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**‘Wild flowers of minstrelsy’ and ‘noxious
weeds’: the Folk and the Masses as an
imagined binary**



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the Folk and the Masses as an imagined binary

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Introduction

‘There is a great deal of trouble and unrest in the world all around us – what is going to see us through these great present day troubles?’ -

- as wrote Cecil Sharp in his preparatory notes for a lecture he was to give to the English Folk Dance Society, in January 1921.¹ His implicit answer was the Folk-Song Revival.

The First English Folk-Song Revival was a movement which is understood to have operated at full force from approximately 1890 to 1914. It involved a tight-knit group of amateur and professional musicians and music-loving intellectuals, as well as a few notable classical composers. These individuals wanted to preserve the traditional songs of the countryside, which they believed were underappreciated, and at risk of extinction. The Revival was initially somewhat of a ‘genteel talking-shop’, but was invigorated by the formation of London’s Folk-Song Society (FSS) in 1898, which coordinated collecting efforts, and provided the funding and means to compile the collected songs into books and pamphlets, for dissemination amongst the society’s members.² Song-collectors travelled around the rural peripheries of England, looking for people willing to sing old songs to them which they could notate and transcribe. The foremost collector was Cecil Sharp, who was notable for the scale of his efforts, particularly in South-West England, and, according to his colleague Lucy Broadwood, elected himself ‘King of the whole movement’.³

This dissertation is a study of discourse amongst folk-song collectors, illuminated in their individual published work, their journal publications, and in the back and forth of their letters

¹ Lecture by Cecil Sharp, 1921, EFDSS Archive, CJS1/5/24.

² Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 42.

³ Letter from Lucy Broadwood to Bertha Broadwood, 1924, Surrey History Centre, 2297/9.

written to each other. It will focus on Sharp and his colleagues, many of whom were close friends. Sharp can be understood as the nucleus of what was a markedly insular circle of song-collectors, as is evident in the acknowledgements of each of their works, which consistently repeat the same select handful of names.⁴ Indeed, the collectors this dissertation draws on were all to varying degrees of closeness involved with the FSS, which was an undeniably exclusive club of educated, affluent men and women, including lords and ladies, and required a paid membership.⁵ The collectors' shared position of societal privilege will be of key importance in this dissertation.

This dissertation will argue that, in their discourse about folk-song collecting, the collectors constructed and upheld a valorised, rigid binary of a content rural 'folk', and a disruptive urban 'masses', which was repeatedly strengthened by the collectors' moralised, metaphor-laden language. This romanticisation and vilification of the rural and urban working-classes operated on three levels of people, music, and place. The folk/masses binary was a construct of the song-collectors' imagination, so necessarily reflects the collectors more than the collected – as such, it is the song-collectors who are the ultimate object of this dissertation's study. By establishing the folk as a precious, vulnerable national treasure, and the masses as a sprawling, encroaching threat, the binary served to justify the Revival as an urgent defensive mission. However, more than this, this dissertation will argue that the binary both reflected and stoked personal class-specific anxieties felt by these song-collectors around the turn of the century – anxieties of an encroaching, destabilising modernity, which Sharp described as 'these great present day troubles'.⁶ Thus, through historicising the song-collectors' written

⁴ See, Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk-Song, Some Conclusions* (Taunton: Barnicott and Pearce, 1907).

⁵ Richard Sykes, 'The Evolution of Englishness in the English Folksong Revival 1890-1914' *Folk Music Journal*, 6 (1993), 446-490 (p. 446).

⁶ Sharp, CJS1/5/24.

language, it becomes clear that the folk/masses binary was not just an intellectual response to the decline of folk-song, but a product of the collectors feeling like they themselves were under threat. The threat was, in its broadest sense, modernity.

Literature Review

There is limited historical scholarship focused on the collectors of the early English folk-song Revival. Some scholars have written biographical studies of individual collectors and their specific contributions, such as C. J. Bearman's study of Percy Grainger and E. David Gregory's of Lucy Broadwood.⁷ These biographical works are generally sympathetic in their approach, essentially seeking to chart the life of an honourable, upright individual. The complimentary nature of much of this literature has contributed to the way that song-collecting has consistently been framed as no more than a benevolent, antiquarian hobby, motivated by preserving the traditional musical products of the countryside, for the good of the future of the nation. The association of the early folk revival with the reform of children's education adds further fuel to this image of innocuousness.⁸ Additionally, Sharp himself, as the movement's self-elected patriarch, has had a profound effect on popular and scholarly perceptions of both folk-song collectors and the folk, shaping the surrounding historiography. The scale of his efforts and the accessibility of his publications, alongside his charismatic personality and dogged self-belief, have meant that for many years his theories circulated unscrutinised, settling comfortably into national consciousness.⁹ Combined, these factors meant that folk-song collectors were assumed to possess what Georgina Boyes calls an

⁷ C. J. Bearman, 'Percy Grainger, the Phonograph, and the Folk Song Society' *Music & Letters*, 8 (2003), 434-455; E. David Gregory, 'Before the Folk-Song Society: Lucy Broadwood and English Folk Song, 1884-97' *Folk Music Journal*, 9.3 (2008), 372-414.

⁸ Maud Karpeles, 'Definitions 1906-7' in *Cecil Sharp, His Life and Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967).

⁹ Ross Cole, 'On the Politics of Folk Song Theory in Edwardian England' *Ethnomusicology*, 6 (2019), 19-42, (p.36).

‘innocence of ideology’, and their pursuit was seen as wholly apolitical, and thus not worthy of scholarly deconstruction.¹⁰

However, towards the end of the twentieth century, several scholars from a range of disciplines staged sophisticated interventions in the dominant historiographical conception of English folk-song and its collectors. This dissertation will refer to these interventions as a ‘critical turn’. This scholarship of the critical turn developed alongside the postmodernist rise of cultural history, and was deeply influenced by the social histories of the 1960s. Dave Harker was the forerunner, publishing *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British ‘folksong’, 1700 to the Present Day* in 1985.¹¹ Drawing heavily on Marxist historiography, Harker broke new ground in his fierce deconstruction of the category of Folk, working across a sweeping time-frame. His central argument was that folk-song collectors must be considered as bourgeois, opportunistic ‘mediators’ of working-class vernacular culture. He suggested that they were highly selective in their ‘collecting’ venture, interested only in songs which conformed to their particular definition of folk-song. Once they had been ‘collected’, many songs were edited – their lyrics subject to censorship and their melody subject to harmonisation – in order to meet highbrow standards of acceptability. In this way, Harker proposed that what was framed as a noble act of preservation, was really an act of cultural expropriation and financial exploitation.

Eight years after *Fakesong* was published, came Boyes’ *Imagined Village : Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*, which implemented a similar class-based mode of analysis, and was fundamentally in agreement with Harker, but was focused in on Sharp and his contemporaries.¹² Boyes demonstrated that folk-song collectors imagined rural villages to be

¹⁰ Boyes (1993), p. xiv.

¹¹ Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British ‘folksong’, 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1985).

¹² Boyes (1993).

magical, isolated remnants of a preindustrial past, far away from present-day urban modernity. This highly romanticised vision of rural place corresponded to an idealisation of rural people – Boyes demonstrated that the collectors portrayed the folk as an anonymous collective, characterised by sensuality and deference. Both Harker and Boyes were drawing on Eric Hobsbawm's theory of the invention of tradition, which was gaining traction within folklore studies in the 1980s, and proposed that old-seeming traditions are actually often recent inventions, invested in in order to legitimise power or stabilise identity.¹³ As such, read together, the theses of Harker and Boyes argue that the folk, their folk-song, and their villages were all mythical entities constructed by the folk-song collectors, who, rather than collectors, would be better described as manufacturers, mediators, or even inventors. This argument of the mythic origin of the folk will henceforth be referred to as the Harker-Boyes thesis, a phrase coined in an article by E. David Gregory.¹⁴

Having established that a tradition has been invented, the logical next step is to consider the motivations of the inventors. Harker and Boyes, along with scholars including Richard Sykes and John Francmanis have gone some way towards situating the collectors within intertwining contemporaneous ideological and intellectual currents, such as nationalism, socialism, imperialism, the Arts and Crafts Movement, and eugenicist fears of degeneracy.¹⁵ These efforts to deconstruct and ideologically justify the existence of the category of Folk were subject to virulent critique in the early 2000s from conservative scholars including C. J.

¹³ *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 1.

¹⁴ E. David Gregory, 'Fakesong in an Imagined Village? A Critique of the Harker-Boyes Thesis' *Musique Folklorique Canadienne*, 43 (2009), 18-26.

¹⁵ Sykes (1993).; and John Francmanis, 'National Music to National Redeemer: The Consolidation of a 'Folk-Song' Construct in Edwardian England' *Popular Music*, 21 (2002), 1-25.

Bearman and E. David Gregory.¹⁶ Bearman and Gregory's attacks were on the grounds of both defective methodology and 'Marxist orthodoxy', which they believed contributed to 'unfounded and limited assumptions' about the motivations of the song-collectors.¹⁷ Harker retorted with a defence, calling Bearman's work 'systematically inaccurate and sometimes libellous'.¹⁸ Ethnomusicologist Ross Cole has suggested that these 'enduring and at times acrimonious debates' over the 'fakeness' of the folk have kept the study of folk-song underdeveloped and peripheral.¹⁹

In recent years, building on the groundwork laid in the Harker-Boyes thesis, Ross Cole has propelled this field of deconstructive scholarship onwards, with several extensively researched articles, and, in 2021, a full length book called *The Folk: Music, Modernity, and the Political Imagination*. Harker had pronounced the politics of the song-collectors 'a bizarre mixture of radical and reactionary elements',²⁰ but Cole has since deftly demonstrated the intellectual coherence of their complicated ideological position. In particular, Cole's pioneering efforts to connect the folk revival with fascist ideology have added nuance to scholarly understandings of folk-music as England's 'race-product'.²¹ Cole suggested that the tendency amongst academics to treat an individual like Rolf Gardiner – a folk revivalist and overt fascist – as an eccentric, anomalous exception of the song-collecting movement, serves to maintain folk-song's innocuous identity.²²

¹⁶ C. J. Bearman, 'Cecil Sharp in Somerset: Some Reflections on the Work of David Harker' *Folklore*, 113 (2002) 11-34; Gregory (2009).

¹⁷ C. J. Bearman, 'Who Were the Folk? The Demography of Cecil Sharp's Somerset Folk Singers' *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 751-775, (p. 775); Bearman (2002); E. David Gregory (2009).

¹⁸ David Harker, 'Dr Bearman's 'meticulous scholarship'' *Folk Music Journal*, 11 (2017) 49-53, (p. 49).

¹⁹ Cole (2019), p. 19.

²⁰ Harker (1985), p. 175.

²¹ Sharp (1907), p. 136.

²² Cole, *The Folk: Music, Modernity, and the Political Imagination* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021), p. 152.

The works of folk-song scholars of the critical turn, including both Harker and Cole, have received criticism from reviewers who were disappointed by their theoretical, political treatment of the folk revival, and the scholars' perceived lack of interest in the musical form of the songs themselves.²³ Similarly, this dissertation takes as its object of study not the music of the folk-song revival, but its collectors. To support this focus, this dissertation will avoid the incendiary language of fakery employed somewhat notoriously by Harker, as well as by numerous other scholars of folk and popular music, including Richard Dorson, Yuval Taylor and Hugh Barker.²⁴ As Vic Gammon contends, labelling an invented tradition as fake can obscure the layered processes of mediation and manufacture which deserve close analysis.²⁵ Instead, this dissertation will adopt Boyes' vocabulary of imagination.

In *The Imagined Village*, Boyes made the revisionist decision to capitalise the word 'folk', in order to emphasise that it is a constructed category, based on the imagination of song-collectors, not on real rural oral culture. This dissertation will proceed similarly, and will also capitalise the word 'masses', to support a focus on the imagined Folk/Masses binary. In the same vein, inspired by Boyes' conception of an imagined village, this dissertation will refer to an imagined city, which was similarly created and maintained by the song-collectors' discourse. As such, when the terms Folk, Masses, imagined village and imagined city are employed it should be assumed that what is being discussed is a construction, rather than a reality. These linguistic shifts are vital, serving to foreground the song-collectors as active producers, rather than just passive collectors.

²³ See, Brian Peters, Review of Cole (2021) *Folk Music Journal*, (2022) 152-155; Phil Edwards, Review of Harker (1985) *Fifty-Two Folk Songs*, (2015).

²⁴ Harker (1985).; Yuval Taylor and Hugh Barker, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007); Richard Dorson, *Folklore and Fakelore: Essays toward a Discipline of Folk Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976).

²⁵ Vic Gammon, 'Cecil Sharp, Politics, Dance and American Englishness' *Musical Traditions*, (2011).

This dissertation will contribute to the aforementioned scholarship of the critical turn. It will provide a historical perspective which has thus far been missing from the field, engaging closely with the specifics of time and place in order to contextualise the song-collectors' discourse. At its core lies the Harker-Boyes thesis, and of critical importance to its argument, particularly in Chapter Three, is the work of Cole, and his consideration of ideology. As discussed, preexisting scholarship has been led by the idea of the collectors as mediators, distorting vernacular culture for their own economic or cultural gain. This dissertation will diverge from this corpus of work in its concentration on discourse – on the semantic intricacies of the words with which the song-collectors described the Folk, the Masses, and their respective songs and homes. Within the collectors' discourse, this study's central focus is the constructed, moralised binary of the Folk and the Masses. The importance of the urban Masses and the imagined city to the song collectors, as an antithesis to their conception of the Folk and the imagined village, has not yet been explicitly discussed in scholarship. This stark opposition acts as a helpful frame with which to structure this dissertation's argument, as well as an intellectual lens through which the collectors' collective hopes and anxieties can be viewed with a new clarity. In this way, this dissertation is centrally concerned not with the Folk Revival as an imposition of elite ideas and desires, but as a reflection of the instability of the time.

Methodology

Much of the language used to describe the Folk and to justify the folk-song collecting mission was highly symbolic, rich in metaphors and emotive description. In order to support a discussion of the characteristics of discourse amongst folk-song collectors, this dissertation will take a linguistic approach, engaging in close textual readings of the collectors' letters,

transcriptions, song collections, books, lecture notes, and journal articles, implementing the methodology of discourse analysis.²⁶ Discourse analysis treats discourse, of any form, as the verbal manifestation of institutionalised patterns of knowledge, and is thus concerned with the social contexts in which discourse is embedded. There is no existing scholarship focused on the collectors of the first Folk Revival which has directly drawn on the methods of discourse analysis. However, this dissertation's approach has been influenced by two recent musicological studies by Matthew Ord and Monique Charles which have employed discourse analysis techniques.²⁷

Within the methodology of discourse analysis, this dissertation's approach is particularly informed by Roland Barthes' 'theory of signs', developed in his 1957 collection of essays, *Mythologies*.²⁸ Barthes contends that the construction of myths relies on two levels of language – the language-object and the metalanguage. The language-object refers to the literal, dictionary-definition meaning of the words, while the metalanguage encompasses the cultural myths and assumptions which imbue the discourse about the objects in question.²⁹ As such, through his study of the consumer culture of post-war France, Barthes argued that the bourgeoisie organised every-day objects of conversation like red wine, milk, and soap 'into meaningful relationships via narratives that expressed collective cultural values'.³⁰ This dissertation's approach to discourse analysis will, informed by Barthes, help analyse the collective values and anxieties which contributed to the construction of a moralised,

²⁶ Evgeniya Aleshinskaya, 'Key Components of Musial Discourse Analysis' *Research in Language*, 11 (2013), 423-444.

²⁷ Matthew Ord, *Sound Recording in the British Folk Revival: Ideology, Discourse and Practice, 1950-1975* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Newcastle University, 2017); Monique Charles, 'MDA as a Research Method: Sifting Through Grime (Music) as an SFT Case Study', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17 (2018), 1-11.

²⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 111.

²⁹ Barthes (1972), p. 114.

³⁰ D.J Huppertz, 'Roland Barthes, Mythologies' *Design and Culture* 3 (2011), 85-100. (p. 88).

oppositional relationship between the rural and urban working classes in discourse between folk-song collectors.

This dissertation is primarily a study of the opinions and assumptions of English folk-song collectors working from the 1890s to the 1910s, all of whom were to varying degrees of closeness involved with the FSS – as such, it draws on various publications authored by these collectors. The span of the dissertation’s time-frame deliberately allows an inclusion of texts which predate the founding of the FSS in 1898. These early folk-song publications including Lucy Broadwood and J. A. Fuller Maitland’s *English County Songs* of 1893 provide a valuable insight into the budding interest in folk-song collecting as a middle-class pursuit at the end of the nineteenth century.³¹ This dissertation will not stretch past the onset of World War One, which brought Folk-Song Society activities to a relative standstill, and inevitably transformed debates around nationhood and modernity, beyond the scope of this study. Some primary sources post 1914 are used, but consist of collectors’ reflections on their early song-collecting activities in the first decades of the twentieth century, so can be analysed in conjunction with earlier texts. This study’s chosen time frame is shared by other works looking critically at the English Folk-Song Revival such as those by Cole and Richard Sykes.³²

This dissertation has drawn some of its primary sources from the extensive online archive of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, housed in The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, which holds the personal papers of key collectors, many of which have been neglected in existing scholarship. It is necessary to note that folk-song collectors’ primary pursuit was song-collecting, so, as a result, their archival presence is mostly in the form of transcriptions of

³¹ Lucy E Broadwood and J. A. Fuller Maitland, *English County Songs* (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1893).

³² Cole (2021); Sykes (1993).

songs and their lyrics, which offer little in the way of understanding the particular perspective of the collectors. The archive also houses a large number of letters, the vast majority of which are void of personal opinion, concerning only the practicalities of song-collecting trips, or else discussing the originality and authenticity of newly heard songs with fellow collectors. However, occasionally the letters provide valuable insights into collectors' opinions of the Folk and their motivations for the collecting mission. Also useful are the collectors' notes to themselves, taken in the margins of their song transcriptions, often referencing their thoughts about the singers they were encountering.

As the movement gathered in momentum, several collectors published extended works pursuing their ideas about the origins and characteristics of folk-song, alongside discussions of folk-song's present-day value. These books have formed the main source base for this dissertation, as they contain the collectors' personal reflections and opinions in an uninterrupted stream of prose. Sharp's *English Folk Song, Some Conclusions* is the primary text which this study draws on. Sharp writes it to 'attract the notice and kindly consideration of students' and 'fellow workers' – it can be considered as fitting neatly into the exclusive discursive landscape in which the collectors operate.³³ The work is split into twelve chapters, which cover the definition of folk-song, track its genesis and evolution, introduce its modal, tonal, and rhythmic character, and then move to a discussion of its present state and potential future. For this dissertation, its utility lies in that it is filled with unsubstantiated opinion, written as indisputable fact – there are no references included in this work. Sharp's language is laden with highly emotive metaphors and descriptive intricacies, which provide valuable entry points into the underlying feelings of anxiety with which this dissertation is concerned.

³³ Sharp, 1907, p. viii.

Ralph Vaughan Williams' *English Folk Songs*, and Broadwood and Fuller Maitland's aforementioned *English County Songs* are both song collections, with their pages almost entirely taken up by notated transcriptions of the songs the collectors heard.³⁴ However in both works the collectors' own subjectivity comes to the fore in the preface, which, in light of the Harker-Boyes thesis, offers illuminating insight into the values and assumptions propping up the song-collecting venture. Journal articles have also contributed to this dissertation's primary source base, particularly the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, which provided a space where folk-song lovers and collectors could voice their experience and concerns for fellow enthusiasts to read, often referencing the letters they had sent each other. For this dissertation, journal articles have been crucial for situating folk-song discourse within the institutions which propelled it, whilst developing an understanding of the insularity of the song-collecting community.

Structure

This dissertation will adopt a tripartite structure, with the first two chapters demonstrating the existence of a moralised binary within the song-collectors' discourse, and the third chapter contextualising the existence of this binary. Chapter One will consider the imagined Folk in isolation, gradually building up a picture of their romanticised character as it existed in the words and minds of the collectors: the Folk as spontaneous, as childlike, as primitive, as content – as a national treasure. Chapter Two will move to the imagined Masses, identifying the layers of vilification which position the urban working classes as the direct antithesis of the rural Folk: the Masses as artificial, as encroaching, as disruptive – as a threatening force.

³⁴ Ralph Vaughan Williams, *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* (London: Penguin Books, 1959); Broadwood and Maitland (1893).

Chapter Three will bring the Folk and the Masses together in the context of the time, reflecting on the rigidity of the binary. Here, a Barthesian approach will direct this inquiry towards underlying collective fears and values which I propose prop up the Folk/Masses binary.

Chapter One- The Folk and the Imagined Village

The first element of the Folk which will be discussed is the prevailing perception of folk-song as being communal and spontaneous in origin, which contributed to a broader romanticisation of the Folk themselves. Various collectors theorised on the origin and evolution of folk-songs, including Parry, who, in his inaugural address to the FSS, described folk-songs as ‘the products of crowds of fellow-workers, who sift, and try, and try again, till they have found the thing that suits their native taste’.³⁵ Parry’s address will be referred to frequently over the course of this dissertation, and was in the inaugural article of the FSS Journal’s first issue, thus providing a valuable insight into the Society’s core values in its early days. Parry’s suggestion of a process of refinement working towards a collective ideal was expanded on by Sharp, who identified continuity, variation, and selection as being the three processes which contribute to a folk-song’s evolution.³⁶

‘Continuity’ referred to a steady base state of evolution, aided by the perceived accuracy of oral transmission, while ‘Variation’ referred to melodic alterations made unintentionally by the singers, who Sharp described as ‘more or less unconscious of the melody’ of the songs they sang for him.³⁷ These individual, inadvertent alterations were thought to contribute to

³⁵ Hubert Parry, ‘Inaugural Address’ *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, 1 (1899), p. 3.

³⁶ Sharp (1907), p. xiii.

³⁷ Sharp (1907), p. 18.

the vitality of the evolution of folk-song, 'just as any extra feather in a bird's tail has led to the evolution of the fan-tail pigeon'.³⁸ With this reference to Darwinian evolutionary theory, Sharp clearly demonstrates that he understood the development of a folk-song to be an inevitable, evolutionary tide, within which the Folk themselves lack agency. 'Selection' referred to the importance of communal taste in selecting the songs which appeal to a collective sense of beauty or meaning, thus shaping the 'racial character' of the song.³⁹ Here, Sharp drew a comparison between a song's gradual, communally-driven evolution, and the way 'the pebble on the sea shore is rounded and polished by the action of the waves'.⁴⁰ This comparison is homogenising, casting the rural singers as the waves – as part of a powerful collective entity, acting unconsciously and without affectation. Similarly, Sharp has described the countryside as 'the fountain spring' of folk-song, which disregards the role of the Folk themselves, instead suggesting that music wells up spontaneously from the rural landscape.⁴¹ As well as that, folk-songs are very often referred to via a metaphor of wild-flowers by song-collectors including both Broadwood and Karpeles.⁴² The evolution of folk-song is explained by way of repeated references to features of the English countryside – this associates the Folk with something pure, organic, and deeply national.

The theory of folk-song origin and evolution, discussed by Parry and Sharp, and rearticulated by Maud Karpeles, reveals a way of thinking common to folk-song collectors, which positioned rural villages as isolated repositories for a continuous premodern tradition.⁴³ This perspective is heavily informed by nineteenth-century cultural evolutionism, typified by the work of

³⁸ Sharp (1907), p. 28.

³⁹ Sharp (1907), p. 31.

⁴⁰ Sharp (1907), p. 16.

⁴¹ Lecture by Cecil Sharp, 1903, EFDSS Archive, CJS1/5/1.

⁴² Cole (2021), p. 80.

⁴³ Maud Karpeles, *An Introduction to English Folk Song* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 12.

anthropologist E. B. Tylor.⁴⁴ Tylor believed that there were three stages of evolutionary development which all societies must move through in sequence: 'savagery', 'barbarism', and eventual 'civilization'.⁴⁵ In his 1871 book *Primitive Culture*, he suggested that residual cultural practices from earlier stages of the sequence sometimes 'survived' into civilization, taking the form of traditional customs, such as games, dances, and songs.⁴⁶ This theory of cultural 'survivals' meant that traditional customs found in contemporary England could be equated not only with an earlier stage of the nation's development, but also with other nations believed to have not yet progressed from the 'savage' or 'barbaric' state. For example, collector Percy Grainger asserted that 'we may always be sure' that the singing of 'an unsophisticated Lincolnshire agriculturalist' is more similar to the singing of 'Hottentots or other savages' than to that of an urban educated Englishman.⁴⁷

Tylor's work had a profound impact on perceptions of Folk culture, inspiring Sharp's song-collecting colleague and close friend Sabine Baring-Gould to publish *Strange Survivals* in 1892, in which he argued that cultural survivals, including folk-songs, dated back to when 'all men were children'.⁴⁸ Survivals theory focused attention on an undocumented national past, which the Folk had 'survived' and could therefore illuminate - this constituted a framing of the Folk as passive, functioning solely as carriers of the nation's heritage. In this way, this perspective was anonymising, obscuring the present-day agency of the rural working classes. Survivals theory also contributed to a pervasive sense amongst song-collectors of the Folk as living

⁴⁴ John R. Gold, George Revill, 'Gathering the voices of the people? Cecil Sharp, cultural hybridity, and the folk music of Appalachia' *Geography and Music*, 65 (2006), 55-66, (p. 57).

⁴⁵ E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London: Murray, 1871), p. 61.

⁴⁶ Tylor (1871), p. 63.

⁴⁷ Percy Grainger, 'The Impress of Personality in Unwritten Music' *The Musical Quarterly*, 75 (1991), 1-18, (p. 9).

⁴⁸ Sabine Baring-Gould, *Strange Survivals: Some Chapters in the History of Man* (London: Methuen and Co. 1892). p. 127.

beyond the normal workings of human time, in a state of developmental stasis.⁴⁹ The timelessness of the Folk was often alluded to by collectors, such as Broadwood, who, when writing about singers from Sussex and Surrey for the FSS journal, told of ‘their almost Chaucerian pronunciation’ which ‘carries one back irresistibly to olden times’.⁵⁰ Here, Broadwood is exemplifying the collectors’ romanticising tendency, framing folk-singers as a charming curiosity, and their villages as suspended in time. In 1893, complaining to Broadwood about a song-collecting colleague of theirs, Kidson wrote that ‘people to whose names I prefix the title “Mr.” he would have spoken of as “Old John So and So”’ – this highlights the way that some collectors saw the Folk as living relics, existing outside of society.⁵¹ The Folk were cherished for their apparent ability to resist the onward march of time, providing a direct thread of connection with the nation’s premodern past, but this in turn alienated them from modernity, and stripped them of their significance as historical subjects of the present day.

Cultural survivals theory suggested that folk-songs were relics from a more primitive, more childlike time. The Folk themselves have also consistently been framed as children by song-collectors, as a result of both the perceived simplicity of their minds and the purity of their personalities. Sharp stated that the Folk ‘find an especial difficulty both in making a start and in consummating a conclusion’, and so come to rely on stock phrases like ‘As I went out one May morning’, in the same way as an ‘infant story-teller’ relies on ‘once upon a time’.⁵² Later in the same book, Sharp also explicitly asserted that the folk-singer is like a child in the way that ‘(he) loves to think that the story which has moved him is not fictitious but true.’⁵³

⁴⁹ Boyes (1993), p. 14; Sykes (1993), p. 449.

⁵⁰ Lucy Broadwood ‘Introduction’ to a collection of songs from Sussex and Surrey’, *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, 4 (1902), 139-41 (p. 140); Sykes (1993), p. 449.

⁵¹ Letter from Frank Kidson to Lucy Broadwood, 1893, EFDSS Archive, LEB/4/86.

⁵² Sharp (1907), p. 92.

⁵³ Sharp (1907), p. 93.

The childlikeness of folk-singers was perceived to go beyond their straightforward approach to song, extending to the very essence of their characters. Parry described ‘the sensitive brain fibres’ of those who sing folk-songs, while Grainger recounted singer George Gouldthorpe’s ‘child-like mind, and his unworldly nature, seemingly void of all bitterness’ which ‘singularly fit him to voice the purity and sweetness of folk-art’.⁵⁴ The collectors’ language is patronising, reducing the adults who they are mining for songs down to crude caricatures. An extreme example of this attitude is recounted by Broadwood and Fuller Maitland, who wrote of their colleague who quickly gave up the song-collecting pursuit, saying ‘I had no idea that our old men were so stupid. No sooner do they see my paper and pencil than they become dumb; in fact, not only dumb, but sulky’.⁵⁵ The phrase ‘our old men’, repeated throughout song-collecting discourse, suggests a feeling of paternalistic possession, which aligns with the portrayal of folk-singers as insolent children. This all contributes to an oft-repeated image of folk-song as the nation’s beloved treasure, which must be treated ‘with the rarity of a precious stone’.⁵⁶ The word ‘treasure’ occurs strikingly frequently throughout the collectors’ letters and publications. In this image, the Folk are sweetly, naively unaware of the treasures they hold – here, in steps the noble, enlightened middle-class intellectual, to collect and protect the precious songs. By framing folk-songs as unearthed treasures from a primitive past, and the Folk as childlike and oblivious, the song-collectors were able to justify the Revival mission.

All aspects of the Folk character discussed so far rely on the Folk and their imagined village being separate from the rest of society, away from the influence of present-day intellectual and cultural trends. Physical isolation is necessary in order for the Folk to convincingly go

⁵⁴ Cole, ‘Vernacular Song and the Folkloric Imagination at the Fin de Siècle’ *Nineteenth Century Music*, 42 (2018), 73-95, (p. 84).

⁵⁵ Broadwood and Maitland (1893), iv.

⁵⁶ Frank Kidson, ‘Folk Song and Popular Song’ *The Choir and Musical Journal*, 3 (1912), 149-151, (p. 151).

about their imagined, simple, childlike lives, in their suspended-in-time village. In the preface to *Some Conclusions*, Sharp stresses the importance of a singer's 'untrained faculties' – a euphemism for illiteracy – which is a product of the fact that they have 'never been brought into close enough contact with educated persons to be influenced by them'.⁵⁷ This is also evident in the way that illiteracy was a key determiner of a true folk-singer in the eyes of the collectors. The word 'unlettered' was frequently used in discourse as an interchangeable synonym for 'Folk', despite the fact that, by 1900, literacy rates for both sexes were at around 97 per cent.⁵⁸

Evidently, folk-song was revered by collectors for its orality, which aligns with the dual characterisations of the Folk as primitive and as childlike, both of which are perceived as states of illiteracy. As well as this, drawing on the work of literary theorist Susan Stewart, the collectors' reverence for orality can be understood as a 'nostalgia for the presence of the body' which modern written culture renders absent.⁵⁹ In this way, relying on the perceived isolation of the imagined village, folk-music was presented as a natural, embodied expression, and the Folk as a feeling rather than a thinking people. Sharp succinctly captured this attitude when he claimed that country districts, 'by reason of their remoteness, have escaped the infection of modern ideas'.⁶⁰ The collectors' construction of these 'modern ideas' will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two, but it refers partly to a perceived endemic self-consciousness, described

⁵⁷ Sharp (1907), p. xi.

⁵⁸ Amy J. Lloyd, 'Education, Literacy and the Reading Public', *British Library Newspapers* (Detroit: Gale, 2007), p. 2.

⁵⁹ Susan Stewart, *Crimes of writing: Problems in the containment of representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) p. 90.

⁶⁰ Sharp (1907), p. xi.

by Sharp as a 'pretence and affectation'.⁶¹ The antithesis to this was the perceived instinctive authenticity of the isolated Folk.

To conclude, through their discourse, song-collectors established and consolidated their romanticised fantasy of the Folk, which was built on three levels of characterisation of people, place, and song. As a people, they were portrayed as simple and childlike in their unselfconsciousness. They lived in isolated, insular, imagined villages, alongside the wild-flowers and streams of the English countryside. They spontaneously, collectively sang their folk-songs, which were framed as authentic survivals of a purer, more primitive time, and were thus treated as national treasures. This builds up a neat, self-contained construction of the Folk as a people to be loved, carrying songs to be extracted and protected, all in the name of the nation. However, in song-collecting discourse, the rural Folk are shadowed over by the threatening presence of the urban Masses. This dissertation will now move on to a discussion of the way that the character of the Masses was imagined within discourse, which will suggest that the Revival was a product of fear as much as it was of love.

Chapter Two- The Masses and the Imagined City

Folk-song collectors' discourse is, as expected, centrally concerned with the Folk, but it also contains strikingly regular references to the imagined urban Masses, their music and their cities. For example, about a third of Parry's short inaugural address to the FSS is taken up with condemnations of 'the sordid vulgarity of our great city-populations', the 'common popular songs of the day', and the 'terribly overgrown towns'.⁶² Throughout collectors' discourse, the

⁶¹ Sharp (1907), p. 34.

⁶² Parry (1899), p. 1.

Masses are never discussed in isolation, but instead are constructed as the direct opposite to the Folk, posing a dangerous threat to the treasured rural folk-songs.

In the eyes of the song collectors, the most significant factors distinguishing the debased, vulgar music of the urban Masses from the purity of folk-song was its 'commercial intention'.⁶³

With folk-song firmly established as a product of oral collective spontaneity, the music of the urban Masses was positioned as its exaggerated opposite – Sharp described the urban musician as being inclined to 'turn it out mechanically, to use his head and not his heart'.⁶⁴

The motivation for this mechanical, unfeeling way of making music was, according to the collectors, an individualistic, competitive drive for profit. Parry asserted that folk music had flourished throughout the nation before people had 'devoted themselves so assiduously to the making of quick returns'.⁶⁵ Similarly, in an article discussing the threat urban music-hall song posed to folk-song, collector Frank Kidson quoted G. K. Chesterton, who seven years prior had written 'Once men sang together round a table in chorus; now one man sings alone, for the absurd reason that he can sing better'.⁶⁶ Collectors seemed to share Chesterton's incredulity that something as natural and timeless as music could be associated with the insincerities of commercial competition, and be subject to ephemeral market forces.

Building on this, Maud Karpeles, writing about new commercial technologies, lamented the development of printing and gramophone records, which she felt foreclosed the possibility of songs naturally evolving in the spontaneous, communal way of folk-songs, rendering their development 'stultified'.⁶⁷ Karpeles was suggesting that if music is tied down materially,

⁶³ Parry (1899), p. 2.

⁶⁴ Sharp (1907), p. 34.

⁶⁵ Parry (1899), p. 2.

⁶⁶ Kidson (1912), p. 150.

⁶⁷ Karpeles (1973), p. 104.

trapped in the ink on a page or the grooves of a record, it is stripped of the fluid vitality which characterises songs of purely oral transmission. These song-collectors maintained a stark division between the music of the rural Folk and the urban Masses. While the making of folk-music was understood as an emotive, communal expression, urban music was described as a competitive trade. The moralised element of this imagined binary will be obvious when looking at the specificities of the language which collectors used.

Song-collectors implemented a vocabulary of artificiality, to describe both the music of the Masses, and the imagined urban landscape in which the Masses were thought to live and sing. Kidson described the ‘abominable trash’ which was ‘howled’ in England’s cities, while Sharp wrote of the ‘superficial sweetness of town songs’, calling them ‘pretty and insincere’ and ‘gutter garbage’.⁶⁸ These empty, unsubstantiated insults reveal the intensity of the collectors’ mindset – they suggest a deep confidence in the depravity of the Masses – a confidence which does not require substantiation. Anti-commercial feeling remained at the core of this attitude, demonstrated by Sharp who described ‘the taint of manufacture, the canker of artificiality’ which he felt lingered indelibly on in commercially produced music.⁶⁹ In a similar vein, Vaughan Williams bemoaned the fact that urban young people’s ‘musical nourishment’ was limited to ‘whatever came to them in canned form from Charing Cross Road.’⁷⁰ This metaphor of ‘canned’ music emphasises the collectors’ distaste for commercial, capitalist mass-production, which contrasts starkly with the perceived beautiful spontaneity of the origin of folk-song. Evidently, the music of the Masses was understood as being irreversibly shaped by its manufacture, which, by association with artificiality, left it rotten to its core. The rot

⁶⁸ Kidson (1912), p. 151. Sharp (1892).

⁶⁹ Sharp (1907), p. 34.

⁷⁰ Vaughan Williams (1959), p. 7.

extended to the imagined city itself, which was also vilified for its perceived artificiality. Parry's inaugural address describes the 'boundless regions of sham' in England's towns and cities, 'where one sees all around the tawdriness of sham jewellery and shoddy clothes, pawnshops and flaming gin-palaces'.⁷¹ The word 'sham' usually implies a level of intentional fakery and deception. However, it is clear that the collectors upheld a very narrow definition of working-class authenticity, which was based on their romanticised vision of the rural Folk. In this way, 'sham' referred not to an intent to deceive, but rather, an urban way of life which was intolerable to the collectors, because of its association with commerciality, which was the antithesis of their fantasy of rural spontaneity.

These two levels of artificiality of music and place implicated the Masses themselves, who were framed as inauthentic and immoral – the opposite of the instinctive, childlike Folk. This is clear in Parry's inaugural address of the FSS, where he describes the 'false ideals' of the people who live in the 'regions of sham', people 'who are always struggling for existence, who think that the commonest rowdiness is the highest expression of human emotion'.⁷² This disdainful moral judgement of the 'struggling' urban working classes and their chosen mode of expression is particularly striking when compared to the loving, nurturing care which Parry and his colleagues show for the rural Folk.⁷³

In comparison with the Folk, who were characterised as living in a peaceful state of stasis, in isolated, enclosed villages, the Masses and their music were framed as an infection, spreading beyond the bounds of their cities. By characterising the Masses as polluting, their urban popular culture was able to be framed as a dangerous threat, encroaching on all that was good

⁷¹ Parry (1899), p. 1.

⁷² Parry (1899), p. 1.

⁷³ Parry (1899), p. 2.

and true in the rest of the nation. The collectors' language is revealing here – Sharp wrote of 'the infection of modern ideas', whilst Parry warned of 'the disease of industrialized modernity' emanating from 'the seething towns'.⁷⁴ This language of illness and infestation frames urban culture as an unstoppable onslaught on the body of the nation. The threat was understood to circulate via the developing channels of communication, commerce, and transport, allowing popular culture and members of the Masses to travel to the villages of England's countryside. As such, Kidson described how 'railways and cheap trips brought the latest music-hall effusions into rural districts'.⁷⁵ Karpeles said that 'the country has been opened up, roads have been built, and the serpent in the guise of radio and records has penetrated this Garden of Eden'.⁷⁶ This biblical analogy is vivid, associating the music of the Masses with vice and disorder, which had the potential to wind its way into the realm of the Folk. The Masses and their urban song were vilified for their modern mobility, which posed a threat to the sacred isolation of the imagined village. As was established in Chapter One, isolation was crucial for the sanctity of various levels of the imagined Folk character – this meant that the encroaching Masses were a real problem for the collectors, as they threatened the cohesion of their construction of the Folk.

To conclude, a construction of the urban Masses was built up within folk song-collecting discourse. Vilified on three levels of people, music, and place, the Masses were positioned as the direct antithesis of the romanticised Folk. Sharp described urban popular music as 'noxious weeds which flourish so luxuriantly', which encapsulates the way that the Masses

⁷⁴ Sharp (1907), p. xi; Parry (1899), p. 1.

⁷⁵ Kidson, *Traditional Tunes, A Collection of Ballad Airs, Chiefly Obtained in Yorkshire and the South of Scotland; Together with Their Appropriate Words from Broadsides and from Oral Tradition* (Orford : Llanerch, 1891) p. 87.

⁷⁶ Karpeles (1973), p. 98.

and their culture were framed as a poison, spilling out of the cities where they belonged, and contaminating the purity of the countryside with their artificiality.⁷⁷

Chapter Three- Contextualising the Folk/Masses Binary

According to folk song-collectors, while the imagined Folk were sincere, childlike and emotive, singing spontaneously in unison, in isolated, old-fashioned villages, the imagined Masses were artificial and grasping, driven by profit, multiplying and spreading uncontrollably. This stark, moralised binary located a precious treasure, in the form of the Folk and their folk-songs, and an encroaching threat, in the form of the Masses and their commercial music. In this way, by establishing an urgent need to defend the nation's treasured heritage, the binary served to justify a Folk Music Revival. The treasure/threat opposition was articulated and consolidated within the insular world of the FSS, given credibility by its institutional grounding, however, as discussed, it was imaginary. The imaginary nature of the binary means that it reflects the collectors, not the collected. This dissertation will now seek to historicise the song-collectors' constructed binary, looking to the changing values and anxieties of the time, in order to bring clarity to the contours of the discourse.

Building on an upwards trend of urbanisation which had begun in the sixteenth century, between 1801 and 1911, the proportion of England's population living in urban areas rose from 20 to 80 per cent.⁷⁸ This amounted to a rapid shift in the demographic profile of England's population, from predominantly rural, to predominantly urban.⁷⁹ Cities sprawled, 'urban

⁷⁷ Sharp (1907), p. 137.

⁷⁸ Peter Borsay and Rosemary Sweet, *The Invention of the English Landscape C. 1700-1939* (London: Bloomsbury Group, 2023), p. 169; Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Tradition in England, 1880-1914* (London: London Quartet, 1982) p. 2.

⁷⁹ Borsay and Sweet (2023), p. 169.

tentacles' reaching into the countryside, creating new suburban areas.⁸⁰ As well as expanding outwards, cities became more inwardly dense, with slums built in inner city areas. Colloquially known as rookeries for their similarity to the nesting colonies of crows, slums housed the growing urban masses in densely populated, multi-storey dwellings, built along dark, narrow streets. These new urban spaces were mentally conceptualised by middle class intellectuals, whose sensationalist interpretations were published as newspaper articles and books, framed as ethnographic investigations into the exotic, nefarious landscape of the inner city for the middle classes' interest.⁸¹ For example, in his 1883 book *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, Andrew Mearns described the 'pestilential human rookeries', where 'no form of vice and sensuality causes surprise or attracts attention'.⁸² As acknowledged by Borsay and Sweet, this demonisation of the city represented a marked change from the early modern period, when barbarity and vice were associated with England's wild, barren, rural peripheries, while cities were held up high as 'civilising environments'.⁸³ This change in perception was a direct result of the rapid growth of cities' working class population.

The last years of the nineteenth century into the early years of the twentieth century should be treated as a watershed moment for urban culture.⁸⁴ Rapid urbanisation, the increased domination of large corporations, and advances in technologies of production and consumption, such as the 1887 patenting of the gramophone, all contributed to this watershed moment. Most significantly for this dissertation, these changes contributed to a new understanding of the body of ordinary people, known as 'the masses', who were

⁸⁰ Borsay and Sweet (2023), p. 175.

⁸¹ Borsay and Sweet (2023), p. 171.

⁸² Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883) in Borsay and Sweet (2023), p. 172

⁸³ Borsay and Sweet (2023) p. 172.

⁸⁴ Mikulas Teich, Roy Porter, *Fin de Siècle and Its Legacy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1990) p. 3.

becoming significant participants in both popular culture and public affairs.⁸⁵ In London, music printing and publishing thrived, centred on Denmark Street and Charing Cross Road. An outshot of the commercialisation of music was the growing provision of music hall entertainment from the 1880s, which P. Bailey describes as ‘a capitalist operation, with an increasingly monopolistic thrust’, which disrupted traditional forms of cultural authority.⁸⁶ At music hall theatres, for a very small fee audiences were entertained by songs written by professional songwriters, and were permitted to drink alcohol and smoke tobacco, which was not allowed in more highbrow establishments. Alongside this new mode of urban mass culture, the identity of the masses was being shaped by their role in industrial production, and in particular, the collective solidarity fostered in trade unions and activist groups. The masses were newly emerging as a powerful industrial proletariat, with cultural sway and the strength and organisation to demand fair treatment.

These shifts in urban demography and the rise of the cultural and political power of the masses were happening in synchrony with changes in popular understandings of evolution. In the late nineteenth century, knowledge of the world’s environments and organisms was rapidly expanding, which, when combined with the societal transformation generated by urbanisation, led to profound biological and social questions being asked about the emergence, development, and future of civilisation.⁸⁷ The natural world was offering evidence of the possibility of ‘backward’, degenerative evolution, such as in the newly-discovered existence of eyeless cave fauna.⁸⁸ This served to disrupt faith in perpetual improvement, and,

⁸⁵ Teich and Porter (1990) p. 3.

⁸⁶ R D Storch, *Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 187.

⁸⁷ Andrew Flack, ‘Dark Degenerations: Life, Light, and Transformation beneath the Earth, 1840-circa 1900’ *Isis*, 113 (2022), 331-351, (p. 332).

⁸⁸ Flack (2022), p. 334.

combined with negative perceptions of urbanisation, contributed to a gathering concern about a potential decline of England's bodies and minds. This bodily and moral decline was conceptualised as degeneracy, which became a subject of much intellectual and popular debate throughout England towards the end of the nineteenth century, reaching a high point with the publication of Max Nordau's book *Degeneration* in 1892.⁸⁹ Cities, especially inner-city slums, were framed as the seat of degeneracy, where limbs 'stunt and dwindle in narrow courts and filthy alleys', breeding a backwards, immoral, 'submerged' class.⁹⁰ This language of subterranean darkness recurs frequently in association with degeneracy.

Degeneracy was a slippery concept, called on in various contexts, one of which was song-collecting discourse. It can be argued that song-collectors constantly made references to degeneracy in their writings, both explicitly and implicitly. Broadwood and Maitland wrote of 'these degenerate days' when folk-song went unappreciated by most, while Kidson described folk-song as 'a precious spark of light amongst so much darkness'.⁹¹ Sharp suggested that 'if we could see England of two hundred years ago we should find that we have gone back in many ways... that they were, in fact, higher grade human beings'.⁹² Here, with an understanding both of collectors' belief in folk-songs as cultural survivals of an earlier time, and the magical timelessness they attributed to the Folk, it is clear that Sharp saw the Folk as living representatives of these earlier 'higher grade human beings', who should in the present be turned to, and learnt from. Sharp also wrote of the 'regenerative influence' of folk-song, which could counter the degenerative impact of the 'poverty-stricken tunes of the music-

⁸⁹ J. E. Chamberlain, *Degeneration: the Dark Side of Progress* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. viii; Flack (2022), p. 334.

⁹⁰ Borsay and Sweet (2023), p. 172.

⁹¹ Broadwood and Maitland (1893), p. v.

⁹² Sharp Lecture (1921).

hall'.⁹³ These examples demonstrate that the song-collectors framed the Masses and their music as a symptom of broader urban degeneracy, to which the Folk and folk-song could be the purifying remedy.

However, these references to degeneracy were, of course, not reflections of the true character of working-class culture – they slot into the collectors' broader imagined construction. Chamberlain and Gilman suggested that degeneracy, as it appeared in intellectual discourse, could be understood as an 'institutionalisation of fear'.⁹⁴ In its broadest sense, this fear was of the threat an encroaching modernity seemed to pose to the middle and upper classes, destabilising power relations, and disrupting traditional forms of cultural authority. Returning to the song collectors' discourse, the Folk/Masses binary can be understood as a response to this pervasive, infectious fear which was spreading through England's intellectual circles, conceptualised as degeneracy. In other words, forcing the working classes into a rigid, moralised binary was an attempt at control, in the face of feelings of instability which came from rapid societal change.

The most destabilising, disruptive aspect of modernity for the middle-class song-collectors was the rising masses, who were growing in number and holding increasing cultural and political power. The threat of the rising masses lay at the core of song-collectors' discourse, and shaped the form of the Folk/Masses binary.⁹⁵ A response to this instability, taken by writers influenced by Romanticism including Thomas Hardy, was to turn to the countryside. The countryside, in its perceived purity and immutability, could be a site of solace in times of change, giving ballast 'to the mind... harassed by the irrepressible New'.⁹⁶ As such, the

⁹³ Sharp (1907), p. 135.

⁹⁴ Chamberlain (1985), p. xiv.

⁹⁵ Cole (2018), p. 89.

⁹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1878), p. 56.

romanticisation of the rural Folk and vilification of the urban Masses, and the Folk Revival more broadly, can be understood as a turn to the comforting permanence of the countryside, in direct response to fear. More specifically, this is illuminated by the way that, underscoring everything, the song-collectors cherished the Folk for their apparent contentment and deferential nature and, in turn, condemned the grasping, disruptive potential of the Masses.

Conclusion

To restate the Harker-Boyes thesis: folk-song collecting is not just a collecting, but a manufacturing and a mediation; an invention and an imagining. As such, discourse between song-collectors is not just a neutral description but a continued mythic making, part of the invented tradition of folk-song. This dissertation has demonstrated that song-collecting discourse of the First Folk Revival revolved around a rigid binary. Collectors romanticised the Folk, their music, and their rural home, and vilified the masses, their music, and their urban home. This valorised discursive binary of the imagined Folk and the imagined masses reflected and stoked the class-specific anxieties felt by the collectors around the turn of the century – anxieties rooted in the societal changes brought about by urbanisation, which seemed, to the collectors, to signify a pervasive, inescapable degeneracy.

As discussed, folk-song collecting has been mostly neglected as a subject of scholarly investigation, partly because it has been consistently been framed as simply a benevolent, antiquarian hobby. Through close analysis of the metaphorical and descriptive intricacies which have characterised song-collectors' discourse, and a historical contextualisation of the binary which their discourse upheld, this dissertation has challenged this idea. Folk-song collectors were not apolitical hobbyists, but instead motivated by profoundly political fears of a changing England, and an encroaching, destabilising modernity.

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