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Double-Think

writer/presenter: John Purser

producer: David McGuinness

Anon 17c (David Melvill *Ane buke of roundels*): As I me walk'd

Cappella Nova/Alan Tavener

BBC recording

Voice-over (Alan Riach): al the laif cryit in that samyn tune as it hed bene ecco in ane hou heuch. and as it aperit to me thai cryit/thir vordis as eftir followis. veysra veysra, veysra veysra gentil gallandis, gentil gal-landis. veynde i see hym, veynd i see hym. pourbossa, pourbossa. hail al ande ane, hail al and ane. hail hym vp til vs, hail hym vp til vs.

John Purser voice-over: This cheerful round is a parody. The original love song was changed to describe Christ guiding the ship of the soul through stormy waters. It was written down by David Melvill, and David's brother, James, knew all about stormy waters. He was a committed Presbyterian, believing in a democratic church with elected members. But his King, James the 6th was an Episcopalian, believing in the greater authority of bishops who could appoint their inferiors. In 1584 James Melvill was in so much trouble for his adherence to Presbyterianism that he had to disguise himself as a shipwrecked mariner and make for Berwick in an open boat.

The voices in the round imitate the cries of the sailors, just as Robert Wedderburn imitates them in The Complaynt of Scotland written fifty years earlier. What we have here is an ancient maritime tradition enshrined in sound.

Reader (Alan Riach): Than quhen the ankyr vas halit vp abufe the vattir, ane marynel cryit and al the laif followit in that sam tune, caupon caupona, caupon caupona. caupun hola, caupun hola caupon holt, caupon holt, sarrabossa, sarrabossa. than thai maid fast the schank of the ankyr.

And the maistir quhislit and cryit. Tua men abufe to the foir ra, cut the raibandis and lat the foir sail fal, hail doun the steir burde lufe harde a burde. hail eftir the foir sail scheit, hail out the bollene.

Than ane of the marynalis began to hail and to cry and al the marynalis ansuert of that samyn sound, hou, hou. pulpela, pulpela. boulena, boulena. darta, darta. hard out steif, hard out steif. afoir the vynd, afoir the vynd, god send, god send, fayr vedthir, fayr vedthir. mony pricis, mony pricis. god foir lend. god foir lend, stou, stou. mak fast & belay.

than the master cryit on the rudir man, mait keip ful and by, a luf. cumna hiear, holabar, arryua, steir clene vp the helme, this and so. than quhen the schip vas taiklit, the master cryit, boy to the top, schaik out the flag on the top mast

JP: These cheerful seamen's voices cover up frightening realities. The fact was that the Stewart kings and the Scottish people were profoundly at odds with each other. Even today, Scotland's monarch is an Anglican, and no British monarch can be a Roman Catholic - it's against the law. So these ancient concerns are actually current disgraces. But I've called this programme Double-think, because a lot of double thinking went on, and men and women who prided themselves on their virtue were as dirty-minded as those they might wish to criticise. Here's a spicy little round written down beside the psalms, no less, in Robert Tait's music book in 1677. Tait was a precentor at Lauder kirk, so he was leading the psalm singing. The words go like this:

There was a pretty maid, her name was Siss.
 You may come in and kiss.
 Her whole estate was seventeen pounds a year.
 Yet you may kiss if that you come but near.

To get the point of it, you have to hear it sung.

Anon (Robert Tait Music Book): There was a pretty maid
David McGuinness, Julian Corrie, John Purser, voices
BBC recording (!)

JP: Now it would be a bad business if I were not to give you the other side of this double-think – namely the very powerful and deeply felt religious convictions of people who were all too willing to die for them in the 17th century. These were the Covenanters, some 300,000 of whom are thought to have signed up to a demand for democratic principles in matters of state and religion – principles we take for granted in today's Scotland. These people wished for no interference by priests and professionals between them and their maker – and this applied to religious music. Organs were destroyed or abandoned: choir-schools fell into disuse: and the people sang. They sang psalms.

Trad (Scottish Psalter) : Psalm 43 vv-3-5 (Martyrs) O send thy light forth
Dunfermline Abbey Choir, conducted by Andrew Armstrong
CASSETTE Scottish Psalms and Paraphrases
Scotsoun SSC 059 Side 1 Track 6

JP: Dunfermline Abbey Choir singing psalm 43 to the tune Martyrs, one of only twelve tunes that survived to be published in 1666 for use with the psalms.

Trad (Scottish Psalter): Dunfermline
Dorothy Wilson, carillon of Dunfermline Abbey
CASSETTE Scottish Psalms and Paraphrases,
Scotsoun SSC 059 Side 1 Track 1

JP voice-over: But the carillons still survived and this is the one at Dunfermline playing the tune Dunfermline, albeit in competition with modern traffic when in the old days it would have been cart wheels and horses' hooves.

Dunfermline was also among the twelve tunes. Noble tunes they were and are, but you've now heard one-sixth of the entire melodic repertoire in the kirk in the late seventeenth century, and one can't help wondering whether the good Lord might not have wished for Sincerity of worship to join hands with Variety.

JP: Unfortunately, for the pious, there was a problem with singing Holy Scripture, and that was, that if a choir or congregation were going to practice it outside the context of worship, it was felt that the Lord's word was being profaned. So, as the years went by, they dreamt up alternative words – some quite innocent:-

Words - from Millar Patrick, *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* (London: OUP, 1949)

Tune - Andrew Thomson: Rose Terrace, in *Sacred Harmony Part 1*,

***for the use of St George's Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1820)**

Choir/David McGuinness

BBC recording

choir: Come raise your voices loud and clear,
and keep in proper time;
Then you may cast away your fear
And sing to any rhyme.

JP: But this kind of double-thinking could lead to unforeseen consequences. John McQuisten, a precentor in Greenock was so carried away by the image in psalm 107 of sailors becoming caught in a storm that, as he was singing in church in all innocence, he lapsed into the ballad words for the shipwreck of Sir Patrick Spens. Others were less innocent:

Words - from Millar Patrick, *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* (London: OUP, 1949)

Tune - Hugh Wilson (1766-1824): Martyrdom

Greg Lawson, Mark Summers, David McGuinness, voices

BBC recording

voices: Keep silence, all ye sons of men,
And hear with reverence due;
The maister he's gane out tae smoke,
But he'll be back the noo.

JP: ... and some were surely far more harmful to piety than singing God's word out of context.

Words - from Millar Patrick, *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* (London: OUP, 1949)

Tune - Stephens, in John Knott, *Sacred Harmony* (Aberdeen, 1814)

Paul Rendall, Greg Lawson, Mark Summers, David McGuinness, voices

BBC recording

voices: Oh mother dear, Tod Lourie's lum,
Whan sweepit will it be?
For all the soot's come tummlin doon,
And spoilt my grannie's tea.

JP: Nor was this kind of double-think confined to choirs and congregations. It applied equally to ministers – and not just the Reverend Taitt who noted down the obscene round we heard earlier. Most notorious was the Reverend David Williamson – Dainty Davie. Williamson, a Covenanter on the run from the Royalists, was concealed by Lady Cherrytrees in her daughter’s bed, the daughter being in it at the time. While Lady Cherrytrees got the royalist troops drunk downstairs in Cherrytrees House, Williamson made good use of his opportunity and got the daughter pregnant. He subsequently justified his behaviour by a disarming choice of text from the Epistle to the Romans.

Reader (Tam Dean Burn): “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.”

JP: It’s almost as though St Paul had swallowed a little sin creature with his breakfast and was not responsible for what it made him do. Personally, I think the girl’s desire for Davie as recorded in song, does far more to justify the Reverend David Williamson than any quotation from St Paul. “Dainty” in Scots means something more like “pleasant, good-looking, good-natured” and, as Jean Redpath disarmingly reveals, it can apply to things as well as people. “Leese-me-on” is an expression of pleasure with no equivalent in English. Here it is, Dainty Davie.

Trad - Dainty Davy

Jean Redpath

LP Laddie Lie Near Me

Elektra EKL 274 Side 1 Track 5

JP: Jean Redpath singing Dainty Davie who, besides marrying Lady Cherrytrees’ daughter whom he’d got with child, managed at least four other marriages. But perhaps I’ve been a bit hard on the religious feelings of the time, and certainly listening to the intensity of Gaelic psalm singing, which was just coming to terms with the new metrical versions of the psalms, it’s hard not to feel a sense of deep commitment that challenges easy jibes and secular cynicisms.

Trad (Scottish Psalter): Dundee - Psalm 103 vv.1&2

Norman McLeod & Group

CD on Scottish Tradition 6 Gaelic Psalms from Lewis

Greentrax CDTRAX 9006 Track 4

JP Voice-over: This is the start of Psalm 103 sung to the tune Dundee. “O m’anam, beannaich thusa nis an Dia Iehòbhah mòr: Moladh gach nì an taobh stigh dhiom ’ainm naomha mar is còir” “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”

JP: Norman McLeod and congregation recorded at Fidigarry in Lewis in 1955. Three hundred years earlier, many men and women died for their beliefs, and amongst them was the Reverend James Guthrie. He was hung on the scaffold at the Cross of Edinburgh in 1661, for declining the jurisdiction of the King and Council.

These are supposedly his last enigmatic words, which take the form of a series of bitter riddles:

Reader (Alan Riach):

“Great newes we lately heard from Court,
A ruler great was turned out:
Draw billets.

Another did succeed his place,
He lost his lordship and got grace;
Take time o’d.

The ladies that the Court resort,
Ye know for what they seek the sport;
Whip towdies.

JP: Whip my towdie was a well-known tune, and in those days, if not in ours, the ladies of the court were happy to have their towdies whipped.

Anon: Whip my towdie

Coronach

CD Whip My Towdie

CMF 005 Track 16

Reader Voice-over (Alan Riach):

Good morroe, Covenant, adieu!
The Covenant is both false and true;
Subscribers.

If Presbyters, they had no greid,
Mixt with the pride, they had no neid
Of Deacons.

I saw a priest carry a bendl
Episcopall, it had an end
Papisticall ...

Others know what I do mean.
I may speak what I have seen;
Save treason.”

JP: So much for the poor Reverend Guthrie. But as a final and utterly disarming example of double think, a few years after his judicial murder, somebody who owned a copy of his sermons, inserted into them a group of tunes for fiddle. They’re written in fiddle tablature with no rhythmic indications: nor, indeed, can one be one hundred per cent certain about the notes. Amongst these tunes is a little fragment of innocent beauty, quite free from religion. It’s called “Corn Bunting” – the name of a bird. There’s no question that the music does suggest a very specific bird-song. The

trouble is that none of the twitchers I've consulted – and these include experts on the corn bunting - can associate these hints with the call of the corn bunting. None, that is, except for my brother, who has a good knowledge of and ear for such things, but no degree in twitcherdom to give his opinion any status.

Trad arr. Rideout - Corn Bunting

Bonnie Rideout

BBC recording

JP Voice-over: Anyway, it's just a fragment – an aid to memory to the musician who wrote it down, so I'm sure it was added to in performance. I gave it to Bonnie Rideout and asked her to play it once straight, and then make of it what she could in the style of the times. This is what she made – something enchanting and as free as a bird.

JP: Bonnie Rideout with variations on the Corn Bunting – a fragment of haunting joy inserted into the Reverend Guthrie's sermons and, perhaps, a sweet enough elegy for a man who died for his beliefs.