

“Es Sind Zween Weg”: Singing Amish Children into the Faith Community¹

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Abstract

The world's largest Amish settlement straddles Ohio's Wayne and Holmes counties. The majority of the Amish prefer an agrarian lifestyle of steady, hard work, preserving a community-oriented, Reformation-era theocracy. The Amish are a "plain" people who define themselves by their differences from the dominant culture. Associating in small groups of 25 to 40 families, "districts," or "affiliations" within geographical areas known as "settlements," they biannually decide by vote of adult members how to modify the rules of behavior (Ordnung). Seeking to be faithful to biblical directives, the members commit themselves to live simply by accepting or rejecting specific technological advances which they believe will enhance or disturb community life. People who break the rules are subject to shunning (Meidung), the primary purpose of which is to bring the transgressor to repentance.

An Amish adult's primary function is to prepare children for heaven by shaping an attitude of "yieldedness" (Gelassenheit) to God. Through vigilant contact, parents teach their children to respect and submit to authority, to work cheerfully, and to be kind to and to help others. Singing is one way parents transmit their cultural values.

They sing lullabies, Amish church hymns, and songs to children from infancy. This paper analyzes several Amish nursery songs and investigates their role in Amish children's socialization.

Introduction

The Amish present a classic case of traditionalist resistance to assimilation. The tradition dates from 1525 when rebaptizers (Anabaptists) broke with the Swiss Brethren led by the priest-reformer Ulrich Zwingli (Klassen 1973, 3). These "Radical Reformers," headed by another priest named Menno Simons, held that adult baptism into a community of believers met God's requirements as set forth in Christian Scripture (Keeney 1968, 14). The Anabaptists grounded their "distinctive knowledge and language of God" in a salvation history (*Heilsgeschicht*), but they did not have a theology (Oyer 1996, 281). As Robert Friedmann explained, the Anabaptists practiced "an existential not a theological Christianity, where witnessing [by lifestyle] comes before arguing. Anabaptists have a church of order and not so much a church of doctrines" (Friedmann 1950, 24). To the Amish, belief is only real when embodied in a community of believers.

In 1693, a further division occurred between the "Mennonites," those aligned with Menno Simmons, and a group of dissenters led by the preacher/tailor Jacob Amman, who would become known as the "Amish."

Disagreements centered on how often to hold communion, whether to practice the ritual of foot washing, and the proper extent of church discipline, particularly whether the shunning of unrepentant, erring members was too severe (Baecher 1996, 48-9).

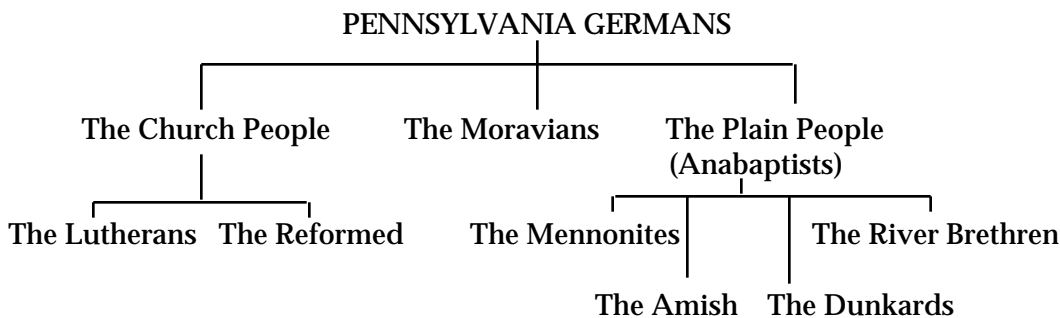
Choosing the simple peasant life, Amman’s group rallied around the scripture-based practice of social avoidance (*Meidung*). Early Anabaptist writers described a threefold purpose for *Meidung*: to bring the sinner to repentance, to protect the rest of the community from possible contagion, and to maintain the community’s reputation (Keeney 1968, 159). The Amish based their “purer” fellowship on the core values of pacifism, i.e., non-violent non-resistance, and separation from the world in obedience to God by means of voluntary adult baptism (Hostetler and Huntington 1992, 8-13). These choices left them open to further persecution. Like the Hebrews, enduring persecution sharply defined their uniqueness and solidified their identity. As Jean Séguy asserted, “Persecution did not arise out of occasional circumstances; it sprang from ontological necessity” (1982, 35). Being at odds

with those around them assured the Amish of their faithfulness to their bible’s separation mandate.

Mennonites first ventured to America by 1640, but nothing is known of their fate. Puritan colonies rejected Mennonite settlement. In 1683 fifty Mennonite families founded a “Deutschstadt” in the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania (*Wir lesen und sprechen Deutsch* 1984, 187). Meanwhile, Amish groups emigrated to the Netherlands, Poland, and Russia (Nolt 1992, 52), with the first Amish, also part of William Penn’s Holy Experiment, settling in Berks County, Pennsylvania in 1736 (Hostetler 1996, 257). (see Fig. 1, below.)

In the decades after their arrival, seeking good and plentiful farmland, the Amish moved west. The first Amish in Ohio were the preacher Jacob Miller and his family, who reached the fertile farmlands of Tuscarawas County in 1809, and in 1813 the first Amish settled in Wayne County (*Wir lesen und sprechen Deutsch* 1984, 93).³ By 1862, this settlement was strong and vocal enough to host a national meeting for Amish leaders (*Diener-Versammlungen*). Today, of the approximately 180,000 Amish in the United States, over one-

Figure 1:²



quarter live in a settlement straddling Wayne and Holmes counties in Ohio, making it the world’s largest settlement, surpassing Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Kraybill and Bowman 2001, 103-5).

Resisting Assimilation

Struggling to maintain their values and identity in the New World, the Amish fellowships chose a functional, non-ornamented or “plain” lifestyle. Over the generations they found themselves divided over whether to build churches in which to gather or to worship in members’ homes; whether their children would attend school past the elementary grades; whether to allow buttons or pockets; and whether or not one could vote or become involved in public life. Occasionally, doctrinal differences caused divisions. One splinter group decided to practice “stream” baptism. Joseph Yoder of McLean County, Illinois, precipitated another division by advancing the doctrine of universal salvation. Yoder wrote poetry that proclaimed the power of love to embrace all and denied the existence of hell. The majority denounced his ideas and reaffirmed that only the righteous would receive eternal joy, while the rest would receive eternal punishment (Yoder and Estes 1999, 155-6)

There was also much discussion about how much change would or could be allowed before they lost their identity. The tradition-minded or Old Order Amish rejected industrial society and opted for simplicity, noncon-

formity, nonresistance, and nonviolence. Today their lifestyle continues to include German-language worship services, horse-drawn transportation, face-to-face business and social interactions, and no established church bureaucracy (Hostetler 1992, 6, 25).

Language serves as a good example of loyalty to tradition. Unlike many other immigrant groups in America, the Amish preserve their native language in both the home and in religious ritual (Gallagher 1987), where High German and Pennsylvania Dutch, or *Deitsch* (a German derivative), serve as important uniting factors. Among the *Swartzentrubers*, an ultra-conservative Amish order, children learn no English until beginning school in the first grade. The adherence to their language, along with intentional community living, isolates the Amish from dominant American education, mass culture, politics, and economic forces. The use of *Deitsch* cements the Amish into a community better able to resist the forces of assimilation.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, legal, social, and political forces opposed the speaking of other languages besides English. The underlying belief of the “perfect union” ideology argued that uniformity of language would produce a single morality, deep-seated patriotism, and even a capacity for logical thinking. From 1917-1923 some states repealed laws that tolerated instruction in languages other than English (Jottíni 1988, 26). In spite of these legal decisions, the Amish taught their children Pennsylvania Dutch and used it as their secular and

sacred language. In *Meyer v. State of Nebraska* (1923), the Supreme Court ruled that states could require English instruction but could not restrict secondary language instruction, a right ensured by the Fourteenth Amendment (Riger 1977, 463).

The Socialization of Children

The Amish have never proselytized to recruit members, as proselytizing was banned from their inception. Thus, nurturing their own children in the faith has been a prime mechanism for membership. Indeed, the Amish highly value children as “the only possession we can take to heaven with us.” Children have both emotional and social significance in the Amish community. As parents strive to be good examples for their children, they become better Amish themselves (Huntington 1981, 380). The Amish believe that their children, born with sinful natures, will become loving and teachable in the proper environment. Parents, specifically fathers, are morally accountable to God for providing this training so that their children will yield themselves to God (Hostetler and Huntington 1992, 14-16). As Keith Thomas points out, “The Reformation, by reducing the authority of the priest in society, simultaneously elevated the authority of lay heads of households,” including the accountability for the religious and moral education and conduct of both wife and children (qtd. in O’Day 1994, 39). Children also contribute economically to the family. One Amish informant estimated that his children

earned about \$75,000 a year working in the community. He invested their money in land or production supplies, or, if necessary, used it for the family’s expenses, so that each of his children had built up a large savings by the time they were ready to marry.⁴

The Amish generally agree that “babies,” as children are called from birth to the time they begin walking, are a gift from God and are not responsible for their willfulness. Amish parents bear full responsibility for their training, as reflected in the proverb, “As a twig is bent, so the tree is inclined.” Ministers at the Amish Ministers’ Meeting of 1873 admonished parents, “Take very great care, you to whom the care of your children is so highly and preciously commanded, that you bring them up from youth in the admonition of the Lord; for this is the greatest and most noble duty of the Christian” (Yoder and Estes 1999, 180).

Amish toddlers or “little children” are taught to be honest, to respect and obey authority as it is invested in their parents and church leaders, and to recognize that these adults have deep concerns about the child’s welfare (Kline 1999). Amish parents act firmly and consistently in their discipline. Thus, they do not moralize to their children with platitudes such as: “It is God’s will that you follow my orders.” Rather, they require obedience matter-of-factly. And when a child “knows what a comb is for, he’s smart enough to know what a whipping’s for” (Stoll 1976, 56). In the May 2001 *Family Life*, a magazine for Amish families, a story for children, “Abner and His Cookies,” tells about

a boy who, in stealing extra cookies from the cupboard, gets his finger caught in a mousetrap. The didactic tale ends with the boy’s mother telling him: “You will have to be punished. I’m sure that after this you will think twice before disobeying” (E., J.H. 2001, 27-28).

Amish parents teach their children to work steadily and to fulfill their work responsibilities agreeably and without expecting thanks. The pleasure in accomplishing a task is seen as its own reward. “The dishes are clean and put away,” a parent might observe (Huntington 1981, 385). Amish parents socialize their children to accept Amish norms by constantly monitoring and guiding them; molding them to be “quiet, friendly, responsible, conscientious, devoted workers, patient with details and routine, loyal, considerate, and concerned with others’ feelings even when they’re in the wrong” (Smucker 1988, 220). Parents do not expect any other institution, neither school nor church, to take the responsibility for raising their children.

Adults welcome their children’s questions about the physical world, such as “When will these seeds come up?” However, parents discourage intellectual curiosity, believing that innovation promotes sinfulness. Children learn to be interdependent, to look out for all younger children and to accept help from those who are older (Huntington 1981, 386). A four-year-old might wait for an older sibling to help with a coat or shoelaces while younger children are required to obey an older child in the absence of a parent.

Amish children imitate their parents. Young children follow their fathers around the farm, patiently observing and helping with chores. Where possible, the Amish maintain small-scale farms of about eighty tillable acres (Kline 1990, xvi). But the high cost and diminishing availability of farmland make it necessary for men to seek work away from home. David Kline, an Amish farmer and author, estimates only 35% of Amish are full-time farmers, down from 70% “a few years ago” (1999). As a result of these social and economic changes in the Amish community, family life has also been affected. Researchers have found that non-farm Amish children are “less respectful, more defiant and rebellious, more self-centered and more confused about who they are and what [is] their future role in the Amish community” (Smucker 1988, 231).

The question of what long-range effects this will have on the Amish community is thus clearly raised. Recognizing early effects of this trend, many Amish are trying to recover the lifestyle associated with family farming, the legacy of slow change, and close parent-child relationships. In the absence of farming opportunities, for example, many establish cottage industries or work in groups doing carpentry to minimize contact with outsiders.

Amish Singing

The place of singing in Amish home life deserves to be studied to determine its role not only in the parent-child rela-

tionship, but also as a vehicle for transmitting cultural values. According to Jeff Todd Titon, “[e]arly childhood music is not simply functional, e.g., for entertainment or to quiet a child, but it teaches the musical taste and orientation of a particular group. Lullabies not only lull but promise, praise and teach cultural values” (1996, 496).

Historically, singing has played an important role in Amish life. Imprisoned in Passau castle in southwestern Germany, and awaiting their fate at the stake or chopping block, sixteenth century Anabaptist martyrs spent their time singing and writing hymns (Nolt 1992, 21-2). As many of those persecuted had been priests, and thus well acquainted with Gregorian chant melodies, these, along with traditional folk melodies, provided the background for their lyrics. When other prisoners danced to their singing, the Anabaptists slowed it down until there was no danceable rhythm left. Collected in the *Ausbund*, these hymns became and remain the most important music of the Amish tradition. They are sung in unison in each worship service, before meetings, at work, and in leisure.

In articulating his theory of “cantometrics,” a music analysis system for understanding and classifying types of cultures, Alan Lomax argued that if a culture uses monophonic texture (i.e., one line of melody sung without harmony), it follows that that society will be primitive and undeveloped (Nettl 1983, 92-5).⁵ But this ethno-centric and value-laden presumption is

contradicted by the Amish, who employ monophonic melodies and are not backward or uneducated. The fact that they teach children within the community and avoid many aspects of modernity is a conscious choice on moral grounds. Marc Olshan has labeled theirs a value-rational culture, meaning they have carefully formulated the “ultimate” values which serve to guide behavior within the community. The Amish continually and self-consciously evaluate alternative modes of action and make specific decisions which enable them to live lives consistent with these core values (Olshan 1980). This evaluation takes place in district church meetings preceding biannual communion celebrations, and through this process the *Ordnung* is regularly reconsidered and reconfirmed. The Amish singing style, thus, results from “intentional interaction by processes of decision-making by individuals” (Blacking 1981, n.p.), and the intentional decision to prohibit the use of harmony and musical instruments reflects this process, rather than signalling a “primitive culture.”

The Amish indicate that their singing serves to “soothe, uplift and encourage” those who sing, but they also believe that their songs must always take a form that “glorifies God and does not spotlight humans” (Brunk n.d., 3). Brunk, an Ohio Amish who advocated “divine simplicity” in songs, noted that musical instruments were not allowed because the Protestant reformer Zwingli had rejected their use in church, along with other non-bibli-

cal trappings such as candles, incense, crucifixes, and altars. According to Zwingli, “God ordained vocal music, the wicked added the instruments” (ibid.). Most districts today do not allow instruments even at home. Ada Lendon, an “ex-Amish,” or one who has chosen to leave the tradition, remarked that her mother (who remains in the tradition) “liked to play the harmonica . . . I remember a boy in another district had an accordion. Boy! Could he play! He had to get rid of it to join the church, however.”⁶

While the Amish have borrowed songs from surrounding cultures, there are many types of songs and styles of singing they reject. John Paul Raber, also from an Ohio Amish settlement, wrote disapprovingly of the use of choruses and quartets, considering them to place undue attention upon the singers. He did, however, approve of the use of gospel tunes and texts when they spread the teaching of Christianity. Nevertheless, he cautioned that gospel “would not be so popular today” if it were truly preaching Christ, suggesting that popularity equaled worldliness. Raber further remarked that the founder of gospel music, “half God-fearing Thomas A. Dorsey and half good-time Georgia Tom,”⁷ had merged the “earnest fervor of spirituals with the Blues’ swinging beat” into “rocking tunes,” and because of this, Dorsey was expelled from the church by the leaders (Raber n.d., 5-6). Thus, while the Amish employ gospel tunes, they do so in a way that could never be accused of “swinging” the beat.

Methodology

To gather information on how Amish view the issue of singing, I interviewed Amish men and women and a few ex-Amish in a variety of settings in northeastern Ohio. From 1999-2000, three undergraduate assistants—Andrea Lucas, Patrice Trudell, and Esther Diehl—and I conducted short, five- to twenty-minute interviews at Amish-frequented auctions in Mt. Hope, Kidron, and Farmerstown, and on the street on market days in Charm, Berlin, Walnut Creek, and Sugar Creek, Ohio. We interviewed individuals and families in their homes through second order (or snowball) sampling, by first talking with Amish who were contacts of our “English” (non-Amish) friends. Some of these Amish were involved in public forums and advisory groups or participated in programs in the Ohio State University Extension Program; some worked as nannies, house cleaners, or other service providers for “English” employers. These Amish, in turn, recommended other neighbors and friends for us to interview. For example, an Amish woman might say, “I don’t sing well, but Esther Miller loves to sing. She lives down Geyers Chapel [in a house] with a big white barn.” When I would visit these women and identify myself as an acquaintance of one of their friends, they would stop whatever project they were involved in, ask me in, and, in general, seemed happy to converse. We also attended a weekend workshop at an English inn in Amish country, eating meals and

talking at length with an Amish bishop, his wife, and two other Amish couples. Patrice Trudell (one of my research assistants) attended the Former Amish Reunion (FAR), a biannual gathering of ex-Amish, which serves as an extended family support for individuals and families who have left the Amish community, and there she engaged in lengthy person-to-person and group interviews.

Some Amish were hesitant to answer questions, especially when we took notes. A few, particularly more conservative Amish, declined to talk with us at all. Others were glad to talk at length, some inviting us to walk a little out of the way so they could sing less conspicuously. For the lengthier interviews, researchers asked a variety of questions about child-rearing practices, the kinds of songs sung to young children, the importance of singing in Amish life, and interviewees were also asked to sing on tape. Such questions often led to other areas of discussion, such as wedding or funeral practices, women's roles, reports of abuse in Amish families, "Brauch"⁸ Johnny healers, and other health issues. In their own homes, the Amish were very happy to talk about their experiences raising children and offered us refreshments, inviting us to come back when they could gather some of their friends to talk with us.

Three Nursery Songs

When we began gathering nursery songs in this protected ethno-religious

community, Amish informants enjoyed bringing out songbooks (with lyrics only) they had collected from bus rides to Iowa or Kentucky. Then, they sang for us their favorites, "Mockingbird Hill," and a Swiss ballad about a young lover lying in the graveyard. One informant insisted that we record an "important" song and began to sing the camp song, "Found a Peanut." We persisted, asking them to sing only songs they would sing to babies. After considerable thought, Amish parents explained that they sang English nursery songs, such as "Ten Little Indians" and "Mulberry Bush," as well as Christian children's songs, such as "Fishers of Men" and "Jesus Loves Me" to their children in both Pennsylvania Dutch and English. Amish adults also sing "fast" songs—hymns which they learn in school, at Sunday night sing-alongs, and other Amish gatherings. The Amish began to collect these hymns in the late nineteenth century into songbooks such as the *Unparteiische Liedersammlung*. These are not sung particularly fast, but are distinguished from the "slow" or church songs from the *Ausbund*. Like all traditional Amish music, these songs are monophonic, that is, one melodic line without accompaniment.

Of all the songs we collected, three songs in particular seemed to express the values that Amish parents seek to impart to their children: "Raddy, Raddy, Gally," "Schlof, Bubeli, Schlof," and "Es sind zween Weg." Each of these songs underscores the importance the Amish place on the extended family and on farming as the preferred

livelihood which includes everyone in the community/family regardless of gender or age. Among the Amish, the ideal is that individuals know their roles, and unite to build an effective, harmonious community. The repetition of songs to children is seen as a powerful way to effect the internalization of the notion of such social harmony in children from an early age. Children who daily hear soothing, gentle words and melodies of songs such as “Schlof, Bubeli, Schlof,” which emphasizes the emotional well-being brought about by such social harmony; “Es sind Zween Weg,” which describes the clear choices that the Amish person faces between

worldly, materialistic conformity to the values of the surrounding culture or devotion to the separated fellowship; and “Raddy, Raddy, Gally,” which evokes the sheer joy of parental love and the desire to hold children close and give them pleasure, are thus thought to be pleasantly and lovingly socialized into the Amish way.

Parents sing the unpitched, sing-song “Raddy, Raddy, Gally” while bouncing a toddler on a knee. In contrast to the American nursery song, “This is the way the gentlemen ride,” which echoes gender and class status distinctions, “Raddy” refers to agricultural life with an emphasis on work-

Ex. 1: “Raddy, Raddy, Gally”—Ada Lendon’s version

(“Ride-y, ride-y horsie/Half an hour a mile/Tomorrow we have to thrash oats/For the horsie to eat food/Then we go over the bridge/And the bridge breaks down”).¹¹

Ex. 2: “Raddy, Raddy, Gally”—Harvey Troyer’s version

(“Ride-y, ride-y horsie/A mile’n’a half an hour/Drive over a ditch/And dump off”).¹²

ing in fields. In Ada Lendon’s version (ex. 1),⁹ the bridge simply breaks, while in the Harvey Troyer’s version (ex. 2),¹⁰ an inexperienced driver and too much speed cause the upset.

In both the above versions, the singers sang at the same, uncharacteristically quick speed (quarter note = 176). This surely gives the impression that thrilling the child is one of the song’s major purposes. The rhythm, somewhat uneven despite the racing pace, follows speech patterns, and resonates with the rhythm of clapping horse hooves. Klassen’s version (= 76) in 2/4 meter is slower, as is the version sung by Barbara (= 96), a young Amish woman working in a community business. Barbara agreed to have her song recorded,¹³ unusual, given that the Amish consider recordings as well as photography to be vain practices, and thus discourage them.

“Schlof, Bubeli, Schlof,” was the most familiar of the nursery songs to

all the Amish we interviewed. Women and men alike greeted the song title with huge smiles accompanied by laughter. They explained that “*Bubeli*” is a term of endearment for babies, whereas for older children it can be used in a negative or teasing sense: “Stop being a baby (“*Bubeli*”) and grow up.” The agrarian theme in the songs emphasizes the security and regularity of tending the farm animals nearby in the corral. *Mammi* (Grandma), lives next door, and is both a role model and a caretaker. Despite her age, she is very productive: Out chasing the skinny cows, she runs all night, “and don’t come till tomorrow morning.”¹⁴

Klassen noted many lyric variants in “Schlof, Kjintje, Schlof,” brought to Canada from Russia by Mennonites (ex. 4), but related that “melodic differences were minimal” (1989, 29-31). The Amish in Holmes county, on the other hand, sang a version that differed significantly from Klassen’s. The

Ex. 3: “Schlof, Bubeli, Schlof”—Barbara’s Version, Walnut Creek, Ohio¹⁵

Shlof, bubeli, shlof Der Dadi hiet die Schof. Die Mammi hiet die dotti Kieh
 Bott im a drecht Un kommt
 bis nuf in di gnee net ham bis miah früh Shlof, bubeli, shlof

(“Sleep, baby, sleep/Grandpa tends the sheep/Grandma brings in the skinny cows/She wades in mud up to knees/She don’t come home until tomorrow morning/Sleep, baby, sleep.”)

Holmes county version is exemplified by Barbara’s tune (ex. 3), which more closely resembles a Pennsylvania ver-

sion brought from Germany in the 1780s and recorded by Hausman (ex. 5) (1953, 66-7).

Ex. 4: “Schlop, Kjintje, Schlop”—Canadian Russian Mennonite Version

♩ = 76

Schlop, Kjin-tje, schlop, Dien Fo-da heed't de Schop, Die-ne Ma-me sched't en

Boom - tje, Doa felt e-rauf en Droom - tje, Schlop, Kjin - tje, schlop.

(“Sleep, baby, sleep/Your father herds the sheep/Your mother shakes a little tree/There falls down a little dream/Sleep, baby, sleep” becomes, in another version, “Sleep, baby, sleep/Outside stand the sheep/A black one and a white one/And if the baby won’t sleep/Then the black one will come and bite it,” while a third version has “Sleep, little child, sleep/Your father herds the sheep/Your mother shakes a little tree/There fall down a little dream/Sleep, little child, sleep;” Klassen 1989, 29-31).

Ex. 5: “Schlof, Bubeli, Schlof”—Lancaster, Pennsylvania Version

Dreamily

1. Sleep, lit-tle one, sleep.— Your fa-ther watches the sheep.— Your moth-er, the lit-tle calves will tend; Thru mead-ows green their way willwend. Sleep, lit-tle one, sleep.

Barbara begins in 2/4 and switches into 6/8 meter when she gets warmed up and into full swing. The 6/8 meter gives a swing-like sound. Hausman’s version is in a regular 6/8 meter with the same scale pattern as the Canadian Russian Mennonite version of Klassen. Klassen’s and Hausman’s are sung much higher than Barbara’s, which is sung in Db. Klassen’s version is in the key of F major; the Hausman, G major. Barbara uses a three-note, *do-re-mi*, scale while Klassen has *do-re-mi-fa-sol* with an additional *sol* below *do*.

The three versions differ widely in melodic material. Comparing the intervals, there is a preponderance of major seconds, neighboring notes, in each, but a larger variety of intervals in the Canadian Mennonite version (table 1). Like “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” the Ohio Amish version is the essence of simplicity, a quality highly valued in Amish culture, using only three notes, all major seconds. Like most of Amish singing, all the notes are diatonic, conforming to the Western major scale and using no additional “accidental” notes.

“Es sind zween Weg,” on the other hand, offers an example of a church hymn sung to babies and little children to calm them and to teach them loyalty to spiritual over worldly claims. The text of this martyr’s song speaks clearly of choosing between two ways, one narrow, one wide, and proclaims that daily actions lead to eternal consequences (ex. 6).

Ex. 6: “Es sind zween Weg”—Troyer

Es sind zween Weg in die - ser Zeit,
 2
 Der ein ist schmal, der an - der welt.
 3
 Wer jetzt will gehn die schmal - e Bahn,
 4
 Der wird ver - acht von je - der - mann.

(“There are two ways in this our day/
 One narrow and the other broad/
 Who now will go the other way/
 Will be despised by all abroad;” Overholt 1987, 60).

Table 1: Comparison of Intervals

| Interval | Canadian Russian Mennonite (Klassen) | Walnut Creek, Ohio (Barbara) | Lancaster County (Hausman) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Minor 2 nd | 2 | — | 1 |
| Major 2 nd | 6 | All | 12 |
| Minor 3 rd | 4 | — | 4 |
| Major 3 rd | 1 | — | — |
| Perfect 4 th | 3 | — | 4 |
| Major 6 th | 1 | — | 1 |
| Minor 7 th | — | — | 1 |

Shape Note¹⁶

The traveler at the crossroads is a metaphor found in many cultures. Wolfgang Harms dated its use to the fifth-century writings of Prodikos, the Greek Sophist, “Hercules must choose between Vice and Virtue” (1970, 40-43).

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 30:15-16, 19, God instructs:

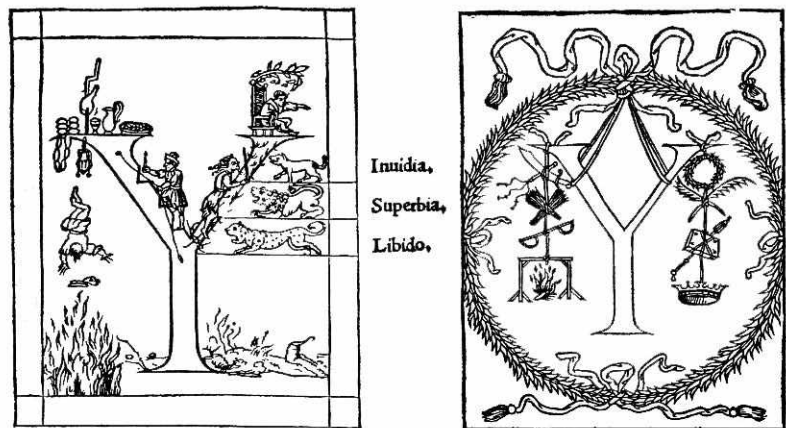
See, I have set before you this day life and good and death and evil; In that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in God’s ways, and to keep God’s commandments and God’s judgments, that you may live and multiply . . . I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your children may live.

In Matthew 7:13-14, in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ also invokes the metaphor:

Enter in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in there; Because narrow is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

In addition to appearing in philosophical and religious texts, as

Figure 2: Y-Signum¹⁷



well as the Amish hymns, this theme is also featured in the visual art of German woodcuts of the twelfth century (fig. 2). The theme is the “Y,” with one thick arm and one thin arm, symbolizing the wide and narrow roads (Harms 1970, 85). By the fifteenth century, the “Y”-shaped symbol was familiar enough to be used as a crucifix and a sceptre. (fig. 3)

Figure 3: Y-Signum Sceptre¹⁸



Choosing between the wide road that leads to punishment and fire and the narrow, which leads to glory and reward, is a fundamental concept for the Amish. (fig. 4) They frequently must interact with others who claim to be Christians but who are not following the narrow way. If the Amish are to survive, they need to draw “a clear cut boundary between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. . . . The Amish sense of order, from their very beginnings, included a decisive need

for boundaries” (Meyers 1996, 40-53). The women singing the FAR version

Figure 4: Two ways¹⁹



(ex. 7) left out one line of melody, the third, and sang the text of the third to the fourth line of melody. Ethnomusicologist John Blacking has observed that, in his experience,

Ex. 7: “Es sind zween Weg”—Former Amish Reunion

Es sind zween Weg in die ser Zeit,
 Der ein ist schmal, der ander weit.
 Wer jetzt will gehn die schmal-e Bahn.

“singers often omit ‘lines’ of standard song” or may insert them in unexpected places (1967, 156). Without apology, the leader translated the first two lines and avoided comment on the third and fourth, despite another woman mentioning quietly that they had omitted a line certainly due to a memory lapse.

As with all Amish church hymns, this is a free rhythm (a flowing rhythm with no set meter), sung slowly at = 69. The melody is neumatic (two to four notes per syllable of text). Only four syllables, one of which is the final, have but one note; and five have three notes. Jackson, who studied Amish church chants, reported that he heard a tendency to melisma (ten to twenty notes on one or more syllables), which he attributed to “vocal vagaries—tone waverings and rhythmic inconsistencies of the performances [that] become stylized and incorporated in performance practices” (Jackson 1945, 152). The preponderance of short-long pairings gives the appearance that the melody has been

borrowed directly from chant. The largest ascending melodic movement is a major third, while there is one descending perfect fourth in each phrase. The melody spans an octave from b^b to b'^b .

Typically, these tunes are transmitted orally. Occasionally, a group of Amish, fearing that they may be losing some of the old tunes, makes the decision to collaborate with an outsider in order to publish a collection of texts and tunes, although this is not in keeping with the Amish emphasis on oral tradition. The *Amische Lieder* by Joseph Yoder, published in 1942, is an example of such a collaborative effort, and in it Yoder presents several different versions of “Es sind zween Weg,” such as the one presented in ex. 8 (1942, 25).

A comparison of the melodic cadences (approaches to the final note of each melodic line) of thirteen melodies from Yoder’s *Amische Lieder* and thirteen melodies from Ben Troyer Jr.’s 1997 edition of *Ausbund and Liedersammlung songs* (table 2) shows

Ex. 8: “Es sind zween Weg”—*Amische Lieder*

A'fange beim
Gentz W. Zug, 1941. Ausbund 748 (1)

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|---|-----|-------|----|------|
| 57. | Es | find | zween | Weg | in | die | — | fer | Zeit, | | |
| 58. | Dns | scigt | uns | an | des | Her | — | ren | Wort: | | |
| 59. | Dar | — | nach | hat | er | e | — | wi | — | ge | Ruh. |

some striking dissimilarities. Each is collected in a different Amish community, but the differences make one wonder how much the melodies have changed. The span of notes which fit comfortably in general group singing ranges from the smallest of a major sixth to the largest of an octave and a fourth in the Troyer edition and an octave and a fifth in the Yoder edition. While both use the shape note tradition, Yoder gives specific pitches for his songs, while Troyer only provides the notes in relation to each other.

Yoder prefaced his 1942 edition with directness:

Since the singers of the [Mifflin County, Pennsylvania] Valley feel that they still have these hymns as near or nearer the old ways of

singing them, than any other community, it was only natural that the writer should go back to the Valley to get these songs and hymns in their early forms (v).

Yoder also explained that his publication was meant to help families to learn and use the slow hymns for daily home worship. Troyer made no such claims, merely acknowledging and thanking those who had helped him transcribe the songs (1997, i) .

Performance practices include the use of scooping and sliding on a new syllable and between two syllables and the consistent use of anticipation. The final note is barely held a full beat, then is chopped off quickly. As in nearly all Amish singing, a song leader (*Vorsinger*) sings an *incipit*, typically the melody for the first syllable of text, in

Table 2: Comparison of Cadences

| | Troyer's <i>Ausbund and Liedersammlung</i> Songs | | Yoder's <i>Amische Lieder</i> | |
|---|---|-------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Upper neighbor tone, anticipation, final | 71 | 70.3% | 40 | 51.9% |
| Upper neighbor, lower neighbor, final | 19 | 18.8% | 4 | 5.2% |
| Final, upper neighbor, final | 1 | 1.0% | 20 | 25.9% |
| Descending notes to final | 0 | 0 | 5 | 6.5% |
| Other | <u>10</u> | 10.0% | <u>8</u> | 10.3% |
| TOTAL CADENCES | 101 | | 77 | |

this case three-notes (ex. 7), then pauses briefly, waiting for the others to join her. Generally, whether in a schoolroom, at home, or in worship, the Amish are singing with people they sing with often, and so, like a well-rehearsed marching band, they match their stride to the group’s norms and maintain their uniformity. As in other Christian traditions, a few tunes may be used for a multitude of texts. A version of the lyrics to “Es sind zween Weg” was sung to a gospel melody, “I’m Building a Home.” Likewise, the same text may be sung to a variety of tunes (ex. 9).

Amish education guides a child to live humbly, and to be satisfied with simple living in resignation to the will of God (Hostetler and Huntington 1992, 14). The music of the dominant culture manifold, varied, simple, or complex reflects a culture of difference. Imbedded in the singing of the Amish, in contrast, is the simplicity, conformity, and unity of a single line of melody, sung together as one voice, for the purpose of praising God. Singing confirms norms of behavior and “sentiments that [pre-]exist”

Ex. 9 : A second melody²⁰

D. H. 156

1. Es sind zween Weg in die - ser Zeit, Der ein ist schmal der an - der weit,
 2. Dies zeigt uns an des Her - ren Wort: Geht ein durch die - se En - ge Pfort,
 3. Dar - nach hat er e - wi - ge Ruh, Da - rum, o Mensch, schied dich da - zu,

The Role of Nursery Songs in Socialization

In his *Venda Children’s Songs*, Blacking proposes that “[c]ultural analyses of music sounds may help us towards an explanation of th[e] relationship between life and music” (1967, 198). In Amish culture, religion and way of life are inseparable (Kingston 1953, n.p.). While education in the dominant American culture promotes self advancement, independence, and the acquisition of power over others,

(Blacking 1967, 31). The Amish focus is on contentment in a life of work and family, and in living spiritually, committed to worship and praise of God with a pure, humble voice, in contrast to a trained, self-conscious voice, singing for self-aggrandizement.

The Amish want their children to choose this more simple way of life, but they believe that submission should be encouraged, not forced. As each teenager becomes an adult, he or she chooses whether to stay under the authority of the church or to leave

(Klassen 1973, 35, 44-5), and today, nearly 80% choose to remain Amish. Amish parents disciple their children into becoming mature adults dedicated to the Amish way of life by shaping their young children’s thoughts and actions. They teach *Gelassenheit* (yielding and submission) and *Demutigkeit* (humility) to their children when they are infants and preschoolers, with the goal of their becoming ideal Amish adults who are sincere, honest, cordial, content, and well-mannered (Wittmer and Moser 1974, 270).

Blackboard Bulletin is a publication for Amish teachers that also finds its way into the homes of many Amish parents, and fosters interaction and cooperation between parents and teachers. The Bulletin’s columnist, “Teacher Arlene,” observes:

A normal child’s attitude toward God begins in his own home. His parents are molding and shaping his attitudes as a reflection of their own. This also is true of a child’s attitude toward work and his own abilities and talents. If we excuse a child from doing something he doesn’t want to do or thinks he can’t do good enough, are we helping him? (Teacher Arlene 2000, 4)

“Teacher Arlene” believes parents should encourage their children to participate and work diligently at developing their skills regardless of ability. This includes singing in the home and at school. The Amish we interviewed told us that singing is a significant part of their family life (table 3).

Table 3: How important is singing in your family?

| | | | |
|----------------|---|----|--------|
| Very important | 5 | 33 | 58.9% |
| | 4 | 12 | 21.4% |
| | 3 | 6 | 10.7% |
| | 2 | 2 | 3.6% |
| Not Important | 1 | 3 | 5.4% |
| TOTAL | | 56 | 100.0% |

They agree singing makes work easier, transmits values, spreads the gospel, and adds joy to the day. It helps them to be more the person they are meant to be. Many sing as much as two hours a day with their children while engaging in a variety of family chores and activities (table 4). One Amish grandmother talked about the birth of a granddaughter who had a rare health disorder. The doctors cautioned that the child would not live six months. “We took turns rocking her and singing to her. We had so little time to show her love,” the woman explained. “The doctors were amazed that she lived nearly eighteen months,” she added.

The Amish we interviewed expressed the opinion that home singing promotes a yielding spirit and brings one closer to God. It encourages “togetherness,” keeps the “thought-life in check and gives you a spirit of gratefulness.” Church songs in

Table 4: When do you sing?

| | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|--|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Cooking | 6 | 10 | 5 | 1 |
| Doing Housework | 8 | 12 | 2 | 0 |
| Gardening | 1 | 10 | 10 | 3 |
| Bathing Child | 4 | 13 | 6 | 4 |
| Buggy Riding | 5 | 9 | 6 | 2 |
| Playtime | 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 |
| Other: while sitting on the porch in the evening to relax, sewing, milking, bedtime, rocking, Sunday evening, mowing the lawn | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

particular were reported to have great value. Parents tell martyr stories to their children often, including when singing *Ausbund* hymns.

On the other hand, not all Amish children or adults enjoy singing. When a few Amish teachers reported that some of their students were less than enthusiastic about singing in school, “Teacher Arlene,” stressing the importance of singing, wrote back:

I think there are many reasons why we should teach our children to sing. . . . if we wish them to spend eternity in heaven, there will undoubtedly be singing there, and won't we be expected to help sing, regardless how our voices are? . . . Singing should be a devotion, a way of worshipping God, and we all should help sing no matter what our ability is. . . . We should instead teach our children that their voices are needed in our homes, in our schools and in our churches—not because of their talents but because they are part of

our fellowship. . . . Let's not deny our children the opportunity for singing to allow them to develop the feeling of expressing their devotion and reverence in their hearts to God. (2000, 4)

“Teacher Arlene” sought to persuade Amish families that singing is an appropriate behavior that will lead to stronger adherence to the community's values. Full participation in the life of the community is expected. “She” equated singing with true worship and reinforced its importance in preparing children, and by inference adults as well, for eternity in heaven.

Conclusions

The Amish we interviewed sing to their children. Fifty-four out of fifty-six informants stated that they sang daily or often with young children. In fact, 30% sang two or more hours per day. Amish report singing to soothe

themselves and their children. When asked how many hours he sang with his children, one man replied, “It depends on how many babies you have to rock.” Singing, the Amish in our study agreed, does transmit the values of yielding, humility, and closeness to God. It is especially important and valuable while working.

In analyzing Amish home singing we found consistent performance practices. First, monophonic vocal music was the norm. Second, as documented in Amish literature, our research reaffirms the role of the *Vorsinger* (song leader), the one who sets the pitch and, often, the tempo, by singing the first syllable of a song (Durnbaugh 1999, 25). We found that in home singing the first syllable of each verse and each chorus is intoned by the *Vorsinger* and that many share the role of song leader. One leads for one song with another leading for a second song. No one person is identified as the “expert.” Even in the schoolroom, children take turns leading, and learn songs from each other. Except when it is her turn, the teacher neither leads nor instructs although her enthusiasm for singing is “catching.” Third, “fast” and gospel songs, such as “Wo ist Jesus mein Verlangen,” are sung nearly as slowly as Amish church chants. Fourth, all participate heartily regardless of ability, and most are capable of staying on pitch. Fifth, the tone quality may be light and pure or a nasal, country *twang*, but the phrasing is invariably *legato* except for the final note, which

is cut off quickly rather than held, despite the fact that one Amish hymnbook notated the final as a long note (Yoder 1942, 13). Sixth, as a rule, the hymnbooks the Amish use do not have musical notation. Tunes are sung from memory. Several men have reported that they get together with other men to practice singing outside of the worship setting and some report using books with shape notes in those gatherings.

The Amish sing English and Pennsylvania Dutch lullabies, such as “Shlof, Bubeli, Shlof,” entertainment and teaching songs, such as “Alds Butter Fas” and “Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush,” religious children’s songs such as “Jesus liebt mich” and “Jesus liebt de kleine kinder,” “fast” gospel songs such as “At Calvary” and “Amazing Grace,” and church slow songs from the *Ausbund*, such as “O Gott Vater, wir loben dich.”

The Amish core values of respect for elders and other figures of authority; mutuality and equality; strong self-discipline and conformity to church discipline; separation from the world; *Gelassenheit*; and *Demutigkeit* evidence themselves in several ways. First, the Amish family carefully chooses texts that feature farming and spiritual themes. Second, they use a measured, thoughtful pace. Voicing the words deliberately, the song is a vehicle for reinforcing important messages. Third, singing reinforces family time and togetherness. Families enjoy singing after a full day of work. Fourth, singing regularly reconnects them with their

history, especially as they sing hymns written by martyred women and men.

In *Music, Culture and Experience*, John Blacking proposes that

[M]usic is non-referential and sensuous, and no claim can be made that it is directly political. But some music can become and be used as a symbol of group identity, regardless of its structure; and the structure of the music can be such that the conditions required for its performance generate feelings and relationships between people that enable positive thinking and action in fields that are not musical. (1995, 198)

Throughout the centuries of persecution and, perhaps more so, during the years of tolerance, the Amish have monitored the musical practices of its members, then prescribed and proscribed certain types of songs and singing. Like the ban on musical instruments, these choices have been made by the community to unite them in their insistent simple way of life, which they believe to be redemptive. Other forms of singing, if tolerated, might lead their children to prefer the vain, pride-filled, consumer- and achievement-oriented lifestyle of their English neighbors. Amish singing reflects the culture of “divine simplicity” and conformity reinforced by their belief that their lives are to be dedicated to nurturing children who will be obedient to God.

Notes

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² Jottíni 1988, 33.

³ For more information about the customs of the Amish of Wayne and Holmes Counties, see Kreps, Donnermeyer, and Kreps 1997; and Donnermeyer, Kreps, and Kreps 1999.

⁴ Amish man. Interview by author, Millersburg, Ohio, 11 March 1999.

⁵ Alan Lomax claimed that his system of analysis, cantometrics, was “objective science . . . [which] supplied us with certain incontrovertible proofs regarding the role of musical style as a reflection of certain fundamental truths” (Grauer 2001, 3).

⁶ Ada Lendon. Interview by author, Wooster, Ohio, 26 July 1999.

⁷ Thomas A. Dorsey (1899-1993), American songwriter known as the father of gospel music; pianist for blues artists Bessie Smith and Gertrude Ma Rainey.

⁸ Meaning “pow-wow.” Some Amish frequent healers; others disapprove.

⁹ Ada Lendon. Interview by author, Wooster, Ohio, 26 July 1999.

¹⁰ Harvey Troyer. Interview by Patrice Trudell, at the Former Amish Reunion, Ashland, Ohio, 31 July 1999.

¹¹ Translated by an Amish informant. Pennsylvania Dutch is a spoken language. Several groups in Holmes County have recently tried to regularize spelling. A local group published a book with about half of the songs of the *Ausbund* written in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect rather than High German. One man who worked on this said they started with the “songs we sing most.” Another group is working on a dictionary.

¹² Translated by an Amish informant.

¹³ Barbara. Interview by author, Walnut Creek, Ohio, 26 January 1999.

¹⁴ Emily Gerstner-Hirzel documented many versions of this song in German language folksong from “Ruh, Kindlein, ruh/der Wächter tutet: uh” to “Schloop Kinneke schloop/in Marias Schöötje” and “Schlaf Babel schlaf/und scheiss mer net aufs Wendele.” The earliest “Slaap Kindken slaap/dien Vader is een Aap/dine Moder is een Etterlin/slaap du verwesseld Horenkind” from Bremen was published in 1767. Another “Schlaf Büble schlaf” dated from 1853 in Tirol. The most similar texts related to agriculture come from Basel (1894), “Schlof Chindli schlof/di Muetter huetet d Schof,” from Lower Franconia (n.d.), “Schlaf Kindlein schlaf/dein Vater hüt die Schaf/dei Mutter hüt die dürra Küh/kommt nich heim bis morgen früh,” and from Lancaster, Pennsylvania (1915) “Schlof Bubbeli schlof/der Dawdy hüt die Schof/die Mommy hüt die rote Küh/un steht im Dreck bis an die Knie.” A Yiddish version, “Schlof schlof schlof/der Tate wet fohren in Dorf/wet er brejngen an Epele/wet sain gesund die Kepele,” was recorded in Munich in 1918 (Gerstner-Hirzel 1984, 243, 271-2, 275, 323). The Swiss still sing this song, an ex-Amish physician who visited there recently reported.

¹⁵ Barbara. Interview by author, Walnut Creek, Ohio, 26 January 1999. Translated by an Amish informant.

¹⁶ Troyer 1997, 6.

¹⁷ Geofroy Tory. 1529. *Champ Fleury*. Paris. Cited in Harms 1970, 321.

¹⁸ Cesare Ripa. 1603. *Iconologia*. Rome. Cited in Harms 1970, 344.

¹⁹ Daniel Sudermann. 1622. “The choice between the wide and narrow way.” In *Schöne ausserlesene Figuren*. Frankfurt a.M. Cited in Harms 1970, 348.

²⁰ Yoder 1942, 94.

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Responses

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Many of my own preconceptions and beliefs concerning the Amish stem from having grown up in an Amish area where many families, including my own, hired young Amish women as live-in domestic helpers. Although I later became an ethnomusicologist with a strong interest in North American orally-transmitted religious singing, I did not persist enough to overcome the many obstacles of ethnographic research among the Amish to have actually done it. This frustrated interest is apparently widespread, for the literature on Amish singing—one cannot really say “music” because of its instrumental associations—is quite sparse. Few articles on Amish singing have been published since the early and mid-twentieth century, when John Umble’s “The Old Order Amish, Their Hymns and Hymn Tunes” (1939), George Pullen Jackson’s “The Strange Music of the Old Order Amish” (1945), Charles Burkhardt’s “The Church Music of the Old Order Amish and Old Colony Mennonites” (1953), and Bruno Nettl’s “The Hymns of the Amish: an Example of Marginal Survival” (1957) were published.

Elder’s work, based on extensive and continuing field investigations, demonstrates that with persistence and creative approaches scholars can do excellent field-based research with the cooperation of the Amish. I believe it important that we continue such field-

work, partially because it is embarrassing that so little is known about Amish singing, despite the fact that such singing often takes place right in the midst of numerous colleges and universities. At my own institution, Kent State University, we know and teach far more about Thai classical music, Chinese “silk and bamboo” music, and West African drumming than Amish singing; indeed, Amish singing barely merits mention in spite of the large populations of Amish in the nearby communities of Geauga and Holmes counties.

Elder’s careful work brings us closer to the hearts and minds of contemporary Amish people and begins to break down the thick wall of cliché and mystique that we have built up around them. More than that, though, her approach is multi-disciplinary. While the article is written with sensitivity to anthropology, folklore, and ethnomusicology, it should be of special interest to music educators as well, for its core is an explication of not only how the Amish teach their children singing but how they transmit their values and their identity in song as well. We all have much to learn from societies such as the Amish who have demonstrated long-standing success in passing their musical traditions from one generation to the next.

Elder’s study is one step in the long overdue process of “rehumanizing” the Amish. Although Amish and non-Amish societies live together and mingle in public arenas such as shopping centers, the latter have little first-hand and much stereotyped knowledge of the former. Because of how the

Amish dress, live, and travel, they are automatically the “exotic other” in our midst, one of our own “national minorities” (to use the Chinese term), a kind of “aborigine” (to use the Australian and Taiwanese term), perhaps a rural equivalent to Brooklyn’s Hassidic Jewish community. We tend to know them through the clichés of “Pennsylvania Dutch” commercialism, reduced to aphorisms in peculiar English, and through artistic motifs portraying barns, buggies, and straw hats. We admire their traits of hard work, craftsmanship, and old-fashioned values which give them, in our minds, a Romantic Herderian mystique of the pure and uncorrupted “peasant,” unaffected by the pollution and alienation of the Industrial Revolution. They embody an ideal of the simple life, infused with spirituality, dignity, and “old fashioned family values.” We also become confused upon encountering “wild” Amish youth filling up on “junk food,” engaging in PDA, and driving buggies fitted with huge, booming speakers powered by batteries through the countryside.

Clearly Amish life is much more complex, self-contradictory, and open to change than many of us may realize. While their singing does not seem comparable in terms of technical complexity to the Euro-American classical musics studied in the conservatory, it is certainly quite complex in its meanings and connections to many aspects of Amish life and culture. From Elder’s article we learn that this singing is also both archaic and modern, for the Amish sing both the ancient chorale melodies to the hymn texts in the

Ausbund as well as recent English nursery songs. From my own experience, I know that some “liberal” Amish listen to Country-Western songs on the radio, and many of the youth are clearly well aware of current trends in American popular music. In spite of shopping among the non-Amish at ordinary malls and supermarkets where they hear Muzak and see everything materialistic the world has to offer, many seem to valiantly strive to maintain a separate existence from the mainstream, perhaps living what could be seen as the original “alternative” lifestyle. They have chosen to be separate, to be different, and their singing expresses this distinctness as much as anything else in their lives. Elder has recognized the significance of song in maintaining Amish life and values, and by focusing on children and how they learn song she has begun in the right place.

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I remember many weekend afternoons from my Ohio childhood when my family would take a trip to “Amish country,” and I would be regaled with parental nostalgic stories of “this is how it used to be.” My memory of these “plain” people, as they are still often and stereotypically referred to, gained mainly from a car window through the dust of unpaved roads, is now as faded as the 8mm movies my Dad faithfully took way back in the 50s. That the Amish might sing in addition to their stereotyped image of riding buggies, wearing old-fashioned clothes, and shucking corn never occurred to me four decades ago. It is thus with a mix of nostalgic curiosity, my own desire for *Gelassenheit*, and scholarly demeanor that I read Elder’s “Es Sind Zween Weg” as a lyrical account of a self-proclaimed rustic sect.

Elder starts with the perfunctory “classic case” scenario the Amish have come to represent: the earlier “American passage” flight from socially activated doctrinal persecution in Europe, a transplanted rural *Gemeinschaft* so fearful of assimilation that it preached the shunning of loved ones to keep them from straying, a group intent on finding meaning by mitigating the change everyone else defined as progress. Thanks in part to the Quakers, the Amish eventually found a Zion in the American wilderness, and were

no longer hated by most for their difference. Instead, through that peculiar American admiration of individualism and uniqueness, they progressively became commodified as nostalgia and tourist machines. In Ohio’s Holmes and Wayne counties, the loci of this ethnographic study, there are still dirt roads and corn shucks: yet, these have long since been reinscribed by neon “Amish Cooking” signs beckoning the busloads of tourists to take stock by buying (into) mementos of an American rural idyll.

Sociological analyses of Amish society have tended to focus on the regulatory functions of a group, which, to most Americans, represents a past thought of as a far better world. Yet hardly anyone would want to return to such a mentally constructed nostalgic world in the everyday, except as a tourist on a bus for a brief weekend gaze. What is interesting about Elder’s research is the focus on socialization through the very specific mechanism of song. Providing a historical survey of the importance of role singing as a form of resistance to torture, Elder is able to demonstrate through her ethnomusicological analysis that it would be foolish to dismiss the monophonic form of most Amish singing as a product of their so-called “backward” or “primitive” state. As a vehicle for inculcating the young with moral values, whether consciously or not, the form as well as the content of the songs shape a will to grow up and remain Amish.

I am intrigued by the author’s comments on the theologian Zwingli, who

privileged, and in fact insisted upon, the purity of voice unencumbered by musical instruments. Although not explored in further detail here, I am curious if this idea might not itself reinforce the return-to-nature economic drive of the society, a kind of Eden-esque innocence in which the naked human voice resonates as the culture-free Adam who knew no distraction from his creator? As a specialist on Islam, I should note that the human voice alone is mandated for reciting the Quran, so as not to call attention to itself. In this latter case, God’s words can only be properly echoed by man’s voice and not something created by man himself.

Elder is to be commended for bridging the interdisciplinary gap that often widens when music is analyzed both as a technique and at the same time is contextualized as a social act of symbolic power to shape socially shared values. After reading this study, we have a sense of what some contemporary Amish actually do and how they view what to them is no doubt a natural part of living. There are a number of areas for further research. I am especially interested in the role of the *Vorsinger*, described here not as an expert who determines the pitch, but as a necessary guiding role that is shared by community members. To the extent that children can “lead” elders, there appears to be a powerful metaphor for developing agency. How this developing agency steers the child to stay within the community or allows him

or her to slide into a parallel religious or even secular community is worth exploring.

Reading through the article, both informative and enjoyable, I am also inspired to read beyond it. There is much more I would like to know about the role music plays as a conscious symbol in promoting Amish social cohesion. Given the chosen isolation from the globalizing world around them, what role does singing in a “mother-” or even “Ur-” tongue play in reinforcing a desired otherness? What role do singing and humming play in everyday work tasks? What is the power of a musical tradition that is not abetted and shaped by recording but—if I understand the context correctly—must be passed on in actual performance? Imagine, if you can, how modern symphonies would sound if we did not usually have a “classic” recorded performance to judge by. I also wonder to what extent the aural overshadows the visual as the sense of choice in Amish upbringing. American culture, in its present commodified euphoria, fixates primarily on the visual. The Amish, it seems, simplify their visual world to harmonize as closely as it can with “nature,” while our broader media-mediated trend has been to out- and overdo nature. There is some irony, then, in the fact that the Amish as a withdrawn cultural group have come more and more to represent, as they did for me many years ago, what modern culture seems to be missing out on.

