets, making saddle girths, carved tools, spinning, knitting, and sewing. This once widespread social practice called *Kvöldvaka* (lit. evening wake), where *kvæðaskapur* was the dominant form of diversion, died out with radical political, social, economic, and material changes in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Remaining practitioners of *kvæðaskapur* are rare indeed, though two occasional *kvæðamaður* make an appearance here. The first, Indriði (CD 3), does not in fact sing in the male voice choir, but he is one of very few remaining *kvæðamenn*, and probably the most experienced practitioner of this style, in the whole of the county. I have included short extracts performed by him in order that comparisons can be made both with the styles of music that replaced this once popular form, and with performances that follow by Þorgrímur (CD 4) – the only member of the male voice choir who suggested that they could perform this genre. There are very obvious differences between their styles and taken together the examples suggest a style of vocalising *rímur*, which is far less homogeneous than studies have tended to suggest.³ The decline in the usage of these particular kinds of vocal style should not however be confused with a decline in domestic vocal behaviour generally; as we shall see, while vocal styles changed dramatically in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it seems that vocal behaviour maintained a central social role in the home. Amongst other things, this study examines the extent to which singing still enjoys such a role in domestic settings.

In remarkable contrast to the isolation of Iceland's dark ages, the Viking age in Iceland was a time of international travel and trade. Medieval Icelandic bishops and clergy studied in Norway, Denmark, Germany, Paris, Bologna, and Lincoln, often for many years at a time, and others made pilgrimages to Rome and even Jerusalem. Neither was travel in just one direction: the thirteenth century narrative *Hungurvaka*, recounts how a French priest, Rikini, appears to have been responsible for teaching the singing of liturgy at Hólar cathedral in the far north of Iceland, just south of the arctic circle and that, "as time passed, there begun in the church a beautiful concordance of the singing of the choir, and the sweetest sounds of the voices" (cited in Ingólfsson 2003: 18).

The quotation above does not necessarily refer to vocal polyphony, but two-part singing was practiced in Iceland from the early fourteenth century at least. It is surely in this kind of setting that the roots of the Icelandic *tvísöngur* tradition – literally "two-songs", though more usually known as "quint-singing" can be found. Whilst the relationship between the sacred written traditions of *tvísöngur* and secular oral ones is, as Ingólfsson (2003) has shown, complicated and evidence scant, a quasi-improvisatory practice of singing in parallel fifths often converging and crossing to end again at a fifth, has just about survived as a secular oral tradition, even to the present day.⁴ This is clearly a very different musical style to the declamatory solo *kvæðaskapur* discussed above. Nevertheless, these two vocal genres dominated Icelandic vocal behaviour for over 500 years. Whilst researchers have argued about the origins of *tvísöngur*, seen variously as medieval organum, Viking music, or the accident of limited vocal ability, they are surely to be found, as Ingólfsson concludes, in European ecclesiastical written models. Whilst still occasionally audible in certain naturalistic settings, *tvísöngur* repertoire appears to be limited to just two or three examples and it is much more likely to be heard in emblematic performances by Icelandic choirs on overseas tours or in performances for foreign dignitaries (Ingólfsson 2003), or in arrangements or compositions by twentieth-century Icelandic composers. Two *tvísöngur* are recorded here on the accompanying compact disc (CD 1 & 2) The first *Ísland*, is arguably the most well known: the melody was being sung in the early 1700s at Skálholt cathedral, whilst the poem is one of Iceland's seminal nineteenth century nationalist texts by the poet Jónas Hallgrímsson (Ingólfsson, 2003: 143ff). The second example is a popular drinking song loaded with sexual

imagery; the text dates from the middle of the nineteenth century and the melody itself may well be pre-Reformation (see Recordings on Compact Disc: List and Notes). The occasional use of these two *tvísöngur* and of one or two other examples as “authentic” Icelandic music, either for visitors or on tour, contrasts strongly with its systematic and deliberate rejection in everyday settings and, generally speaking, from choral practice too.

Research into both these unique musical styles is scant. In the case of Icelandic Epic Song or *kvæðaskapur*, three significant musicological studies exist: a short article by the Icelandic composer Leifs (1929); Nielsen’s analysis of recordings of the performer Þórður Guðbjartsson (1972); and Steingrímsson’s wider study of Epic Song practice (2000). In the case of Icelandic *tvísöngur*, Hammerich’s 1899 study was published in both Danish and German. The genre has subsequently been the subject of several other studies, the most comprehensive being a recent unpublished survey by Ingólfsson (2003). Whilst both genres may historically be perceived as idiosyncratic media for Icelandic voices, and there undoubtedly remains plenty of space for further theoretical investigation, further discourse in this volume will only focus on them as far as they appear relevant to the vocal lives of contemporary Icelandic men and to their perceptions, or to my interpretation, of them.

2.1.2 Romantic Nationalist Voices

The eighteenth century was undoubtedly the most tragic in Icelandic history: following devastating smallpox epidemics, famines and natural disasters the population fell to below 40,000 people, half what it was around 1100. The second half of the nineteenth century saw little relief in ordinary Icelanders’ fortunes: several extremely severe winters exacerbated poverty, disease and general deprivation, and thousands of Icelanders sought a new world across the north Atlantic to the west, mostly settling in Canada. Nevertheless, with the reconstitution of the Icelandic *Alþingi* as a consultative assembly in 1843, the relaxing of trade restrictions, and the development of Icelandic administrative, admittedly still firmly under Danish control, new voices were emerging. Often inspired by the romantic nationalist movements in mainland Europe, they were to lead to dramatic changes in vocal behaviour and a fundamental re-orientation of both Icelandic musical life and national identity.

One of the most significant factors in the decline of indigenous vocal styles was the introduction of Western European diatonic harmony in the middle of the nineteenth century and the subsequent systematic and conscious use of this “new music” as a tool in what might with some justification be called, cultural cleansing or more precisely vocal cleansing⁵. In 1841 Pétur Guðjónsson, the first Icelander to study music overseas, at least it seems, since the Viking Age, returned to Iceland from Copenhagen, with a new three-part hymnody and set about “improving” on the “...singing of Icelanders (which) in general, hardly deserves to be referred to by such a noble term as song.” (Íslendingur. Ný hugvekja, 1870, cited in Ingólfsson, 2003: 209). At the same time as Icelandic sagas and Viking history were pressed into service in the construction of a new national identity, voices singing *kvæðaskapur* and more especially *tvísöngur*, which was still widely practiced in churches, were silenced. The genres were pressed out of everyday service and into a pejorative association with the poverty, hardship, and subjugation from which Icelanders were increasingly aspiring to escape.⁶

However widespread and dominant these vocal practices may have been, the idea that only two genres, or, metaphorically speaking, two voices, were heard in Iceland for nearly 500 years, suggests the kind of simplistic view of things which I have criticized earlier in this chapter. A collection of manuscripts and recorded data at the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar in Reykjavík and at the Icelandic State Broadcasting Service, illustrate the diversity and undoubted individuality within these vocal genres and in other related folk song forms. Neither, as Ingólfsson illustrates, is the idea that these forms were simply “deep frozen” for half a millennium, sustainable (Ingólfsson, 2003). Nevertheless these idiosyncratic styles of singing, undoubtedly at the core of Icelandic vocal behaviour for 500 years, were to be silenced: such was the contempt with which they were held in some “educated” circles that Þorsteinsson’s early twentieth century collection of Icelandic folk songs, including 42 *tvísöngur*, failed to secure funding for publication in Iceland, so worthless was the task considered (Ingólfsson, 2003: 4).⁷

In the second half of the nineteenth century, others followed Guðjónsson abroad, assimilating three- and four-part vocal styles and keyboard skills and returning with almost missionary zeal to travel around the country on horseback,

urging communities to organise formal church choirs, reject *tvísöngur* and practice these new musical forms. Apart from Guðjónsson's publication of a three-part psalter in 1861, a four-part psalm book followed in 1885 edited by Jónas Helgason, and then no less significantly, Helgason published a series of three and four-part collections of secular songs for four-part choirs. Subsequently, almost all of Iceland's foremost composers followed similar overseas routes, first emulating Guðjónsson in going to mainland Europe, but later in the twentieth century heading elsewhere.⁸ Romantic influences imported from Europe were assimilated too by "amateur" composers in Iceland in the early twentieth century, as illustrated by the works of one of Iceland's most popular and prolific composers of songs Sigvaldi Kaldalóns (1881-1946). Kaldalóns possessed a genuine gift for melodic invention that earned him the nickname "the Icelandic Schubert". Along with many other amateur composers throughout the twentieth century, he wrote copiously – both solo songs and four-part choral music – to meet demands from, and in turn encouraging the development of this new Icelandic vocal culture.

In the region of North-east Iceland where men in the present study live, the first keyboard instrument – central to these new forms of vocal behaviour – a harmonium, arrived during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁹ Within about 50 years though, there was a harmonium on virtually every other farm in the county (Jakobsson & Jónsson, 1990: 23). That people living in poor, overcrowded, pre-industrial revolution small-holdings, some of them turf farmsteads with little if any means of heating, should have made sacrifices to buy instruments, transport them, tolerate and accommodate them, learn to play and cherish them as so many people here did, reveals something about the social significance attached to singing and to this particular kind of singing at this particular time. The first mixed choir in the area appears to have begun rehearsing soon after 1880, the same year that a group of men began to practice regularly to sing in one of the local churches in a neighbouring valley.¹⁰ Other choral groups soon emerged; most notably a countywide mixed choir of 45 men and women rehearsed to sing at an open-air festival to celebrate the new century in 1901. This festival in particular appears to have been the catalyst for a widespread choral wakening and the founding of mixed and male voice choirs – though not women's choirs – all over the county. Whilst records and minutes of meetings, along with

programmes from early choral groups and anecdotal accounts have been preserved, no systematic studies of this vocal revolution exist.

The new Romantic Nationalist repertoire, the choirs founded and trained to sing it, and instruments imported to sustain it, can all be seen as serving a clear social and political purpose in the construction of a new Romantic National identity – an identity which, while full of contradictions and paradoxes, and having no place for the “old” ways of singing, proved effective in the struggle for Icelandic independence from Danish rule. The political, social and vocal struggle for independence led to home rule in 1918 and eventually, in 1944, to the declaration of full independence and the founding of the Icelandic Republic.

2.1.3 Male Voice Choirs

The influence of the Romantic Nationalist movement on singing in Iceland during the twentieth century cannot be over-estimated and this is especially true of the life-histories of the men whose stories are told in this dissertation for one reason in particular; all the men whose voices are heard in the next chapters of this study sing in the same male voice choir, and it is probably fair to say that no other musical institution is more intrinsically linked to the romantic nationalist movement, to the construction of new Icelandic identity and to the struggle for Icelandic independence. Following the first public performance by a men’s choir, in Reykjavík in April 1854, this became the dominant voice of Iceland’s public musical life and an extensive repertoire of songs was composed, or imported and translated to sustain it. Male voices were soon heard in chorus all over Iceland, and in the first decades of the twentieth century, male-voice choirs were formally founded and the Icelandic Union of Male Choirs established in 1924 (*Samband íslenskra karlakóra*). Extensive historical documentation exists and several male-voice choirs have published their respective histories, but only the feminist historian, Björnsdóttir (2001) has attempted a critical analysis of this phenomenon, firmly implicating the men’s choral movement in the construction and maintenance of a hegemonic and highly gendered national identity. Questions about the role of male-voice choirs and their musical, aesthetic, social, political and gender implications will be addressed later as men share their personal perceptions about the vocal institution to which they are committed and about their singing in it.

2.1.4 Classical Voices and Singers

Today Iceland has its own internationally acclaimed symphony orchestra, professional opera company,¹¹ and a highly developed community music school system.¹² The international success of professional Icelandic singers is particularly noteworthy, and although the prominent role that singing has played in the construction of national identity and in social agency is surely implicated, and perhaps some typical Icelandic physiological features may explain an apparently high ratio of tenors among the population, this all awaits more detailed investigation. What is indisputable is that a remarkably high number of Icelandic singers have pursued classical training overseas and that some have enjoyed considerable international success. The phenomenon is generally seen as beginning with Stefán Íslandi¹³ who was engaged at the Royal Opera House in Copenhagen, and sang leading roles in opera houses in both Italy and Germany in the middle of the twentieth century. More recently, singers like Kristján Jóhannsson, Kristinn Sigmundsson, and Gunnar Guðbjörnsson have played leading roles at some of Europe's most illustrious opera houses. The impact of such success on a small populace like Iceland's is considerable and, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, there is a tendency for Icelanders to claim ownership of all Icelandic voices, especially those that have received international acclaim. "Stefán Iceland", mentioned above, was given his nickname by the Italian public, but it was quickly and widely adopted in Iceland. Whilst Stefán Íslandi remained a household name here for half a century, I suspect that few Icelanders would attach any special significance to his real name – Stefán Guðmundsson. In a society where few questions appear more important than "whose son (or daughter) are you?" this is very significant indeed. This sense of national ownership often appears to have outweighed cultural factors that polarize low and high art in most Western societies. Classical vocal works and opera are certainly not unpopular among men in the study and many of them in fact seem familiar with a considerable quantity of standard classical vocal repertoire in addition to that which they sing in the male voice choir.

2.1.5 Popular Voices and Singers

Iceland also has a unique story to tell about the development of popular vocal styles and performance in the twentieth century especially following the Second World War and Allied Occupation. Since then Iceland has undergone economic and social transformations of extraordinary proportions. In less than half a century Iceland has been transformed from a dominantly pre-industrial, rural society to one of the most affluent countries in the world. Today the majority of Iceland's population, numbering less than 300,000 people in total, live in the southwestern conurbation, which continues to attract young people in particular from rural areas and fishing towns scattered all around or near the island's 4000 km-long coastline.¹⁴ It was here in particular that Iceland's second music revolution took hold, as new, essentially urban musical voices and styles spread out from the American base at Keflavík. Today a wide range of contemporary music styles may be heard all over Iceland and several of the men who appear in the following pages, have performed or still perform, in "functions" bands, playing extensive repertoires from mainstream Icelandic and international pop scenes. Whilst the growth of Iceland's music industry can be traced through the annals of the *Félag íslenskra hljómlistarmanna* (Association of Icelandic Musicians), and is now internationally recognised through the remarkable success of Björk, and to a lesser extent bands like SigurRós and Quarasi, no systematic research from any theoretical standpoint exists with the exception of a recent study of the economic impact of the music industry in Iceland (Einarsson, 2004). Fascinating themes remain unexplored, including a conjectural hypothesis that Björk's highly idiosyncratic vocal style relates musically, literally and socially to Iceland's Epic Singers,¹⁵ the vibrant amateur popular music scene and its agency in social settings; and in particular the proliferation of alternative music styles and the construction of sub-cultural, local, gender, sexual and group identities which, I suggest, continue to undermine what were, until fairly recently, relatively homogeneous Icelandic voices.

2.1.6 Contemporary Musicians and Identity

In relation to music and identity, a recent unpublished study by Baldwin (2001) presents anthropological case studies of three musicians living and working in

Reykjavík. In it, Baldwin examines concepts of Self-hood in the face of perceived sexual, national and gender identity negation by both historical and present hegemonic structures, and looks at music's role in these identity construction sites. These are central themes in this study too, though here I focus explicitly on vocal behaviour as the construction of Self and on vocal autobiographies. Of additional interest is the fact that one of Baldwin's subjects, like me, is an immigrant. Whilst Baldwin's *Gerry* is not a professional musician himself, the impact on Icelandic musical life by foreign nationals throughout the twentieth century is worth noting here. They have made particularly significant contributions to the development of Iceland's community music school system in the second half of the twentieth century and no less so to the vocal lives of the communities in which men in the present study live. In fact, as I have illustrated above, the impact of foreign nationals on Icelandic musical life is not just a twentieth century phenomenon and the romantic idea of Icelandic musical indigenesness bears little close scrutiny despite several hundred years of isolation and hardship. It should be clear even from the brief survey above that neither Icelandic people nor their musical traditions provide the sort of simplistically cohesive homogeneous groupings and classifications once so much sort after by researchers from all kinds of disciplines. There have been times in Iceland's history when they might have done so, but these are clearly not the times inhabited by men singing in Iceland today, even if some of their songs recall – accurately or not – those times and places. In spite of Iceland's apparently remote location in the North Atlantic the island's population has been and continues to be subject not just to the gulf stream, but to an international flow of ideas, images and voices.

At the beginning of this chapter, I attempted to review some of the theoretical objections to treating "society as a reified object". I wish to end this chapter by emphasizing how the symbolic interactionist paradigm adopted in this study helps guard against this objectification. According to symbolic interactionism ethnicity and gender, along with other components of individual or collective identity are constructs of the imagination: continuing creative processes shape them, as both individuals and groups press all kinds of performative behaviours – including vocal performance – into the service of building and maintaining these identity constructs. With that in mind we may find ourselves,

like Rice (1994), wishing to emphasize much more our subjects' encounter with musical symbols, their perception of their musical behaviour and the meaning it has for them, rather than our observations of them and their settings from a position of power. Prioritizing our participants' perceptions, emphasizing their supremacy and acknowledging that the researcher's role is not that of an objective observer but that of a subjective interpreter brings us to important questions of phenomenology and psychology. Why might a study that focuses on people's own perceptions of their vocal behaviour be at least as worthwhile as one following a more logical-positivist paradigm? Establishing a case for the validity of a psychology of individuality is essential to the validity of the study undertaken here. Doubts about the limits of logical-positivist frameworks have emerged in psychology, where the dominance of psychometric and experimental psychology has been challenged by a fundamental reassessment of the discipline's theoretical foundations to take account of phenomenological and symbolic interactionist paradigms. While mainstream psychology has been tackling these questions for more than a decade, the psychology of music, struggling to establish academic respectability, has shown as yet, little sign of response.

The following chapter briefly reviews the already well-articulated case for rethinking some of general psychology's most widely held theories. It illustrates how that discourse might facilitate a reappraisal of the traditional boundaries of music psychology itself, opening up possibilities for a deeper and richer understanding of musical behaviour and everyday life.

¹ The importance of Icelandic sagas both in terms of world literature and as historical documentation can hardly be over-estimated. These medieval prose narratives range from historical accounts (for example of Viking Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and the Orkneys – *Íslendingabók*, *Heimskringla*, *Knytlingasaga*, *Orkneyingasaga*), the most important resources for Norse mythology (*Eddas*), to everyday family sagas, romances and tragedies (*Hrafnkelssaga*, *Egilssaga*, *Njálssaga*, *Laxdælasaga*, *Grettissaga*).

² Halldór Laxness won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1955 for his book *Independent People*. Most of his books, which have been widely translated, are concerned with the hardships of the farmers and fishermen, often combining the tradition of sagas and mythology with national and social issues.

I spent my entire childhood in an environment in which the mighty of the earth had no place outside story books and dreams. Love of, and respect for, the humble routine of everyday life and its creatures was the only moral commandment which carried conviction when I was a child. (from Laxness's Nobel acceptance speech, *Gjörningabók*, 1959)

³ Real-life observation of these forms in Iceland would be very much limited to practitioners belonging to a society devoted to the preservation of these genres, inevitably raising questions about their relevance to any study of everydayness. Whilst there has been a tendency to see contemporary performances of these genres as anachronistic, some isolated but recognizable remnants of their practice can still be observed in naturalistic settings. It is more than a decade since I worked with young teenagers on a “rap and *rímur*” project in the community where I live, but more recently the emergence of Icelandic rap and the *rímur* revival has seen commercial efforts at developing this unlikely, though certainly not illogical fusion. Interestingly, the release of several commercial recordings and the publication of a collection of music and texts, all over the past few years, suggest a growing cult following. Recent releases *Raddir*, 1998, *Árnastofnun/Smekkleysa SMK7CD & Silfurplötur Iðunmar – Tónlistararfur Íslendinga*, 2004, provide representative recordings of this genre

⁴ Ingólfsson discusses the interplay of written and oral traditions. As Ingólfsson observes, this model, developed from Þórsteinsson's 42 transcriptions, does not reflect the wider freedom of intervals and voice leading evidenced in other extant transcriptions and recordings (2003:153).

⁵ Ingólfsson (2003: 211-212) describes the speed at which the old manner of singing was rejected as “collective historical amnesia” and quotes Benedikt from Auðnum – in the locality of the present study – describing in 1898, how “seeds of dislike and contempt were sown in my mind regarding all native singing”. This kind of reaction appears to have been widespread and is even, I suggest, discernable today in men's unwillingness to sing *tvísöngur*, except when a) drunk b) singing overseas c) when asked to record it for the present study!

⁶ Ingólfsson notes that similar vocal practices with slow tempos, weak sense of rhythm and extraneous pitches and their systematic rejection have been documented in both seventeenth century England and early eighteenth century New England (ibid.:205); see also Small (1977) for an account of this phenomenon.

⁷ Fortunately a great number of Icelandic vocal melodies were collected and transcribed by the Reverend Bjarni Þórsteinsson early in the twentieth century. All subsequent research into Icelandic music is indebted to his remarkable collection of *Íslensk þjóðlög* (1906-9). Even though subsequent comparisons of Þórsteinsson's transcriptions with Jón Leifs's field recordings in the 1920s appear to cast some doubt over their accuracy, and whilst accepting that some of his commentaries and interpretations are now seen as highly controversial (see Ingólfsson 2003: 3-12), Þórsteinsson's work can, with some justification, be seen as no less significant in Iceland as say

Cecil Sharp's in England or Bartók and Kodaly's in Hungary. The Icelandic Literary Association (Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag) refused to finance publication as being a worthless undertaking and the work was only completed with support from the Danish Carlsberg Foundation.

⁸ Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson (1847-1927), composer of Iceland's national anthem, Páll Ísolfsson (1893-1974), a student of Max Reger, and Jón Leifs (1899-1968), arguably Iceland's most original composer, all studied in Leipzig; Jón Þórarinnsson (b. 1917) was a student of Paul Hindemith at Yale in the USA and more recently Hafliði Hallgrímsson (b. 1941) studied in the United Kingdom with Peter Maxwell Davis and Alan Bush.

⁹ It is a regular source of surprise to visitors to Iceland interested in folk music practices, to discover that it is almost totally dominated by vocal behaviour and that what little instrumental traditions there are, are almost entirely concerned with the subservient role of accompanying singing. In the area where I live however, "Icelandic fiddles" were played in the latter part of the eighteenth century, superseded by the "Icelandic langspil" before the appearance of fiddles and flutes in the middle of the nineteenth century. One theory is that they were brought here by overseas visitors – quite possibly English – who often stayed in the locality during summer months (Jakobsson and Jónsson, 1990: 21). Much of the music played was clearly influenced by Norwegian and Danish fiddle tunes, and even I suggest, the Shetland and Scottish fiddling traditions.

¹⁰ Benedikt from Stóruvellir is said to have rehearsed a small mixed choir singing 3 part-hymns from Guðjónsson and 4-part works from Helgason. According to Jakobsson and Jónsson it was short-lived. A male voice choir began rehearsing in neighbouring Reykjadal in 1880, with 12 men initially to sing with church services (Jakobsson & Jónsson, 1990:31).

¹¹ Íslenska óperan was founded in 1979 and has since staged nearly 50 operas with Icelandic and overseas singers and conductors. The company have performed 2 operas in the locale of this study, both with participation from members of the local community.

¹² Whilst the first music school was founded in Reykjavík in 1930, the next was not opened until 1945 in the north of the country and it was not until the passing of a first music education act in the Althingi in 1963, that community music schools became widespread, numbering more than 70 today. Many students over the past 40 years in particular, have continued their studies at leading conservatoires overseas and returned for example to join the ever-growing number of Icelandic nationals in the internationally acclaimed Icelandic Symphony and to teach.

¹³ Stefán Íslandi was given his nickname by an Italian critic following a performance as Pinkerton in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* in 1933. Stefán adopted the name and soon afterwards, so did the Icelandic people.

¹⁴ The founding of a modern fishing industry and the development of lucrative overseas markets was and remains the main source of Iceland's prosperity and in many ways facilitated Iceland's independence (Pálsson & Durrenburger 1996:180). In spite of often harsh weather conditions and serious soil erosion problems, Iceland has enjoyed a high level of self-sufficiency in terms of agriculture, traditionally in sheep and dairy farming, and more recently in poultry, pork and a range of vegetables, some grown under glass and utilizing Iceland's rich geo-thermal resources. Nevertheless the erstwhile hegemonic ideology of the "the holiness and purity of the countryside" and the cultural and "moral primacy of the farm and farmers" has been in decline as Iceland's economy rapidly developed. Diversification has included energy intensive aluminium smelting – utilizing, not without controversy, the country's huge water and geo-thermal reserves – tourism and new technologies. Iceland enjoys an international reputation in genetic research, not least because of the genetic homogeneity of most of its population. Iceland presently enjoys among the highest levels of information technology per capita and boasts a welfare state comparable to any in

the western world. Several Icelandic companies have wide international and even global interests in retailing, food processing, pharmaceuticals and prosthetics. Iceland has its own iconic symbol of market ideology – a stock market.

¹⁵ This hypothesis was suggested by Njáll Sigurðsson in a British television South Bank Arts Show devoted to Björk.

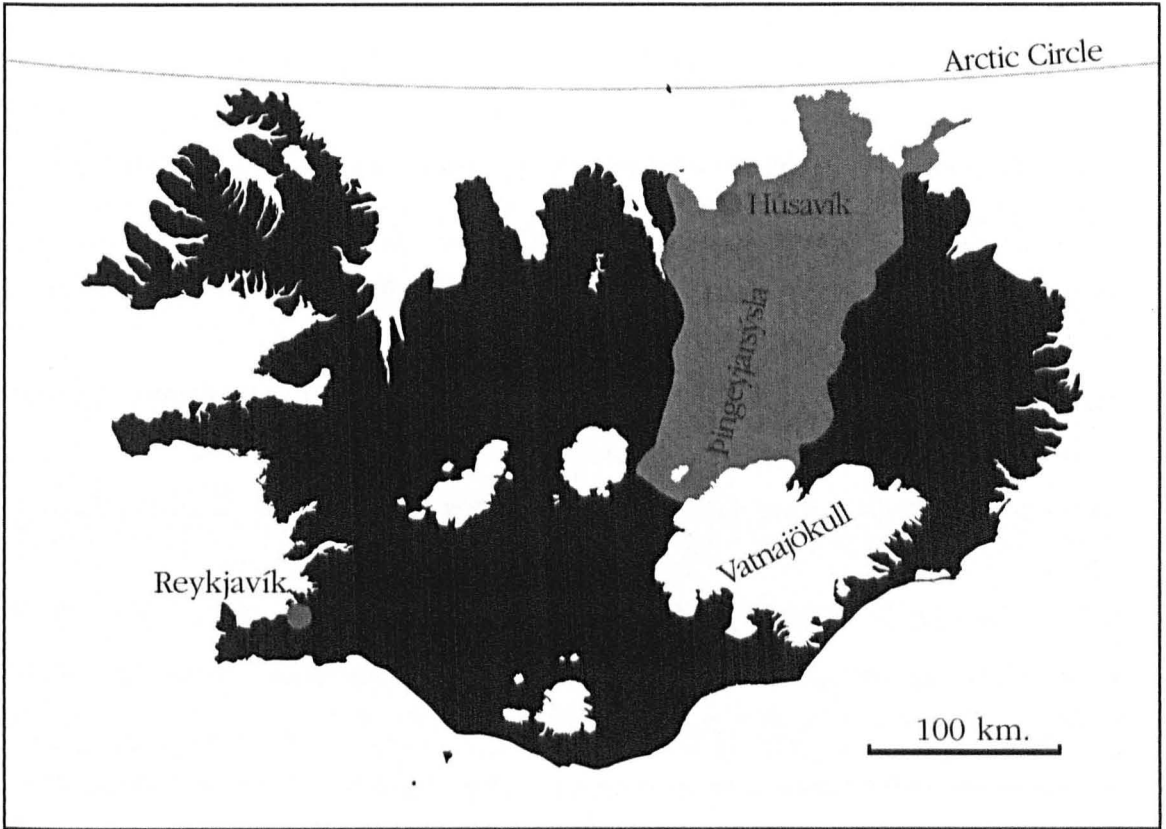


Fig. 2.1 Iceland

3. RETHINKING MUSIC PSYCHOLOGY

3.1 Psychology of Music and Logical Positivist Traditions

Like psychology generally, the psychology of music has been dominated by an experimental research paradigm clearly located within empirical and logical positivist frameworks. These were the frameworks traditionally deemed necessary to justify scientific claims made by both music psychology and the wider discipline of psychology itself, in order to provide essential academic recognition. In music psychology a movement away from traditional laboratory settings and towards more ecological validity, was recognizable in Sloboda's study of the real-life behaviour of musicians (Sloboda, 1985: 9). His everyday cognitive psychology of musicians and research by many others including Shaffer, Gabrielson, Sundberg, and McPherson (see Sloboda, 1985; Gabrielson, 1999) is more concerned with mental functions in situ. That is to say, that this kind of research focuses on the processes of listening, performing and composing in contextualised engagement with music. Predominantly, though no longer exclusively, this focus has been limited to engagement with Western classical music and to functional practitioners – or at least, to serious students – of it. Musical scores facilitate the objectifying of music, and, just as I observed a historical tendency in the last chapter for anthropological and ethnographical research to objectify societies and their practices, so a similar trend remains clear in psychology of musical performance. Musical scores provide a sort of independent variable against which performances can be measured and assessed. The present study is essentially neither concerned with musical objects nor with professional performers of them, but with biographies and singing in everyday life. It attempts to examine the structure of perceptions about vocal behaviour, not the structure of musical objects, or their performance. It investigates the meaning of singing in individually lived experience.

It should be clear then: research paradigms that have dominated music psychology are not appropriate for the journey undertaken here. An admission of the limitations of these traditional frameworks was implicit in seminal research

that looked at the biographies of young musicians (Davidson, Howe, and Sloboda, 1997). Whilst cognitive developmental sequences formulated from experimental paradigms, may, as Sloboda argues, account for the “types of musical activities to be found in virtue of the general cognitive capacities (children) require” (Sloboda, 1985: 195), there were wider concerns that the significance of social and cultural opportunities were being underestimated. Moving into the realm of social psychology and musical development, Davidson, Howe and Sloboda’s study investigated significant factors in the development of outstanding young musicians. Despite subsequent studies that have looked into questions such as motivation, taste, opportunity, identity and enculturation at both micro and macro levels (see Zillman and Su-lin Gan, 1997; Burland and Davidson, 2002), these kinds of studies remain drastically under-represented. Surprisingly, the vast majority of contributions to a recent volume of social psychology of music edited by Hargreaves and North (1997) indicate that even in the search for social knowledge (of music), which has enjoyed most theoretical controversy and least consensus among general psychological disciplines, empirical experimental and psychometric methods, and cognitive forms of explanation, are far more widely represented than methods based on more naturalistic observations and dialectical explanations developed through phenomenological symbolic interactionism.

Significant among exceptions to this theoretical norm is Burland and Davidson’s research that follows up Davidson, Howe, and Sloboda’s original research cited above. Interviewing some of the same individuals eight years after the original study, Burland and Davidson (2002) provide valuable longitudinal perspectives on motivational and emotional issues that appear to have played important roles in sustaining individuals’ love of music, in their perception of music’s role as a stabilizing influence in their lives and in musical and professional development. This biographical focus is much closer to the focus adopted here, as is the use of interpretative phenomenological methods. Closer to the actual theme of the present study of Icelandic men and singing, there is even some research that examines the function of vocal behaviour, its agency in social and personal settings and its significance in social and personal identity. These include an investigation by Durrant and Himonides (1998) into cross-cultural perspectives of the choral phenomenon and Smithrim’s study of singing in the everyday lives of women in North America. Smithrim’s subjects seem to be

suggesting that the function of singing has changed from one related to the larger social group identity and collective entertainment to more private, perhaps therapeutic use of singing along with recorded musics (Smithrim, 1997). In a similar vein, Adams (2000) examines vocal autobiographies of three women who have sung in the same church choir for 60 years and identifies functions that relate to integration, self-esteem and development, spiritual validation and communication. Patteson's findings about the life transformations instigated by women's taking up singing lessons, their finding and development of a personal voice and its impact on wide-ranging elements of self (Patteson 2000), all resonate with similar reports of the therapeutic impact of singing on personal identity which can be found for example in work by Wiens, Janzen and Murray (2001), Bailey and Davidson, (2002a, 2002b, 2003) and Newham's *Voicework as Therapy* (1999). A tendency in some of these studies both to under-theorize method, and to under-develop grounded theories, beyond the discussion of emergent themes, has arguably limited their impact on the dominant music psychology paradigm.

Neither these studies nor the relatively few others like them can be seen as seriously undermining the homogeneity of methodological and theoretical frameworks central to the majority of music psychology research. They do however raise doubts about the ability of empirical positivist frameworks to provide full and exhaustive explanations about the structure and content of musical experience, and they challenge the logical-positivist hegemony, just as more phenomenological based methods have in psychology generally. The variables we should be looking for in phenomenological based research are not experimental ones, but those which relate to factors like personality constructs, beliefs and personal experiences – or to be more precise, to their perception, the retelling and reconstruction of them through symbolic interactionist work. These variables become central to the building of theory on an idiographic, case-by-case basis. The brief re-conceptualising of psychology that follows is central to establishing the validity of the kind of theoretical framework that I have adopted for this study and to a wider call for a reassessment of some of music psychology's most basic theoretical and methodological tenets.

3.2 Rethinking Psychology

Rethinking psychology is the title of a comprehensive collection of articles edited by Smith, Harré and Van Langenhove (1995) whose central hypothesis is that there may be an alternative conceptual foundation for psychological inquiry than that which has been privileged to date. Fundamental to their argument is what they perceive as an inadequate conception of the nature of knowledge. The omnipotence of knowledge obtained through logical positivist frameworks has been so persuasive that many ideas from psychology's most original thinkers, they suggest, have literally been turned on their heads: Bruner's original conception of a cognitive psychology based on meaning and meaning making, becomes instead, the science of information processing (*ibid.*: 4); in the case of Wundt, it is widely forgotten that his experiments were not modelled on the natural sciences, neither was he primarily interested in behaviour, but in private individual consciousness, where psychological phenomena are attributed to individuals not to aggregates (*ibid.*: 17); even James, virulently critical of Wundt's work, can be properly called a phenomenologist whose most earnest concerns were consciousness and self (*ibid.*). In the early twentieth century however, psychology increasingly privileged practices and products that were of value primarily as commodities in the capitalist market place. According to Van Langenhove (1995: 18), Galton's index of correlation soon became the most marketable of those products. Its significance in the subsequent development of psychology can hardly be overestimated: where, for ethical or practical reasons, psychology was unable to go to the laboratory and to experimental settings, Galton's index of correlation enabled the quasi-scientific observation and statistical assessment of the relationship between all kinds of "naturally" occurring situational variations and other variables. Van Langenhove however points out that the problem with applying the natural science theories and Cartesian traditions of logical positivism to psychology is that human behaviour is meaningful behaviour (*ibid.*: 15); whilst active agents are observable in the natural sciences, predicting or measuring the impact of a whole range of human intentions, motivations, expectations and communications must surely limit the knowledge that can be meaningfully represented as a statistical relation between independent events under different conditions and circumstances.

Both Van Langenhove and Harré have argued that the hegemonic Newtonian – Euclidean space/time grid is not necessarily applicable to the study

of social phenomena. Harré proposes that as far as the possibilities for human perception and experience are concerned, the material world can be seen epistemologically as consisting of three kinds, or realms of phenomena: the first and second categories consists of objects of actual and possible experience respectively. The interface between them, according to Harré, is historically and technically unstable, so whilst traditionally Realm 1 would have included objects like rocks, people and houses, more recently and because of technological developments, it could include micro-organisms, stars in distant galaxies, previously belonging to Realm 2 – objects of possible experience. Realm 3 consists of phenomena that are inexperienceable in principle – “for instance ensembles of quantum states prior to acts of measurement” (cited in Van Langenhove, 1995: 19). Harré’s point is that the social sciences’ adoption of this framework implies an epistemological synonymy between the natural science model and the social sciences where none necessarily exists: if it is possible to say that in psychological terms, observable behaviour constitutes Realm 1 and that Realm 2 comprises that which is observable with the aid of “psychological instruments”, whilst Realm 3 is made up of the unobservable – concepts like Self and mind – then it would seem perfectly reasonable that whilst the third domain was the central concern of many of psychology’s early pioneers, it can have no place in the *science* of psychology. At best, concepts like Self and mind might be moved to the realms of the scientifically observable by objectifying them as social and cognitive processes and by rejecting introspection and reflection, as say in the work of Mead (see Denzin, 1995: 48).

An alternative ontological basis for thinking about the social and psychological world is, as Van Langenhove argues, Harré’s two-dimensional framework where people, persons, or institutions can be located simultaneously on both a space/time axis and on a persons/conversations axis. It is essential to recognise though that time and space dimensions in Harré’s referential grid are not those of Euclidean theory; time and space are not simplistically mapped in physical or chronological terms on to psychological concepts of time and space (Van Langenhove, 1995: 20). This is an important point: whatever the “real” historical, geographical, or other physical situatedness of any experience, in phenomenological psychology how individuals reconstruct that situatedness and what it is that they reconstruct, through conversations or other symbolic work, is

of much more concern to us. This is the central focus of my study of men's vocal behaviour: the autobiographical, psychological stories that men tell about their singing and the meaning they make of it. The themes that I focused upon in the last chapter, in an effort to provide a sense of the specific historical and geographical context of this research, need therefore to be sieved very carefully through the filter of men's symbolic work. This process lies at the heart of an informed interpretation of life histories. Where life-histories are constructed through performances like reflective conversations, a chronological ordering of events is not the same as a psychological one, grammatical "tenses" are not synonymous with psychological ones; the present Self may be used to explain past motives or even be implicated as a causative factor in past behaviour, present settings may influence past ones; psychological locations are not the same as those in which we may have physically lived. This is one of the main problems facing the researcher who wishes to balance individual psychological perceptions of everyday experience with their undeniable situatedness. Having gone to considerable trouble in the last chapter to illustrate something of the specific historical, social and geographical context of the present study – the stage upon which men's vocality is performed – I find myself now cautioning against an over-reading of that "time and space" data and of its influence on the daily vocal behaviour of those men. When thinking of the development of specific vocal forms or the historical and social status of singing in Iceland for example, it is worth being mindful of Berger and Del Negro's warning about the danger of attributing "a weight or profundity to a form of expression that it does not possess in the experience of its practitioners" (2004: 22). Not to urge caution in assuming consequential links between these men's vocal practice and the rest of social life would be to run the risk of treating this setting as a reified object, men's vocal behaviour as a congenital product of it, and the natural science ontology challenged above, as still omnipotent.

The more frequently articulated objection to hegemonic logical positivism however, is an epistemological one fundamental to establishing the validity of phenomenological study, and whose roots can be traced to the philosophical writings of Husserl at least. Central to this objection as Giorgio explains, is that whilst a thing existing in time and space is subject to causal laws, the *perceived thing* is not (Giorgio, 1995: 28). The point is an important one for this study; it is

not so much concerned with singing, the singer, and the song, as with perceived singing, the perceived singer, and the perceived song. The search for musical meaning which excludes the hermeneutics of how musicking, the musician and the music are perceived by individuals or ignores what Husserl saw as meaning's fundamental basis as a "determinate relationship between an act of consciousness and its object" (Giorgi, 1995: 36), is doomed to yield the limited and often frustrating insights typical of psychological and sociological studies of music which persist in the absolute primacy of the aesthetic music object. Returning to Husserl's relationship between an act of consciousness and its object, we should acknowledge, though, that problems may exist in establishing the extent of that determinacy when the objects themselves are brought into being through, and are as closely bound up with acts of consciousness, as works of art are. Whilst the visual arts usually produce artefacts which can be distanced, separated and related to as "reified" objects, this is not necessarily true of music, much less so of musical performance and of oral – aural traditions in particular. In such settings, complex relationships between the creator, performer, and consumer, who may even be one and the same person, add to the problems of deconstructing the act of consciousness and its object. Music in oral – aural modes is located only in a stream of time and consciousness; examining the relationship between acts of consciousness and its object(s) in such conditions may be an exacting undertaking. Whilst I have no difficulty in thinking about and even reflectively talking with a friend about a Bill Brandt photograph *as* I observe it at a recent exhibition and even though DeNora (2003) has experimented with *consciousness* commentaries while individuals are listening to music (to which we will return later), the embodied and apparently consciousness-absorbing nature of vocal activity severely limits the potential for this kind of separation, objectivity and reflection. Singers are obviously not able to provide a commentary while they sing and so, while we inevitably focus in this study on these kinds of relationships either in reflective post hoc modes and or in predictive, suppositional pre hoc ones – that is to say through the symbolic interactive processes of conversation and narrative construction about singing which men in the study engage in – we will want to stay as close as possible to the experience of singing itself. Berger and Del Negro have recently attempted to develop an essentially phenomenological theoretical framework expanding the concept of reflexivity from its traditional

verbal and linguistic parameters to what is described as the “role of reflexivity in performance” (2004: 89ff). They note, following on from the philosophical writings of Bermudez, that there are possibilities for non-linguistic forms of Self-consciousness, a reciprocity between perception of the world and perception of Self, upon which later forms of self-consciousness in language emerge (2004: 71ff.). Whilst Bermudez is primarily concerned with self-consciousness in vision, it is easy to see how this might apply to tactile, spatial, and aural senses too. The theory clearly challenges the privileging of the linguistic and its almost exclusive status in phenomenological studies, reminding us that there are other forms of symbolic work. Trevarthan’s communicative musicality in infants, I suggest, would be an example of this form of Self-consciousness (1999, 2002). Similarly Davidson’s studies of the body, movement and gesture in performance behaviour (1993, 1994, 1995, 2001, 2002a) remind us that other forms of reflexivity are possible and that in recognising them we might be able to supplement traditional phenomenological analysis and the exploration of consciousness. But all this is only true up to a point: we are still largely dependent upon verbal interaction to articulate those experiences even though observations of vocal performances like Trevarthan’s studies of infant-carer interaction or This study of men singing maintains a more traditional verbal approach, but the particular point I want to make here, following on from Berger, is that the real-time perception of embodied, performative vocal acts themselves include forms of Self-consciousness which are not dependent on language.

Giorgi provides an apt summary of the main points of this chapter to date when he argues that it is the “individuated, subject-dependent construals of meaning”, belonging to concrete everyday situations, that are the central concerns of psychology (1995: 37). In doing so he is of course arguing for a return to some of those themes which were of most concern to early pioneers in psychology – Wundt’s private individual consciousness, Bruner’s original conception of a cognitive psychology based on meaning and meaning making, and James’s Self. It is this emphasis on a psychology of individuality that is at the heart of both the post-positivist paradigm and the theoretical framework chosen for the present study. It is my contention that one of music psychology’s most serious omissions to date has been its failure to attend to a psychology of everyday musical individuality, preferring instead theories of musical generality. Even the recent

volume *Musical Identities* edited by Macdonald, Hargreaves and Miell (2002), suffers from the under-theorization of the much used term “identity”, containing few contributions which make any attempt to explore “individuated, subject-dependent construals” of musical meaning. These surely ought not to be such a dramatically under-represented or inaccessible starting point for research into musical identity. Idiography, as the study of individuals, of personality variables and of the perception of things, rather than the study of general nomothetic aggregates is therefore absolutely central to the re-thinking of psychology that I have been arguing for in this chapter. We shall examine in more detail the processes involved in the building of theories from idiographic case study in the chapter that follows.

3.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and the Reflexive Researcher

Collecting and interpreting individuals’ perceptions or perspectives of a thing is of course, the responsibility of the researcher. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is the specific method of phenomenological enquiry that I have chosen to employ, explicitly acknowledges the central significance of that role: I am heavily implicated in an on-going, reflexive interpretation of those perceptions and perspectives (see Smith and Osbourne, 2003). Negating the role of the researcher’s own lived-experience and conceptions in the interpretation of other people’s experience and the meaning that is assigned to them is not an option. This is why I prefaced this volume with some autobiographical detail emphasizing that I am a singer and that I am a man. Few problems there then, in establishing a link with, and motives for, the study of men and singing – though we might wish to examine what else that might mean at some later stage. My position, as an adopted member of the group being studied, having lived in their community for nearly twenty years and as director of the choir in which they sing, underlines the importance of acknowledging this constructivist standpoint. The notion that researchers engaged in empirical logical positivist research ever really enjoy the kind of objective unimpeachability often claimed for them, could be challenged on similar grounds to those that have been explored above.

Engaging with and interpreting data with a totally objective, unbiased mind is not then, epistemologically speaking, a truly realistic option. Nevertheless IPA, like all grounded theory traditions, attempts to resist the temptation to

impose theoretical frameworks onto data *a priori*. Illustrating the way in which emergent themes are identified and extracted from data before nascent theory is developed and tested and before contingent hypotheses are proposed, is however a difficult process, especially if the appearance that data is being neatly pushed into certain shaped boxes is to be avoided. It is very easy to give the impression that data are being used simply as examples of a particular theory post hoc, rather than the basis and catalyst for its development, as I recently found whilst re-reading an already published article based on some of the findings of this study. Those findings are dramatically expanded here where I hope they can be seen as emerging more realistically from individual vocal stories preceding it, than it seems to now, as I re-read it as an individual, isolated article (Faulkner & Davidson 2004). I have noticed too how reflexive research processes seem often to fit more easily onto Harré's ontology of psychological time and space than the Eculidean one. Whilst researchers have rightly concerned themselves with the fit of data to emerging theory, they have often ignored how reflexive research methods, which are of course "rethought psychological" ones, are often forcibly fitted into the traditional, prescriptive structure of empirical, logical positivist research literature, where a clear sense of precedence, chronology and direction are clearly based on natural science models.

Regardless of the traditional logical-positivist positioning of most research literature, especially in academic journals, Berger and Del Negro point out that all durable media have the potential to signal their creator's reflexive attention to herself in the creating of:

... an object for the heightened aesthetic attention of others [...] the overproduced recording, novel dense with allusion (2004: 122).

This is true of the present study too, which, as I have attempted to make clear from the outset, calls for:

...partial sharing, reflexive consciousness, metacommunicative signalling and mutual orientation of subjects to each other's experience (ibid.).

This is the kind of intersubjectivity central to phenomenological discourse and to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) itself. Whilst a relatively new theoretical framework, IPA, developed by Smith has already been used in research areas as diverse as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, musical identity, homelessness and a wide range of health and clinical issues (see Smith and Osbourne, 2003). Emphasizing as it does a psychology of individuality and symbolic interactionism, IPA appears sensitive to the investigation of a wide range of identity issues and seems a particularly appropriate framework for the present idiographic study.

Having argued in this chapter for a music psychology of individuality it might have been appropriate to develop immediately themes relating to idiographic research design that are central to the kind of rethinking of music psychology I am calling for. Instead, I wish to examine those themes in the following chapter, in tandem with discourse about the sociology of music. Very recently DeNora, in her publications *Music in Everyday Life* (2000) and *After Adorno* (2003) – interestingly and coincidentally subtitled *Rethinking Music Sociology* – has proposed a radical re-orientation of music sociology. Her approach to an individual's perception of lived musical experience, though predominantly through listening experience, is essentially a phenomenological one. It is concerned with the kind of psychology of individuality and the multi-disciplinary perspectives that I have attempted to outline above. Although DeNora is described as a sociologist, her work is, according to Giorgio's definition cited above, more essentially psychological than most previous contributions to the field. Perhaps the term a psycho-sociology of music is a helpful description of the tentative theories she develops from a careful interpretation of, to use Husserl's phrase, the "determinate relationship between an act of consciousness and its object" (cited in Giorgi, 1995: 36). Some of the issues she raises about music in everyday life and its social agency in settings like the shopping mall, the car and the fitness club, along with her idiographic and essentially, if under-stated, psychological approach, will provide a useful springboard into my first individual vocal-graphy and the beginning of the development of a theory of men's vocal behaviour in this sparsely populated and remote setting just south of the arctic circle.

4 IDIOGRAPHY AND THE CASE FOR A PSYCHO-SOCIOLOGY OF MUSIC

4.1 Lessons from recent sociology of music

It is hopefully clear from the last chapter that whatever insights psychology of music research framed in the logical positivist tradition has given us – and they are both numerous and invaluable – the framing of the discipline in this way has excluded some of the most essentially psychological of all insights into the nature, structure and meaning of musical behaviour. This was achieved by rejecting – just as general psychology had before it – Self and consciousness as legitimate sites for systematic study, and introspection and reflection as legitimate modes of enquiry. Maintaining logical positivist supremacy in music psychology requires that we maintain the objectification not just of music artefacts themselves, but of musical behaviour too. An almost identical dilemma has plagued music sociology, and before turning to the life-stories of individual Icelandic men and to their vocal behaviour, I wish to consider the question of reification as it relates to the sociology of music. In doing so, I hope to add a sociological thread to the theoretical network which I have been attempting to develop and through which I hope to formulate and refine comprehensive theories about men's vocal behaviour and vocal identity. In particular I wish to review some recent developments in music sociology, which appear to me to illustrate how phenomenology, seen as the kind of interpretative framework proposed in the last chapter, can break down traditional disciplinary frontiers by grounding theories of music's agency in psychological perceptions of lived experience.

A long-standing and well-documented controversy exists about music's social nature and function. Even differentiating between the study of music and of musical life is not unproblematic, for as Shepherd argues in *Music as Social Text*, accepting a clear line of demarcation between the two, is to assume that the social nature of music has only to do with the circumstances of its creation and consumption, not with the way it sounds (Shepherd, 1991: 5).

Rejecting this assumption, musicologists like Shepherd and ethnomusicologists like Lomax have argued that analysis of musical artefacts alone can indeed reveal significant information about the political and social conditions of their production (Shepherd, 1991; Lomax, 1968, 1980). Lomax claims that singing styles and traits of song performance are related directly to social interaction and social structures. Of particular interest for the present study is Lomax's theory that the dominance of solo or choral organization, degrees of vocal tension and even vowel colour are directly related to male dominance, sexual sanctions (towards women) and patriarchal systems. Lomax's ambitious and provocative cross-cultural theory of Cantometrics – literally, "Song as a measure of man" – has been the source of very considerable debate and controversy. In an effort to develop a musicological framework for the social study of music, Shepherd also focuses on musical sounds and forms. Like Lomax, Shepherd has not been without his critics, who claim that meaning in music cannot possibly be linked to social significance (Swanwick, 1984: 53). If music's meaning were linked to social significance, the argument goes; it would prohibit responses to music from other cultures. It is hard to see how such apparently musically *pure* arguments could endorse the possibility that meaning in music might be linked to social structure and management, let alone to subjective personal significance. What this argument fails to acknowledge though, is that music's sounds and structures are constituted by human practice located in specific social, historical, and personal practices. To what, if any extent, a potential link between social or personal significance and musical meaning must lead inevitably to the kind of referential theory that musical purists see as both undesirable and naive is debatable. Moreover, the ways in which "particular personal gestures" of a composer or performer may be able to speak across cultural space and historical time (*ibid.*) – to some of us, about something, at least – cited by the purists as evidence that meaning is not linked to social significance, might just as easily be seen as examples of the kind of psychological inter-subjectivity that is the basis of phenomenological enquiry.

The problem here, just as in the society as ontologically independent of its members, versus Self as an ontology that informs and creates society dichotomy which I discussed in chapter two, is that claims are made for the exclusive correctness of one or the other of often polarised views and by definition for the

exclusion of all other possibilities or dimensions. Musical meaning surely resides in more than one of the following perspectives:

- a) aesthetic/musicological
- b) social
- c) personal/psychological

More studies might attempt to triangulate data from all of these perspectives and recognise that these are not discreet views of things but overlapping and interacting ones. I suggest that multi- and inter-disciplinary studies that examine the same phenomenon simultaneously from these different perspectives are far more likely to deepen understanding of musical meaning and function than those that focus from only one of them. The relative importance of any one of these perspectives at any one time – that is to say at any specific, real or recalled hearing, in any specific and *situated* setting – for our meaning-making of any particular musical behaviour or *work*, may vary very significantly according to the ways in which individuals socially organize their attention to the phenomena, be they acts of concentrated audition, conscious reflection, or the seemingly sub-conscious reflexes involved when music is employed as backdrop to a whole host of activities. Exploring these connections is essentially what DeNora does in a series of idiographic ethnographies which form the basis of an innovative framework for music sociology she calls “The Musical Event” (DeNora, 2003).

Following a series of idiographic cameos in *Music in Everyday Life* (DeNora, 2000), which illustrate how music is used to structure personal and social life, DeNora uses Adorno’s theoretical writings to develop a grounded theory about music’s dynamic agency (DeNora, 2003). According to this theory, music can be seen as a resource for reconfiguring bodily conduct and providing a model for thinking about concepts. DeNora argues that aspects of music’s structure and texture for example, can all provide resources for thinking in the form of “object lessons, analogies, exemplars, models”. Now this is not a causal argument that would generate disdain from the musical purists, since as DeNora is at pains to point out, “(W)hat comes to count as the musical “object” emerges in relation to how that object is handled by its recipient” (DeNora, 2003: 48).

DeNora plots this musical engagement – the Musical Event and its conditions – on three dimensions of time, which although DeNora attempts to define them neatly as past, present, and future, appear to have much more in

common with Harré's ontology of psychological time discussed in the last chapter than they have with the Euclidean one. Similarly, accounts of the Event rely heavily on the symbolic interactionist paradigm central to phenomenology. Through reflexive symbolic work – which may either be almost synchronous with the musical engagement as in DeNora's problematical efforts to get subjects to provide running commentaries, or time-lagged reconstructions – the musical "object" emerges. It is easy to see DeNora's "objectified" "Musical Events" as an example of the social and cognitive processes central to the Meadian tradition of "the act". This reifying, however, becomes more problematical given the significance of introspection and reflection. The "events" DeNora theorizes about might be thought of as having more in common with the continuous stream of experience central to James's seminal theories of Self and consciousness, where music's structure, textual or other characteristics serve to move horizons and focus of an ever moving awareness. Following on from Husserl and from the phenomenological network developed in the last chapter, I prefer to see what DeNora's participants say they hear and think in Remembering my father through Brahms, De-stressing through Schubert's Impromptus, Finding my kind of store, and the taking turns (to say "Hello") of music therapist and client – not as "objects", but as perceptions, perspectives of real things – partial, perspectival adumbrations.

In spite of this difference in social theory, little other research has been as significant in the development of my own study of Icelandic men, as DeNora's. Whilst the formal, traditional literature search appears always to have been undertaken before research plans are formulated, executed and analysed, surely I am not the only researcher to know that this is not true; it is yet another myth of the Euclidean time and space ontology. DeNora's *Music in Everyday Life* (2000) was published just as I began to investigate singing in men's everyday life in Iceland. That listening, rather than active music making, is the dominant everyday mode of musical behaviour in contemporary Western society and therefore in DeNora's study is, as suggested in the introduction to this dissertation, hardly surprising. However, add to this the inclusion of thumbnail ethnographic studies of karaoke and music therapy sessions, and her study appeared to indicate that my own field of enquiry might be an enlightening one too. Having already begun on analysis of my own data another theoretical perspective from which to view it was

provided by DeNora's theory of "The Musical Event" (2003), briefly outlined above. Music sociology has shown an increasing willingness to review its historical focus on the influence and role of society in music's production – composing, performing, and listening – at the cost of considering music's dynamic social agency. DeNora, echoing Shepherd's sentiment quoted above, calls it music's downgrading "from active ingredient or animating force to inanimate *product*, an object to be explained" (DeNora 2000: 3). Similarly, ethnographic and anthropological music studies has moved on in the past decade or so from an obsession with homogeneous social groupings towards more interactionist, individuated frameworks. This kind of idiographic research model remains rare in psychology of music because of the dominance of logical positivist paradigm, outlined above.

4.2 The individual and case study

There has been little place then in music psychology for the building of theories from individual case studies. I would argue however, that DeNora's recent work not only reflects the growing use of idiographic frameworks evident in both ethnomusicological and sociological research, but can also, and in spite of her theoretical emphasis on the object rather than the subject, be described as essentially psychological. The glimpses that DeNora provides into the personal, social, and psychological worlds of her participants, and their importance in her interpretation of "The Musical Event", illustrate how this work is fundamentally concerned with the interface between consciousness and musical experience. Nevertheless, music psychology can hardly be said to have recognized the legitimacy of the case study approach, even though its challenge to the dominant logical-positivist paradigm has been thoroughly documented in psychology literature generally and increasingly represented in ethnomusicological research. In the case of psychology, some of this literature is reviewed in Smith, Harré and Van Langenhove's discussion of idiography and the case study (Smith, Harré and Van Langenhove 1995). In summarizing arguments for idiography's centrality in psychological research, their first point, a philosophical one expounded by Goethe and later by Satre in his concept of the "universal singular", is that distinctions between the individual and the universal are not as obvious as often supposed (ibid.: 59). In developing frameworks which facilitate the building of theories

from idiographic realms to general nomothetic ones they call for researchers to be mindful of all levels of Kluchohn and Murray's postulation that every man is in some ways like all other men (universal norms), some other men (group norms), and no other men (idiosyncratic norms) (ibid.: 60). As the example from music sociology above and the survey of music psychology in chapter three, illustrate, it is clear that the study of idiosyncratic norms has been grossly under-represented in the search for a deeper understanding of the structure and content of musical experience. Ironically, the validity of building general theories from idiographic study is illustrated in Du Mas's distinction between mathematical properties of three empirical domains (cited in ibid.: 60). Whilst exploring the first domain can only provide data about all people at one moment in time, and the second data about all people over time but only about one specific property, investigations in the third domain potentially yield data about all the properties at all times of any one individual. Repeating idiographic nomothetic enquiries in intensively designed studies where extensions are literally a case-by case process is "a cautious climb up the ladder of generality, seeking for universal structures but reaching them only by a painful step by step approach" (Harré, 1979: 137). Theories will inevitably always be interim and contingent but this is surely at least as valid a scientific approach as individual difference research that produce "indeterministic statistical zones that construct people who never were and never could be" (Kastenbaum, cited in Smith, Harré and Van Langenhove 1995: 61). In any case as Smith, Harré, and Van Langenhove, point out, it is generally accepted in almost all scientific paradigms that intensive design is an appropriate way to develop universal theories and they justifiably ask why it is that extensive design has dominated psychology research even when it is seems very inappropriate. According to them the blame for the "triviality and banality" of a great deal of personality and social psychology research lies firmly at the feet of extensive design methods.

In contrast to the production of people who never were or never could be, this study is concerned with the open reproduction of real people and their vocal lives. Turning to my own empirical work the study examines next the vocal history of one particular individual. Having heard Baldur's "voice" we can start the process of interpreting and theory building; following the traditions of analytic induction (see Robson, 1993) we can begin to explore what it is about him as a

singer that is unlike any other man, like other men who sing in the north east of Iceland and even perhaps like men who sing elsewhere in the world. To be clear about how data that informed my interpretation and subsequent theory building were constructed, collected, and analysed, it is necessary to provide some specific details about the methods that were adopted.

R.F.: Is that before you had any children?

E.J.: Yeah, just when we first started living together, soon after that.

R.F.: Anywhere else out walking or something?

E.J.: Always when we were in the car.

R.F.: What were you doing?

E.J.: I was just driving and we decided to sing a song....

R.F.: No radio?

E.J.: It must have been turned off. I've always had a radio in the car.

R.F.: But you don't do it now?

E.J.: Rarely.

R.F.: Have you sung much with your children?

E.J.: Maybe not much

R.F.: You talked about your father singing for you when you went to bed. Did you sing for your children?

E.J.: Not much, I haven't maybe most with Andrea (*oldest daughter 16*). Maybe it's because there's a tape recorder in every room, and, I mean Hildur, (*youngest 5*) she always listens to the tape recorder, so you don't so much for that reason, I suppose. They listen to a tape or something. I read sometimes for them.

R.F.: Do you think that it's necessary then?

E.J.: Isn't it just that you don't do it.

R.F.: Ahah

E.J.: There's almost certainly a need for it I mean you're just able to get out of it. Tired more comfortable.

R.F.: We'll come back to that in while. Let's turn again to the male voice choir. What's the relationship like between voices, I mean you're second tenor?

E.J.: Yeah?

R.F.: Well what's it like to be second tenor and not second bass for example.

E.J.: Well I have a feeling for it not that I could ever sing first tenor , second tenor just suits the range of my voice much better. I think I'm probably getting close to first bass.

R.F.: Happy with your voice?

E.J.: Yeah, yeah.

R.F.: How would you describe it?

commentaries appear simply to illustrate a researcher's theoretical point, rather than being the generating force for it. Whilst researchers presumably do not adopt the latter position deliberately, the possibility of (mis)using participants' voices in this way is one I have attempted to guard against. It is for this reason that my efforts at developing theories about men's vocal behaviour begin with one man's voice – Baldur's. Somewhere on the continuum between the polarised examples of life history usage in research cited above, grounded theories can be developed through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis that stays as close to commentaries as possible, whilst recognising both their, and their interpreter's, historical and social situatedness. Within this framework the developing of theories from commentaries depends upon dialogic authority – the individual's "personal view of his own experience as he understands it", and the researcher's understanding or interpretation of it. Central to that understanding is an acknowledgement that the kind of life-history method employed in this study is not the testimonio form for which moral or social imperatives are often seen as existing, and for which the author is ideally little more than a passive mouthpiece (see Beverly 1992, cited in Tierney, 2000: 541). The biographies told here have been elicited with the specific aim of exploring vocal experience and illustrating the role of singing throughout the life span of individual men.

Tierney reminds us that life-history texts exist somewhere between history and memory, and that memories are recalled for reasons that are important to someone (Tierney, 2000: 545). In the case of the present study, the rich details of these commentaries suggest that these memories are genuinely important to the storytellers themselves, and that they are not simply constructed as a response to their implicit privileging because the researcher has come to talk about singing. Recognising the subjectivity of life histories is not to undermine their significance, especially when they are explicitly interpreted from phenomenological perspectives. Essentially, I can concur with Connell, who uses life histories as the basis for his study of masculinities, that we might wish to avoid "spurning the effort that respondents themselves make to speak the truth. An autobiographical story is evidence for a great deal beyond its own language (Connell, 1995: 91). Nevertheless, in an important sense, and in keeping with the phenomenological framework I attempted to develop in chapter two, what it is that storytellers reconstruct, through conversations or other symbolic work, is of

much more concern to us than the “truth” Connell speaks of. This is not to dismiss life histories simply as works of fiction, but to admit that we must carefully balance individual psychological perceptions of the everyday experience with the situatedness of the everyday, even where the latter can be described and verified with reasonable reliability.

5.2 Conversations, Interviews and Analysis

Interviews with long-standing friends are obviously unlikely to produce the same kind of data as interviews with total strangers who, as is typically the case in the vast majority of psychology research projects, are met solely with this purpose in mind. I have had conversations with all of the men in this study at some time prior to the conversation that I called “an interview”. I have spent many hours in the company of these men, and not just when directing them as a choir: I have travelled widely with nearly all of them; I have eaten and drunk with them; we have partied together and we have even grieved together; I have visited many of their homes and I am a regular guest in some of them. Our extensive, regular, and varied conversations have undoubtedly covered a wide range of subjects including politics, religion, sport, and singing. I have even shared what I consider to be quite personal matters with one or two of these men, and them with me too. Inevitably, given my position and role in the community, we have frequently spoken about singing, songs, and music. It was, without doubt, listening to, and reflecting upon some of these conversations and stories about singing, that led me to want to explore their vocal experience more systematically – though exactly when that was I cannot say.

Having decided to engage in a more formal investigation of this phenomenon it was necessary to define what processes I would adopt. I have already outlined in chapter three why I believe that IPA is a particular appropriate method for studies like the present one. I emphasized its flexibility and sensitivity in developing a psychology of individuality, and in the examination of identity issues over a wide range of fields. Without repeating that philosophical framing of the method, it is necessary to be clear about the specific details of it as they relate to the collection and analysis of data in this particular study. Following conventional IPA procedure, I aimed to collect primary data through semi-structured interviews (see Smith, 2003: 55). I fully expected, in the process, to

hear stories and thoughts that I had heard before in other settings. I felt, nevertheless, that it would be appropriate to allow the men to reconstruct their vocal life histories, and to share perceptions of their vocal experience, within a specific framework that is acceptable as an appropriate psychology research one. It is these interviews that form primary data here. All the other conversations I have had with these men may well have influenced what they decided to say in this setting – there were certainly no obvious inconsistencies between previous narratives and the ones constructed here. Similarly, all those previous conversations have undoubtedly influenced my interpretations of the interviews themselves. Occasionally my interpretation of this data is explicitly informed by other casual conversations with the men or other individuals; these are indicated as such. The deeper implications of my previous and continuing roles here, as someone already well established in the community before formal research begun, will be examined in greater detail at the end of this study.

Having approached the choir's 5-man committee for their support, I spoke to the men as a group, telling them of my desire to investigate men singing, and, in particular, to look at the role singing played in their lives, both in and out of the male voice choir. Initial surprise that their own singing experiences might be of interest to anybody else, let alone that it might form the basis of a formal research study, appeared to be replaced by genuine interest. Initially, I informed them that I was looking for between 10 and 15 men who would be willing to take part in interviews with me about singing in their lives. None of the men declined to take part, and so, with the exception of Baldur, with whom I had already taken an extensive pilot-interview, I drew lots for 12 other interviewees. Both before and after interviews were taken, these men were given other opportunities to withdraw from the project. In several cases, where I wished to use data that men had openly provided, but which seemed particularly personal, I returned to the men again and asked them specifically about its inclusion in the study; none asked for any data to be omitted.

A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared and memorised (Appendix A). Essentially, the schedule was built around four major areas of enquiry: the first concerned the construction of vocal history from childhood to the present day; the second was aimed at exploring men's experience of singing with the male voice choir; the third area of enquiry was the role of singing in

men's present everyday lives; fourthly, the schedule aimed to look at men's personal feelings about their voices and themselves, including gender, and to open the possibility for participants to raise other issues that they felt relevant. For all of these areas a list of possible prompts and probes was produced. In all areas of enquiry it was hoped to focus interviewees attention not just on the recall of factual details, but on their own personal perceptions of singing – on the meaning that singing, and the remembrance of singing, held for them, and on their association with feelings and moods before, during, and after the singing acts themselves.

Interviews were taken and recorded in the men's own homes. One exception was a group interview that was carried out in the community hall where the choir normally rehearses. The four interviewees who took part in this group interview had already been interviewed individually along the lines of the interview schedule discussed above. However, in these cases I had deliberately omitted the section on singing in the male voice choir. It was on this area that the group interview focused. The group interview proved, as was intended, to be a useful comparator with individual's narrative stories about singing in the choir. In fact, no obvious inconsistencies emerged between this collective narrative and the stories that individuals produced. In fact, as we shall see later, the bantering nature of the dialogue often illustrated points made by men in individual interviews see Appendix C).

In practice, the interview schedule was only used for occasional prompts to ensure that interviewees covered all the main areas of enquiry, whilst building narrative constructions of their vocal-lives in their own words. Interviews were relaxed, friendly, and chatty. All went well over the hour I had originally estimated and several were nearly two hours long. In many cases men moved freely between the areas I had originally defined, blurring definitions between them. Nearly all of the participants adopted a fairly chronological approach, and their commentaries, as we shall see, and as I had hoped they would, related not just to the *facts* of their vocal histories, but also to reflections upon feelings and meanings that they associated with them, and to their role in personal and social agency. Indeed, the men's openness, in discussing what were often very personal matters, came as a slight surprise to me, even as a friend. This in itself challenges widely held preconceptions about men's ability to express themselves and their

feelings verbally. Many stories and details emerged of which I had no previous knowledge at all.

Their words, of course, were Icelandic words, and it is important to recognise from the outset that translation is always provisional (Tierney, 2000: 543). This indisputable fact prevents even *I, Rigoberta*, cited earlier, from acquiring the status of an immaculately unmediated testimonio – for most of us at least. Interviews here were transcribed and translated into English. In one or two isolated instances, I sought clarification and confirmation of my translation before subjecting translated transcripts to analysis following standard IPA procedures (see Smith, 2003: 51-80). First readings of the first case – in this instance Baldur’s – were accompanied by what was almost a “free textual analysis” (ibid.). Re-examining transcripts line-by-line, men’s comments were summarized or paraphrased, and links between them were noted. In some cases, these links are questions of resonance or a deepening of previous ideas, in other cases they were contradictions of previous points or the introduction of novel ones. Subsequently, these notes were used to formulate succinct phrases or titles of themes, which were, in turn, examined and clustered with a view to theoretical ordering. Prototype themes that emerged from the original analysis of Baldur’s transcript were the following:

- Singing is a very special kind of social connection
 - To family – especially mother and brother, and to grandparents
 - To other friends
 - To guys in the male-voice choir
 - To audiences
 - Harmony makes these connections even more special
 - Singing allows me to get physically close to other people

- Singing is family
 - Family is identified by its singing
 - Family is celebrated by singing

- Singing is Self-help therapy

Singing makes people feel good physically

Singing stops people being sick

Singing changes mood and emotions

Singing is cathartic

Singing is how bodies are checked out

- Singing actuates physical spaces

Spaces become vocal places – they are given meaning in song, they are changed in song

Work space – Domestic space – Religious space – Urban/rural

Places are remembered by the songs sung there, or associated with them

I can make a personal/vocal “impression” on spaces

- Singing in the male voice choir

The men’s choir = our collective identity in this county

Unifies men from all over the county (and country?) and of all ages

The sound! Expressive range

The kick! Physical pleasure

Pleasure in performance – presenting Self – connecting with other people

- Singing as masculinities

Singing makes me more of a man

Social structures have limited women’s vocal opportunities

Sex impacts expressive potential of voices

Men’s voices have a naturally wider “expressive” range

Singing is a special way for me to get close to my young offspring

Singing “feels” good

Singing facilitates the feminine – gentleness, loving, beauty

- Singing is life

Life without singing is unimaginable

I get scared when I cannot sing!

Singing as my memories

At all stages of analysis, emergent themes were compared to the original text to validate the nascent theory. An independent third party verified the replicability of interpretations that had been developed in initial and subsequent coding, and clarified meanings. Such validation is a relatively standard process in psychological research methods, and is seen in some quarters as increasing reliability, rather like quantitative inter-examiner measures. Clearly though, it is a remnant of positivist empirical frameworks that, to some extent, implies that the interpretation of one individual is not necessarily a reliable scientific tool. Nevertheless, the analysis and interpretations developed here were shared with a third party who had no attachment to this particular setting, and I argue that the dialogue that emerged from this procedure helped to develop a deeper analysis of data and clearer formulation of theory.

In examining these themes, I became attracted to their apparent consistency with James's social, physical, and spiritual elements of Self, and to models of gender identity. How the themes above can be seen, not just in Baldur's narrative, but in those of other men in the study too, as constructs of Self in these particular frameworks is the subject of the following chapters. Proceeding in a case-by-case method, the theories above were tested, revised, and adapted in the light of analysis of the other twelve translated transcripts. A key moment of that development, about half way through initial analysis of these transcripts, was the decision to attempt to organise emerging themes and theories around models of Self and gender identity.

In all cases, the analysis procedure was the same as that outlined above, but in keeping with the development of theory from the idiographic, nascent theory emerging from Baldur's narrative orientated subsequent analysis. In such a procedure, it is important to be sensitive to the emergence of new themes or contradictions to old ones: as we shall see, most of the subsequent interviews appeared to resonant with, and deepen themes that had been identified in the original case study. But that is not to say that there were not significant contradictions: these will be examined in the chapters that follow. In some cases, further triangulation of data was obtained by returning to participants and asking them to comment on interpretations, clarify points, or provide further details.

5.3 Diaries and Theoretical Sampling

IPA recognises the possibility of collecting data from diaries as well as interviews. In addition to the forming and collecting of data in interviews above, I decided to use a secondary method to generate data that could be used to theoretically sample the theories developed in analysis and interpretation of the narratives that men had constructed in interview. I asked the thirteen men whom I had interviewed, or was in the process of interviewing, to keep one-week diaries, describing, and reflecting upon singing activities that they had recently engaged in. In addition, I asked other members of the choir to keep vocal diaries too, and whilst most of them initially agreed to take a diary with a view to making entries, only sixteen other men returned completed diaries. Many men stated that they found this process far more challenging than the thought of being interviewed. Some claimed to have made aborted attempts at entries, others simply that they kept forgetting, or that they felt unable to articulate anything important enough for what they considered to be a serious task. The men were asked to make entries about what and where they had sung since their last entry, and to reflect upon the circumstances and feelings surrounding any singing. If possible, and in order to keep entries as close to the singing experience itself, men were asked to write at least once a day, though preferably at both lunch-time and in the evenings, or as soon as possible after any singing (see Appendix B). The following suggestions were made as to how men might reflect on their singing. It was not my intention though, to oblige participants just to answer a list of questions for every singing event:

- Have I sung since my last entry?
- Aloud or just in my head?
- Where, when and what was I doing?
- Who was I with?
- Why did I sing?
- What did I sing?
- Why do I think I sung that particular song?
- Did I take any particular care with singing it? How did I project my voice?
- Did I sing it all the way through?

- In what sort of mood was I?
- Did singing change my mood in any way?

Only one or two of the men appeared to use the list as a checklist for all songs. Most of the participants made comments, usually related to several of these points for each individual entry, in a more prose-like, conversational style (see Appendix D). Only a few men managed to make two entries a day, but those whose diaries were used for the generation of data included here, all made regular entries every day for at least six of seven days. Some made more than one entry on some days and not on others, and several asked if they could extend the period by a day or two because they had missed entries, or even because they felt they were getting into a more comfortable routine with it. There seemed to be no reason not to agree to these extensions. Interesting issues arise about experience sampling methods like those used here: they will be examined in detail at the end of this study. These diaries provided a further dimension for developing theory, providing, in many cases, fairly detailed accounts of individual and collective vocal activities in the workplace, in the home, and in various recreational settings. Diaries were analysed in similar ways to interviews themselves, though there was a greater emphasis on the theoretical sampling and testing of emerging themes, and of nascent theories, that had been developed in the interpretation of interviews with the men. Additionally, the diaries provided a wide range of ethnographic vignettes of vocal behaviour in men's current everyday life. Some of these are examined later in the light of the theory developed here, and in relation to DeNora's theory of "The Musical Event" (2003).

In keeping with the argument for the building of theory from a single case study that I outlined above (Smith, Harré and Van Langenhove 1995), the next chapter is concerned with Baldur's vocal story. At first, and with the qualifications mentioned above, it is told with a minimum of theorizing. I alternate between my own paraphrasing of his autobiography and the use of direct quotations from it. As a rule, I have paraphrased autobiographical details of a general nature in my own words; Baldur's comments specifically concerning singing itself are quoted directly. Any additional commentary attempts to provide contextual details rather than interpretation, though once again, differentiating between the two is not incontrovertible. In the chapter that follows, we shall look

in detail at emerging themes in an interpretation of Baldur's vocal life story, and begin the development of a nascent theory of men's vocal behaviour by examining other men's vocality too.

6 ONE MAN'S VOICE - BALDUR

Baldur was born in 1948; he is married with three children and has eleven grandchildren. Part owner of a haulage company, Baldur worked for many years as a long-distance lorry driver, mainly on the Reykjavík to Húsavík route. When Baldur was regularly on this run, it was a difficult seven or eight-hour drive, long stretches had no hard surface or tarmac and the road crosses several mountain passes. In winter, hazardous weather conditions were commonplace. These days Baldur drives local trips from and around Húsavík and he is more involved with the day to day management of the company's fleet; comprising around 12 large articulated trucks, it is the largest company of its kind in North East Iceland.

I'm always in and out of businesses with goods or vehicles to pick up goods; then either I'm whistling or singing and I'm known for that wherever I come.

Baldur now lives in Húsavík, the county's largest town with a population of just less than 2500 people. Apart from providing a wide range of service industries for the county, Húsavík traditionally relied on the fishing industries, though changes in the industry have reduced its significance in the local economy and employment. These days Húsavík enjoys a growing reputation as the "whale-watching capital of Europe", and its economy is increasingly dependent on tourism. Its slaughterhouse and meat-processing plant serves agriculture all over north east Iceland, especially sheep farmers, whose numbers continue to dwindle as the nation's eating habits, changing life-styles and demands for greater levels of productivity force many small-holders to give up.

6.1 Remembering Childhood and Song

Baldur Baldvinsson along with his two brothers and two sisters grew up on just such a typical Icelandic smallholding. He was born in the farmhouse at Rangá in 1948, which his parents, Sigrún and Baldvin, had just built. For the previous couple of years, Sigrún and Baldvin, with Baldur's older brother Jón, had been

living with Baldvin's father and extended family in the neighbouring farmhouse, just 50 metres away, whilst they built their own house. Baldur's early memories are of his parents' efforts at establishing independent husbandry, though always in close co-operation with the neighbouring farm, Ófeigsstaður. Baldur recalls the building of outhouses and barns that came to hold the dozen dairy cows and, between October and May, more than one hundred and fifty sheep. Along with ducks, hens and Icelandic horses, this formed the livestock of what Baldur describes as a "well-average farm". The family's "larder" also included plentiful trout and salmon stocks in a river that flows just east of the farm. Mains supply electricity was laid on in 1958, though Baldur recalls one of their neighbours installing a small generator and dynamo over the farm brook around 1954, which, when functioning properly, provided some light in the long dark winter months. Otherwise, they relied on oil-lamps both at home and in the outhouses. Around 1956 Baldur recalls the installation of an Aga that provided hot water. Along with his two brothers and then, one sister, Baldur slept in the same small bedroom as his parents until he was about ten years old.

If his parents' efforts, literally, at building the family home, establishing their livelihood, raising four young children, all in very basic living conditions and in often very harsh natural conditions, were a struggle, this is not a word that Baldur ever uses. Everyday life appears to have been typified by optimism and a general sense of happiness frequently mediated by singing's agency in social and personal life:

As far back as I can remember, I can remember singing. And I grew up with that. Mum was always singing.

Always?

Always, she sang at her work all the time and when she was working in the kitchen, washing up, doing the washing on the washboard, she always sung. And then there was a great deal of singing at home generally....

She sang always, so completely, gave herself totally. I remember really well, when she was singing, especially when she was at the washing board, must have been an absolutely dead boring job, as you can imagine, rubbing the washing on the board, and then she sang completely, then she sang, it was just these Icelandic songs, these beautiful Icelandic songs.

Whilst Dad sung too – especially when milking the cows, rinsing the milking equipment, in the local church choir and in local amateur dramatic productions of the *Ungmennafélagið* (Youth Movement) – it is mother’s vocal behaviour that has clearly had the more lasting and deeper impression on Baldur’s own vocality and vocal identity. Baldur’s mother, Sigrún, is descended from the Halldórsstaðarætt or clan, in the nearby valley of Reykjadal. The family appears to have been defined for more than a century by their vocal and musical behaviour. Baldur recalls that it was widely said of his mother’s family that:

Even if the hay was bone dry, the family at Halldórsstaðir would still forget themselves in singing and playing.

Baldur’s memories of early childhood visits to the maternal family home in Hamrar in Reykjadal, some 20 kilometres away, reinforce the significance of singing as an inherited legacy central to this family’s kinship and identity:

When we went to visit Granddad and Grandma at Hamrar, we always begun by singing and never went home without singing, and in harmony! [...] As soon as we could stand up, Granddad directed, he was very strict about that, and it was absolutely obligatory. We couldn’t leave Hamrar unless we had sung one or two songs. He taught us particular songs that were compulsory to learn. Often we were just set up on a chair and allowed to sing loudly.

Granddad even appears in Baldur’s vocal diary some fifty years later; on a day where Baldur confesses to having been angry and irritated by some unspecified and, in Baldur’s opinion, unjustified personal criticism, music plays an important part in restoring Self. Baldur’s first comment reveals how even at these moments sad or heavy songs “seek a way” into his head. Later in the day, he hears on the radio, some music composed by an unnamed composer who lived most of his life in a wheelchair: Baldur rebukes himself for self-pity and when returning home his thoughts turn nostalgically to Grandfather:

I sat at the piano, as I do sometimes when I’m alone and then often it’s something original and often a bit melancholic. The latest was a piece with words by Granddad, a poem to a girl somewhere far away and he is going to build her a house and live with her for the rest of his life.

The songs that Baldur mentions are all Icelandic national songs: Like so much of the Icelandic nationalist song and poetry repertoire significant in the construction of Icelandic identity and in the struggle for Icelandic independence these songs, like *Fjöllin blána* (*Blue Mountains*), *Ó fögur er vor fósturjörð* (*Oh beautiful is our homeland*), are concerned with Icelandic nature:

Ó, fögur er vor fósturjörð
um friða sumardaga,
er laufin grænu litka börð
og leikur hjörð í haga,
En dalur lyftir blárri brún
mót blíðum solar loga,
og glitrar flötur, glóir tún
og gyllir sunna voga.

(Jón Thoroddsen)

Oh beautiful is our homeland
On a peaceful summer day
When green leaves colour the land
And the flock plays in the pasture
And the valley raises its blue brow
Against the sun's gentle rays
The plains sparkle, meadow's glow
And the sun gilds the creek.

Whilst Grandad directed the singing at family gatherings, Baldur recalls Grandma adhering to “a principle that if you felt bad, it was good to sing.” And when playing card games at whist drives, an erstwhile very popular Icelandic pastime, Grandma would use the song *Ó hve fagurt er að líta* (*Oh what a beautiful sight!*) as a coded message to her playing partner.

During the summer, the sun hardly sets here for two months. Baldur and his brothers might then go and stay on the grandparents' farm and enjoy the long, long summer days in an apparent rural idyll. They would cadge a lift with the milk truck and walk the rest of the way home. Motor transport was possible, though Baldur recalls several occasions on which the family from Hömrum turned up on horseback, as they did on his father's thirtieth birthday where there was, as usual, a great deal of singing.

If you went to a birthday, any sort of gathering [...] there was always singing.

At Christmas the extended family would meet up, as long as weather permitted, and when they did the family would all [...] dance around the wooden Christmas tree as they sung loudly and lots. Grandad insisted it should be loud!

Whether these Christmas visits and the extended family gatherings that Baldur recalls happening between six and a dozen times a year, belong properly to the realms of the everyday or to the special is debatable, but in any case Berger and Del Negro have illustrated how such concepts are really positions of interpretation (Berger and Del Negro, 2004: 8-14). What is not debatable is the way in which singing appears to have been a dominant medium of social connectedness, not just permeating the fabric of life at Rangá, but actually being the fabric, the family script, which everybody knew and performed by memory (see Byng-Hall, 1985 for a discussion of family scripts). There appear nevertheless to be several different scenes to the script: one is the singing that accompanied everyday chores and tasks – Baldur’s mother at the washing board, his father milking; the second is singing as corporate hospitality:

If we had any guests, I mean there were always lots of guests, lots of people visiting [...] people coming to visit in the evening, then we took a song.

Yet another singing scene is the formal vocal activity in the neighbouring church, just a few hundred metres away, or in the local Ungmennafélag.

Having witnessed for myself family gatherings at Rangá both before and after the death of Baldur’s mother, I can testify that singing’s place at the core of this family’s identity seems hardly exaggerated. Nor does its importance appear to have declined over the half a century since Baldur’s youth, even though migration and demographic changes have made these gatherings less frequent.

It was something that was simply in our blood, and it’s been especially so in more recent times, was always, when the family came together, they never came together without singing. Yeah, it was just that people were happy and felt better, went happier home. It had that sort of influence on people [...] tremendous singing, just four-part singing. These guys would sing bass, others tenor, middle voices, it just happened automatically. Nobody organised the voices or parts, they just got it together. It was people who were used to singing from childhood. It’s always been like that somehow.

6.2 Mothers, Sons and Songs

Whilst Baldur sees vocal connections as significant in all social interaction, his vocal relationship with his mother is a very special case in point. Sigrún, Baldur's mother, had a very fine soprano voice and apart from using it to accompany daily routines, she sang solo too in more formal settings:

Kári, the first organist that I remember, he really loved mum's singing, accompanied her a lot. And they would go home to him and we would go home to him too, or he would come home to us. They founded a church choir, can't remember what year it was, I was 5 or 6, but I remember there were choir practices and we were allowed to go. Both mum and dad sang and we sat and listened.

And I always thought Mum had an absolutely wonderful voice, a tremendously beautiful voice.

Sigrún's women friends would also come together occasionally to sing. Sigrún would play the guitar, and the women would sing in 2 or 3 parts. Baldur goes on to recall:

The first time that I sang publicly, mother wanted me to sing with her. I must have been at least 15. It was a Lions Club meeting, it (*Lions Movement*) was just starting here and they wanted us to come and sing together. Sang two or three songs. Went really well, well considering. Mum had a brilliant voice of course and sung really ... and I ... incredibly little voice and a bit pathetic, I thought (laughs). But she knew how to project her voice so that I was decently presentable. It was so well received that we were asked to sing again together. [...] I thought singing with her was absolutely fantastic and, and I would have liked to have been with the voice I've got now and sing with her, as she was then.

The compact disc accompanying this thesis contains a recording of Baldur singing one of these songs with his mother: Baldur thinks that the recording here was made when he was 17 years old (CD 5).

6.3 Brothers Singing

In Baldur's relationships with his brothers too, singing was a significant way of being. Singing before puberty with his brother Jón, for some reason, does not seem to count as singing "publicly":

I remember singing with Jón at a concert when I was 11 or 12, it was in 2-parts, songs by Jón and Árni Múla from the play *Dubronis*, we sang all the songs, knew them backwards. And after that Jón and I sang a lot together, until Jón went off to grammar school (*boarding school*) and we parted.

Baldur and Jón became a lyrics and melody writer partnership: Jón would normally make up a poem or verse and Baldur would compose a melody to it, though sometimes the process was reversed. Following their parents' example, they sang together whilst doing their chores – and youngsters are still given very considerable responsibilities even today on Icelandic farms. According to Baldur, he and Jón always sung whilst milking together. Baldur still remembers some of their original melodies and texts and a couple of years ago Baldur asked me to write one of them down for performance at a family gathering – his father's 70th birthday: *Baldur og Jón's Rangá Waltz* was employed as a technology of recollection and celebration.

Jón's education and career have subsequently taken him far away from the family home, as the introduction to this study reveals. But after Jón went off to boarding school at the age of fifteen, Baldur slowly developed a vocal partnership with his younger brother Baldvin. Much later in their mid-twenties to late-thirties Baldur and Baldvin went on to enjoy widespread amateur success as a tenor and baritone duet. For a period of about ten years they appeared regularly together as "The Rangá Brothers" and even privately released a long play recording in 1986 (CD 6a & 6b). They sang together formally and informally at private and public functions, funerals, and birthdays. Baldvin has subsequently pursued aspirations as a soloist, and the brothers have only sung together publicly on the odd occasion in recent years.

6.4 School and Formal Music Lessons

Apart from the school play mentioned above, school features little in Baldur's vocal memories. In any case, schooling did not begin until Baldur was 10 and even then, it was a kind of peripatetic school:

I was allowed to take part in the schooling at home at Rangá and Ófeigsstaðir. I was allowed to take part, join in, even though I wasn't really old enough. When I was 12 I went to school, walked 4kms to school, stopped off on the way home for organ (*harmonium*) lessons

with Inga, extremely gentle and a fine organist, pretty well educated, at least for those times. [...] Though I have to admit it didn't really ignite any special interest and it didn't last long.

Later Baldur had a few lessons on the harmonica but for the most part, he was self-taught. He still plays the harmonica today from time to time, occasionally accompanying singing at family gatherings, and has a piano at home, which he plays by ear.

6.5 Illness, Losing a Voice and Vocal Therapy

Singing, by his own admission, was always "more attractive" than playing an instrument and Baldur harboured aspirations for further vocal and musical training as a young man before he fell seriously ill to tuberculosis, spending six months in the Kristnes Infirmary at the age of 16, unable to sing. Baldur is still periodically susceptible to bronchial ailments and the fear of losing his voice still remains an ever-present one:

Say for example that my throat's not very good, maybe a sore throat or a bit off, maybe I should be singing, and want to sing, but can't, then I really feel bad. And then I get this feeling that I can't sing. And that's really bad. [...] I mean if it happened to you that you just could not sing at all, nothing at all, that must be absolutely terrible. I mean you have to admit that you eventually have to slow down. But singing, singing is just something that you pretty much live for!

Baldur's first entry in his diary begins with similar concerns:

Got up at 7:30 and when I am getting up my first thoughts are "How's the voice today" and clearing the vocal chords whilst I rinse my throat and brush up my face.

Echoing his grandparents' sentiments about singing's agency in personal and emotional life and its therapeutic impact on mental well being, Baldur attempts to explain singing's potential as Self-therapy in everyday experience:

If you feel bad, or you're angry, then there's nothing better than to sing. You think differently, and feel a bit better, not least if you're angry and maybe you sing something, something sad, something gentle, you're soothed by it. And just the same, when you're sad, you find an outlet.

Singing is just something that is ... an elixir.... You feel totally different afterwards, you sing yourself away from something, you dissolve something that was stuck. You're sort of ... very free of tension, really tremendously relaxed.

6.6 Thoughts on Singing and Gender

Baldur's very special vocal relationship with his mother appears to give him a particular view of gender and vocal behaviour. Even though his mother sang at every opportunity, sang solo publicly and had women friends who would meet up on occasion to sing together, Baldur stated that he:

can't remember ever hearing anybody talking about founding a woman's choir. It was completely unimaginable that women should exclude themselves and get together to practice singing. Now I'm saying something that I don't have any idea about.

But he does have some ideas about gender and singing, and continues:

I mean that these women, they had other things to do at that time, they weren't supposed to be meeting up together to go to a song practice and so on.

When asked about his mother singing in the church choir Baldur explains:

That was something that *had* to be; at least they thought so. And it was something that was of course pleasing to God and all that. And it was possibly neither pleasing to men or ... now I'm saying too much.

The implication is surely clear though; it was neither pleasing to men or God that women should spend time out of the domestic setting simply to gratify themselves by singing together in a choir. At the same time:

It was taken for granted to form male voice choirs; nobody made any comment about it. And imagine even in a little area like Þingeyjarsýsla, for a while, there were loads of male voice choirs.

Eventually a women's choir was founded:

Lizzý, the first woman's choir here in Þingeyjarsýsla, it maybe came out of that, that there were certain women at the front of certain women's equality issues, who were instrumental in its founding. Women were not supposed to be pushing themselves forward to form special choirs.

The women's choir Baldur speaks of exists today only in name. Despite several revivals, which have been short-lived, it has not rehearsed regularly for several years. Its failure to secure a place in public music spaces raises questions about gender and vocal behaviour, social institutions and structures. As Baldur has already made clear his mother and several other women would meet together to sing informally, but that is not the same "as pushing themselves forward" to form a formal choir just for women. Men it seems had a monopoly on that arena, shared at best with occasional concerts from mixed church choirs or choral groups. Furthermore, Baldur sees other social spaces as being configured by highly gendered vocal behaviour and conditioned by traditional sex-roles:

At þorrablót (*the mid-winter feast of soured, smoked and salted dishes, often combined with heavy drinking and singing – commemorating the pagan month of Þorra*), when the guys get together and put their arms around each other and sing. It's usually under the influence of alcohol, then this is some sort of tradition that emerges too. It was done when people (*men*) came happy home from the "göngur" – (*the autumn sheep roundup in the mountains*) – and then people rejoiced together by taking a song. It needn't necessarily be under the influence of alcohol. And it was a tradition and the men had a drink when they brought the sheep into the "réttir" – (*sorting ring where sheep are claimed by farmers*) – and happy that it had gone well. I think it's just an obvious thing when men come together; it was just the obvious thing to do, to sing a song.

It is not always easy to see whether Baldur perceives men singing as an act of biological determinism or the result of restrictive social processes and sex roles.

He continues:

In the past there were simply many more men at the roundup than women. In recent times there is much more of that, I mean equality, women even go on the roundup in the mountains, so it doesn't make so much difference really. You could just as easily put your arms around the next woman and sing.... If you think back 30 or 40 years, there would hardly have been a woman who would have drunk out of a hip flask at the roundup, even less sing with the men who were a bit merry. Today you could go up to the next woman and offer her your hip flask and she'll probably take a sup.

I suggest that whatever changes may have occurred in this particular vocal arena, Baldur is generous in his assessment. Though I have witnessed what he describes, it is still not very common.

6.7 Male Voice Choirs and Hreimur

Baldur began singing in a male-voice choir when he was 17 years old, just as he was still recovering from tuberculosis. The choir in question was Þrymur at Húsavík, where Baldur was living. Membership of male-voice choirs was limited then to small geographical areas; a town; one or two neighbouring valleys; a hamlet and surrounding farms; and so on. Baldur sung in the choir for 2 or 3 years under the direction of a Czech director. The contribution of foreign nationals to the musical lives of even small communities in Iceland has already been noted in chapter two. The women's choir mentioned above for example, was named after a Scottish immigrant known here simply as Lizzy. Her considerable contribution to local musical life, and its implications for gender issues and vocal behaviour, will be examined in more detail later. Whilst Lizzy was an amateur musician, highly trained classical musicians from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Germany, the Baltic states, Norway, Canada, U.S.A. and the U.K have all lived and worked in the county throughout the twentieth century and to the present day. Some stayed just a couple of years; others, like my partner and I, are still here after a couple of decades. Their contribution to local musical life is widely acknowledged and it illustrates once again the myth of Icelandic isolation. How many towns in the U.K. with a population of less than 4000 people could boast of such cosmopolitan musical influences? None of these people came to Iceland empty-handed of course and they have played, in different ways, very significant roles in the development of both public and private musical lives that are worthy of further investigation.

It was a foreign national who was the first conductor of Hreimur, the choir of which Baldur was a founding member in 1974. Baldur had moved from Húsavík and bought a small neighbouring farm just a couple of kilometres up the valley from his parent's Rangá. The farm had a relatively small sheep quota and Baldur was frequently away from home driving for the company that was owned by his spouse's family. His children grew up there, but there are noticeable

differences in their vocal enculturation. They were increasingly left to more formal schooling and denied the same level of everyday domestic vocality that Baldur had himself enjoyed. He sung of course in the same church choir as his parents and formed a male-voice double quartet with men on neighbouring farms. But in 1974 at the age of 27, Baldur became one of the founding members of Hreimur the male voice choir:

I am very proud of our male-voice choir, hugely proud, to have been one of its founding members and then one of its leading supporters and now as chairman.

Originally, Hreimur's members were drawn from three neighbouring valleys. With continued urban migration, decreasing rural populations, improvements in roads and transport, and in the face of increasing competition from other recreational diversions – especially television – many male-voice choirs, even Þrýmur in Húsavík, struggled and folded. Hreimur on the other hand, expanded, and today it is the only male-voice choir in this predominantly rural county of just less than 4000 people, which includes several small hamlets and the small fishing town of Húsavík. Choristers in Hreimur presently number around sixty. They are, by occupation, small-holding sheep and dairy farmers, lorry drivers, a wide range of skilled manual craftsmen – including electricians, carpenters, car mechanics, and welders – white-collar workers at both clerical and managerial levels, a sales director of a leading national fish processing company, and county director of education, branch insurance manager, a specialist consultant at the local health centre a barber, several students at technical college, an undergraduate student in education, and several men who are retired from full-time employment. Whilst this might give the impression that the male-voice choir cuts across social classes, this sparsely populated community in northeast Iceland still enjoys a level of egalitarianism rare in western capitalist societies. Stereotypical social class divisions of working-class, middle class or upper class are for the most part un-illuminating. This is not to say that there is no significant wage-differential, but that the size and interdependent nature of this community, unlike Iceland's major conurbation, mitigates against the building of social groups around this construct. Similarly, a wide-range of ages, presently from 18 to 80, is represented in the choir. Improvements in transport meant that membership of

male-voice choirs was not as limited by geographical boundaries as it had been previously. Hreimur for example presently has members who live more than 100 kilometres apart. Some of them drive twice a week to rehearsals and, given that the choir normally rehearses between October and April, weather conditions are frequently poor. The seasonal nature of this and other social activities reflects the influence nature still has on the way of life here. In the summer months and long summer days all hands in rural communities were traditionally needed on the farm, making Baldur's comment about his matriarchal family's reputation for neglecting hay-making in favour of music-making all the more pertinent. Although mechanisation has changed this considerably, the choir still rarely rehearses in the summer. In the more distant past the traditional *kvöldvaka* with the performance of Icelandic *kvæðaskapur* mentioned in chapter two, like the male voice choir, was usually a diversion for the long winter evenings. Furthermore, the social need to get out and meet other people seems far greater here in the dark winter months, especially for those men still working on smallholdings, often with little wider social contact outside immediate family-units, which are much smaller than they typically were fifty years ago.

Baldur sees singing in the male-voice choir as being both vocally and socially motivated and differentiates aesthetically and vocally between homovocal behaviour and singing in a mixed choir:

I wouldn't say that it was necessarily better, it's different. It's a totally different sound.

You sing differently in a male-voice choir especially singing tenor – it's more demanding. It's really enjoyable singing in a mixed choir, especially to feel that you are filling up a particular harmony. But while I'm in decent form it gives me a special kick to make an effort to sing a really handsome song (*in the male voice choir*), show what you're made of ... singing at full power or the finest falsetto, giving everything you've got.

Baldur also gives the impression that male-voice choirs offer something different socially too!

Well my vision of male-voice choirs and my being in male voice choirs generally, is the social thing; it's quite unique I think. I've thought that

all through the years: It's a remarkably unified and sympathetic group, all the same whatever we take on, it's always a really, really closely-knit and cohesive group ... in recent years it's been even more unified and more united in standing together in whatever it is we're doing.

The ideal of men uniting in song is an important one in other ways to Baldur: under pressure from central government, small local urban councils, not traditionally run on party political lines but on a kind of *realpolitik*, are finding it difficult to survive financially. Some of their residents feel coerced towards larger local government units where they fear disenfranchisement, the "economising" of public services, the closure of small schools, increasing bureaucracy and less personal access and accountability. Some tensions clearly exist between councils, and in particular between rural district councils and the urban council of Húsavík. Significantly though, the choir crosses those barriers and Baldur frequently reminds both choristers and concert guests of singing's uniting power and of Hreimur's almost unique position as the most visible and audible symbol of county-wide unity and identity.

The choir, like the county itself is made up of smaller units, in this case voices. And there are tensions there too between in- and out-groups. Interestingly though these intra-choral tensions are played out, in what appear to be well-practiced strategies:

... some sort of ragging between the men, nothing serious. It's always been like that, throwing things at each other a bit ... like saying that the first tenor thinks that they are the only voice in the choir, or that the worst guys get put in the middle voices. I mean if you've got poor middle voices, it's a bloody awful choir.

Baldur sees this inter-voice rivalry as light-hearted banter and quotes a text by a local poet that describes a choir rehearsal in these humorous terms. Similarly, several of the choristers are highly skilled in composing Icelandic rhymes or *vísur*. This strict alliterative form is frequently employed in coffee breaks or on choir trips, both as a kind of competition and as a means of light-hearted censure. It is clear that the strategies are designed to ensure that no individual choristers or groups develop too high an opinion of themselves!

Returning to gender issues as they relate specifically to the male-voice choir, Baldur admits:

Sometimes you're aware of male chauvinism within the male voice choir, but not as a rule. And if we were asked to sing with a mixed choir, or a women's choir, which we've done, then our men would definitely not be the first to say no.

But Baldur problematizes a simplistic view of the kind of masculinity represented by singing in this homo-social setting, not least in his descriptions of repertoire and the sensations associated with singing it:

Take *Kvöldbliðan lognværa* (*Evening's gentle zephyrs*), we have to sing it in a richly loving way, gentle and beautiful. Yeah, I think that's it, that softer side. Women couldn't sing it the way we sing it. To be in control of such a beautiful song, when you feel that every note sounds pure and clean, you feel really good. It can be sung so magically, beautifully by a male-voice choir. It's among the most beautiful things you hear. (see CD 12) [...] And when you're singing together and some bell starts ringing, even if you're knackered after a two hour concert and maybe end with an encore *Góða nótt* (Brahms Lullaby) and you find that every tone comes out clear and pure, then it's a wonderful end to a wonderful time. It's, you couldn't have anything better.

Not that Baldur objects to singing more mythopoetic versions of masculinity:

I might choose something big and grand, something elevated (upright/noble), show what the choir is made of, something like *Brennið þið vitar* (*Light the watchtowers*). (see CD 19), for another example of a song that Baldur calls "noble" by the same composer)

Yet whilst Baldur suggests that this setting represents and constructs something more complex than the stereotypical, one-dimensional masculinity often associated with homo-social arenas, the dominance of male-voice choirs in Icelandic musical life is justified by aesthetic judgements:

I never think that a women's choir is as beautiful, it can never be as much of an instrument. There's much less width to the sound. You never get that deep sound that you get in a men's choir and on the other hand, you can get that high bright sound in the male voice choir. I've never heard anything, I mean a women's choir that I think is comparable to a good men's choir. A men's choir, a good one, can show unbelievable brilliance ... beautiful powerful singing, each voice clearly defined, you

just get goosebumps. I've never heard a mixed choir for example that has really bewitched me, not that I'm not a great supporter of mixed choirs.

Baldur feels that this is a general public perception too, reflected in the popularity of male-voice choirs, not least among women audiences. He rejects though the notion that this is related to sexual-display: "Totally not; I can't see anything like that. It's completely out of date, that idea belongs to history." Moreover, when asked about whether Baldur saw singing as significant in his own courtship, he rejects this too. Having asked Baldur's partner of over thirty-five years about their courtship as teenagers, I am not convinced that this is necessarily true. Even if Baldur was unconscious of it, his partner seems to suggest that she was in fact attracted to his vocalness.

Public display, sexual or not, has been and continues to be a significant part of Baldur's vocal life both with the choir and in other vocal arenas:

Of course we spend a lot of time practising and even though we enjoy singing and get a lot out of this, we still get a lot of pleasure from sharing that with other people, showing other people what've been doing and let other people feel what we can do, I think it's all part of this. It's essential to share with many more people. [...] I really enjoy it, a little nervous, always excited and great fun.

As a soloist, Baldur again differentiates significantly between singing solo with the choir or just with an accompanist. The choir offers a level of support far beyond that provided just by an accompanist on a piano, an impression that may be linked to the authenticity of the match – the quality of reciprocity between his voice and the voices of other men:

I enjoy it more with the choir, it just forms more sound which can be with your voice. Especially if it goes well; to have such a good sound behind you, beautiful. You get somehow, you feel good if you get that beautiful sound behind.... You get a certain power when the choir comes in, you get a specific strength ... something that supports and encourages you. It's the sound, it pushes under you, and almost automatically, your voice pretty much projects itself. You have nobody to support you except yourself when you are singing solo (*without a choir*). I've sung less just by myself, well I don't know if it's ten's of funerals or a thousand, but I enjoy myself much more singing with a choir.
(see CD 8)

6.8 Singing in the Church Choir

Since moving back to Húsavík, Baldur sings in the church choir there. He sees singing in the church choir as an act of community service: “Underneath I really feel obliged to go, even if I might be feeling a bit lazy.”

Funeral services are large social functions in Iceland, and just as singing plays an important part in other family and social gatherings, so it does here, even if the structures are more formal. Music – usually four or five, four-part hymns, a solo song or two and specifically chosen voluntaries, which might frequently blur barriers between the secular and sacred – plays a large part as an agent in grieving, catharsis and remembering. Baldur expresses concern about the increasing problems of staffing four-part choirs in church:

I’d be ashamed not to sing with them, and people here who can sing and aren’t taking part in anything, they could support the choir, it’s the same people who want and need singing in church for themselves.

Baldur is presumably talking here about funerals, but in general, he thinks, “services in church without singing are not even half a service.”

Just a couple of years ago Baldur persuaded his wife Sigrún to join him in the church choir too. Baldur appears as proud of this new vocal partnership as any other he has shared in:

I could never get Sigrún to sing. I mean she sings, often, singing or humming along when she’s washing up or something. But she was convinced that she couldn’t keep the pitch until very recently. She can, definitely. And I think if you can sing you should, it’s an elixir.

Sigrún, who has been listening to this part of our conversation, laughs, saying that this was the only way she was ever going to get to spend anytime with him!

6.9 Father and Grandfather

Despite the long hours that Baldur has worked all his life and the often-unsocial hours worked when his own children were small, he insists that he sang with them all. None of them sing in choirs though and they are certainly nothing like as vocally active as he, though I have seen them singing at family gatherings and

Baldur claims they all have good singing voices. Baldur recognises that his own absences from home meant that he did not sing as often for his children as he would have wished. Their education was dramatically different from Baldur's own, and singing was a subject (object?) on their school curriculum. Baldur suggests that whilst his sons have often talked about joining the male-voice choir, their work commitments have made that difficult. Whether or not this vocal behaviour, which Baldur sees as the single most important identifying family feature, skipped a generation remains to be seen. Certainly, I have witnessed Baldur singing and playing with his grandchildren, and the diary that he kept is full of references to everyday vocal activity with them:

Dropped in to visit my daughter and her one-year old son, Gunnar. He thinks it's great fun when Grandad takes him in his arms and swings him back and forth in time to some song or other.

On the way home from the male voice choir practice I just called in on my son to meet my namesake, my grandson. It's his fifteenth birthday and he told me he was going to take part in a production of the musical *Gauragangur (Rumpus)*, he sings in two or three songs. So I tried to encourage him because he's a bit apprehensive about it.

Invited my daughter to supper, her husband is at sea. Little Gunnar has to have things to do, so after supper I provided for him, sat at the piano with him and played and sung, so he moved around in time and joined in - *Nú blikar við sólarlag (Now the sun sets – Ef væri ég söngvari (If I was a singer!) – Komdu og skoðaðu (Come and have a look in my box).*

Got home at 17:30 and Little Gunnar was there so Grandad had to sing with him for a while.

When I came home from work today, I popped in to see my daughter and little Gunnar and we sang a song together as usual.

Baldur says that his grandchildren are all "fine singers, good pitch, but they don't sing in the school choir, there is a lot more that they would rather do." Moreover, as schools rather than extended families have become more responsible for the enculturation of vocal behaviour, it seems that there have been fundamental changes to it. Many schools in Iceland appear to be struggling with the kind of gender issues recognised wider in music education (see Adler, 2003). Baldur

recalls a recent conversation with a female singer and music teacher now living in Reykjavík:

She said that it's so difficult to get boys to sing with the girls. I said that I had been to a concert the other day with a brilliant children's choir, lovely tone, and varied programme, full of boys at Hafnalækjarskóli.

The researcher and author directs that choir, but more importantly perhaps it is full of pupils whose fathers and grandfathers, even older brothers, sing in Hreimur. It is also the school that serves the same area in which Hreimur was originally founded and where Hreimur rehearses. Traditions and role-models still appear to be significant in boys' attitudes towards singing; in spite of the huge increase in recreational activities on offer in the community, greater access to the popular media, and exposure to the kind of gendered musical behaviour and musical masculine protest typical of a great deal of that media, boys here still sing. It seems that they are not in quite so much of a hurry to de-feminise themselves by refusing to sing, or that they feel that singing, even as boy sopranos, does not threaten their gender identity: Baldur had raised this issue about boys singing and I pressed him as to whether he had ever felt singing a threat to his masculinity:

No, no. I think, I think I'm more of, I mean, I'm more of a man ... because I sing. It works completely the opposite for me, definitely not. Never, ridiculous.

I'm just more "manly" because of it, not that I am a soft man. Even when I'm singing something like Kvöldblíðan, that's exactly what I mean: we are as much, if not more manly, because we can sing, gentle and beautiful and clean and pure and beautiful. You're not less of a man for that, you're more. Seriously!
(see CD 12)

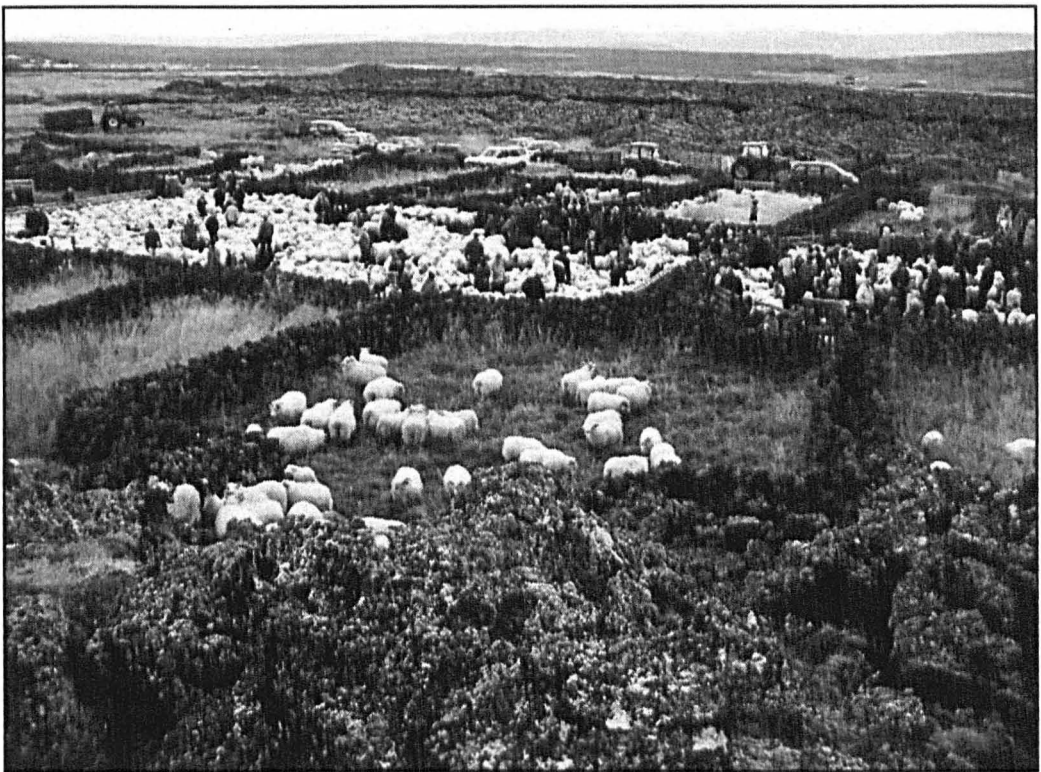
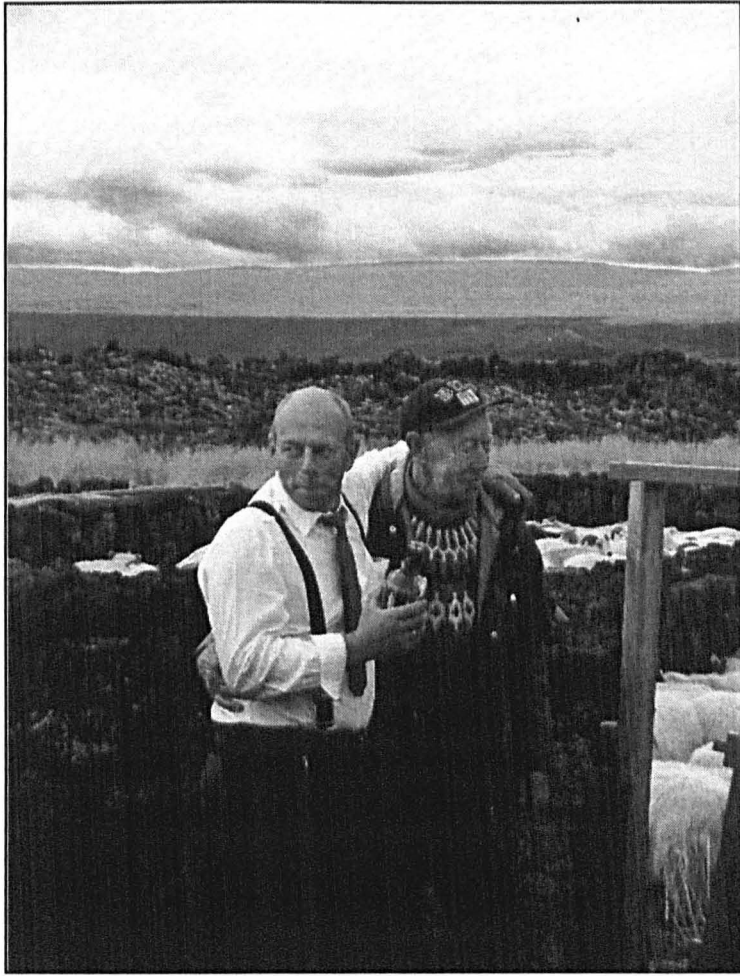
The contradictions in Baldur's vocally constructed gender identity are obvious and this is as it should be. Perhaps similar contradictions are evident between his own childhood experience of singing with parents, grandparents, and his experience of singing with his own grandchildren on the one hand, and his experience of singing with his own children, on the other. However cohesive we might like our theories to be, we need to remember Tierney's assertion that:

The challenge is to ensure that individuals are not the object of our disclosures, but rather the agents of complex, partial, and contradictory identities that help transform the worlds they and we inhabit.
(Tierney, 2000: 545)

As I turn to developing theory from Baldur's vocal story and from the vocal stories of other men in north east Iceland, I hope to remain faithful to the complexities of their vocal behaviour and to their construction of Self in its many and even contradictory facets.



Fig. 6.1
“Even if the hay was bone dry, the family at Halldórstaðir would still forget themselves in singing and playing”.



Figs. 6.2 & 6.3

“It was done when people came happy home from the *göngur* – the autumn sheep round up in the mountains ... the guys get together and put their arms around each other and sing.”



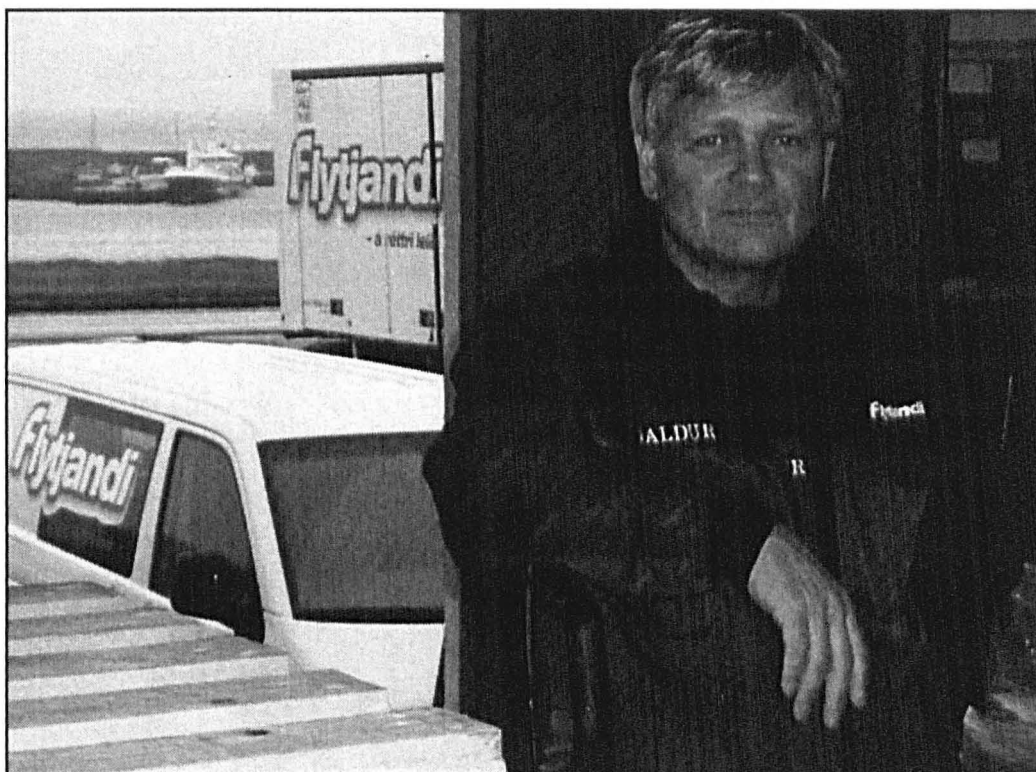
Figs. 6.4 & 6.5
Singing in the male-voice choir is traditionally a winter diversion.



Fig. 6.6
Banter at rehearsal



Fig. 6.7
Baldur sees singing in the church choir as an act of community service.



Figs. 6.8 & 6.9
Baldur



Fig. 6.10
From Sandur to Húsavík: "People don't sing as much in urban areas."

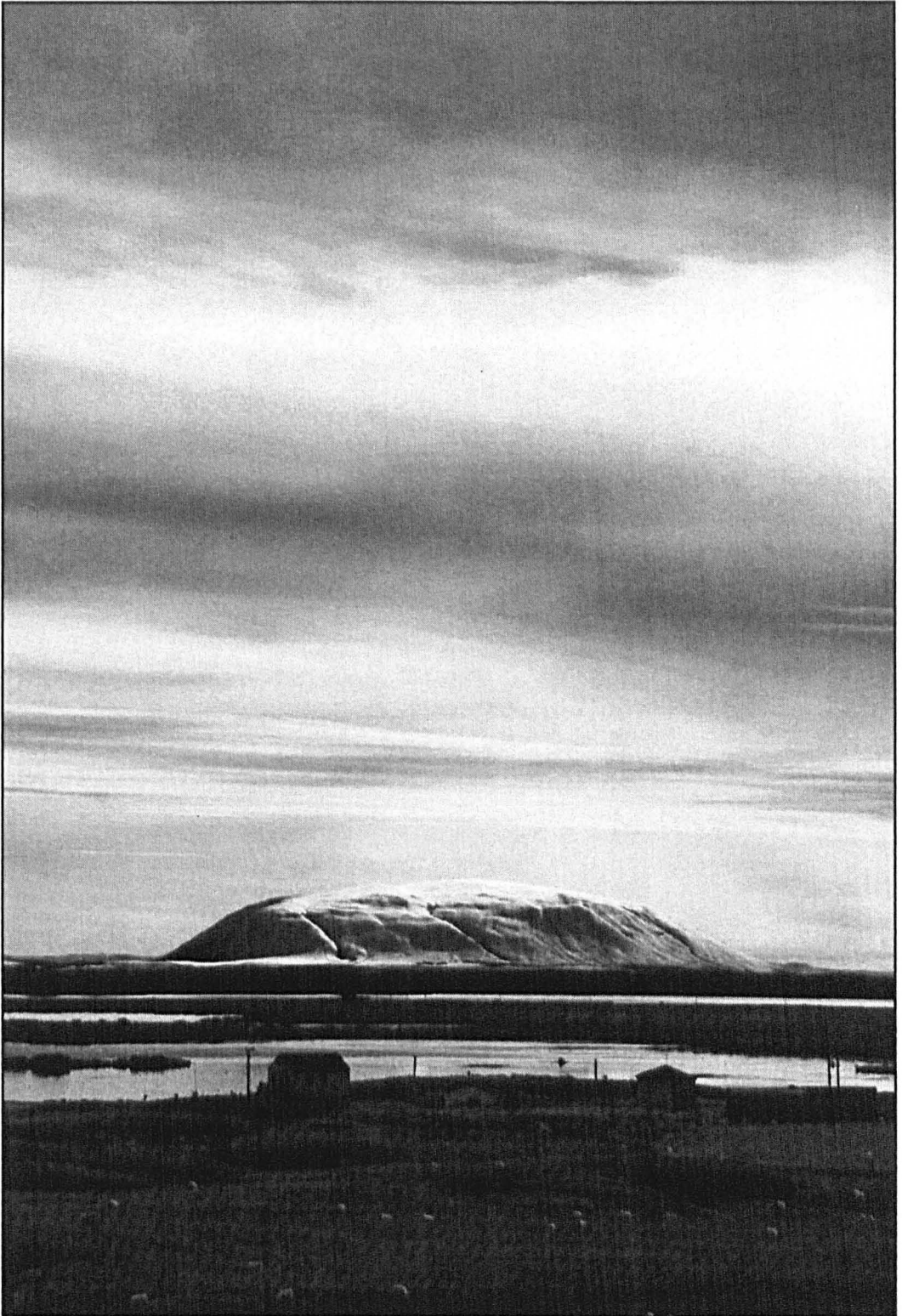


Fig. 6.11
An Icelandic small-holding

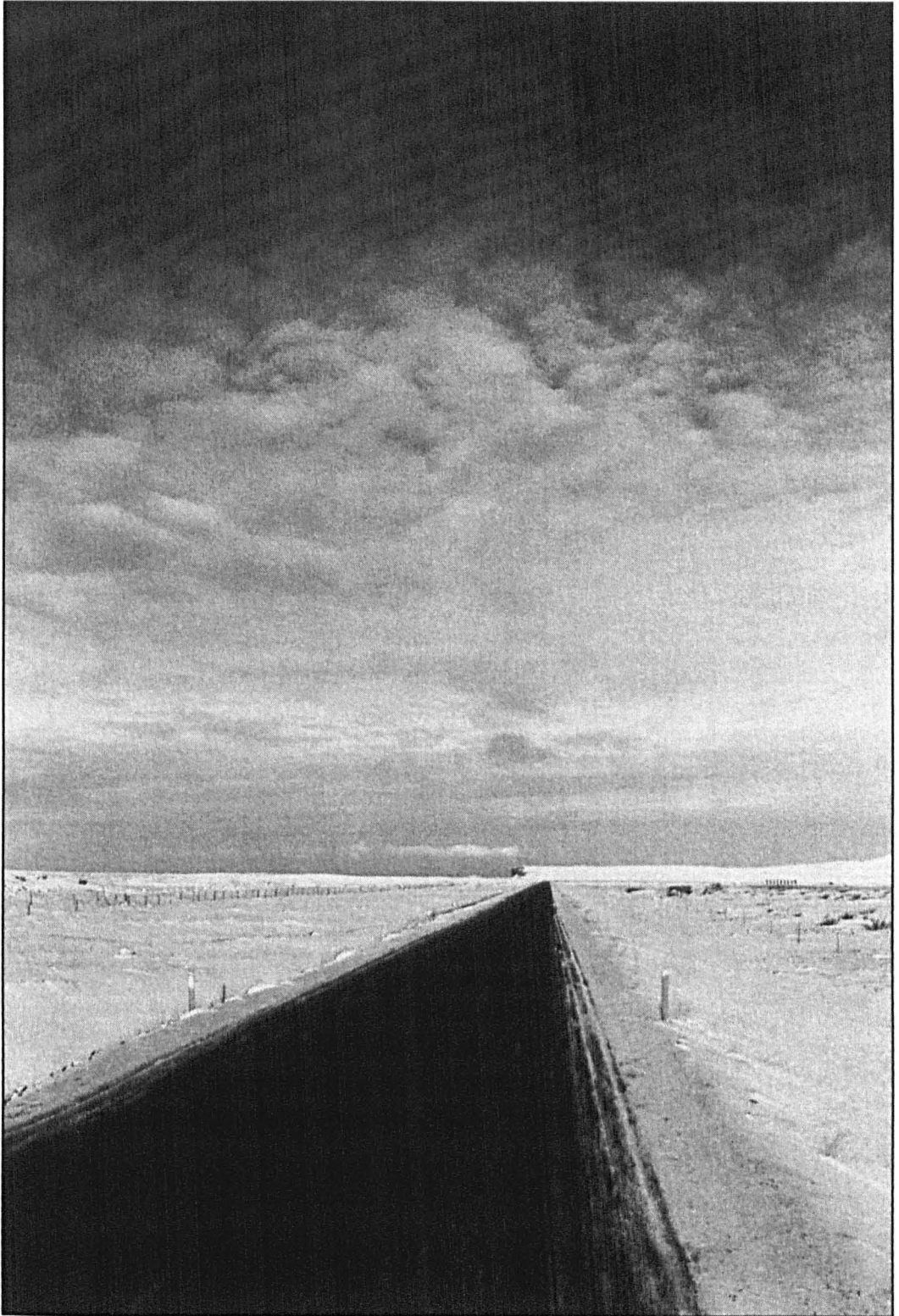


Fig.6.12
The road from Húsavík to Reykjavík - "Grandma said that if you sang you wouldn't be travel sick, so we sang and sang."
"My wife and I sung a few popular Icelandic songs together in the car, just to shorten the journey home."

7 RESOLVING DICHOTOMIES AND EMERGING THEMES

7.1 Reality and Perception

According to Connell, life histories like Baldur's, viewed as the making of social life through time, can be seen as a productive method in the study of social change (Connell, 1995: 90). From such a perspective, we might wish to examine in more detail the changes in family structures, domestic arrangements, employment, education, mobility, sex roles, and community practices, to which Baldur makes allusions in his life-history. Connell seems to be suggesting that life histories reflect the reality of social change. At more macro-levels and in discussing the role of male-voice choirs in the construction of a new Icelandic identity exemplified by hegemonic masculinity, Inga Dóra Björnsdóttir illustrates how viewing this vocal phenomena as a mere representation of that identity is to fail to recognise its agency in the processes of social change (Björnsdóttir, 2001). Even the inevitably sketchy context provided in chapter two has, I hope, left the reader in no doubt as to the extent and rate of recent social, political, and economic change here. In terms of the gender and identity issues that Björnsdóttir writes about, there have been many changes since the early years of the twentieth century and the founding of the Icelandic male-voice choir movement. This is also the case for the fifty years that have past since Baldur's early childhood: obvious examples include the fact that it is a quarter of a century since Iceland elected a woman president, and that in 2002 men and women were awarded equal maternity/paternity rights – provoking the question as to what impact more equally shared responsibilities for infant care might have on men's vocality? This was not a benefit that Baldur was able to enjoy with his own children and it seems fair to suggest that they did not have the same kind of vocal opportunities that Baldur had himself in his early years with both parents at home on the farmstead. Baldur's vocal life story notes social changes from the homogeneous tightly knit rural family units that Baldur experienced as a child, where men enjoyed high

levels of autonomy at their work in and around the home, and where formal schooling did not begin until children were at least 10 and often later. Baldur's fatherhood is marked by the increasing importance of formal schooling, the moving of employment away from the home, and the dispersal of family groups.

It is clear that these changes have been vocally represented in all sorts of singing practices, some of which Baldur describes above, and that it might be possible to develop theories like Björnsdóttir's, which illustrate singing's agency in some of those changes. However, it should be noted that even Björnsdóttir's theory about the origins of male-voice choirs is by no means a consequential one implying precedence. Along with male-voice choirs, Icelandic literature, political discourse, the Icelandic Youth Movement and resurging interest in Icelandic history, were all agents in the evocation, construction and maintenance of a new national consciousness and identity. Baldur and other men's vocal behaviour is surely not a congenital product of this setting anymore than the settings and social structures that Baldur describes can be said to be directly attributable to vocal behaviour. To agree to such a premise would return us to the reified frameworks and the natural science ontology I have argued against.

This is an important point because it reminds us again of the psychology paradigm which I attempted to expound in chapter two: I am not primarily concerned here with efforts at mapping Baldur's or other men's vocal experience on to an Euclidean framework of time and space and of establishing consequential links between men's vocal practice and the rest of social life. Illustrating agency is not the same as establishing causality. Whilst Björnsdóttir, as a feminist historian, supports her argument with documented evidence about Iceland's official musical life, we are primarily concerned here with singing's agency in private musical lives and with individuals' perceptions of them. Whatever the "real", historical, geographical or other physical situatedness of their vocal experience, in phenomenological psychology terms, it is what individuals reconstruct about their vocal lives, through conversations or other symbolic work that concerns us. This is consistent with Watson's argument that the direct purpose of life history is "as a commentary of the individual's very personal view of his own experience as he understands it" (Watson, 1976, cited in Tierney 2000: 539). Life histories are not therefore as easily seen as the making of social life through time, or as a productive method in the study of social change, as Connell suggests (Connell,

1995: 90). More accurately, but no less importantly, they should be viewed as the *perception* of social life and change and as the construction of psychological life from the perspective of a particular conversation or other symbolic act.

Baldur provides us then at a particular moment in time with a particular set of Husserl's partial, perspectival adumbrations of real things (Giorgi, 1995: 29) – of singing and of singing's role in personal and social life. Their meaning's fundamental basis is the determinate relationship between Baldur's act of consciousness – Baldur's remembering and retelling – and its object – singing and social life (Giorgi, 1995: 36). Having hopefully clarified this dichotomy between *real* things and *perceptions* of them, as they relate to Baldur's life history, I wish to look at one more apparent dichotomy, which may have relevance for our understanding of Baldur's perception of singing: the *solo* performer and the *everyday* singer.

7.2 The Solo Performer, the Everyday Singer and Singing as Self

7.2.1 Baldur and Solo Performer Identity

Reading over Baldur's interview for the first few times, I was immediately concerned that I had chosen a very special case, a case so special as to make claims of "the everyday" appear totally unfounded and any endeavour at developing more general theories impossible. Whilst Baldur makes no claims as a solo performer, he has and does sing solo fairly regularly. His vocal history is a particularly rich one; his very considerable vocal experience clearly verges on that of the solo vocal performer, which is certainly not the *group* of people I had originally set out to study. Significant, though by no means exhaustive work already exists on solo performer identity (Davidson, 2002b; Davidson and Coimbra, 2001; Burland and Davidson, 2002.) and it seems appropriate to consider to what, if any extent, these theories might contain Baldur's perception of his vocal self before I look at possibilities for developing theories of my own.

In Davidson's recent discussion of the solo performer's identity, several key themes emerge (Davidson, 2002b): environmental factors include the opportunities to experience "peak emotions" (see Sloboda, 1991, 1998); regular but informal exposure to performance and music (see Lehmann, 1997); and the role of key others (see Davidson, Howe, and Sloboda, 1997). All of these factors

are given prominence in Baldur's account of his vocal life story. Using autobiographical details and those of another instrumentalist, Steve, Davidson differentiates between her and Steve's musical identity not primarily in terms of musical skills, but in terms of performance ones. As Davidson notes, the correlation between the two has often been taken as given, without any rigorous examination of this assumption (Davidson, 2002b: 99). She suggests that it might be the specific and early learning of performance skills in unthreatening situations and the association of performance with positive experiences that are likely to be the motivation for future musical performance. Looking at personality research questions of extroversion and introversion, the dichotomy between self-defined private and self-defined public personalities, and at the role of the projected self, Davidson develops a Jungian/Goffman model of the persona and applies it to musical performance. She argues for the validity of a performance "mask" theory in understanding the solo performer's identity and for the importance of learning "how" to present a "projection" from early years as being a central factor in the development of the solo performer's personality (ibid.: 102).

In keeping with Davidson's thesis, Baldur appears to have learnt something like this kind of "projection" from his earliest childhood:

When we went to visit Grandad and Grandma at Hamrar, we always began by singing and never went home without singing, and in harmony! As soon as we could stand up, Grandad directed – he was very strict about that – and it was absolutely obligatory. We couldn't leave Hamrar unless we had sung one or two songs. He taught us particular songs that were compulsory to learn. Often we were just set up on a chair and allowed to sing loudly.

This is not of course a "performance" in quite the same sense that Davidson means, but it is learnt in the kind of unthreatening environment that Davidson talks about, involves key others and appears to have facilitated the experience of positive emotions. Baldur seems to have subsequently developed the self-concepts which "permit him to enjoy public situations and to thrive in them" (Davidson, 2002b: 103), at least in vocally mediated public situations. In another setting Baldur might perhaps have become a solo performer. Through the impact of this early "performance" exposure and in watching his mother's vocal "performances" Baldur seems to have learnt how to use this vocally projected Self so effectively

that the ease with which he appears to move between formal vocal performance, informal vocal performance and everyday vocalicity, suggest a remarkably cohesive and unified Self, with singing firmly at its core. It is clear from Baldur's story that he would not concur with the popular British tenor Russell Watson's claim that:

I keep myself and my voice in separate places. Some mornings I can wake up and feel terrible, but the voice always, "the voice" never "my voice", can feel great. (Watson: 2001)

Applying Davidson's theory of the mask to Watson's perception of the voice and Self, I am reminded of another mask, the doubled-faced Janus mask named after the Greek god of doorways and gates: for two faces, read two voices and two identities. Another concept that might prove helpful in comprehending Watson's almost clinical separation of "The voice" from "MySelf" is that of the "alter ego": For Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Clark Kent and Superman (see Weber, 2000: 184), read Me and The Voice. This kind of division of Self is far more radical than Davidson's "easily shift(able)" "on-stage", "focused", "larger" than normal self-presentation and other self states. Furthermore Watson's discrete compartmentalisation is clearly in diametric opposition to the kind of integration of Self and voice which first readings of Baldur's story seemed to suggest are symptomatic of his perception of vocal identity. In reflecting upon these three views – Baldur's, Davidson's and Watson's – we find ourselves considering a continuum of psychological concepts of voice and Self, Watson separates a special "performance" voice from Self, Baldur integrates voice in Self and Davidson lies somewhere between the two.

What the three examples seem to suggest, is that the ability to use a "projection" of Self in terms of Davidson's theory, which is to say, the ability to be a performer, appears unrelated to the extent to which the medium of that "projection" – in this case singing – is integrated with, or is a core concept of Self. The location of voice in Self, or for Watson, outside of Self, is not a quantitative indication of vocal behaviour – of whether a person sings or not. It might though, be a qualitative indication of the *kind* of vocal behaviour that an individual engages in: it would seem likely that singing in everyday practices, as opposed to participation in "special" vocal practices, especially, as in Baldur's case, where they permeate the very fabric of social and personal life, would indicate that the

voice and singing enjoy a central location in Self. In contrast, Watson's relationship with "the voice" is not an everyday relationship but a special affair; it indicates a level of objectification that amounts almost to a denial of its embodiment.

7.2.2 Baldur and Singing as Self

Whatever insights theories of the solo performer's identity might afford us into Baldur's perception of his vocalicity, those theories clearly do not fully contain or describe his vocal identity. His everyday vocal behaviour and identity on the one hand and his solo performer identity on the other hand, are not easily differentiated. Whilst this appears to have been true too of Davidson's early experience, her formal training and the more separatist nature of the professional functional singer in the UK, appear to have drawn a clearer demarcation between the everyday and the special. Major questions remain about Baldur's vocal identity, about his voice's prominence in the construction of Self and in everyday life, about the mechanisms and processes involved, and about whether Baldur's relationship with his voice and singing is typical of other men's perception too? Much theoretical work remains. Concerns that other men's vocalicity might not be comparable to Baldur's, even if they did sing in the male-voice choir with him, were overtaken by the recognition that any theory of these men's vocal behaviour would have to include him too. In looking at other men's singing lives it would be essential to examine whether they met the criteria incorporated into the kind of intension that Baldur appears to have defined – that singing was a central construct, and everyday technology, of Self. Baldur is probably as a good a case as any to start from.

The word *personality* owes much to the ancient Greek dramatic concept of an individual's core traits being embodied in vocal sound. In mainstream twentieth century psychology however, and more particularly in the discipline of music psychology, the link between voice and Self has been neglected. This seems surprising considering the emphasis that has recently been placed on the performative nature of Self and identity (Butler, 1999: 171-80). "Voice" frequently appears in the general psychology literature as simply a vehicle for people to present themselves. Its common usage as a metaphor for all kinds of mechanisms employed in projecting social selves is illustrated by idiomatic

expressions such as *finding a voice*. In music, it seems that the voice and singing might be salient in the actual construction, maintenance, and performance of Self at various stages of personal, musical, and psychological development. This potential is highlighted by Trevarthan's examination of evidence implicating vocal social awareness in terms of developing infant identity (2002), and a study by Davidson and Coimbra (2001) investigating questions of voice and identity amongst students of classical singing. Davidson and Coimbra's students were engaged in learning how to present a "persona" connected with a public, larger than life Self in their vocalising, and at the same time, present intimate, inner-Self thoughts and feelings through their singing. Furthermore, Baldur's construction of his vocal life history, retold in chapter five, richly illustrates singing's salience in creating Self. His *personality* appears to be embodied through vocal sounds or at least in the dramas he constructs about them. In particular, it is clear that for Baldur, singing has been and continues to be a technology of both social and physical Selves.

7.2.3 Vocal Connections and the Social Self

Undoubtedly, one of the most prominent categories emerging from analysis of Baldur's story is the perception of singing as a special mechanism for connecting with others. Whilst in the realm of the solo vocal or even choral performer this is a means of projecting Self to an audience with whom there may be no other particular relationship outside of the public vocal arena, singing is seen here as fundamental to special personal relationships. In relationships with grandparents, parents, brothers and grandchildren in particular and with the wider family clan, vocal communication technology is clearly central to family script and identity. In all kinds of relationships – intimate, familial ones or performer audience ones – and even though the strength and quality of connection may differ radically, Baldur testifies to singing's agency and affective powers, its ability to fasten people together and then to act reciprocally on those relationships.

These perceptions all point to singing's significance in the construction of the social Self. Just as individuals are often seen as having a multitude of different social Selves, so too can Baldur be seen as having a wide range of different Vocal Social Selves – depending on the connection that is to be made or maintained. Repertoire, bodily posture, clothing, vocal projection are all employed in support

of an appropriate Singing Self and in the maintenance of various vocal relationships.

7.2.4 Vocal Places and the Physical Self

Baldur also articulates clearly how important the voice is to the material or physical Self. Firstly, this is concerned with the obvious fact of the voice as body: the voice unlike other musical instruments is not an extension of the body, upon which the body then operates. Whilst psychologically, as Watson suggests, it might be located in a place elsewhere, it remains physiologically very much the voice *in* the body as irrefutably as the mind is *in* the body. For Baldur this is obvious: the voice is central to both psychological and physical dimensions of self and thus vocal health appears synonymous with general health. Baldur's fear of losing his voice is clearly a fear of losing himself. That this is true illustrates how vocal behaviour can be seen as a signifier of Self and has the potential for the embodiment of all kinds of Self-constructs. Secondly, the relationship between singing and physical Self can be seen as being concerned with the physical spaces where voices sound and where connections are made. Baldur makes no bones about the gendered nature of these vocal spaces, about men's and women's voices in private and public, work and recreational places. Significant amongst those vocal places are churches, and religion is obviously an important part of Baldur's life: even there, connections with people and with Baldur's God, are vocal ones. Similarly, the importance Baldur places on the role of nationalistic songs and of the male-voice choir's role in the local community reinforce the significance of vocal agency in the construction of identity and real physical places.

7.2.5 Vocal Behaviour and the Gendered Self

Apart from emergent themes that appear to point to general theories of Self and identity, the question of gender identity stands out from Baldur's story. In a sense this is actually very surprising: even allowing for the fact that Baldur is a man and that he sings in a men's choir, the weight of discourse about gender identity generally appears to suggest that the relevance of those facts to the practice of social behaviour, or to the construction of social structures, is rarely foremost in men's consciousness. The very special vocal connections that Baldur describes as having with his mother are clearly central to the prominence that he gives to

gender issues and singing. Whilst he clearly sees his mother and other women as having been denied the opportunities for vocal expression and socialization that were afforded men, he also justifies men's dominance of public vocal arenas in aesthetic, rather than just social terms. As I stated at the end of the last chapter, this is as it should be, for in in-depth life histories and identity studies, individuals surely produce rich, multi-faceted, even discrepant Selves.

Looking at gender theory, and examining Baldur's life-story and other men's perception of their vocal behaviour, it became clear that it was possible, and even desirable, to talk specifically about vocally constructed gender identities or masculinities. The very term masculinities, title of a book by Connell (1995), points clearly to the "complex, partial and contradictory" gender identity that Baldur's singing and his perception of singing constructs. Interviews with several other men and analysis of them, confirmed that these were indeed prominent themes in men's vocal life-stories. Early on then, I found myself attracted to general discourse and theories of Self and Identity. It soon became clear that some of them provided useful and hitherto largely unexplored frameworks for understanding the meaning of men's vocal behaviour. Applying and developing general theories of Self and Identity to a theory of Singing and Self required that other life-stories were tested against them. This procedure has been discussed in an earlier chapter on method, and, without underestimating the importance of questions of precedence in the developing of theory from data, what follows in the next chapters is an after the event summary of what emerged from that process. No attempt was made to fit data to pre-conceived codes or to theories at these preliminary stages of analysis. However, as the themes above were being developed and tested from the data, the author investigated theories of identity and Self found in general psychology literature. Whilst the question of gender and singing clearly called for its interpretation in the light of theories of masculinities, the two other categories of social and physical Selves point to general theories of Self and Identity. These two emerging themes appeared to resonate for example, with phenomenologist William James's theoretical model of Self (1890, 1892, 1902), and on closer examination, more particularly, with its subsequent revision by Robert Weber (Weber, 2000). It is from these theories of Self that I wish to develop a framework for a theory of the vocal construction of Self. No attempt was made to impose the models *a priori* onto either the process of data collection

or its initial analysis. As other case studies and men's vocal-diaries were analysed, so James's and Weber's models of Self were adapted and developed to provide a basis of a theory of singing's role in the construction of Self.

7.2.6 The Tripartite Self

William James (1890, 1892, 1902) saw Self as being essentially composed of three principle components: *the material Self*, concerned with the body and the physical world; *the social Self*, concerned with how we relate to other people; and *the spiritual Self*, concerned with belief and experiences of a religious or spiritual nature. These elements of Self or Me were not seen as being fixed, but as subject to continuing revision, development, contraction, and expansion. James's seminal theory of Self forms the basis of Robert Weber's recent discourse *The Created Self* (2000), where Weber substitutes his more broadly defined "persona" – thinking of Self and how it is presented to others – for James's *social Self*. Weber's model of the tripartite Self then, is made up of elements defined as Body, Persona, and Spirit. Weber sees these elements as being held together by a unitary Self with its component parts of consistency, continuity, completeness and community (ibid.: 114 - 26). Additionally, Weber goes on to develop a theory of a control system of Self, examining motivating factors and mechanisms by which changes may be consciously made, guided by systems of unity, empathy and interpretation (ibid.: 144 - 56). Even though my original analysis had not included a specific "spiritual" dimension, Baldur's many comments about the place of singing in religion seemed to suggest that this was an important element in his vocal Self. Furthermore, Weber's spiritual self as we shall see, is a far wider concept than religion and it soon became clear that it resonated with other concepts in men's vocal life histories. Whilst Weber's discourse on Self includes a whole range of behaviours from personal relationships to body piercing, genetic reproduction and loss of personal identity, to spiritual and aesthetic experiences, he omits discussion of artistic, musical or vocal behaviours. In chapters that follow I turn to discussion of the role of singing and the narrative men construct about it in relation to the three elements of Self in Weber's model of Body, Persona and Spirit and James's of Physical, Social and Spiritual – and to Weber's model of the expanding and changing Self, beginning with his vocal connections

and projections, the voice as a technology of the Social Self or what Weber describes as Persona.

Before doing so, I introduce other men who participated in this study and whose accounts of singing in everyday lives facilitate this research's extension, from Baldur's case study and its idiosyncratic norms, towards a more general study of group norms, and towards the developing of theories about Icelandic men and singing.

8 OTHER VOICES: PROFILES

It is not my intention to provide in-depth biographical detail about all the other men whose vocal stories facilitated the development of theory from Baldur's original case study, as I have with Baldur himself. It seems appropriate though to provide brief profiles of those men who engaged in the reconstruction of vocal autobiographies in extensive informal interviews like Baldur's, as well as keeping vocal diaries. Other specific biographical information will be provided on a "need to know" basis, as it appears relevant to the interpretation of data and development of theory in the chapters that follow.

Magnús (P2), born in 1953, has sung in the Male Voice choir for about 15 years. He grew up in Húsavík and apart from a few years spent studying at technical college in another part of the country, he has lived here all his life. He is the manager of a local branch of Iceland's biggest insurance company and does some private bookkeeping and accounting. He is married and has two children, the oldest of is currently studying at university in the USA, and both of them are competent instrumentalists. Magnús has considerable experience in various choral groups, having sung in the church choir at Húsavík and in a 12-man close harmony/jazz group for several years (see Figure 10.17).

Úlfar (P3), born in 1953, is an electrician who works at the local hydroelectric power station in the rural setting of Aðaldalur. Úlfar plays guitar by ear, and performs sometimes at family functions and parties as a "troubadour", even writing and performing his own songs. He has had formal singing lessons and has sung a wide range of repertoire including occasional Italian art songs, lieder, and even opera arias. His other keen interests include Icelandic horses. Úlfar grew up in a rural area before moving to a town in the south of Iceland and then to this area just over 10 years ago. One of his daughters is training as a class music teacher, he also has another daughter and younger son aged 6 (see Figure 10.7 and CD 15).

Eiður (P4) has sung second tenor in the male voice choir for well over 20 years. Born in 1957, Eiður has lived for nearly all his life in the same rural setting, and although he is a qualified electrician, Eiður has increasingly worked designing, making, and installing small water turbines and generators all over Iceland and even in Greenland. He has a pilot's licence and owns a small light aircraft. Eiður also sings in the local church choir and plays the piano and harmonica by ear. All his three children play instruments, his oldest, aged 16 is a promising pianist. Aged 44, Eiður is Baldur's cousin.

Sigvaldi (P5) is one of the oldest members of the choir. Brought up in a rural setting in the northern part of Þingeyjasýslu where he was born in 1928, Sigvaldi was a farmer on his own smallholding, before earthquakes in 1975 and 1976 caused considerable damage to his property. Moving to the town of Húsavík, Sigvaldi worked in a variety of manual jobs, especially in fish processing. Now retired, Sigvaldi enjoys relatively good health after a major health scare three years ago.

Gunnar (P6) was born in 1948 and was brought up in the same part of the county as Sigvaldi, before marrying and moving to a valley just south of Húsavík. For many years, Gunnar worked as a fisherman, often on deep-sea trawlers. Giving up this occupation, which took him away from home and family for long periods of time, he took over the running of his wife's family farm, which they now own. Gunnar is 54 years old and also works as a part time policeman. All of his children play musical instruments; one of his daughters is an extremely promising flautist, plays the piano, and also plays in both a Zimbabwean marimba group and guitar in a teenage rock group. Gunnar has sung in the choir for eight years and has little other formal vocal experience.

Erlingur (P7) has sung first bass in the choir for 8 years. He plays the guitar by ear and chord symbols, writes his own songs, and has performed in a variety of trios and popular groups. He plays guitar in the male choir's instrumental group, which accompanies lighter repertoire (see Figure 13.1 and CD 14). Erlingur was born in 1955 and grew up in the town of Akureyri (Iceland's second town and "capital" of the north), in a home where Erlinger is at pains to point out, singing played a very minor role indeed. Erlingur is a motor mechanic and works as an inspector for motor vehicles' roadworthiness. He sung in the same close harmony/jazz group as Magnus for a while and has also performed in

amateur dramatics. Erlingur lives in Húsavík with his wife; they have four children in their teens and early twenties.

Kjartan (P8) was born in 1966 and lives with his wife, stepdaughter and 2 daughters on their dairy smallholding. He has sung in the male choir for 2 years and whilst he has not taken part in much organised choral activity, he claims that there was a great deal of singing in the family home. His two daughters and one stepdaughter all play various instruments, including violin, piano, guitar, and Zimbabwean marimba. Kjartan plays guitar by ear and from chord symbols. His father was a keen harmonica player, composer of several popular songs and performed in a local functions band.

Jón Gauti (P9) is one of four brothers who all sing in the male voice choir. 44 years old, Jón sung briefly in another male choir and church choir. He and his brothers form an occasional vocal quartet for family get-togethers. Born in 1958 and brought up in a rural setting near Lake Mývatn, Jón now lives in the valley of Aðaldalur on the banks of the river Laxá. Jón does not play an instrument but two of his children, aged 16 and 11 both play piano and Zimbabwean marimba. His son, aged 16 also plays in a rock/pop group. Jón and his wife, who plays a little on the guitar by ear, also have a one-year-old daughter (see Figure 9.1). Trained as a carpenter, Jón works as a school caretaker and runs a family guesthouse over the summer months. Jón Gauti also sings in the local church choir.

Guðmundur (P10), born in 1959, is a sheep farmer who lives on his own smallholding at Vestmannsvatn Lake with his wife and 3 children. He plays the drums in a local functions band that plays very regularly for dances all over the county. Guðmundur is 43 years old and has sung in the male voice choir for over 20 years. His son also sings in the choir and is one of its youngest members (see Figure 6.2 left & Figure 10.16, seated).

Þórarinn (P11) plays on the bass in the same functions band as Guðmundur, originally founded by Þórarinn's father. He lives in Húsavík with his wife, who has been one of the leading figures in the extremely active and widely renowned amateur dramatic society there. Þórarinn's other interests include Icelandic horses. They have no children. Þórarinn works as a driver, driving the milk tank between dairy farms all over the county and to the local dairy. Þórarinn, born in 1955, is cousin to both Baldur and Guðmundur. He has sung in the male

voice choir for nearly 30 years where he also plays bass guitar in the choir's instrumental group (see CD 14).

Ólafur (P12) was born in 1927 and lives in Húsavík. For many years, he was a teacher of craft and woodwork at the compulsory school in Húsavík, although he was brought up in the Westmann Islands off the south coast of Iceland. Ólafur is a renowned wood-carver and has carved and painted birds for displays in the local whale museum at Húsavík.

Guðmundur from Grímshús (P13) was born in 1938 and lives on his own dairy smallholding in Aðaldalur. Guðmundur has sung in the choir for almost thirty years apart from an enforced absence because of bronchial trouble and asthma. He and his wife have three children, and six grandchildren. Guðmundur sings in the local church choir at Grenjaðarstaðir. He is well known for his interest in local history (see Figs. 12.1 & 12.2).

Apart from the men above, the following men all kept vocal diaries used for the theoretical sampling of emergent themes:

Áslaugur (P14) was born in 1952 and lives in Mývatn where he works at the geo-thermal power station at Krafla. He has sung in the choir for several years.

Guðmundur Árni (P15) lives in Húsavík like his father Ólafur who also sings in the choir. He is a barber by profession and has little other formal vocal experience apart from singing in the male voice. Guðmundur was born in 1963.

Sveinn (P16) has sung in the choir for 2 years. He was born in 1960

Ómar (P17) is a sheep farmer and has sung in the choir for well over twenty years. Born in 1960, he has recently been joined in the choir by his own 17 year-old son who also plays drums in a functions band performing regularly for dances and balls. Ómar does not play an instrument himself.

Hafliði (P18), born in 1941, is the father in yet another father/son partnership in the choir. He plays a little by ear and sung in a functions band but has not done so regularly for over ten years. He has composed songs, including one that the choir has sung. Hafliði works in the local meat-processing/slaughterhouse and was for some years the verger at the parish church in Húsavík. His son, who has just joined the choir, is presently studying for B.Ed. at the University in Akureyri.

Friðrik (P19) lives in Mývatnsveit. Born in 1954, Friðrik's formal vocal experience is limited to singing in the male voice choir, where he has sung for 16

years with a short gap. He is widely renowned as a writer and improviser of *vísur* (a popular and often humorous form of Icelandic poetry). Indeed, I often have the impression that Freðrik thinks in this form! He has produced a welter of Icelandic texts for the choir, including for example, translations of folk songs from Estonia, England and Canada, and songs by Poulenc and Schubert.

Jón Sig (P20), born in 1948, is a car mechanic. He something of an expert on vintage cars and has rebuilt and restored several himself. Jón lives in Húsavík and has two grown-up daughters, one of whom has immigrated to the USA. Jón has no other formal vocal experience but has sung in the choir for over ten years.

Jón Þ (P21) works as a stores and sales assistant in a building, hardware, and DIY store in Húsavík. Jón was born in 1959. His partner suffers from a serious degenerative motor disorder; they have two young children, aged 10 and 12. He has sung in choir for over two decades.

Oskar Óli (P22), born in 1954, lives in Húsavík and works in the same store as Jón Þ. Óskar works part time in order to be able to spend more time with his young family, especially his son who has severe disabilities. His partner is departmental manager for education in Húsavík town council.

Jónas (P23) is a car mechanic, working at the same garage, in Húsavík, as Jón Sig. Born in 1960, married and with two children, Jónas has sung in the choir for over 20 years.

Einar (P24) was born in 1975; he lives and works with his parents on their farm. Einar plays the keyboard by ear and has sung in the choir for about 10 years. Einar is Baldur and Eiður's cousin.

Bensi (P25) has recently sold his sheep farming quota though he stills lives on the family farm. Bensi is currently working in the training of Icelandic horses. His son has recently completed an M.A. in composition from St. Petersburg Conservatoire. Bensi is one of Hreimur's founding members; he has sung in the choir for nearly thirty years and has sung the occasional bass solo. Bensi was born in 1951.

Þorgrímur (P26), born in 1937, is a machine tool maker and welder living in Húsavík. He appears here as an occasional performer of Icelandic *rímur* and is the author of the text "Í Ásbyrgi" also on the compact disc (see Figure 10.12 & CD 14).

Sigurður (P27) is a sheep farmer. He regularly sings solo with the Hreimur and also sings with a mixed choir in Húsavík. He has sung in the choir for nearly twenty years. Born in 1964, Sigurður's son, aged 19, has also recently joined the choir.

Stéfán (P28) was born in 1927 years old and lives in Mývatn where he has a smallholding.

Ingólfur (P29) is a teacher at the 16+ higher education college and runs his own fitness centre/ gym at Húsavík where he lives with his wife. He has sung in the choir for several years. Ingólfur was born in 1958.

9 THE SINGING VOICE AS PERSONA

9.1 Family Scripts and Songs

All of the men in the study illustrate the varied ways in which singing has had, and continues to have significant agency in relationships with parents, offspring, family, friends, and wider social groups. These kinds of connection networks – the patterns individuals make and the forms they take – constitute what James saw as the social Self. I am concerned here with vocal forms of these networks, the way in which people present themselves to each other and receive each other in singing. For every individual in the present study, singing appears to be an essential and fundamental mode of communicating and relating, providing considerable personal and social enrichment. Some of the richest accounts of this vocal connectedness relate to the home and to relationships primarily situated there. In the interpretation that follows, this is where I begin, examining singing's role at a micro-interactionist level, and then tracing its agency in wider social networks and settings outside of the home.

To help in the interpretation of men's stories about domestic communicative vocality, I wish to borrow the term *family scripts* from Byng-Hall (1985), who developed it as a way of thinking about repeating patterns of family interaction generally. According to Byng-Hall these patterns become ritualized through their regular performance in daily family practices and communication. We can already see from Baldur's commentary that singing in his home at least can be thought of in this way, as a motif weaved into the very fabric of domestic life, repeated to form intricate vocal and social patterns. Here then, family scripts and songs describe a whole repertoire of domestic vocal practice and even the repertoire appropriated for it. As we have seen from Baldur's life history, there are in fact several different types of domestic vocal motifs; different kinds of vocal practices and different repertoires are sung by members of the family in different contexts. The first type relates essentially to the everyday songs sung for work, rest, and play; secondly, there is a repertoire of vocal family scripts clearly interpreted by Baldur as belonging more to the realm of the special, to extended

family gatherings, trips to the grandparents, and celebrations. In such scripts singing lies at the heart of senses of familial and collective identity: Singing is an active affective agent in their construction, the medium by which they are experienced and the mode of their representation to family and outsiders alike. Family scripts and songs, then, may be performed by large or small vocal ensembles, or even by solo family members, and the extent to which individual relationships within the home are determined or expressed in these vocal terms varies too of course. In Baldur's case, it is quite clear that his relationships with his brothers and in particular with his late mother are determined to a great extent by their vocal connections. In this latter case note how in various life transitions of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood Baldur remembers his mother through vocal events, and often defines his relationship with her by, and through, vocal empathy:

Mum sang all the time and when she was working – in the kitchen, washing up, when she was doing the washing on the washboard, she always sung – she gave herself totally in song, *completely*. (P1)

And the first time I sang publicly (*as a tenor*), it was with my mother. I had a little, pathetic voice, but she knew how to project hers so I was decently presentable. (P1)

I would have liked to have been with the voice I am now and sing with her... as she was then. (P1)

Baldur's comment about singing with his mother implicitly recognises her vocal and social skill in projecting a voice that takes due consideration of his. In doing so, she seems to have facilitated reciprocity, a memorable vocal matching, which with some justification, might be compared to the way in which a mother might match a young infant vocally. According to Trevarthan (1999, 2002) this kind of matching or vocal synchrony, observed in a wide range of infant and adult interaction, stimulates a communicative musicality fundamental to the development of social identity. This vocal event certainly seems to have been hugely significant in Baldur's perception of his own vocal identity development. The positive feelings it promoted motivated him to greater vocal endeavours, just as a mother's matching of her baby's babbling does. One might draw the

conclusion from research literature investigating adult and infant vocal interaction that all of these family scripts are exclusively duets between mothers and babies. As we shall see, the evidence here does not support such a view of adult-infant vocal interaction. Social developments, in particular those relating to the changing status of men, from autonomous home-based workers towards *out of the home employment*, appear to have had some impact on these vocal scripts, as Baldur reluctantly seems to admit. But men still sing with infants and they clearly value the connections that are made in intimate social and vocal modes of projection and reception. Following on from Byng-Hall's general claims about family members conditioning to family scripts, it comes as no surprise that Baldur sees vocal behaviour as essential to relationships with his own children and presently with his own grandchildren. The more settled routine of his recent daily working life appears to have provided him with the opportunity to nurture vocal relationship with his grandchildren, as the following extracts, written on consecutive days, from his vocal diary show clearly illustrate:

Dropped in to visit my daughter and her one-year old son, Gunnar. He thinks it's great fun when Grandad takes him in his arms and swings him back and forth in time to some song or other. (P1)

On the way home from the male voice choir practice I just called in on my son to meet my namesake, my grandson. It's his fifteenth birthday and he told me he was going to take part in a production of the musical *Gauragangur* (Rumpus), sings in two or three songs. So I tried to encourage him because he's a bit apprehensive about it. (P1)

Invited my daughter to supper, her husband is at sea. Little Gunnar has to have things to do, so after supper I provided for him, sat at the piano with him and played and sung, so he moved around in time and joined in - *Nú blikar við sólarlag* (Now the sun sets)- *Ef væri ég söngvari* (If I was a singer!) - *Komdu og skoðaðu* (Come and have a look in my box). (P1)

Got home at 17:30 and Little Gunnar was there, so Grandad had to sing with him for a while. (P1)

When I came home from work today I popped in to see my daughter and little Gunnar and we sang a song together as usual. (P1)

Other grandfathers practice similar rituals with their grandchildren on a regular basis; Valdi, like Baldur, learnt the ritual from his own grandparents:

Even though he was deaf from the age of three and could only hear a tiny bit, he knew loads of songs and sang them with extraordinary accuracy. I taught my children and grandchildren them even before they could speak. (P5)

In addition, as with Baldur, movement also appears to be important in this unavoidable ritual:

I went to visit my daughter at Akureyri so I couldn't avoid taking a few dance steps with my younger granddaughter and singing along too, and we sang Happy Birthday for her pet dog. (P5)

The importance of men's vocal connections with their young offspring is reiterated by most of the men in the study. Many of them are younger than Baldur and their memories of singing with their children and their perception of the importance of this vocal interpersonal intelligence is very much based on present, *this* day experience, as Jón illustrates:

The day ended like so many other days, because I sung for my children when they had got themselves ready for bed and got themselves under the duvet. Usually I sing lullabies like *Sofðu unga ástin mín* (*Sleep, my young love*) or *Erla, góða Erla* (*Erla, good Erla*) or something like that. But that didn't seem to fit so I sang "Once there was a boy who had a little car!" and then a long repertoire of songs that came into my mind! It's so lovely to see the children be quiet, listen, relax and sleep because of this noise coming from me. (P21)

We should note too the satisfaction that Jón takes, despite his self-deprecating tone, in the knowledge that his voice projection has the power to affect mood and facilitate relaxation and sleep, made explicit in a later entry:

Singing didn't start today until evening, in that place where my singing appears to have most and best influence – in the children's bedrooms! Now the children wanted to sleep with lively male-voice choir songs, so I sung for them *Á Sprengisandi* and *Í Ásbyrgi* (*About places in Iceland*). (P21)
(see CD 13 & 14)

Gunnar too practices vocal connections in the domesticity of the home:

This evening my daughters were practising the piano – *Bjart er yfir Betlehem (Bright over Betlehem – Piae Cantiones)* and *Ó helga nótt (O Holy Night)* – I sung along and felt very good! (P6)

My daughter Hafrún asked me to read for her this evening before she went to sleep. When I had finished reading, I sung her a lullaby, *Sofðu unga ástin mín (Sleep, my young love)* and I kissed her goodnight! (P6 see CD 18)

As does Guðmundur and several other men: “Sung some children’s songs with Bessa Bjarnason with my son Hrannar, whilst he was going to sleep.” (P10)

Given that vocal diaries were only kept for a week the number of references to singing with children and grandchildren clearly suggest that for most men in the study, this is, if not quite an everyday occurrence, a very regular one indeed. Neither is singing with children limited to bedtime lullabies. Many of Óli’s entries and several by other men suggest that traditional sex roles in the home are not adhered to exclusively:

Didn’t sing this morning. Picked up my daughter from the play-school at 12:00 and on the way home in the car we sung together *Hafið bláa hafið (The sea, the blue sea)* and *A,B,C,D*. She is always singing and in a cheerful mood, so of course it makes me feel cheerful too. When we got home, I turned on the radio and the “last song before the news” was *Í dag skein sól (Today the sun shines)* so I sung aloud as I got the lunch ready. From lunchtime until around 16:00, we are just two homes. This afternoon the song *Litla Stína (Little Stína)* was top of the pops and she demanded that I sing it aloud with her twice and it was really fun, felt good though I’m not sure I took any special care with singing it. (P22)

Everybody was on good form and Hrund insisted that I sing with her while we were doing the housework. It was songs like *Vakna Dís (Wake up Dís)*, *Ég á gamla frænku (I Have an Old Aunt)*, and now we can sing Christmas songs too, like *Rudolf með rauða nefið (Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer)*, and *Í skóginum stóð kofi einn (In the Woods There Stands a Cottage)*. They were sung aloud and made our mood and the chores lighter! (P22)

Valdi, who is retired notes:

My granddaughter comes to visit. She is 6. We sing a few songs together, on the light side and end with the lullaby, *Mamma ætlar að sofna* (*Mother is going to sleep*) – a favourite with both of us. (P5) see CD 10)

The importance Valdi's granddaughter attaches to singing with him is reflected in the following deal she strikes with him:

The day was spent for the most part walking between houses and selling Christmas cards for Association of Heart Patients. My assistant is my 6-year old granddaughter. She makes one condition – when we have finished I have to sing lots of Christmas songs with her. I oblige, tell her a few Christmas stories and in the evening we are together in song and Christmas meditation. (P5)

Úlfar echoes Baldur's very special vocal relationship with his mother, in his own relationship with his father: "He was always singing, anything and everything ... at home, in the shops. I understood it completely." (P3) And the shouted response of Úlfar's 5 year-old son, who has been listening from outside the room, "Dad you sing everywhere too, you're always singing something", suggests that the same family script is still being performed.

Of the thirteen men originally interviewed, there are two notable exceptions to this picture of domestic vocal performance. They claim that there was little vocal behaviour in their childhood homes and that their parents did not sing very much if at all. Erlingur insists that, "I don't think she (*mother*) ever sung me to sleep and I never heard Dad sing a single tune, he doesn't sing, not even half a note." (P7) In the absence of vocal connections in the home, Erlingur finds another explanation for the very significant role singing plays in his own life: "This singing is in me, it's not something that has come from somebody else. It's just sort of born in me". (P7) He continues:

I've been told I could sing before I could speak. I sang pretty much from the beginning. I could hold a melody and sang the text ... you could hear the text of songs long before I was talking. (P7)

In keeping with the family script, Erlingur claims to have replicated these patterns of non-vocal behaviour in his own home: "I've never sung my children to sleep and never sung or played for them." (P7)

Erlingur's vocal connections are concerned with other social groupings; the patterns they make are different to almost all men in the study. Following his teenage experience of playing in a band with his peers, it seems that it is in this kind of social peer group that singing is a central technology of his social self. As we shall see, this is also the case for all those men who enjoyed considerably greater vocal connectedness in their childhood homes than Erlingur did.

Plenty of music repertoires generally are concerned with duets other than vocal displays of connectedness between men and their offspring like those discussed above. In particular, a whole range of formal and informal repertoire all over the world can be seen as being directed at or determined by some kind of aesthetic sexual display. None of the men in the present study though, thought singing significant in terms of relationships with their own partners. Conversations that I have had with some of their partners seems to suggest however that the men may well be underestimating the impact of their vocality on their then prospective partners and failing to recognise that their singing was sometimes clearly perceived as a significant and attractive part of their identity. There were though, occasional references to singing with and for partners:

On the way home from the male-voice choir practice tonight, I was revising *Mansöngur* which we had been practicing this evening. Why? Well maybe because it's about Hulda and my wife's name is Hulda, when I got home I sang it for her!!!! (P14)

And Gunnar I suggest, seems to be echoing this process of appropriating and personalizing – perhaps more appropriately described here as inter-personalizing – songs and lyrics with his partner:

Maybe when we were dancing together at a ball or something, maybe I'd sing along with the band, I couldn't say it was, that it was for her ... but some need ... some longing. (P6)

These specific examples are exceptions and even when pressed, nearly all the men reject the notion that their singing is related to aesthetic sexual display. Only one man makes the suggestion himself that there may be an element of biological determinism in what he sees as men's need to sing publicly:

I mean in the choir, aren't we guys always the cockerel showing off? You see it in nature; doesn't that happen everywhere in nature? The male always has to display himself ... has a specific routine. (P2)

And another recalls the importance he attached to being watched by girls as a teenager in a pop group when he says, "We thought we were pretty manly, in the eyes of the girls, first and foremost, naturally." (P3)

Naturally, is a key word here, and questions of men singing and its perception as aesthetic sexual display will be discussed more fully in a later chapter on gender identity. Similar issues relating to singing and traditional sex roles such as infant childcare also deserve more than cursory consideration; they too will be examined in a chapter specifically devoted to the theories of masculinity and men's vocal behaviour.

Returning to, and extending the web of connectedness from the immediate family, I turn now to the wider family or kinship group. Family-ties are important in Iceland and genealogy is an extremely significant element in individual, local, and even, I suggest, in national identity. In this respect at least, a view of Icelanders as a homogeneous group, is backed up by clear evidence from both genealogy and genetics. For many of the families vocal behaviour has agency in the performance and maintenance of those ties and singing appears as a central construct in concepts of kinship, some like Baldur's, are even renowned throughout the county for their vocal behaviour: "Even if the hay was bone dry, the family at Halldórsstaðir would still forget themselves in singing and playing." (P1) Whilst Baldur's matriarchal family at Halldórsstaðir were known by their devotion to song and music-making even at the expense of neglecting necessary work, other men, though by no means all, also speak of how singing is central to their kinship identity. This is true, for example of Úlfar, who says, "Dad's family had to find a tune to sing for everything", (P3) and continues to follow, for the most part, the same family script:

I'm maybe not quite as industrious as I was. We sang a lot here at home. I sung with my daughters when they were little and we still do actually. One of them is just graduating as a class music teacher herself. (P3)

Many others relate what they perceive as the role singing plays in connecting families and friends together. Kjartan recalls a childhood tradition he clearly interprets as everyday:

Often in the evenings, a sort of *Kvöldvaka* (lit.: evening wake), there was just a lot of music. Dad played the harmonica, composed a lot. It was nothing special and it's always been around us all the time. (P8)

... even though it may have special significance on high days and holidays:

We get together, my sisters and family, at Christmas for example, we've always done it and we sing. I don't think we have ever missed a Christmas, to come together, Christmas Day, in the evening. (P8)

As Byng-Hall's family scripts would predict, Kjartan, father of two girls and stepfather to another, perpetuates the pattern of vocal behaviour:

I suppose a couple of times a month, we all get together, the girls, Sonja, and me. Sometimes it's shorter between. I think it helps the children too. It gives us pleasure or something. Happiness! The girls are getting on really well in their music lessons. But I don't do it for that, you do it for yourself and for them. (P8)

Kjartan and Sonja's daughters are indeed developing fairly advanced musical skills. The oldest daughter has, since I began this study enrolled in formal singing lessons at one of Iceland's most prominent music schools, recently singing the role of Papagena in their production of the *Magic Flute*. One of the younger girls plays violin, piano, Zimbabwean marimba, and guitar, and the other plays violin and marimba. But even so, "You do it for yourself" indicates that what Kjartan sees as being most important in singing with others is neither the musical skills or the musical objects per se, but something more intrinsically personal and social, the maintenance of Self and of *our* collective Self. This appears true of Gauti's family too:

The other day at Þórdís's birthday all the family came and we sang for an hour and a half. (P9)

If we had guests, and there were always lots of people visiting, then we took a song. (P9)

All of Gauti's four brothers sing in the male-voice choir. They even sing together occasionally as a quartet, drawing lots to decide who sings which voice! More recently three of them formed the basis of a double quartet who self-effacingly call themselves Quartet Garðar Hólm after a fictional character in a novel by Halldór Laxness who persuades a local council to financially support his overseas vocal studies, despite his apparently singing very, very badly indeed (see Fig. 9.2)!

9.2 Wider Vocal Networks

Widening the focus from micro-social-systems, it is clear that both the vocal and social self are not just constructed within the contexts of connecting with immediate or extended families. In isolated cases like Erlingur's, they are not actually performed there at all – though even this fact is hugely significant for Erlingur's construction of his vocal identity. It has been claimed that we have as many Selves as there are people whose opinion we care about (James, 1892). The following comments reveal how men see singing as central to many of those Selves, to larger and various group identities and to social harmony within them. In small group situations, a few friends engage in singing together:

Before we left for the male-voice choir evening, Ella and Inga came because we were going together. Before we left, we picked up the guitar and as we do so often when we meet, we took a few lively songs. We always try to be careful and sing in harmony. It always gets us in a good mood! When we got back home, we took a few more songs before going to bed! (P23)

Even certain work situations allow for vocal partnerships, as Siggí illustrates, "I went to help Kjartan at Múli in his cow-shed ... I sung a bit, but he sung more." (P27) And in larger social gatherings,

When there are get-togethers, dances or something, people start singing in harmony, then you mix with that group, just to take part, to join in with others. (P3)

At a birthday party I ended up singing with Jón and Karl, and loads of people, it was amazing singing and therewith I was taken into their group ... it was the first time I'd had that feeling for singing in harmony ... massive singing. (P4)

In all cases, the justification, the importance of vocally connecting to others, is similar:

There's so much joy in people doing something together rather than just by themselves... it is like some sort of treaty. (P27)

You feel much better in harmony with others. Then you get that kick, that's how it's supposed to be. (P2)

Singing in harmony in particular seems to facilitate a very special kind of social connectedness and whilst many contemporary societies would see singing in harmony as an indication of highly developed aural and vocal skills, it is not unfair to say that it is rare here to hear a group of adults sing just in unison. In fact, it happens rarely and in many circles it is looked upon with derision, not apparently born of simple snobbery or a sense of superiority, but that singing is inevitable an affair of different parts! Seen in the light of Iceland's very recent adoption of 4-part harmony and its wide-spread and relatively wholesale rejection of older two-part and unison vocal styles, this seems very striking indeed. Perhaps singing in harmony is valued in particular because the connections it makes differentiate between people within a group, rather than producing a monochrome collective in unison, that it preserves a sense of individuality within a group setting. Whilst these kinds of multi-layered connections are frequently spontaneous and voices quite possibly improvised at informal occasions, they are also made in the more formal setting of the male-voice choir in which these men sing.

9.3 Choral Connections

The vocal links made in singing in Hreimur Male Voice Choir, are clearly of huge significance to these men's social Selves, but even they are not easily differentiated from the family scripts discussed above. Five fathers and sons sing in the choir along with Gauti and his three brothers mentioned above, two other pairs of brothers, and, I suspect, more cousins than not! It is easy to see then how

the choir might become an extension of Self to be looked after, cared for, and invested with emotional energy (see Weber, 2000: 175). The simple fact of the distance many men travel to practices I related earlier is a clear indication of the importance attached to this particular vocal network. The men attempt to explain it:

The men's choir is quite unique I think; it's a remarkably sympathetic and unified group ... really, really closely knit and cohesive. (P1)

He only lives for the men's choir. (P10)

It (singing in the male voice choir) is just some kind of madness. (P11)

If one link breaks, it can ruin the whole thing, if you don't concentrate, just one small thing. (P5)

Their success is directly related to how hard they work, men's attitudes to what we are doing, united in our determination to do it well. (P12)

I'm so proud of our men's choir. (P13)

Whilst some social groups might differentiate themselves by, say, attire or body-decorating (see Tajfel, 1978), the single most important feature of this group appears to be that they are men who sing together. Whilst few of the men identify themselves explicitly as "singers" or "musicians", they distinguish themselves favourable from other men by virtue of their vocality. Singing contributes significantly to the group and individual's Self-esteem, while non-singers are perceived as being denied a wide-range of personal and social benefits that come through vocal access and connectivity:

There was a group in the mountain hut last autumn that wasn't singing. I pitied them; they were completely out in the cold. (P10)

The guys that don't join in (*singing*), they're just left out, not in the group. I think they're really missing out. (P11)

Even men who see themselves as being not particularly good singers enjoy this enhanced Self-esteem as, in Weber's words, they "are linked to a valued community" (2000: 71). Whilst the conjunctive nature of choral tasks might mean

that the group performs no better than the level of the least able singer, the large size of the group means that the tasks in hand are divisible – extremely competent singers support less able ones in what is essentially co-operative interdependence. Light-hearted banter and rivalry between voices ensures, as Baldur noticed, that there is some element of competition. In stark contrast to the Barbershop traditions of North America (Stebbins, 1996), or Isicathamiya in South Africa (Erlmann, 1996), where choral competitions often appear to play central roles in collective vocal identity, formal competitions are conspicuously absent from the male-voice choral scene in Iceland:

Even though singing is number one, there's that feeling that you are a link in a particular chain. That you are something, rather than nothing. (P5)

It's always been a bit like that – voices throwing things at each other a bit. Ragging between the men, nothing serious. (P1)

There are four teams on the pitch, they own their sound and had better come with it right. (P2)

They (*first tenors*) think of themselves as the top of the world (laughs). It's fine, just humour. (P4)

It was when I was attempting to interpret men's perceptions of singing in the choir or at least in larger social groups that two specific modes of vocal interaction were thrown into sharp relief – those of vocal collaboration and competition. They appear to have salience for understanding the communicative processes involved in learning, rehearsing, and performing songs. I turn to them now, because whilst they might just as easily be relevant to a discussion of gendered identity, they cast particular light on the nature of the vocal connections about which men speak, and especially upon projective and receptive empathies, which I see as being increasingly significant to an understanding of vocal networking.

9.4 Competition and Collaboration

In a later chapter on singing and the construction of masculinity, I give some consideration to the vocal competition that, as we have already observed, appears only on the periphery of men's life histories – singing as aesthetic sexual display.

For now though, and evolutionary biology apart, it is clear both from Baldur's stories about what goes on in the choir and from other men quoted above that, in keeping with psychological theories of social interaction, various permutations of interpersonal and intergroup behaviour, of competition and collaboration, manifest themselves within and between vocal or choral groups. Elements of competition clearly exist both between and within individual voice-categories or choral parts.

Competition in a wider context may be seen as endowing a particular social group with the kind of "cultural or social capital" that men in the choir seem to think they possess. In other settings, this cultural capital has sometimes been seen as compensating for the absence of economic capital, part of a wider competition for power and change in social structures. Erlmann, for example, argues this case in his study of South African migrant workers and their singing of *isicathamiya* or "nightsong" (Erlmann, 1996). In Stebbin's survey of the barbershop singer, by far the most "important thrill" in pursuing choral singing as a leisure activity is the competing or winning as a chorus in regional, district, area or national contests (Stebbins, 1996). Similar responses were forthcoming in interviews I carried out both with men who sang in a large men's barbershop chorus in Newfoundland, and - in a very different setting and singing very different repertoire - a small university men's chorus from the USA (unpublished). The absence of these kinds of formal inter-choral competitions in Iceland is interesting. It is my contention that two factors are particularly significant here: firstly, the early Icelandic Male Voice Movement was concerned fundamentally with a collaborative effort at constructing a unified national identity - albeit a hegemonic masculine one. There was little space in such a task for competition and male voice choir members across the country were to be, formally at least, song brothers, choir festivals were not to be choral competitions. Seen from this perspective, competition and collaboration among singers or choral groups arguably may come down then to social structures and to a culture's position on an individualism - collectivism dimension (see Lubart, 1999). Secondly, we can see a clear tendency emerging from men's stories to emphasize the essentially social act and social function of singing, rather than the aesthetic objectification of a performance of a musical work. This is not to say that they are uncritical of vocal performance, or indifferent about the choice of songs, but that

the measure of a performance appears frequently to be the quality of connections singers make with an audience, even in these formal settings. I explore next how collaborative and competitive strategies are perceived as acting as technologies of these connections at various stages of vocal behaviour, and I begin, where we just left men's stories, in the formal setting of the male-voice choir.

9.4.1 Collaboration and Competition in Learning New Scripts and Songs in Formal Settings

Few of the choir's members read music fluently, though notation clearly aids their learning considerably and with their often highly developed aural skills and tradition of singing in harmony, they learn varied repertoire at remarkable speed. During these early stages of what is usually rote-learning, music is learnt either voice by voice in sectional rehearsals or, depending on the nature of the piece, two or more voices more or less simultaneously. Collaboration with other members of the voice group is essential; the men rely heavily on hearing other same-voice singers, an intra-voice network. They are aurally sensitive and quick to confer if there is not unanimity, without waiting for the conductor to correct them. All of the participants, even experienced singers, claim in a self-effacing way to rely on other members of the group to learn parts:

I've always thought it good to sing with somebody who's got a good voice, quick to learn and so ... somebody who can lead the singing ... It's always better to sing with good singers. I'm maybe not the sort that would lead the singing. (P4)

I'm not very quick to learn exactly, I'm not terribly musical, but with the help of the good chaps in the second tenor ... it went O.K. and you could feel that it was beginning to sound, beginning to harmonize and resonate ... then it became really fun. (P6)

Intra-voice collaboration also compensates for what the men perceive as the limitations of their own vocal technique and tone quality:

I always thought I was pretty poor ... my voice is so thin and poor and it doesn't work by itself ... but yeah, it's OK to have it along with something else. Yes, yes, that's how I see me in all of this. (P7)

I think I'm pretty good in a team, when we're not singing too loudly, but I can often get pretty high up, but it's not a particularly big voice. (P2)

At this stage of learning the intra-voice collaboration is balanced by an inter-voice competition to produce "the goods":

We have our sound, it works together with yours, and you'll jolly well give it to us right and then we come along with ours. (P2)

This competition to "get it right" often takes the form of light-hearted banter that Baldur had observed and that is echoed by many of the men:

Well you know, men support their men and all that ... it's done more for fun I think ... yeah. (P6)

Well each voice is made up of these guys and these guys have of course much more in common ... what's more, some people find it difficult to cope when they are moved between voices. (P5)

Commonly this competitive banter takes the form of comments about stereotypical personality types according to voice, as the following discourse illustrates:

The tenors think they are the only voice in the choir (P10)

I mean people often say at practice, bloody tenors they, you know, can never learn anything (P9)

No, no, usually second tenor.... (P10)

There we go! (RF)

It's nothing, nothing nasty; it's just a joke. (P10)

Well it's supposed to be like that. (P11)

It's mainly just to get the humor going a bit ... if it was serious than it wouldn't be enjoyable. (9)

First tenors maybe think of themselves as top of the world. (P4)

First bass is naturally the rubbish bin, people that can't sing anything, they have to be there (laughs) because everybody should be able to sing first bass... the normal range for a man.... (P11)

What about first tenor then? (RF)

They're just abnormal (laughs) or some sort of straining, or something, squeezing. (P11)

This kind of competition is strictly limited to motivation strategy in learning and rehearsing. Magnús expands on the idea of inter-voice competition with a sporting analogy but makes it quite clear that the performing choir, as we shall see, is a singular entity:

There are four teams on the pitch. And there's competition and team spirit in each and of course, you unite under your banner. I mean in the tenors, when people are taking shots at us, then we respond to that. And that's how the whole team works. You're maybe defending your voice. [...] We're never talking about individuals; it's always the bass, not Jón!!!! If you don't produce, well, that's a battle, let them have it. You have got to demand it. Anywhere else, publicly, we're one choir, the people that listen, they listen to the whole team! (P2)

9.4.2 Collaboration and Competition in Rehearsing Songs

At a later stage of rehearsal, a different standing arrangement facilitates another kind of collaboration. Sometimes the 60 men move from their normal arrangement on risers, where they stand in same-voice category groups, and stand in one large circle. At this point, nobody stands next to a same-voice singer. Significantly, none of the men see this arrangement as a competitive one, none of them claim to avoid listening to the other voices, in a “fingers in ears, singing in harmony” sense, rather the men seek an appropriate self to a “different voice” balance:

I think it is really great when we rehearse in a circle, stand beside somebody in the bass, if you're secure, then it's really fun to sing. You're with the support you need; you can get into the harmony. Build the higher voices down into the bass. (P2)

You hear it naturally, but you maybe try to lock it out while you are still trying to learn your part and then you begin to put some effort into trying to listen and find some balance with it ... then you can feel, you can find, the whole thing, the sound.... (P10)

I mean that is the most important thing if it's really going to work, that everybody hears what everybody else is doing.... (P11)

The concept that men are articulating is sometimes described as the Self to Other Ratio (SOR) and its significance in choral singing has been examined as an

acoustical phenomenon (Ternstrom & Karna, 2002; Daugherty, 2000). The SOR is seen as key to both good intonation and ensemble and it can be affected not only by individuals' own vocal techniques but also by external factors such as the arrangement of voices, use of folders and other acoustical factors. The men in the present study however articulate a significant psychological perspective to this phenomenon, which appears to have salience for the meaning they make of their collaborative vocal activity. The ideal Self to Other Acoustic Ratio appears to be a metaphor for an ideal Self to Other Social ratio. This is an important concept for our understanding of vocal connectedness and the voice's agency in the persona to which I return at the end of this chapter.

9.4.3 Collaboration and Competition in Formal Performance

Effective performance of songs in harmony is clearly perceived as depending on an all-channel communication pattern: singers must hear their voice, others singing the same part and other voices around them:

Over the past few years, I've been more willing to listen to others and I would like to find it even more, to find the sound with another voice. [...] You feel much better in harmony with others. Then you get that kick. That's how it's supposed to be (P2)

At another level, the conductor mediates this all-channel vocal collaboration and ultimately of course the formal singing situation varies fundamentally from the informal because of the status of the conductor. Given the size of the group, this is not surprising. Even so, only one of the men in the study saw the conductor's role as a clearly authoritarian one.

You have a piece, a project and you solve it together, but the conductor decides ... the interpretation I've always been able to submit to the captain, I've never been the rebelling type. It's not one person's responsibility the performance of a song; it has to be the conductor. I mean you are just one of 50 voices that make that sound, and who's going to see that it sounds all right ... it's got to be one person. (P2)

9.4.4 Connecting with an Audience

The formal performance setting differs from the informal vocal one because of the role of a vocally non-participatory audience. Bringing an audience into some kind

of shared aesthetic collaboration about mood and emotion is clearly seen as important though, whilst at the same time a kind of competition is clearly discernable in the ways in which men see one of the prizes of singing publicly as

soothing other people, influencing their mood. You do it in a game not like propaganda – it's a game [...] and on stage when (you) hear that everybody in the audience is captive, listening and (you) sing a note that everyone is waiting for, that's incredible influence that that person has, power. (P2)

Weber's re-defining of James's social self as persona, is particularly appropriate for the study of singing and Self, with its emphasis on the ways in which we present ourselves to others. Formal musical performance is, of course, a particular, symbolic version of these patterns of connectedness and these are the versions of patterns that Davidson theorises about as the identity of the solo performer (2002b). The men in the present study clearly project a group identity onto wider social systems through the act of vocal performance - a public display of who we are and what we do in similar ways as Davidson's solo performers. Nevertheless, there are fundamental differences: whilst still retaining a very strong sense of myself, singing together facilitates a projection of a collective mask - the collective vocal Self – which individuals might not be able to sustain alone, either for reasons that relate to their vocal ability or because they may not have developed the solo performance identity of which Davidson speaks. Along the lines of creative systems theories thinking, most of the men find that the sum of their vocal skills and achievements are far greater than their own individually. Whilst their individual voices might not be of particular interest to people outside of their close social networks, their collective one is, and it is often able to draw other people's attention and connect with them.

It's like expressing something of *myself*, giving something of *oneself*. (P8)

It's essential to share with people what it is we've been doing, show what we've done and let them *feel* what we can do. (P1)
(My italics reflecting narrators' emphases)

Performing is about the need for attention or something. (P12)

Together, men may be able to impact the mood and feeling of other people in the same kind of way as Baldur's Grandma had talked about singing in the home and as Magnus had suggested above.

Soothing other people, influencing their mood, that's incredible power that that person has. (P2)

So this is still a reciprocal connection with other people, where feedback is seen as an essential recognition of who we are. The presence of others is associated with evaluation and arousal in general psychology literature (Travis, 1925; Zajonc 1965; Cottrell, 1968, 1972. All cited in Wilke & Wit, 2001). This is rarely as explicit as in public performance. Indeed the presence of audience-others is seen by the men as leading to an improved performance of this identity. Given that tasks are normally very well learned – and this choir performs almost all its extensive repertoire by memory – this is as Zajonc predicts (ibid.).

It's the excitement and challenge, the need for attention, it's more fun to sing, we were pretty bloody good. (P11)

It's special, when we're singing and people stand up for us. (P9)

It's worth a lot when people say the choir has really sung well ... it's a nice feeling to have that support. (P4)

We can begin to see then, how competitive and collaborative strategies work in the formal setting of the male voice choir, establishing and maintaining all kinds of vocal and social connections. When we return again to less formal settings however, we find very different strategies at work.

9.4.5 Informal Collaboration as Performance

Many of the men's first experiences of homo-social singing are not in the formal situation of the male-voice choir. All kinds of social arenas become settings for vocal behaviour; birthday parties, mountain huts, sheep corrals, dance floors, men's toilets, and family get-togethers. All kinds of spaces become vocal places – barns, silos and resonant landscapes. Many of the songs will be the same as are

sung in the male voice choir, others will be from a large, orally transmitted repertoire of what have become essentially “folksongs”. The singing will usually be in harmony and if the harmonies are not “known”, they may be improvised. Men can even try themselves out in another voice from that which they sing in the formal choral setting – first tenor being a popular choice!

I'd always been in awe of the tenors. Just tried as hard as you could, to get up there, on some high note or something! (laughs) (P8)

Understanding the construction of these various vocal spaces will be one of the themes of the next chapter. For now, I wish to note that highly pleasurable experiences in these informal singing settings often appear to have been significant in subsequent decisions to join the choir. The pleasure derived from these peak experiences seems almost exclusively to stem from collaborating on a *singing in harmony* project – a very strong sense of being in harmony with other people, vocally and physically. Whilst even in informal settings like birthdays or dances the men may subject themselves to a self-appointed conductor to coordinate vocal collaboration, equally as often they will rely on a kind of audio all-channel communication between as many group members as possible, with added aids of facial expression, physical gesture and touch (Faulkner, 2003). Once again, these physical issues will be dealt with in greater depth in the following chapter. Significantly, divisions between learning, rehearsing, and performing do not exist here; this is learning “on the job”. The essence of this “musicking” – a term borrowed from Small (1998) – is the collective vocal moment. The preferred mode of learning appears to be something akin to co-operative, peer teaching; although there is no formal teacher some individuals clearly have expert status. Men huddle together in a kind of vocal scrum. When a participant is unsure of a voice, they may even align themselves, almost to cheek-to-cheek, with other singers. Men talk about learning a vocal part by being physically sensitized to it, their bodies are literally physical sensors, and in close proximity, they are able to pick up and tune in to the right signal, even though other voices may be sounding around them.

You know there is a big tradition of singing at birthday parties.... It was around 1988-90, quite a few people had big birthday parties and (I)

wanted to take part too and stood beside somebody who could do it, ... somebody who knows the part and you are sensitized to it.... pick it up. (P9)

I went to his birthday party There was this amazing singing. I ended up singing with them, and I was taken into their group. It was the first time I got this feeling for singing in voices, that I've always been so attracted to ... tremendously enjoyable ... I fell for it straight away ... this sound, the harmony that you land inside of ... pulled along in the sound. (P4)

Aha? (RF)

I got a lot of really good instruction from him. It was good to follow him and learn the part. (P4)

Was that formal instruction of some kind? Did he teach you the voice or something? (RF)

No, no, just following him and learning the part, he knew all these songs; we didn't have any notes or anything. (P4)

Thus, a whole repertoire of Icelandic "folksongs" has been orally transmitted by an integrated collaborative mode of learning/rehearsing/performing – vocal behaviour in a much more democratic network of connections than that which is typical of the male-voice choir. The physical intimacy that often accompanies them suggests that the Self to Other Ratio in singing has not just an acoustic and psychological dimension, but a physical one too.

9.4.6 Informal Vocal Competitions

At some dance or something, the guys might get together out in the corner and start blowing their chests out a bit. It's some kind of struggle or competition; maybe they're not totally in control ... because of the booze. (P4)

Competing for what? (RF)

Who sings the loudest or highest, probably. (P4)

When the guys have had a few then they tend to screw themselves up as high as they can ... and normally they are in some kind of singing competition, who can sing the highest and best. (P10)

The competitions that the men speak of above will invariably be in unison and, regardless of the singers' normal range, singing high tenor appears to afford most status. But the paradox of the competitive co-operative dimension is illustrated in that even this informal competition:

...holds the group together and ... there's ... there's great joy in it
(P8)

Moreover, whilst there are no formal competitions between choirs in Iceland, unlike many other contemporary choral cultures, an interesting incident happened when the male-voice choir found itself staying at the same hotel as another male-voice choir from Reykjavik. Having decided to eat together, the two choirs then proceeded to sing for each other in what was quite clearly a competitive sparring match. I was instructed to conduct repertoire that would "show 'em what we could do". After several rounds, a truce appeared to be called, but long into the night, strained battle cries could be heard from alcohol imbibing individuals and small groups from both choirs all over the hotel.

Aren't they just displaying themselves, proving that they are better than the others, can sing higher. Jón was doing it the other day with guys from x choir, well into the night. I've stopped trying to jack myself up there! (P10)

Having proved mutual vocal prowess, that evening was also the beginning of considerable formal collaborative ventures and co-operation between the two choirs. Both the choir's foreman and I have since been made honorary members of the "opposing" choir, exchange visits organized, super-ordinate goals were established, calling for vocal and social collaboration between the groups.

9.5 Summing up Song and the Social Self

By way of an interim summary, then, the men in the study appear to use vocal behaviour to ensure that they are socially well connected. The connections, mediated by individual or group vocal behaviour are highly cherished, and whilst they may vary according to the nature of relationship – parental – immediate family – kinship – wider social groups – audience – they are clearly seen as essential components in the technology of the social self. In most cases, this technology makes complicated patterns across a wide range of micro- and macro settings, in intimate vocal dialogues, small-scale ensembles and in large-scale choral interaction. Weber's conceptualisation of persona sees it as being constituted by ways in which people present themselves and receive each other. A central construct of persona for men in the study is vocal behaviour – the many

and varied ways in which they sing to and for each other, listen to each other singing, and sing with one another. In a wide range of social settings, establishing and maintaining these connections is a question of finding an ideal Self to Other Ratio, finding it vocally is perceived as finding it psychologically too. This will mean adapting voices and voice projection according to whom it is that the singer is connecting with, whether that is young infants, parents and families, friends, fellow choristers, or “opposing” ones. Whilst most of the men connect vocally in all kinds of directions and to all kinds of people, there is evidence to suggest that family vocal practices or even in extreme cases, the absence of them, produce family scripts which subsequent generations tend to follow too. Nevertheless vocal behaviour appears to be so central to the social self that nearly all of the singers find themselves moving easily between formal and informal modes, domestic and public settings. This is the vocal equivalent of James’s claim that individuals have as many Social Selves as groups of people whose opinions they care about. The men are able to put on different vocal identities or voices or join vocal forces with others to facilitate the making of these connections. One night Jón sings lullabies, the next a lively male-voice choir song; both voices are aimed at the making of social connections with his children. At the male-voice choir practice, he may tune in more finely to receptive modes, as he attempts to learn a new song in a very different setting. The next evening at a birthday party, he may be in close physical proximity with friends singing together in half learnt, half-improvised harmony. On Friday evening, he may join forces with the male voice choir in an effort to project a collective identity and make new connections in a formal concert setting. All of these situations will require different voices, the employment of competitive or collaborative vocal strategies like those discussed above, and empathy - an operation that Weber sees as absolutely central to the social Self.

I mentioned above the significance of projective and receptive empathies in the vocal dialogues in which parents or grandparents engaged in with infants and children, without clarifying those concepts sufficiently. Weber talks of projective and receptive empathies as tools in the building of connection and community; the former a tool for reaching out to others, the latter, the basis for understanding other people’s mental states and processes (Weber, 2000: 159ff.). These tools, technologies of the expanding Self, fashion ways of creatively

participating – albeit intuitively and unconsciously – in the minds, feelings and thinking of others and even “incorporating them into our own self”. Singing is clearly employed by men in the present study in just this way, just as it was employed by Baldur’s mother and in his home, as a way of building family. Men note the effectiveness of this tool as an empathetic mechanism of identifying with and understanding other people’s situations, feelings, and motives. Likewise, it helps them project their own thoughts and feelings, developing often very close personal relationships with significant individuals or groups, or short term casual affairs with that evening’s audience. We have seen how this applies in particular to relationships with very young children, relationships not appropriated to such a large extent by forms of verbal communication soon to become the hegemonic mode of social interaction. But I want to argue that concepts of projective and receptive empathy are also at the heart of the value that all men in the study without exception attach to singing with all kinds of other people. More especially, I believe that it provides us with a model of the workings of peak aesthetic and psychological experiences that the men clearly perceive in singing in harmony. The idea that music is a metaphor for human relationships is not a novel one, but the application of this metaphor for understanding music’s meaning in Western settings at least, has often been aimed at musical works themselves rather than at musical behaviours. The men here provide us with plenty of evidence that they see singing in harmony as synonymous with *being* in harmony. Just as good singing in harmony is often conceptualised acoustically as the Self to Other Ratio (SOR), finding the right balance between individuals, making social networks that maintain a clarity and equality of parts, is a question of balancing projective and receptive empathies. Matching others in vocal behaviour, whether it is the mirroring of adult and infant interaction, or adults singing in harmony, requires this aural and vocal empathy. Being in harmony relies on musical manifestations of projective and receptive empathies and whilst this may be true of any ensemble music making, it has particular meaning in vocal behaviour because of the embodied and physical nature of singing – themes we turn to in the next chapter. When vocal practices are as commonplace and everyday as they appear to be in the lives of most of the men in the present study, then it becomes easy to see how singing forms a core construct of their social Self or persona.

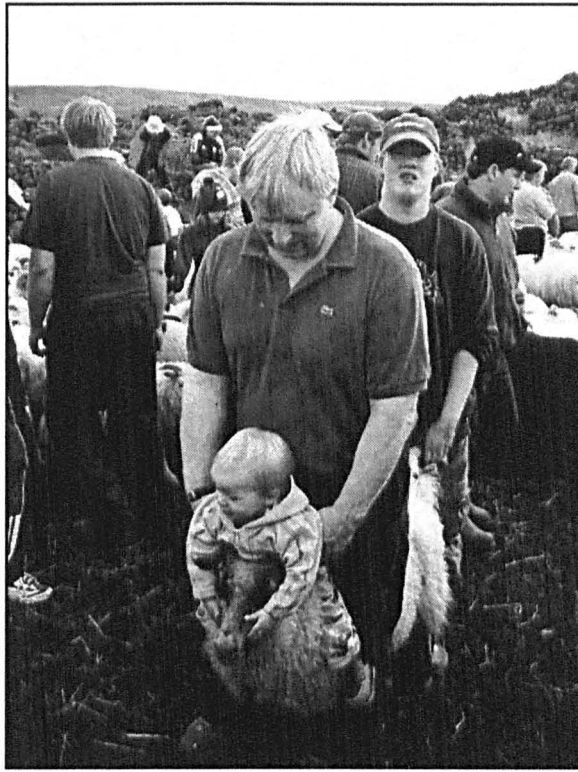
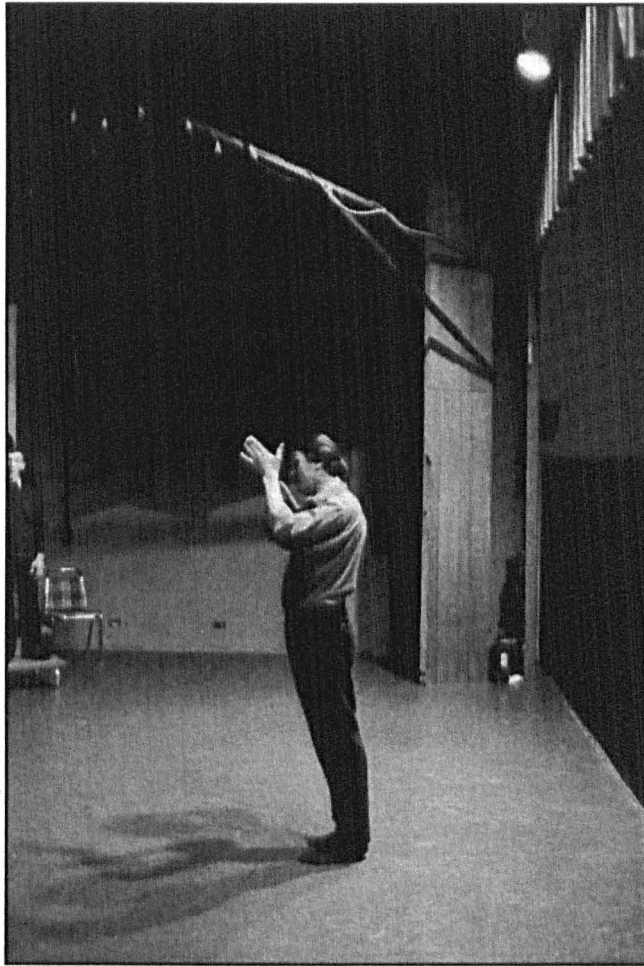


Fig. 9:1
"Family-scripts"



Fig. 9.2
Quartet Gardar Holm



Figs. 9.3 & 9.4

“You have a piece, a project and you solve it together, but the conductor decides...the interpretation...”