Metals and Their Workers: Our Thundering Cannon

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ABSTRACT. Iron and steel have been the backbones of Wales, Scotland, Ireland and England for many centuries. This paper includes three growing case studies: itinerant tinkers in Ireland in the Middle Ages, the setting up of an ironworks in the Black Country in the English Midlands and in Wales from 1784, and a strike in a steel mill in Scotland in 1986. Around them grew a song culture which included 1) songs of revolt, 2) cultural sayings and 3) (one) paean to the ironmasters. Even the simplest songs discussed here can be regarded as dismantling the barriers between work, the raw material, and the wider social and political life of the workers. The later songs take up a stance and assert a place to stand, and characteristically the position of the singers offers resistance to authoritarian and life-denying attitudes. Significantly, there is as yet little evidence that in the iron and steelworks the songs were sung at work as they were in, for example, Ulster's linen mills. However, there is recent evidence that the songs have been sung in both solo and in unison, a practice that has been emphasised in recent research in other fields (Korczynski, Pickering, Robertson 2013; Porter 2018a, 2018b). Singing in the arduous conditions of an industrial workplace, a pub or on a demonstration in this way can be called performing a role, a way in which singers have asserted their sense of unity as well as unison. In fact, songs for individual singers which were actually performed by iron and steelworkers are often even harder to find, and have usually been written by outsiders and in recent times.

KEYWORDS: iron, steel, metalwork, songs of revolt, call and response.

This paper examines three aspects of the vigorous oral culture which accompanied the manufacture of iron and steel from the earliest years to the late twentieth century. Firstly, it deals with the early tradition of iron as a tool in Ireland among travellers, who were central to the Irish song and instrumental tradition. This is followed by an example of the way a song 'delivered from above' in the name of a manufacturer of iron and early steel in late 18th century Shropshire (England) and Wrexham in Wales became a (presumably unintended) vehicle of local expression and enjoyment. The final section is a study of how the songs of steelworkers from Gartcosh in North Lanarkshire in Scotland were the backbone of a march south from Glasgow to London two centuries later, during the privatisation of steel that accompanied the period when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister in the 1980s. The songs that were sung in these settings indicate a change, from rural Ireland to industrial Britain that has been little recognized until very recent times: how these songs originated, and how they were 'performed' as crowded dwellings became increasingly gathered around centres of work, either as tight villages or as crowded suburbs.

IRELAND. METALWORK AMONG ITINERANT TINKERS (TRAVELLERS)

In the 4th century BC, the Greek philosopher Plato wrote that itinerant metal workers were an example of those "whose souls are bowed and mutilated by their vulgar occupations even as their bodies are marred by their arts and crafts" (Plato. *Republic* (VI, 6, 495); Plato 1982: 731) and were therefore unfit for philosophy. At that time, or very soon after, it is believed that there was in Ireland a caste of itinerant tinkers (metal workers) and tinsmiths (tin or tinplate repairers working with light metals), who had a very different view of themselves and of their metalwork. Certainly, by the Middle Ages they regarded themselves as a high caste, descendants of the 10th century High King of Ireland, Brian Boru, and were known respectfully as 'Travellers'.

Since the ability to work with metals once seemed very close to magic, tinsmiths clearly had high status, which is seen today in the many songs of sexual prowess which featured them as heroes. By the end of the 19th century, however, their status had declined in Ireland as a result of poverty, lack of education and repeated exclusion by the settled population. It was not until 1988 that Travellers began to be described in legislation as an ethnic group with special needs, and by 2000 they were recognised as a group with equal status, because of their shared history, culture and traditions, which included a nomadic way of life.

These changes came about as a result of the rising awareness of the Irish Traveller community and of their distinct and positive role in Irish society. Referring to the song culture of the country, Mary Burke asserts that "the ballad tradition of Ireland is arguably a Traveller art form" (Burke 2009: 211). She does not back this bold claim, but the volume, diversity and distribution of their songs certainly supports it, at least for songs in English and macaronic songs featuring words in *shetla* (or *cant*). Because of their skill they spread to Scotland and England in the Middle Ages and at that time had high status: in the words of the Scottish folklorist and collector Hamish Henderson, "it is clear that to primitive man [sic] the ability to use metals seemed very close to magic" (Henderson 2004: 229).

The gift of the ability to work with metals remained associated with Irish Travellers who were forced to leave their country, as in the song "When Jones's Ale was New", a version of which has been traced back to as early as 1595 and may have an Irish origin. It continued to spread very far in the 19th and 20th centuries with deported Irish. This version was in the repertoire of "Two Axe Mac" (Simon McDonald), a tinker of Irish origin living in Australia until 1994:

Now the first [to] come in was a tinker,
Good Lord, he was no drinker (*twice*)
To join this jovial crew.
He said, 'Any pots or kettles to settle,
My tongs are made of the best of metal.'
Good lord his hammer and tongs did rattle
When Jones's ale was new. (Anderson 2011: 90)

To singers, metal workers were not only deeply skilled: they were long considered (or considered themselves) to have great sexual powers, a belief which may have originated in early rituals of production in the village community (Porter 1992: 93). Taken together, the blacksmith (the smith who works in iron) and the tinsmith are still associated in Ireland with more songs of sexual conquest than any other occupational group: as late as 1954 the Uilean Piper Séamus Ennis maintained that the melody of "I'll Mend your Pots and Kettles", which announced the arrival of a roving tinsmith to a village in Ireland, was itself enough to arouse the housewives of the village with its sexual ambiguity (Lomax, Kennedy, Collins 1961, no. 7). It is, however, for their own distinctive traditions and skills that they are once more regarded in Ireland today with respect as a group: in 2002 a separate volume of the Irish census was devoted to them. However, once regarded for their skills, they were left behind by the great changes in metal production in the 18th century, which also transformed the songs of those who produced it.

SONG AND IRON SMELTING IN 18TH CENTURY ENGLAND

The Rise of Coalbrookdale (Shropshire)

Ireland had its tinkers and tinsmiths for more than a thousand years, with the addition of supernatural powers. Iron has been one of the backbones of the English speaking world too for at least seven centuries. While in Ireland, metal was considered to have supernatural properties that gave it special properties, and in 14th century England John Gower interpreted 'the first blacksmith' Tubal Cain as an example of the Biblical associations of metal work:

> Tubal in Iren and Stel
> Fond ferst the forge and wroghte it wel. (Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, 4.2425-26, quoted in Burke 2009: 94)
> (Tubal was the first to set up a forge and to show skill in working in iron and steel.)

This was more a contemporary than a Biblical statement: iron had begun to be mined and smelted in England around 1400 (Morton 1974: 77): it was being widely beaten and shaped long before the Industrial Revolution, particularly by the blacksmith, a metalworker who created objects from wrought iron by forging metal and then using tools to hammer, bend and cut. This did not only take place in England. Outside England forging metal was the leading trade up to the 19th century, as was recorded by an Irishwoman, a 'Tinker' who had settled in Scotland:

> Of all the brave trades of ancient renown,
> The blacksmith's the foremost and shall wear the crown,
> For he is a bonny laddie and I love him weel [*sic*],
> He works for his living in iron and steel. (Palmer R. 1979: 89)

From 1500 to 1700, there were examples of early uses of iron as decoration on, for example, gravestones. Although for most of the century such metalwork was confined to tinkers and farriers, there was an increasing demand for high quality metal for greater roles such as iron bars, axe blades and, eventually, bridges. Soon a Sussex ironworks was one of the most productive in Britain, destroying woods to make charcoal for iron production. In 1548 a Commission was appointed to inquire into the destruction of wood and timber in Sussex (Mantoux 1968: 281). Work (and destruction) moved from Sussex to south Wales in the late Elizabethan period, bringing protests from the Welsh. Not only that: the majority of metal workers at this time were classed as unskilled labourers, with the exception of highly skilled mechanics (ibid.: 68). For a long time, it was powered by water and only finally driven by Watt's steam engine in the 1770s.

The 18th century was good for the iron industry, first because of the wars (both Marlborough at the start, Napoleon at the end and many others in between), and then the steam engine, quickly followed by rails for the lines (which absorbed almost all the metals up to the first half of the 19th century). The growing industries of the 18th century were not predominantly urban. Sussex ironworks near Brighton dominated the first half of the century but collapsed because of a lack of fuel, which was then trees. The technique of using coal instead of felling forests came in increasingly during the course of the century, and Shropshire west of Birmingham became the centre of the newly growing industry. It was

Abraham Darby (1677–1717), a man born in the 1600s who died at the age of forty, who substituted coal and then coke (which involved heating coal so that its more volatile constituents were drawn off) for wood in his ironworks in the appropriately named Coalbrookdale in Shropshire. He was a cautious industrialist, but his family continued the practice vigorously. In 1779 the third Abraham Darby completed the world's first iron bridge across the Severn, and inevitably called it "Ironbridge". As G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate wrote (Cole, Postgate 1981: 65), "The iron trade in the eighteenth century was a more 'capitalistic' industry than wool or cotton, because "it offered far more benefits from production on a relatively large scale". Working conditions were dirty and above all noisier than the working conditions of tinkers, tinsmiths or blacksmiths, who were all known for their voluble singing.

The inventor John Wilkinson, born in 1728, was the leading Black Country Iron Master of all. His greatest activity was after 1784, when he set up ironworks at Broseley, near Coalbrookdale, and elsewhere, and pioneered the manufacturing of cast iron using the process of "puddling", which has been called 'the heaviest regular task ever accepted by man' (Derry, Williams 1979: 478). He was not an inventor himself but promoted the inventions of others, such as precision boring for cannon and steam engine cylinders. He died at Bradley in 1808 and was buried in an iron coffin, not because of his trade but because of the protection it gave against body snatchers.

It is surprising that the growing iron industry in the newly industrialised county of Shropshire produced very few songs that have survived. One of the single surviving songs, printed below, is a raucous communal song in praise of John Wilkinson. It survives in three distinctive versions set on both sides of the English-Welsh border:

Ye workmen of Bersham and Brymbo draw near,
Sit down, take your pipe, and my song you shall hear;
I sing not of war or the state of the nation;
Such subjects as these produce *nought* but vexation. (naught)
Derry Down Down, Derry Down.

But before I proceed any more with my *lingo*, (tale)
You shall (all) drink my toast in a bumper of *stingo*: (good ale)
Fill up, and without any further parade. (fill it up)
"John Wilkinson", boys, "that supporter of trade."
Derry Down, etc.

May all his endeavours be crowned with success,	
And his works, ever *going*, posterity bless!	(growing)
May his comforts increase with the length of his days,	
And his *name* shine as bright as his *furnaces* blaze!	(fame / famous)
Derry Down, etc.	
That the wood of old England would fail did appear	
And though *wood* was scarce, because *charcoal* was dear,	(iron; charcall)
By puddling and stamping he *prevented* that evil,	(cured)
So the Swedes and the Russians may go to the *devil*.	(divil)
Derry Down, etc.	
Our *thundering* cannon too frequently burst.	(by implication murdering)
A mischief so great he prevented the first;	
And now 'tis well known, they never miscarry,	
And drive all our foes with a blast to Old Harry.	
Derry Down, etc.	
Then let each jolly fellow take hold of his glass,	(Now)
And drink to the health of his friend and his lass,	
May *he* always have plenty of *stingo* and pence,	(we; good beer)
And Wilkinson's *health* blaze a thousand years hence.	(fame)
Derry Down, etc.	

(Raven 1977: 45–46, from Palmer A. N. 1899)

Three versions of this survive. The other two were set in Bilston and Bradley (Marchant 1888: 451–452), and Bradley and Brymbo (Raven 1978b: 150). The three songs are clearly related, but all the versions vary in ways which suggest that they have been adapted from place to place. Although they follow a similar narrative, they are set in different villages, one of them, Bersham, being set in Wales. There are numerous other variations, in the grammar (*'tis / it is*), spelling (*devil / divil*, *nought / naught*), details of appearance, others perhaps suggesting word of mouth transmission (*fame / name* in v.3), and also variations in the terminology. The language of each version bears clear signs of being adapted to local jargon and interests in both England and Wales, but all clearly housing employees of Wilkinson.

The songs were clearly not intended to be sung at work but for a convivial scene in a public house where they were drinking *stingo* (good ale). The three versions of the song, written originally by unknown admirers in praise of John "Iron-Mad" Wilkinson, have been performed in (or at least written for) any one of five (or more) districts where iron workers were living, on both sides of the Wales-England border –

Bilston, Bradley, Broseley and Brymbo in Britain, and Bersham, lying in the county borough of Wrexham in Wales where Wilkinson established his reputation too.

Although the song has not been traced earlier than 1850, it seems clear that it was sung in Wilkinson's lifetime (1728–1808), and at the height of his reputation. There are many lines of praise:

May all his endeavours be crowned with success,
And his works, ever going, posterity bless!
May his comforts increase with the length of his days
And his name shines as bright as his furnaces blaze!

Although some of the lines are over-enthusiastic:

May he always have plenty of stingo and pence,
And Wilkinson's health blaze a thousand years hence.
Derry Down, etc.

The melody *Derry Down* was used in the 18th century for numerous songs, particularly ephemeral ones, but also to ensure that local people would be able to participate.

There are clear signs of familiarity with the raw materials and processes of the sites, and the songs show technical knowledge and awareness of recent changes in the work, such as the introduction of coal to replace English wood, which was seriously depleted, a change that 'by puddling [purifying] iron so that the pig iron was carbonised and stamping... prevented, or, as others said, 'cured' that evil' (Raven 1977: 46).

That the wood of old England would fail did appear
And though wood was scarce, because charcall [*sic*] was dear,
By puddling and stamping he prevented that evil,
So the Swedes and the Russians may go to the devil.
Derry Down, etc.

The songs do not mention the way that Wilkinson also developed destructive processes but later had to use his ingenuity to control them when they failed. When a mechanical stoker was installed, in his ironworks an Irishman, Welshman, Scot, Yorkshireman and cockney were all killed (Derry, Williams 1979: 479). The songwriter admits that the "thundering cannon" (by implication "our murdering cannon") that he invented were often unreliable, but adds approvingly that he lined up 24 of them outside the works' gates at Bradley in readiness for a mob which threatened to attack:

Our thundering cannon too frequently burst.
A mischief so great he prevented the first;
And now 'tis well known, they never miscarry,
And drive all our foes with a blast to Old Harry [Hell].
Derry Down, etc.

Even as early as the end of the 18th century, songs like this resulted from the expansion of iron to include steel for new industries. This idea of Iron Men like John Wilkinson, and Abraham Darby before him, had an image of heroic strength built around them. In later years that image passed to those they employed in the steel mills themselves.

COMMUNAL SONGS IN WORKPLACES

The Songs of the Gartcosh Steelworkers in the 1980s

The songs that derived from, or were adopted by, workers in the iron and steel industries have been known for many years, but it is only in recent years that communal, as opposed to solo, songs, have been recognised and recorded in Scotland, Wales, England and Ireland. For example, the leaders of the early folk music revival concentrated on the singing of women as individuals rather than in groups (Porter G. 2018a). When the leading English song collector Cecil Sharp was collecting folk songs in Somerset in the south west of England at the beginning of the twentieth century, he largely ignored communal songs even though the area was the centre of a domestic industry for women making up shirts together at home. The workers, many of them young girls, sang at their machines:

> The sewing of the shirts called for no great powers of concentration, so the women and girls used to meet in one another's cottages to sew, chat and sing, and you could walk down the village street and hear through the open windows snatches of song mingled with the hum of the machines. A singer with a good repertoire was a great asset at these gatherings, for time passed quickly and pleasantly as song followed song in unending succession (Newall 1993: 14).

Cecil Sharp did not collect any of these songs, but passed by and concentrated instead on the singing of a single older informant, Louie Hooper. It is impossible now to recover the songs that Sharp missed, or even to know whether the songs were related to the women's work in any way, or sung collectively. However, a study made by Betty Messenger (1988) showed that in Belfast in the north of Ireland women workers and young girls sang alone and in groups in the flax mills in the first half of the twentieth century. An important new study relating to this maintains that "singing cultures within factories were overwhelmingly the creation of female workers" (Korczynski, Pickering, Robertson 2013: 199) because factory noise, dust, and supervision are not congenial to singing. From the 1930s to the 1960s John A. and Alan Lomax (Chairetakis, Greenberg 1997, no. 1) collected work songs from prisoners in the southern American states of Tennessee, Georgia, Arkansas and Mississippi. In the prisons where white guards supervised exclusively black male prisoners (this practice was much later found to be unconstitutional but did not end until 1972*),* the prisoners worked exclusively outside (supporting Korczynski, Pickering and Robertson's statement above) with an antiphonal (call and response) structure*,* with the rest of the group forming a chorus, keeping time with their tools (Lomax 1997, no. 3). The songs included narrative ballads and hollers (a shout or cry by a single worker) and were clearly based on traditions established in Africa. In the strict sense of songs which provide working rhythm, there are few known equivalents to the American prison farm tradition of the southern states, but call and response exchanges by others are known, as steelworkers on a demonstration in Scotland in the 1980s showed.

Metalwork outside Ireland was carried out in the 18th century not only at the ironworks set up by Wilkinson in Shropshire but by tinkers and farriers in Scotland. In 1926 the iron and steel industries joined the General Strike called by the Trade Union Congress, which was supported by 2.5 million workers altogether. It was a steel-trader, Arthur Pugh, who became President of the Trade Congress at the time and quickly gave in to the government of the day (Cole, Postgate 1981: 579, 585). However, this led to resistance in the steel industry that lasted on and off for more than fifty years, and culminated towards the end of the 20th century in a rolling mill at Gartcosh, near Glasgow, Scotland. In the words of Roy Palmer (Palmer R. 1988: 84), "To protest at the planned closure of their rolling mill, a group of steelworkers from Gartcosh, near Glasgow, Scotland, trekked to London in January 1986 through snow, strong winds and freezing rain". They were singing:

On the third day of January nineteen eighty-six,
We went off to London to put Maggie in a fix.
We didn't take a jet plane, we didn't take a car.
We walked it all the bloomin' way with the lads of Castlecarr.
We're the Gartcosh commandos, we're down from old Gartcosh;
We haven't got a gaffer (boss), wee *Tommy* is the boss; (Tommy Brennan)
And we'll cause the biggest rally you've ever come across;
Just remember we're the Gartcosh commandos.

When they arrived in London at the Houses of Parliament they sang "The Braes of Killiecrankie"[1], about the defeat of the English in 1689. The song had been sung, and probably composed, by Robert Burns (1759–1796):

Whaur hae ye been sae braw, lad?
Whaur hae ye been sae brankie o?
Whaur hae ye been sae, braw, lad?
Cam' ye by Killiecrankie o?
  An' ye had been whaur I hae been,
  Ye wad-na been sae cantie o;
  An' ye hae seen what I hae seen
  On the braes o' Killicrankie o. (Buchan, Hall 1978: 150; Burns 1971: 431)

'Where have you been so well-dressed, young man?
Where have you been so fine, o?
Where have you been so well-dressed, young man?
Did you come through Killiecrankie, o?
  If you had been where I have been
  You wouldn't have been so lively, o.
  If you had seen what I have seen
  On the slopes of Killiecrankie o.'

This song is still being sung in Scotland today, by Travellers and others (Stewart 2010: 154; Roud, no. 8187). On the long march of 1986, many of the steelworkers adopted the parodic versions sung by Scots throughout the 19th and 20th centuries:

When I was young and eesed [used] to be
As sweet a chap as ye could see,
The Prince of Wales he wanted me
To gang [*go*] and join the army.
  Tooril ooril ooril oo
  Fal de riddle aldi doo
  She's as sweet as honeydew
  The lass o' Killicrankie. (Greig-Duncan 1990: 51)

It has also been suggested that they sang the parody of the song where the lass of Killicrankie 'stole my hankie', sung to the same melody by the most famous traditional singer in Scotland, Jeannie Robertson:

1 A traditional ballad printed by James Hogg in *The Jacobite relics of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1819).

For on a thistle I sat doun,
I nearly jumpit tae the moon;
I nearly jumpit tae the moon;
For the lass that stole my hankie.

<…>

For Jean she began tae curse,
Her bloomers fell doun an' her stays did burst,
She gied her aul 'erse a twust
An' she caa'd it through a windae. (Porter, Gower 1995: 201)

'For on a thistle I sat down,
I nearly jumped to the moon;
I nearly jumped to the moon,
For the lass that stole my handkerchief.

<…>

For Jean she began to curse,
Her knickers fell down and her corset burst;
She gave her old arse [backside] a twist
And she stuck it through a window.'

The marchers used both the heroic and the parodic versions, since recordings show that both served their role. The 'original' James Hogg version is more repetitive than the others, but less contemptuous and scornful of the government's threat to the industry.

> [The steelworkers] had also made up songs about their own heroes, such as 'The Gartcosh Commandos' itself, which was broadcast at that time on the radio… The steelworkers lost the battle, and the works were closed a few months later, but the situation in the Glasgow area was heard by a wide audience in radio news bulletins as a result of the march… (Palmer R. 1988: 84)

The Gartcosh walkout was not by any means the first indication of Iron and Steel activity in Scotland: it was conducted for most of the 18th century. This brief overview has shown how both traditional and improvised songs are known to have been integrated by workers into the Iron and Steel industries of England, Scotland and Wales over a period of over 200 years. The final section has suggested that such social practices could exist only in a tightly-knit community that shared long hours of work and bursts of shared free time such as a carnival or a demonstration. Like the other examples from the slender repertoires of steel labourers, they each break in some way with earlier assumptions about what a folk song is – many things, but not least as part of a challenge to a Conservative government – nor were there any more songs of praise on "He was their boss" lines that were prevalent in 1780. Since that time more research has been done in Britain and Ireland to recover examples sung together outside as well as inside factories, from the children in the street mimicking the women in a biscuit factory to the men from the steel plant at Gartcosh keeping vigil in London outside the House of Commons. This account has drawn attention to the fate of songs which have been neglected through being performed in many cases far from the Iron and Steelworks, and suggests a diverse trawl which is not confined either to buildings or to individuals.

Even the simplest songs discussed here can be regarded as dismantling the barriers between work, the raw material, and the wider social and political life of the workers. The later songs take up a stance and assert a place to stand, and characteristically the position of the singers offers resistance to authoritarian and life-denying attitudes. Since love, labour and money are part of the same discourse in occupational songs, they were both empowering and reciprocal. Significantly, there is as yet little evidence that songs were sung at work in the iron and steelworks as they were in, for example, Ulster's linen mills. However, there is recent evidence (Porter 2018a, 2018b) that the songs have been sung in both solo and in unison, a practice that has been emphasised in recent research in other fields (Korczynski, Pickering, Robertson 2013). Whether or not there was ever the opportunity to chant on the spot against the arduous conditions of an industrial workplace, singing on a road in Ireland, a pub in England or Wales, or on a demonstration in Scotland can be called performing a role, a way in which singers have asserted their sense of unity for more than a thousand years.

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Metalai ir jų apdirbėjai: mūsų griaudėjantis pabūklas

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Santrauka

Raktažodžiai: geležis, metalas, metalo pramonė, pasipriešinimo dainos, šauksmas ir atsakas.

Geležis ir metalas daugelį metų sudarė Velso, Škotijos, Airijos ir Anglijos stuburą. Šis straipsnis aprėpia tris šiuo metu analizuojamus atvejus: keliaujančius skardininkus viduramžių Airijoje, geležies apdirbimo pradžią Juodojoje šalyje – Anglijos Midlandse – ir Velse nuo 1784 m., taip pat 1986 m. Škotijos metalo fabriko darbininkų streiką. Visa tai išaugino dainų kultūrą, kuri apima: 1) antifonines pasipriešinimo dainas, 2) kultūrinius posakius ir 3) vieną metalo meistrų pašlovinimą.

Dainavimas sunkiomis pramoninio darbo sąlygomis, aludėje ar per demonstraciją gali būti laikomas tam tikro vaidmens atlikimu ir būdu dainininkams įtvirtinti savo bendrumo jausmą, o ne vien suderinti balsus. Netgi pačios paprasčiausios čia aptariamos dainos gali būti vertinamos kaip priemonė įveikti atskirčiai tarp darbo bei gamybos žaliavos ir platesnio socialinio bei politinio darbininkų gyvenimo. Vėlyvesnės dainos jau aiškiai užima ir įtvirtina tam tikrą poziciją; būdinga, kad dainose kviečiama priešintis ir nepasiduoti gyvenimą gniuždančioms sąlygoms. Solinių dainų, kurios būtų buvę iš tiesų atliekamos geležies ir metalo pramonės darbininkų, labai nelengva rasti, o ir tos pačios dažniausiai būna sukurtos prašalaičių arba parašytos labai neseniai.

Kadangi fabriko triukšmas, dulkės ir griežta drausmė tikrai neskatina dainuoti, turime labai mažai duomenų, kad dainos būtų buvę atliekamos vyrų, dirbančių sunkiojoje pramonėje su geležimi ir metalu, – bent jau tikrai ne tokiu mastu, kaip kad būdavo dainuojama moterų, pavyzdžiui, Alsterio drobės fabrikuose. Dainavimo darbe kultūra yra išskirtinai moterų kūrinys. Vis dėlto neseniai paaiškėjo, kad ir metalo apdirbėjai dainuodavo tiek po vieną, tiek unisonu. Trečiasis mūsų aptariamas atvejis apima darbininkų maršą iš Škotijos į Londoną, kai žygiuodami jie atsakydavo savo vadovui – tai labai primena garsiąsias šauksmo ir atsako dainas, aprašytas Johno A. ir Alano Lomaxų, tyrusių juodaodžius dainininkus, dirbusius pataisos darbų fermose pietinėse Amerikos valstijose.

Tokio pobūdžio kolektyvinės dainos, priešingai nei solinės, tik pastaraisiais metais išskirtos ir imtos užrašinėti Škotijoje, Velse, Anglijoje ir Airijoje. Vis dėlto, priešingai nei Amerikos kalinių tradicijoje, jos nėra skirtos nustatyti darbo ritmui; „susišūkavimai“ tarp metalo pramonės darbininkų per demonstraciją Škotijoje XX a. devintajame dešimtmetyje rodo, kad toks atlikimas mums dar irgi beveik visiškai nežinomas.

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