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PATHS OF FRICTION: *KVÆÐAMANNAFÉLAGIÐ*, GEOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY IN 21ST-CENTURY ICELAND

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Konstantine A. Vlasis entitled "PATHS OF FRICTION: *KVÆÐAMANNAFÉLAGIÐ*, GEOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY IN 21ST-CENTURY ICELAND." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music, with a major in Music.

Leslie C. Gay, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

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PATHS OF FRICTION:
KVÆÐAMANNAFÉLAGIÐ, GEOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY
IN 21ST- CENTURY ICELAND

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Music
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Konstantine A. Vlasis
August 2017

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to family,
John Vlasis, Charlotte Vlasis, and Mary Osborn
who, together, have always supported my dreams and endeavors,
no matter how abstract or questionable,
...like working on a farm in Iceland.

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Jafnan er hálf sögð saga, ef einn segir

(A tale is but half told when only one person tells it)

The following research is but one perspective among a vast meshwork of personal and group experiences. I have attempted to include these experiences within the following pages, and would like to take a moment here, at the start of this path, to thank a few individuals.

I would first like to thank my committee members Dr. Leslie Gay, Dr. Rachel Golden, and Dr. Andy Bliss for their guidance, support, and productive criticism throughout this project. I would also like to thank other members of the musicology faculty at the University of Tennessee, including Dr. Jacky Avila, Dr. Lillie Gordon, and Sean McCollough, who constantly challenged me to put forth my best work. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Eric Harris, Dr. Chris Goertzen, Dr. Valerie Goertzen, and Dr. Edward Hafer for their continued support and guidance through the years. You have all shaped me into the musician, scholar, and individual I am today.

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ABSTRACT

Originating in the 14th century, *rímur* continues to remain a significant tradition in Iceland. *Rímur* melodies, together with the texts of Icelandic Edda and Saga poetry, were the main form of household entertainment in Iceland for almost six centuries until modern, global technologies cultivated new interests. In the early 20th century, *rímur* enthusiasts gathered together to form the *Iðunn Society of Intoners and Versifiers* in Reykjavík, to preserve the singing traditions of their ancestors. Since then, numerous other societies have organized, many within the past decade. In this way, intoning societies have become a medium through which a national Icelandic identity is formed. At the same time, Iceland has witnessed a boom of tourism. I argue this contemporary practice of *rímur* reflects a nationalistic sensibility within intoning societies, in reaction to tourism and other globalized influences.

Drawing from Tim Ingold's (2011) concern for sound as lived experience and Anna Tsing's (2005) analysis of friction in globalized space, I examine how intoning societies sonically represent the lived Icelandic experiences among these communities in the face of increased tourism, conflicts, and frictions between local and global perceptions of Icelandic identity. Additionally, I draw upon the work of ecomusicologists Aaron Allen and Kevin Dawe to consider the sonic impact of ecotourism in Iceland. For this study, I have conducted ethnographic research of these societies in Iceland. The rise of ecotourism in Iceland corresponds to the increased calls for preservation of *rímur* melodies, intoning practices, and traditional Icelandic music, as marks of local Icelandic identity.

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*All tables are created by author unless indicated otherwise

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CHAPTER I

KVÆÐAMANNAFÉLAGIÐ, GEOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY

You don't find people like the Bramleys now; radio, television and the motorcar have carried the outside world into the most isolated places so that the simple people you used to meet on the lonely farms are rapidly becoming like people anywhere else. There are still a few left, of course—old folk who cling to the ways of their fathers and when I come across any of them I like to make some excuse to sit down and talk with them and listen to the old Yorkshire words and expressions which have almost disappeared (Herriot, 1972, p. 73)

Cows

We never learned about this in class, I thought, as the cow bellowed in discomfort. I had cleaned her udder countless times over the past two months, yet she was still fickle about the temperature of the damp cleaning cloth. Too hot and she would kick, too cold and her teat shriveled before the milking machine could suction. These were the kinds of particularities I had grown accustomed to while working as a farmhand in Northern Iceland. On this specific day, I planned to attend a folk music festival in the city of Akureyri, Iceland's second largest city and about one half hour drive from the farm where I worked. But the morning duties had just begun, and I stared begrudgingly at the row of cows yet to be milked.

A bucket filled with heated, disinfectant soaked rags hung from the ceiling conveyer belt like a floating, warm oasis in the frigid morning air. Steam rose from the swinging pail, dancing in slow spirals and spins, as if beckoning my freezing hands for a quick, refreshing dip in the hot water. I selfishly grabbed another cleaning cloth, savoring the momentary warmth. It was June, 2015, and although I had imagined Iceland as a cold, untouched landscape, this particular summer was exceptionally chilly. The question to ask was not if it would rain or snow on any given day, but simply when. The weather seemed to change moods as often as a pregnant heifer on the farm, one minute delightful and calm, the next, relentless and bitter (see Figure 1.1). In

fact, whether we ran tractors in the fields, collected hay-bales, or opted for indoor construction, relied solely on the forecast's spirit. Every daily task registered an acute awareness of man's relationship to nature, a link between being and place.

This was the Iceland I had come to know—where geography and natural elements saturated the experiences of everyday life. While attending a master class at the Vaka folk festival in Akureyri, I discovered that music and poetry were also part of early Icelanders' daily practices. I learned about a form of early music-making called *rímur* (rhymes, pl.)—how it began as a form of household entertainment for rural farmers, its close connection to Eddic and Saga texts, and the complexities of its meter and rhyme.¹ Although it began in the 14th century, I was interested in the contemporary practice of *rímur*—what is its significance today?



Figure 1.1 Edge of Fellshlíð farm overlooking the Eyjafjarðarsveit valley

¹ A glossary of Icelandic terms can be found in the appendix on page 112.

Later, I discovered that many of those present at the master class belonged to the *Geffun*—a group of Akureyri community members that meet once a month to sing traditional Icelandic music. These communities are called *kvæðamannafélagið* (intoning societies, pl.), and are organized in various cities across Iceland, most of which have been founded very recently (Anna Sigtryggsdóttir, personal communication, January 11, 2017; Ólafsdóttir, 2011, pp. 197-200).² The significance of *rímur* melodies today begins with the increasing activities of intoning societies across Iceland, as most of them have formed within the past decade. But what has stirred traditional music practitioners to mobilize? Why the recent formation of *kvæðamannafélagið*?

As I left the folk festival that afternoon, I noticed that more people had gathered along the streets and in shops throughout Akureyri. Tourists sporting brilliantly colored rain-jackets and windproof pants dotted the sidewalks, and I knew they had specifically come to visit Iceland’s distinctive landscape. It was no surprise to see so many travelers since the peak tourist season takes place in the summer months. Tourism, especially tourism focusing on Iceland’s geographic phenomena, has grown into one of the country’s leading industries (De Freytas-Tamura, November 2016). Part of the recent activities of *kvæðamannafélagið* are related to the outdoor tourism efforts in Iceland. As more and more travelers visit Iceland each year, the roles of local music practices, landscape, and local identities are contested.

The 21st century marks a period of cultural renegotiation in Iceland. Global forces currently impact intoning societies, Icelandic geography, and other forms of Icelandic identity. Central to the increase of globalization in Iceland is the rise of its outdoor tourism industries,

Throughout this project, I use the terms “*kvæðamannafélagið*” and “intoning societies” interchangeably.

which create friction between global pressures and local practices. The preservation of both Icelandic traditional music and Icelandic geography provide ways to establish a local identity within a nation that has become more globally influenced. An understanding of sound studies (Titon, 2015), metaphorical friction between cultural differences (Tsing, 2005) and sound as lived experience that moves along metaphorical pathways (Ingold, 2011), are paramount to the understanding of globalization in 21st century Iceland.

Histories of Music, Place and Identity

The recent actions of *kvæðamannafélagið*, and the moves to preserve and celebrate Icelandic landscape, are ways that local identity has been asserted within a country experiencing extreme globalization—the overwhelming and swift influence of global flow (Appadurai, 1990). Such experiences can be explored through Timothy Ingold’s (2011) metaphor of “paths of lived experience,” and Anna Tsing’s (2005) notion of *friction* caused by increased globalization. *Kvæðamannafélagið* across Iceland, and the increased significance of Iceland’s outdoor tourism industry, represent a response that draws upon sound, place, and identity in reaction to global forces. In short, forces of globalization and tourism have clearly influenced local practices for Iceland’s intoning societies.

The first *kvæðamannafélagið* was formed in the early 20th century, when farming families began to travel to urban spaces in search of better work and opportunity, bringing with them their musical traditions (Ólafsdóttir, 2008, pp. 18-20). Intoning verses and telling stories became a way to express cultural and familial histories, and eventually led to the collection of folk tunes compiled in the late 19th century and to the first recordings of *rímur* melodies in 1903 (Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, personal communication, August 6, 2016). Over the next two decades, as

communities grew and expanded, numerous other recordings began to accumulate and traditional music enthusiasts organized. In 1929, the *Kvæðamannafélagið Iðunn* was founded in Reykjavík as the first intoning society, which is still active today (Ólafsdóttir, 2008, p. 104). In part, the *Iðunn* asserted ownership of the *rímur* tradition by implementing specific rules and regulations concerning performance practices (Ólafsdóttir, 2011; Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir, personal communication, January 2017). Several other societies have formed across Iceland since.

The 21st century has seen an explosion of activity within the *kvæðamannafélag* (sing.) scene in both number and location across Iceland. In Akureyri, the *Geffun* was founded in 2005; *Árgali* organized in 2010 in Selfoss; *Ríma* was founded in 2011 in Siglufjörður; *Gná* was established in 2015 in Sauðárkrókur; and the *Snorri í Reykholti* was founded in 2016 in Reykholt. Thus the 21st century is characterized by recent *kvæðamannafélag* activity, with five out of the seven societies founded in this century. When asked about the recent activity of intoning societies, Þórarinn Hjartarson, a founding member of the *Geffun*, stated “I can’t really figure out the reason for it, maybe it’s a sort of reaction against globalization, in general” (personal communication, January 3, 2017) (see Figure 1.2 and Table 1.1). One aspect of globalization centers on Iceland’s geography, which has been impacted by outdoor, wildlife, and ecotourism industries.

Tourism in Iceland focuses on geographic phenomenon and the country’s unique topography (De Freytas-Tamura, November 2016). Biking, hiking, sailing, glacier walks, ice-cave spelunking, lava field exploration, and rafting all cater to outdoor and adventure enthusiasts, as well as to eco-conscious individuals who want to intimately experience Icelandic nature and preserve its diverse landscape. As Kirsten Hastrup has argued, geography has always been fundamental to Icelandic lifestyle and culture (2008, p. 60). In the summers, days are endless,



Figure 1.2 Active intoning societies and their locations today (worldatlasbook, 2011)

Table 1.1 Society name, founding year, and location

Society Name	Founding Year	Location (city)
(1) <i>Iðunn</i>	1929	Reykjavík
(2) <i>Félag Ljóðaunnenda á Austurlandi</i>	1996	Near Egilsstaður
(3) <i>Geffun</i>	2005	Akureyri
(4) <i>Árgali</i>	2010	Selfoss
(5) <i>Ríma</i>	2011	Siglufjörður
(6) <i>Gná</i>	2015	Sauðárkrókur
(7) <i>Snorri í Reykholti</i>	2016	Reykholt

and in the winters the sky is dark. Weather constantly shifts from mild to extreme, and the interior highlands make travel across the country difficult. Cities and towns were often named after geographic phenomenon or natural elements, such as Reykjavík, which translates to “Smoky Bay” (Sowen, 1985, p. 67). While traveling around Iceland throughout my research, certain topographic formations were pointed out to me by friends as having specific stories, histories, and significance. These natural elements are woven into the daily existence of Icelanders and become an intimate part of local conceptions of Iceland and of being alive (Ingold, 2011). As the number of visitors continue to increase each year, these natural elements also become woven into global experiences through outdoor and ecotourism industries, asserting geography to identify Iceland and the Icelandic experience.

Both the increase of outdoor tourism and the recent activity of *kvæðamannafélagið* present a reformation of Icelandicness—the sense of being Icelandic—brought about by global pressures, and attempts to preserve identity. Drawing from the work of John Tomlinson (2003), I understand cultural identity as “much more the product of globalization than its victim” (p. 269). Following Tomlinson, Icelandicness is negotiated through the interplay between global and local forces, specifically geography and traditional music. The founder of the *Geffun*, Þórarinn Hjartarson, remarked on the importance of these local forces as ways to confront global

pressures, stating “people get so lost in globalization that they find out that we have to find what really belongs to us, ourselves” (personal communication, January 3, 2017). For Þórarinn and others, intoning societies have organized in recent years to reclaim a local identity, experience a form of cultural belonging, and to enhance a sense of Icelandicness.

Nature, Pathways, and Friction

By examining the relationship between sound and place through the lens of ecomusicology and sound studies, we can better understand the significance of *kvæðamannafélagið* and Icelandic geography as forms of identity in the 21st century. Ecomusicology is a relatively new field that Aaron Allen (2014) defines as the “study of music, culture, and nature, in all its complexities of those terms” (p. 1). Allen’s definition suggests the plurality and expansiveness of ecomusicology to include any acoustic field of study as it relates to nature and sound. Sound studies emerge from R. Murray Schafer’s (1994) concept of soundscape—an acoustic field of study that examines our sonic environment through sound, setting, and significance (p. 9). Schafer seems most concerned with the natural soundscape, and describes our “modern” world as polluted with noise from new technologies, urbanization, and industrialization (Ibid., p. 36). The idea of noise pollution seems to relate closely to Jeff Tilton’s definition of ecomusicology as “the study of music, culture, sound and nature in a period of environmental crisis” (Allen and Dawe, 2015, p. 3). I consider the growth of outdoor tourism in Iceland as a force that reshapes the sonic environment, and has stressed the relationships between sound, setting, and significance in Iceland today.

Within this ecomusicological and sound studies context, the music of *kvæðamannafélagið* exists as part of the Icelandic environment. I use the concept of soundscape

to understand how natural elements in Iceland reflect and enhance the actions of *kvæðamannafélagið*, and how both geographic phenomenon and music negotiate forms of Icelandic identity. Ecomusicologist Mark Pedelty (2011) states that, “how we make music is related to how we interact with the rest of the living world,” and further argues that, “it is not a matter of simple, linear cause and effect, but rather complex, reciprocal, and systematic relationships among social, cultural, and material factors” (p. 118). The effects of globalization in Iceland reflect these relationships, as explained by Pedelty (2011, p. 118).

Furthermore, the recent developments in intoning societies mirror natural sonic features such as wildlife sound synchronicity or echoes that reverberate off water or rock (Titon, 2015, pp. 70-75). Likewise, members of intoning societies sync into a single collective voice that echoes *rímur* melodies across Iceland. This blending of traditional music practices and natural elements create the sensation of toponophilia—a sense of place that enhances cultural identity (A. Allen, Titon, and Von Glahn, 2014; Titon, 2015, pp. 70-75). Other natural features reflect the movement of the *rímur* tradition and intoning societies from their beginnings until today. Just as traditional music traverses a path of history, rivers, wind, glaciers and lava each flow and move across the landscape, leaving paths and impressions wherever they travel.

Sound studies and the concept of soundscape can be further extended through the work of Tim Ingold (2011), who considers sound as lived experience and a primary feature of being alive (pp. 136-137). Ingold challenges a simple concept of soundscape by asserting that sound is a medium through which we listen, instead of an element within a landscape. Ingold uses a visual example of light and illumination to contest the idea of “scaping” sounds:

The scaping of things—that is, their surface conformation—is revealed to us thanks to their illumination. When we look around on a fine day, we see a

landscape bathed in sunlight, not a lightscape. Likewise, listening to our surroundings, we do not hear a soundscape. For sound, I would argue is not the object but the medium of our perception. It is what we hear *in*. Similarly, we do not see light but see *in* it (2011, p. 138).

For Ingold, this medium that we hear *in*, pervades the world in which we live (p. 136). For him, sounds are not primary features of a soundscape, but are constantly in fluctuation and movement—interacting with landscape, not conforming to it. Here, Ingold (2011) states that sound, “is neither mental nor material, but a phenomenon of *experience*—that is, of our immersion in, and commingling with, the world in which we find ourselves” (p. 137). Imagining sound as lived experience suggests a constant shift between multiple experiences, which illustrates the depth of the *rímur* tradition; melodies were echoed from generation to generation in Iceland, and are now practiced within a more globalized context. The imaginary surrounding *rímur* melodies as echoes from the past, pervade the imaginary of Iceland as an archaic, mythical, untouched landscape. Members of intoning societies sonically create an imagined past, just as ecotourism industries make a “fantastical” place real. These ideological perceptions of both past and present exist within 21st-century Iceland as a way to phenomenologically engage with people and place.

Following Ingold further, I draw upon his metaphorical concept of pathways and *wayfaring*. Ingold argues that humans do not move across surfaces, but instead move along lines of lived experience (Ibid., p. 87). These lines create specific paths of movement, which he describes as a process of *wayfaring*. To Ingold,

... lives are led not inside places but through, around, to and from them, from and to places elsewhere. I use the term *wayfaring* to describe the embodied experience

of this perambulatory movement. It is as wayfarers, then, that human beings inhabit the earth (Ibid., p. 148).

As we walk the paths of others, we indirectly lay trails of our own experience, connecting movement and forming knots of significance that Ingold calls a *meshwork*: “a tangled mesh of interwoven and complexly knotted strands. Every strand is a way of life, and every knot a place” (p. 151). As paths of *wayfaring* intersect and tangle, knots act as important sites of cultural interaction and development.

Ingold’s concept of *meshwork* reminds me of Clifford Geertz’s (1973) view of culture. Geertz (1973) describes man as,

... an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (p. 5).

Likewise, I consider Ingold’s *meshwork* to be webs of significance that facilitate cultural meaning in a society. If we consider sound to be lived experience, *rímur* practice metaphorically becomes a form of *wayfaring*. Echoes of melodies that were performed centuries ago can still be heard by traveling along the *meshwork* of experiences today. *Kvæðamannafélagið* serve as knots within this *meshwork*, and stand as sites of cultural significance as global pressures influence local practices and challenge notions of identity. As *kvæðamannafélagið* walk the sonic paths of past generations, these routes become more deeply engrained within the Icelandic soundscape. New paths are also created through *friction*, as they intersect with global forces of the 21st century.

Anna Tsing’s concept of *friction* helps me situate intoning societies, geography, and identity within a global context. For Tsing, *friction* exists as “the awkward, unequal, unstable,

and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (2005, p. 2). In her work, Tsing describes the destruction of rainforests in Indonesia by multinational consumer corporations, and states that, “Indonesian forests were not destroyed for local needs; their products were taken for the world” (Ibid., p. 2). Similarly, the topography, landscape, and geographic phenomena of Iceland have become marketed commodities through outdoor tourism for the increasing number of visitors each year. These industries were not created for local needs, but for global consumerism.

Unlike the deforestation that Tsing describes in Indonesia, global influence on Iceland is not necessarily negative. The recent activity of *kvæðamannafélagið* across Iceland, the growth of outdoor tourism industries, and the negotiation of an Icelandic identity represent a cultural shift. Tsing argues that, “all human cultures are shaped and transformed in long histories of regional-to-global networks of power, trade, and meaning” (Ibid., p. 3). These changes do not necessarily make Iceland a victim of globalization, but are simply the product of global and local differences. In fact, *kvæðamannafélagið* of the 21st century may not have formed if it were not for the increase of globalization, which ignited local traditionalists to mobilize.

Tsing provides another definition for *friction*, which does not slow movement through difference, but compels it to metaphorically catch fire and galvanize. Tsing states,

A study of global connectedness shows the grip of encounter: friction. A wheel turns because of its encounter with the surface of the road; spinning in the air it goes nowhere. Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick. As a metaphorical image, friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power (Ibid., p. 5).

In this view, *friction* is not only characterized as a means of resistance, but as a way to ignite, spark, and kindle cultural change. Further action is set ablaze from developments in ecotourism and its movement to preserve Icelandic geography (Hoyt, 2005, p. 141). In her study, Tsing (2005) describes environmental preservation efforts as flourishing only through “the instigation and support of global movement” (p. 2). For me, the preservation of both music and place in Iceland simultaneously represents a preservation of Icelandic identity—one that is negotiated through local and global *friction*.

Scope and Method

Throughout my research, I utilize ethnographic methods of fieldwork, participant observation, interlocutor interviews, and audio/video documentation. I am particularly inspired by the texts of other ethnomusicologists and anthropologists that have lived with and become intimately saturated within the cultures they study (Feld, 1982; Levin, & Süzükei, 2006). My ethnographic method draws upon the works of Aaron Fox (2004) and Matt Sakakeeny (2013), both of whom utilize interviews, observation, and community involvement within their research. And both detail shifting reflexivities, where their roles as researchers are constantly examined throughout the research tenure (Fox, 2004, p. 21; Sakakeeny, 2013, p. 14).

My own reflexivities similarly prove crucial to social and cultural understanding within my research. As an example, Michelle Kisliuk (2008) argues that we understand people by “making ourselves known to them, and through them to know ourselves again, in a continuous cycle” (p. 187). As a traveler to Iceland, and as someone who did not speak Icelandic fluently, my initial interactions with collaborators were reluctant. The political strife occurring in the United States at this time also impeded several attempts at dialogue. I confronted these

challenges by returning to the same communities in Iceland and by working on the same farm in Akureyri over several periods. As my relationships grew closer with my Icelandic friends and community members, new relationships also emerged that substantially contributed to my research on intoning societies.

My fieldwork spans from the summer of 2015 until January of 2017. I spent two, three-month periods in Iceland during the summers of 2015 and 2016, as well as an additional three weeks in the winter of 2017. I supported myself in Iceland by working on the dairy farm Fellshlíð in Eyjafjaðarsveit—a valley region in Northern Iceland. In exchange for food and accommodation, I worked construction, tended to animals, and performed daily farm tasks. Although I began my work at Fellshlíð as a traveling stranger, I have become close to the family over the course of these two and a half years. Additionally, this relationship proved invaluable while conducting research. My host family helped translate conversations and texts, aided with domestic travel details, and introduced me to various musicians, scholars, and performers.

In studying the *rímur* tradition and the contemporary practices of intoning societies, my ethnographic research centered on several sites of investigation: personal interviews conducted in homes or local businesses, university and archives, *kvæðamannafélagið* meetings, and folk festivals. Each interaction generated more possibilities directing me towards other collaborators and sources. One example involves my initial contact with *kvæðamenn* (intoners, pl.) at the Vaka festival, where several performers directed me towards other individuals related to my research interest. The festivals I attended projected a welcoming atmosphere for inquiry about Icelandic musical practices, and were convenient sources since many practitioners gathered in a single location. I specifically attended the Vaka Folk Festival in 2015 in Akureyri, and the Siglufjörður Folk Festival in Siglufjörður in 2016.

Although I made important contacts at these festivals, the majority of my research involved personal interviews. Sometimes these took place at festivals, and other times, my host family at Fellshlíð connected me with friends or family members who could help with my research. During several interviews, I was invited into interlocutor's homes for meals and conversation. Sometimes I met scholars at the University of Iceland, the Reykjavík Academy, or local businesses around town. As my presence throughout the lives of *rímur* practitioners became more comfortable and regular, various other practitioners became interested in speaking with me as well.

Eventually, I was invited to attend several *kvæðamannafélag* (sing.) meetings—the *Gefjun* in Akureyri and the *Iðunn* in Reykjavík. Since these intoning societies did not convene in the summer months, I attended both the *Gefjun* and *Iðunn* during January 2017. Moreover, my specific accounts of *kvæðamannafélagið* meetings and activities are drawn from my case studies of the *Iðunn* and *Gefjun*, as well as my conversations with several of their members. I incorporate the *Iðunn* in my research since it was the first *kvæðamannafélag* established and is located in Reykjavík, the largest city in Iceland. I decided to study the *Gefjun* partly out of practicality, since its activities and members were located in Akureyri near the farm where I stayed, but also because it was the first *kvæðamannafélag* established in the 21st century. My role as a participant observer during both the *Gefjun* and *Iðunn* meetings in January 2017 allowed me to intone with each community group, as well as speak with various individuals in attendance. I also used the work of John Bailey (2009) as a guide for my own audio and video recordings.

Most people in Iceland speak English, but there were several instances during my research when communication was problematic. It was not my intention to insinuate, assume, or

over-power an interviewee who had trouble digesting conversation; instead, I rephrased my questions or provided sufficient time for a collaborator to answer. In extremely difficult situations, I had a translator present. In these scenarios I relied on the work of James Spradley, who details ethnographic interviewing as a type of guideline for researchers (1979, pp. 58-59). Throughout my time in Iceland, I never came across an individual who was not willing to speak with me about his or her experiences or share his or her story. I believe this shows how important many believe Icelandic traditional music to be, and illustrates a desire for the collective voices of *kvæðamenn* to be heard.

My research associates lived throughout Iceland, but the majority of the individuals I interviewed were from either Akureyri or Reykjavík. In Akureyri, my initial contacts were Rósa María Stefánsdóttir and her husband, Þór Sigurðsson. They introduced me to the activities of the *Geffun* and eventually helped connect me to the Chairman of the *Geffun*, Þórarinn Hjartarson. I spoke with Anna Halldóra Sigtryggisdóttir and her sister, Kristín Sigtryggisdóttir, who grew up with family members that intoned *rímur* melodies. Both Anna and Kristín also helped found the *Geffun*. Lastly, Jóhann Jóhannsson, a close friend, helped me navigate across the interior highland during the summers of 2015 and 2016.

In Reykjavík, my primary informants were Chris Foster and the Chairwoman of the *Iðunn*, Bára Grímsdóttir. I met with Rósa Þórsteinsdóttir, who works at the *Árni Magnússon Institute* archives, and who compiles and manages the *Ísmus* website. In addition to our interview, Rósa allowed me to examine the institute archives, which house the largest collection of *rímur* melodies to date. Another collaborator was Rósa Jóhannesdóttir, who is very active in the *Iðunn*, and has been encouraging her children to intone. She is also the sister of acclaimed *kvæðamaður* (sing.), Steindór Andersen. The literary scholar Viðar Hreinsson was very helpful

in putting me in contact with other university scholars such as Terry Gunnell and Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir.

While there have only been a limited number of ethnomusicologists and scholars specifically concerned with contemporary intoning societies, including Ragnheidur's work with the *Iðunn*, there seems to be a growing interest. Chris Foster asserts that many individuals outside of Iceland are curious about *kvæðamannafélagið*, and hopes that more work will be done in the future (personal communication, August 7, 2016). As a Tennessean who traveled from the United States to investigate the music practices of Iceland, my own participation within intoning societies inevitably results from increased globalization in Iceland.

“Are you sure you know about *rímur*?”

Understanding the history of the *rímur* tradition and its contemporary practice, help situate the actions of intoning societies today. *Rímur* began in the 14th century as a form of household entertainment, where poets would sing melodies to texts of Icelandic Edda and Saga poetry (Sigmundsson, 1966). A single *rímur* comprised multiple *ríma* (sing.) that served as chapters in the overall story. Each *ríma* contained anywhere from ten to one hundred stanzas, which caused some performances to last hours or even days (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016; Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 2). Over the centuries, this musical form changed alongside political and social forces in Iceland, which affected the music's length, performance context, and frequency of performance (Faulkner, 2013, p. 49). Today, the *rímur* tradition is primarily practiced in *kvæðamannafélagið* across Iceland. In studying the recent development of *kvæðamannafélagið*, I have discovered that the term *rímur* is complex.

Although I use *rímur* in reference to the 14th-century practice, its precise definition seems

ambiguous within certain contexts. In part, this uncertainty stems from the tradition's pervasiveness throughout many genres, settings, and backgrounds in Iceland. As the history of the *rímur* tradition has developed over time, the ways in which people describe this practice have also changed. Ethnomusicologist Pandora Hopkins defines *rímur* as:

... lengthy epic poems that used to be chanted informally when Icelandic family members gathered in the evening—an occasion called *kvöldvaka* ‘evening awakening’, which, for almost six centuries, was an enormously popular means of cultural expression (2000, pp. 402-403).

As Iceland's first indigenous musical practice, I was initially struck that *rímur* remained untouched for almost six centuries, and soon became interested in its use today (Ibid., p. 401). But when confronted with questions about contemporary *rímur* practices, several of my collaborators and friends caught me off guard.

Each person I spoke with seemed to express a different understanding of the *rímur* tradition. Chris Foster, a musician living in Reykjavík, asserted that “*Rímur* doesn't exist anymore” (personal communication, August 7, 2016). I was met with a similar reaction by Bára Grímsdóttir, the current chairwoman of the *Kvæðamannafélagið Idunn* in Reykjavík, who asked “Are you sure you know about *rímur*?” (personal communication, August 7, 2016). For both Chris and Bára, *rímur* is something of the past that is no longer practiced today. Through their example, the definition of *rímur* can be separated into several categories: performance context, composition, transmission, and significance. When one of these aspects of the tradition changes, so does its description as a musical genre. For musicians such as Chris and Bára, *rímur* no longer exists because its performance context has shifted and its compositional length has diminished. But if *rímur* no longer exists, why have so many *kvæðamannafélagið* formed in the 21st century,

and what do they practice? The answer does not reflect difference over time, but instead, what has remained consistent in the tradition over the centuries. Although certain aspects of *rímur* have changed since the tradition's inception, one facet has remained the same—the importance of orality and community in both transmission and performance.

Rímur consists of text and melody. The texts of *rímur* poets have been documented ever since the tradition's beginnings in the late 14th century. In contrast, *rímur* melodies have been transmitted orally through the generations and were not documented until the early 20th century (*Lagboðar við Kvæðalög*, 1935; Gunnsteinsson, 2004; Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 1). The gap between text and melodic documentation reflects both aesthetic changes in the tradition and new technologies. For example, modern recording technology in the 20th century allowed musicians and performers to record their voices for later listening and transcription (Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, personal communication, August 6, 2016). Poets in the mid-19th century began to use strict rules of *rímur* composition to write shorter rhymes and poems that consisted of only ten or twenty stanzas (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 15, 2016). Because these poems used the same meters and rhyme schemes as earlier *rímur* texts, performers could simply adapt pre-existing melodies to these shorter songs. These shorter *rímur* are distinct from the 14th century practice, and are called *kvæðalög* (intoning songs, pl.) (Bára Grímsdóttir, personal communication, August 7, 2016). Although there are still performances of abridged versions of *rímur* today, most *kvæðamannafélagið* practice *kvæðalög*.

Even though many do not consider *kvæðalög* as purely *rímur*, there is no doubt that such songs are shaped by the rules and structure of *rímur*. In addition, the process of *kvæðandi* (intoning) is characteristic of both the *rímur* tradition and the performance of *kvæðalög*. Other genres of Icelandic traditional music, such as ballads and lieder-style folk songs, exist as distinct

from *rímur* practices because they lack *kveðandi* during performance. From my experience, to intone is to produce a more guttural timbre in comparison to singing or chanting. It is often associated with the harsh, nasal quality of Icelandic farmers who sang with nose tobacco in their nostrils, thus creating a distinct timbre. Other types of *Þjóðlög* (folk/national songs, pl.) are sung or chanted with some form of accompaniment, whereas *rímur* and *kvæðalög* melodies are intoned and lack accompaniment (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 11).

In addition, *kveðandi* and the importance of oral transmission remain today as the foundations of becoming a master *kvæðamenn* (one who intones, intoner, sing.). During an interview, Anna Sigtryggisdóttir, a founder of the *Gefjun*, explained that the best way to learn how to *kveða* (to intone) is to listen to recordings or listen to someone who already knows how, and to imitate them (personal communication, January 11, 2017). Additionally, Sigtryggisdóttir played several recordings, pointing out specific tendencies of each *kvæðamenn* we heard, and asserted the importance of recordings, oral transmission, and the process of *kveðandi* in contemporary *rímur* practices (personal communication, January 11, 2017). This example highlights various timbral preferences within *kvæðamannafélagið*. The use of recordings, memory, and personal experiences allow members to imitate past *kvæðamenn*, while not diminishing the importance of their own personal voice.

Although much of this project includes the *rímur* tradition as practiced in *kvæðamannafélagið*, my main focus concerns the recent formation of intoning societies, Icelandic geography, and Icelandic identity. I provide a deeper historical discussion of *rímur* in Chapter 2, which helps situate Iceland's musical developments alongside changes in national identity and geographic influences. Even though some argue that *rímur* no longer exists, it has, in fact, endured over the centuries in new form within *kvæðamannafélagið* today.

Other Literature

My argument that Icelandic geography is a form of Icelandic identity relies on a book of essays edited by Michael Jones and Kenneth R. Olwig (2008), which highlights the role of landscape within Scandinavian countries and the North Atlantic. Specifically, Kirsten Hastrup (2008), provides an interesting chapter on Icelandic topography as a means of Icelandic identity (pp. 53-76). Hastrup discusses how various landmarks in Iceland contain certain histories and personalities, stating,

I see the Icelandic landscape as deeply historicized. It is not simply a surface, or a stage upon which people play their social roles; it is part of the social space. It infiltrates practice and makes history. There is, as it were, agency on both sides; the opposition between wilderness and culture dissolves (2008, p. 53).

Hastrup's work helps connect Ingold's notion of sound as lived experience to the deep history of the *rímur* tradition. Hastrup further states that "by fixing the ancestry of Icelandic society in the land, it becomes a timeless reference point"—one that translates ancient melodies to the 21st century (Ibid., p. 59).

The importance of history and place is also found in Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon's (2010) work on social developments in Iceland. Although Magnússon (2010) primarily focuses on developments in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, he also "looks back to earlier periods in the country's history... to explain the roots of the culture on which the latter history rested" (p. 32). Essentially, Magnússon recounts 1,100 years of Icelandic social history. Magnússon's work helped strengthen my argument, in Chapter Two, that the development of the *rímur* tradition mirrors the social history of Iceland as a nation.

In further studying the history of the *rímur* tradition, I draw upon the work of Ragnar Ingi

Aðalsteinsson (2014), which explains alliteration and other poetic devices within Nordic verse, and provides useful translated text and musical examples. Aðalsteinsson's discussion of the *poetic ear*, first proposed by Einar Benediktsson (1952), proposes an Icelandic aural proclivity towards poetry composition. Aðalsteinsson states,

The poetic ear involves a sense of alliteration and rhythm, and is formed by reading (and no less important) by listening to poems, as well as other exposure to traditional poetry. A poetic ear is formed by experience rather than inheritance and is probably related to other general factors relating to an individual's sense of form and language. The demands that the ear makes on alliteration must therefore be related to what the listener has most often heard or the reader repeatedly seen; it must to some extent reflect the tradition as used in poetry, both old and new (2014, p. 52).

Although I do not expand on the *poetic ear*, Aðalsteinsson's concept has proved useful when considering the relationship between experience and inheritance throughout intoning practices.

In the winter of 2017, I interviewed Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir at the Reykjavík Academy, who was kind enough to lend me a copy of her dissertation. Her work pertains specifically to the *kvæðamannafélagið Iðunn*, and has helped guide my own project. Although I detail my own experiences with the *Iðunn* and *Gefjun*, Ólafsdóttir has spent significant time with *Iðunn* in Reykjavík, stating that, “the *Iðunn* Society shaped the *rímur* tradition in its own way. By ‘freezing and policing’ the melodies, *Iðunn* unintentionally brought changes to the tradition they meant to preserve” (p. 212). In my last chapter, I return to Ólafsdóttir's idea of the *deep freeze*, and instead consider contemporary practices of traditional music as a *great thaw*. In comparison to regulations imposed by the *Iðunn* in the 1930s that “froze” the *rímur* tradition, the 21st

century is marked as a period where local practices are metaphorically melting and thawing through friction, and blend with global forces.

I rely upon the work of Karen Oslund in negotiating various perceptions of Iceland. Karen Oslund (2011) discusses Iceland as existing on the “margins of not just European maps but of European minds for over a millennium” (p. IX). I use several sections from her book to situate an imagined image of Iceland, which orients several differences between global and local perceptions of Iceland as a place. Here, global and local are two separate and, paradoxically, connected purviews. Oslund’s work has also been invaluable when framing globalization through Tsing’s (2005) lens of friction, where a specific imagining of place has been contested over time, and continues to change and shift based on global and local difference (p. 53).

Kimberly Cannady (2014) also is concerned with Icelandic identity, globalization, and nation building. Cannady suggests how “Icelanders use music to assert who they are and how they aspire to be seen as a nation” (p. i). Although parts of her work involve *kvæðamannafélagið*, her focus on national identity and forms of history in Icelandic culture has been helpful in situating Iceland’s position within a global context. Her interviews with Steindór Andersen address the process of learning how to intone *rímur* and the historical importance of the tradition, supports Ingold’s pathways of movement (2011). Cannady’s work orients the historical paths that contemporary practitioners have walked, the current paths they traverse, and which ones they will choose to form (Ingold, 2011).

A collaborative work by Aaron Allen and Kevin Dawe (2016) consists of a collection of essays that focus on recent work within the field of ecomusicology. I have gained tremendous insight into the expansion of concepts dealing with sound and place, including architechnoics, sound synchronization, and acoustic ecology (Guyette, 2016, p. 45). I use this collaborative text

throughout Chapter Four, when I discuss the significance of Icelandic geography in greater detail.

Although I am concerned with the practices of traditional Icelandic music, several articles concerning the contemporary and popular music scene in Iceland prove relevant to my study. Nicola Dibben (2009) has studied the formation of an Icelandic national identity and the implicit environmental efforts found in popular music video and documentaries. Daniel Grimley (2005) has completed work on the popular Icelandic artist Björk, and her exploration of music, sound, noise, and place in the film *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). Tony Mitchell (2009; 2013) has studied the relationship between Icelandic music and landscape in terms of psychogeography—the ways in which music can “express both a ‘spirit of place’ and a topographical dimension in which musical forms, idioms and modes of expression mirror features of landscape and cityscape” (2013, p. 1). These articles, although more concerned with popular Icelandic music and artists, still emphasize the relationship between sound and place, and help negotiate traditional and contemporary music practices in Iceland.

In terms of globalization and tourism, I draw from the work of Arjun Appadurai (1996; 1990) while examining differing “scapes” and global cultural flows. Appadurai provides five different “scapes” as interconnected dimensions of global flow: ethnoscaping, mediascaping, technoscaping, finanscaping, and ideoscaping (1990, p. 296). I also draw from Alexander O’Neill’s (2002) research on the impact of globalization on ecotourism in developing countries. O’Neill’s concepts of uses terminology, passive and active ecotourists, and mass tourism, have helped me situate ecotourism within an Icelandic context (2002, p. 511). Notably, O’Neill’s description of alternative tourism is particularly relevant to ecotourism in Iceland. O’Neill (2002) states,

‘Alternative tourism,’ which calls for approaches to tourism that are opposite to

those of mass tourism, is based on the belief that tourism policies should not just consider economic and technical necessities but should also take into account the demands for environmental quality and the welfare of local people (p. 509).

His work also highlights the authority of global economies and markets, the impact of industrialization, and the changing roles of globalization and ecotourism, in general (2002, pp. 515-523).

I also consulted several texts that deal with the history of Iceland as a nation and ancient texts such as Edda and Saga poetry. Snorri Sturluson wrote the *Prose Edda* in the 13th century; I have examined the translation by Jesse Byock (2005) when referencing the text directly. For the majority of my historical recounting of Iceland, I use the text by Gunnar Karlsson (2000), which traces developments in Iceland through several important periods of the nation's history, as well as a similar work by Guðni Jóhannesson. In other instances, I draw from other texts by Magnússon (2010), Oslund (2011) and Ólafsdóttir (2011), as previously described.

Finally, I have been fortunate to benefit from the assistance of several individuals who have aided me in the translations of texts and documents over the past several years. Further, I have consulted several books on the early *rímur* tradition, Icelandic culture, and Icelandic history that are written and printed in Icelandic—most notably, the *Silfurplötur Iðunnar (Iðunn Silver Lacker)*, which was adapted from the original *Iðunn kvæðalög* guide (Gunnsteinn, 2004). Numerous other texts can aid in the research of *kvæðamannafélagið*, but there are currently no English translations. Lastly, the *ismus* website has been extremely helpful when searching for specific recordings, names, and styles.³ *Ismus* contains recordings from the Árni Magnússon Institute, photos of important musical and culture sites across Iceland, and is partly supported by

³ <https://www.ismus.is/>

the Reykjavík University. The project intends to serve as a complete musical database for all Icelandic music (Rósa Þorsteinsdóttir, August 6, 2016). I encourage anyone interested in Icelandic music to consult this free, extensive, and growing resource.

Project Overview

Building from this opening discussion, I address how intoning societies, Icelandic geography, and Icelandic identity are influenced by global pressures in the 21st century. This first chapter has served as an outline for my project, including topics such as *kvæðamannafélagið*, geography, identity, and globalization. The remaining chapters deal with Iceland's history, geography, and musical traditions in greater detail. I weave aspects of Icelandic identity, friction and global shock, ecomusicology, and metaphorical pathways throughout each chapter.

In Chapter 2, I trace the developments of the *rímur* tradition in concurrence with the developments of Iceland as a nation. Chapter 3 recounts my fieldwork with two intoning societies, the *Geffun* and the *Iðunn*; I discuss their meetings, rehearsals, and performances in detail, and also consider their formation of sonic pathways. Notions of place and sound are discussed in Chapter 4, where I examine the Icelandic geography and relate elements in nature to the practices of *kvæðamannafélagið*. Although I include the topic of identity throughout each chapter, I dedicate the beginnings of Chapter 5 to the complex formation of cultural identity, and the exchange between local and global forces. The final section of Chapter 5 discusses the future of globalization in Iceland, the direction of *kvæðamannafélagið* today, and newly emerging ensembles that embrace folk traditions. Lastly, I argue how certain ideas presented from a deep ecological or global nature mind-set may help us understand our own actions within a changing world.

Paths of Friction

Throughout my travels in Iceland, I noticed numerous piles of rocks stacked across varying distances. Through conversations with acquaintances and friends, I discovered that these rocks were ways for early travelers to mark paths and roads. As you pass across these piles of stones, it is customary to add to the pile, affirming your experience as essential to moving and making pathways (see Figure 1.3). Kirsten Hastrup (2008) states that,

Paths create relationships and the more people have walked there, the greater the significance attached to the relation. The paths created by generations of people structure the experience of subsequent walkers, and the historical marks left by predecessors form the conceptual space of present-day travelers (p. 62).



Figure 1.3 Stone pile built gradually by travellers (Crowder, 2015, para. 3).

Tsing's (2005) notion of global *friction*, Ingold's (2011) paths of *wayfaring*, and the work of ecomusicologists help situate the practices of *kvæðamannafélagið*, Icelandic geography, and

Icelandic identity in the 21st century. Members of intoning societies metaphorically walk along paths made by the experiences of past musicians, poets, and Icelanders, resonating their ancient melodies within a contemporary context. These paths span Iceland's geography, highlighting the intimate relationship between sound and place, and begin to branch new trajectories as they blaze fresh paths through global *friction*. I am intrigued with how often these paths are walked upon, and where they might one day lead.

Herein, lies the start of these paths.

CHAPTER II

PLOTTING PATHS

*With Thee is each day as a thousand years,
Each Thousand of years, but a day.
Eternity's flow'r, with its homage of tears,
That reverently passes away*

(Jochumsson, trans. Jakobina Johnson, 1930)

Sound, Setting, Significance

Iceland's musical history parallels the development of Iceland as a nation. I am most concerned with the *rímur* tradition and how it has transformed over the ages; however, other musical and literary practices also played important roles throughout Iceland's history. The beginnings of epic poetry, *rímur*, folk songs, and Western art practices in Iceland mark significant periods in the growth of a nation, and highlight the emphasis on literature, language, and music in Icelandic culture. In addition, the relationship between humans and the natural world has always remained at the foreground of Icelandic life, from the early settlements of Iceland through the outdoor tourism industry today. In this way, both music and geography have existed as constant forces throughout Iceland's history, and have helped shape Icelandic identity over the ages. Understanding the social, political, and musical backgrounds in Iceland better situates the modern-day practices of intoning societies, changes in Icelandic geography, and the negotiation of an Icelandic identity in the 21st century.

I divide the history of Iceland in this chapter into three sections: Early Iceland (700-13th Century), Íslenska (13th-18th century), and A New Age (19th Century-20th Century). Each section stands as a significant period in Iceland's history, and details specific changes within the *rímur* tradition. Mainly, as farmers moved from rural areas to more urban spaces, class structure began

to cement and separate low and high artistic domains into the 20th century. More recent developments in the 21st century are discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Lastly, music, geography, and identity reflect the sound, setting, and significance of the Icelandic soundscape. Certain changes within this Icelandic soundscape mirror changes to Iceland as a place, and its developments as a nation over time. It is in this vein, that I begin with setting—the natural elements of Iceland.

Early Iceland (700-13th century)

Iceland is an island located in the North Atlantic. It is situated 200 miles west of Greenland, and nearly 500 miles from the northern coast of Scotland, and therefore, is geographically isolated from any largely populated landmass (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 1). The Mid-Atlantic Ridge crosses the country from south to north, creating a fair amount of volcanic activity, which constantly reshapes the landscape (Oslund, 2011, p. 23). At the same time, Iceland is home to Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in greater Europe, which spans across the southeast region of the country. In addition, melting ice and snow form incredibly powerful rivers and waterfalls, which weave throughout the countryside and flow from the highland interior to the ocean. The center of the country is an elevated plateau of rough terrain, making both travel and farming difficult. Around the coast, low valleys and sloping mountains better protect the land from harsh climate, providing an environment for flora to thrive (Karlsson, 2000, p. 9).

Most plant life in Iceland must be able to survive drastic shifts in weather, as well as freezing winters. Various types of moss, lichen, grass, and flower permeate the region, yet, there are only a few forests, which primarily consist of pine and birch trees. Although migratory birds,

fish, seals, and whales have always frequented Iceland and its surrounding shores, the only mammals indigenous to the area are field mice and foxes (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 2). It was not until the 9th century that humans began to inhabit Iceland.

The first human believed to travel to Iceland was the Greek explorer Pytheas, around 400 B.C., who maintained that the sun could be seen throughout the night. Similarly, in the 9th century, the Irish author Dicuil asserted that a faction of priests had traveled to a land where, at midnight, “a man could do whatever he wished as though the sun were there, even remove lice from his shirt” (as cited in Karlsson, 2011, p. 12). Both Pytheas and Dicuil describe how geographic location, and its related solstice cycle, are vital to identifying Iceland as a place. Additionally, seasonal changes and other natural elements persisted as constant obstacles for early settlers in Iceland. Because of its remoteness and harsh living conditions, Iceland’s first settlers traveled in small groups and settled in various territories (Magnússon, 2008, p. 16).

Unlike many settlements of the 10th century that were expansions of specific political powers, Iceland was settled by small groups of families and friends from Northern Europe. These factions organized by territory, and were headed by a *goði* (chieftain) (Kristinsson, 2003, p. 2). The historian Axel Kristinsson (2003) states that although these “alliances served to ensure a minimum amount of security for their members,” men and women were free to change alliances often (p. 2). In addition, since there was essentially no centralized government, multiple *goði* organized into a legislative body called the *alþingi*, leaving the enforcement of law to individuals and community groups (Ibid., p. 3; G. Jóhannesson, 2013, pp. 14-15). Although early Icelanders were originally pagan, Christianity was accepted at the *alþingi* in 999 and Catholicism was established as the main form of religion until the Protestant Reformation (Karlsson, 2000, p. 33). Political, religious, and familial spheres were catalogued and recounted in several works of

literature, which eventually influenced early music in Iceland.

In relation to its size and population, Icelanders produced manuscripts far beyond the scope and volume of other European regions at the time (Kristinsson, 2013, p. 1). During the 12th and 13th centuries, two texts chronicled the early settlements of Iceland. *Íslendingabók* (The Book of the Icelanders) is a twenty-page document written by the priest Ari Þorgilsson that recounts the early history of Iceland from 1122-1133 (Karlsson, 2000, pp. 16-17). The historian Gunnar Karlsson (2000) describes another text, *Landámabók* (Book of Settlements), as a report of the settlement and first settlers practically all over the habitable parts of the country. Its preserved versions, composed in the later 13th century and later, amount to between 100 and 200 printed pages each, but the material has accumulated gradually (p. 11).

Writing literature became a significant way for the Icelandic culture to chronicle their history and way of life. Although these early documents focus on settlement populations, the occupations of inhabitants, and the location of families, other literature, such as epic poetry, also became important to the development of Iceland as a nation. The earliest tales were part of an oral tradition, but were eventually written down around the 13th century (Magnússon, 2008, p. 34). Forms of narrative writing such as Eddas and Sagas suffused Icelandic mythology and history, and were used as forms of entertainment.

Two substantial works, each using the title *Edda*, provide some of the first examples of written poetry in Icelandic culture. The *Sæmundar-Edda* (Poetic Edda) which accumulated around 13th century, is a collection of narrative-driven poems inspired by human heroes, historical figures, European migration, and Nordic deities (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 11). The authors of the *Poetic Edda* are unknown, but the language used is West Nordic, and the

narratives are believed to have accumulated centuries before the 13th century (Karlsson, 2000, p. 16). A similar text, the *Snorra-Edda* (Prose Edda) was a book of poems written by Snorri Sturluson around the 13th century, and includes stories on Norse gods, mythological creatures, and the universe. It has been referred to as *Prose Edda*, *Snorri's Edda*, and *Edda* (Sturluson, 2005 ed., p.3).

Confusion surrounds both the *Eddas*, in part, because of their shared, and abbreviated names, but also because the *Prose Edda* contains excerpts from the *Poetic Edda*, and they share similar narratives. Additionally, both *Eddas* feature stories from various parts of Scandinavia, unlike the Icelandic Sagas, which primarily focus on Icelandic history (Magnússon, 2010, p. 125). Both the *Eddas* and Icelandic Sagas represent an emphasis on narrative composition in medieval Iceland, and helped plot the path for musical practices in Iceland. For example, many have assumed that dramatic performance accompanied the reading of Eddic poetry, where mild acting and the use of melody accompanied the recitation of text (Gunnel, 1995, pp. 182; Karlsson, 2000, p. 16). Thus, the performance of poetry began to combine texts with melody, resulting in new forms of entertainment. One such was *rímur*.

The first manuscript of *rímur* dates from 1390. These early *rímur* were essentially epic poetry in versified form (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 47). Stanzas composed of two, three, or four lines, comprised the narrative, which often retold famous stories from *Eddas* or Sagas (Magnússon, 2010, p. 95). Each line could contain a maximum of twelve syllables, depending on the meter, which were based on the long and short syllables of rhythmic modes (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 42). A single *rímur* was comprised of multiple *ríma*, which served as chapters within a larger story. Early performers used shifts in meter to match differing melodies, and to delineate between the various *ríma* (Ibid., pp. 43-44).

The full performance of *rímur* was described as a *rímnaflokkur* (*rímur* cycle), and would contain many *ríma*, melodies, and meters that helped progress the story. Often, a *rímur* cycle began with an introductory section called a *mansöngur*, which usually provided information about the performer or current social events (see Figure 2.1) (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016). For many, this commentary related to natural elements, family history, or agrarian life. In fact, the *rímur* tradition originated in agrarian lifestyles as a form of entertainment (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 43).

Table 2.1 Basic form of *rímur* (Ólafsdóttir, 2011)

<i>Mansöngur</i>	<i>Ríma 1</i>	<i>Ríma 2</i>	<i>Ríma 3</i>
Specific meter and melody, introduction unrelated to narrative	A (meter and melody), narrative	B (meter and melody), narrative	C (meter and melody), narrative

Almost all families in Iceland were farmers of some kind until the late 19th century, when other means of income, such as fisheries, began to thrive (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 92). During the cold, Icelandic winters, family members would gather in the *baðstofa* (living-room) for an event called the *kvöldvaka* (evening-awakening) (Hopkins, 2008, p. 402). In this instance, natural elements were necessary for the early practice of *rímur*. Long, cold, winters forced Icelanders to develop forms of group entertainment until the sun returned in the summer seasons. Some women would knit, children would play, and a poet would perform *rímur* (Magnússon, 2010, p. 82). Other forms of entertainment included reading aloud from secular and religious texts, or playing rhyme games. Learning to rhyme and compose stanzas using the rules of *rímur* composition became a common practice and daily experience for many early Icelanders (Ólafsdóttir, 2008, p. 105). During an interview, Bára Grímsdóttir explained how intoning verses

eventually led to the use of short stanzas and well-known rhymes in everyday conversation (personal communication, August 3, 2016). And although the texts and structure of *rímur* poetry pervaded daily life, *rímur* performers controlled text and melody in virtuosic ways.

The success of a *rímur* performance relied on a performer's ability to *kveða* (intone) and compose narratives in rhyme. The *rímur* scholar Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir (2001) asserts that because most narratives were already known among Icelanders, “the aim of the poet was not to tell a new story, but to show off his/her skills and control of meter and versification” (p. 43). This often involved the use of double meanings, palindromes, alliteration, internal rhyme, assonance, vocal timbre, and mastery of *rímur* prosody (Aðalsteinsson, 2014).

Vorvísur

Slær á Hað Himinblæ,

Hyllir undir dranga,

geislum Stafar sól á Sæ,

Signir grund og tanga.

Spring Verses

Sea and sky enter,

Cover under a place,

Sun shines at sea,

Blessed on the ground and earth.

(Jónas Hallgrímsson, 1847)

Some *rímur* poets traveled from household to household since performances of a single *rímnaflokkur* could last many hours or even days (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016). Within this social context, *rímur* served as the primary entertainment for communities and families. Additionally, *rímur* only featured a single *kævdamaður* (intoner) and remained almost untouched for six centuries, until later influences began to shape public perspective and impact the *rímur* tradition in multiple ways (Hopkins, 2001, p. 401). Þ

***Íslenska* (13th Century-18th Century)**

Developments in language, poetry, and *rimur* also occurred in later centuries when Iceland was controlled by foreign rule, beginning in the 13th century. In 1262, Iceland submitted to Norwegian rule, agreeing to pay fees and goods to the crown in exchange for the continued authority of Icelandic law within its shores (Karlsson, 2000, pp. 89-90). This pact held true, even throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, as the Scandinavian dynasties between Denmark, Norway, and Sweden began to mix, resulting in Danish rule of Iceland from the 15th century until the mid-20th century. In subsequent years, as Danish settlements in Greenland began to falter and diminish, travel to Iceland also lessened, marking the late middle ages as a period of cultural isolation. Gunnar Karlsson (2000) argues that the Icelandic language developed as a result of this remoteness, and states,

In the 16th century, the Icelanders found it impossible to call their language Norse, even less Danish, and coined the term *Íslenska* (Icelandic)... Instead of being predominately connected through a common language, as in the Viking Age and high Middle Ages, Icelandic society was now, together with its geographical remoteness, distinguished mainly by its language (p. 105).

Iceland's poetic and literary history also becomes relevant to the newly appointed Icelandic language.

Within this context, language, literature, and *rimur* practices become early forms of sonic identity. Since learning to rhyme and composing stanzas were part of familial traditions, mastery of poetry simultaneously meant mastery of language. Historian Sigurður Magnússon (2010) believes that the complex poetry of *rimur* was a way to maintain the Icelandic language.

Magnússon states,

Clearly, the continuous learning and practice of this poetry, with its fixed and complex rules in which one syllable out of place destroys the entire metrical structure, served to inhibit morphological change in the language and helped to keep alive its rich traditional poetic vocabulary (p. 95).

Here, poetic structure plays an important role in the negotiation of an Icelandic identity, and underlines a musical tradition within the daily experiences of Icelandic families.

Throughout this period, the subject of *rímur* narratives included nature, politics, religion, and influences from abroad (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016). Travel outside of the country became more frequent in this period, and some Icelandic scholars began to attend universities in Europe (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 96). One scholar in particular, Árni Magnússon (1663-1730), spent several years collecting poetry and folk songs across Iceland. His collection is now housed in Reykjavík at the Árni Magnússon Institute, and is the largest collection of *rímur* melodies to date (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 92). In subsequent years, other scholars and musicians would also document, collect, and record *rímur* melodies. The largest boom of the *rímur* corpus, in terms of publication, occurred throughout the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016; Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 47).

Part of this interest in Icelandic traditional practices stemmed from international powers. European authorities wanted to document, and sometimes publish, texts that described the cultures of their expansive territories or documented information from neighboring countries. The first published book to contain folk tunes from Iceland, which included a few *rímur* melodies, was by French scholars in 1780 (De Laborde and Roussier, 1780, pp. 402-406; Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 51). The actions of Árni Magnússon also reflected a continued cultural

interest by the Danish king, and represents the first significant housing of Icelandic manuscripts abroad (Magnússon, 2010, p. 158).

A New Age (19th Century-20th Century)

If the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries mark periods of increased *rímur* activity, the end of 19th century marks a period of decline. The lessened interest in the *rímur* tradition during the end of the 19th century reflects the distinction between classes, and a shift in cultural aesthetics. With the occupation of foreign rule in Iceland, an aristocracy began to emerge throughout Icelandic society (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016). The makeup of *rímur* as text and melody represented a division between the aristocratic upper class, and the rural, farming lower class. That is, although the actual poetry of *rímur* was often held in high regard by aristocratic powers, the process of intoning was not, and distanced the connection between text and melody. The separation between textual composition and aural practice of *rímur* represented a split within class aesthetics, which resulted in the formation of high and low art forms. Most of the output of *rímur* during this period revolved around poetry texts that followed *rímur* composition rules, and devalued the process of intoning, composing melodies, or performing *rímur* (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 44).

In part, among the aristocracy, melodies were unadmired because of the timbral quality of intoning. *Kveða* was considered unpleasant and sounded like old farmers with noses full of *neftóbak* (nose tobacco), trying to sing (Anna Sigtryggisdóttir, personal communication, January 9, 2017). Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir (2011) states that “educated Icelander’s such as Magnús Stephensen, the [Danish] King’s deputy, described *rímur* intoning as ‘ugly howling’ ...” (p. 45). These divisions also reflect a split between urban environments where the Icelandic aristocracy

dwelled, and farming families in the countryside. Therefore, *rímur* was often painted as rural music that belonged to the lower class and older generations—a sentiment that persists today (Chris Foster, personal communication, August 7, 2016).

One critic of *rímur* was Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807-1845), a popular 19th-century Icelandic poet educated in Copenhagen, who focused on the education of high-art aesthetics and the purity of the Icelandic language (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 47). Hallgrímsson commented on the *rímur* texts of Sigurður Breiðfjörð, one of his contemporaries and a famous poet, calling them an embarrassment to the Icelandic nation (Ibid, pp. 45, 48-49). His critique centered on a division of class, and the primacy of Continental romantic aesthetics (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016; Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 48). In an interview, my friend Viðar Hreinsson, an Icelandic literary scholar, stated that there was a naivety about the cultural importance and functions of *rímur* during this period. He states that for the *rímur* tradition, when it came to romanticism, [the performance of] *rímur* broke away from distinguished [aristocratic] functions in society to outline [Icelandic] cultural values [such as community and entertainment]. Those who criticized *rímur* were simply not aware that *rímur* had certain functions, mostly entertainment, maybe sometimes education (personal communication, July 28, 2016).

As a form of poetry, music, and entertainment, *rímur* symbolized Icelandic cultural values such as community and language, and became distant to popular romantic art spheres.

The critique of *rímur*, through individuals such as Hallgrímsson, led to a decline of its practice by the end of the 19th century, and brought about further structural changes within the tradition. The long intoning practices of *rímur* had begun to shift to shorter stories with fewer

stanzas, and the intimate venue of the *baðstofa* (living-room) was almost non-existent (see Figure 2.1). Some would argue these changes transformed the genre completely into shorter rhymes or songs called *kvæðalög* (Chris Foster, personal communication, August 7, 2016). Composition of *rímnaflókkur* still remained, although the ability to compose shorter songs and write stanzas became common practice, and a way to assert cultural clout (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 44). As poetic emphasis of *rímur* grew within aristocratic scenes, the process of intoning diminished in value, and by the 20th century, *rímur* practitioners realized that the tradition, especially the practice of intoning and composing melodies, was in danger of vanishing. However, political, social, and economic changes of the 20th century concurrently began to influence a *rímur* revival.



Figure 2.1 Photo of *kvöldvaka* (Magnússon, 2010, p. 86)

Geography, music, and cultural identity transformed drastically with the arrival of Iceland's industrial revolution in the 20th century. During this period, the cultural reformation in

Iceland brought numerous jobs in contrast to the agrarian lifestyle of previous generations; new technologies and forms of entertainment such as radio became popular. Further, a path away from Danish rule would arrive by mid-century (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 93). These changes began to shape rural and urban spaces and often centered on the relationship between Icelanders and their natural environment. Fishing, farm work, harsh living conditions, and new technologies all impacted Iceland's development as a nation in the 20th century (Ibid., p. 94). For example, from 1870-1914, there was a mass exodus from Iceland to North America because of rough living conditions (Þórarinn Hjartarson, personal communication, January 3, 2017; Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016; Jóhannesson, 2013, pp. i, 89-90). Additionally, in 1902, workers began wearing rubber boots and the first engines were installed in fishing boats, placing fisheries at the head of the Icelandic industrial revolution. Fishing companies were established in multiple ports, the largest of which was a herring company (1911) in the northern town of Siglufjörður. By the 1930s, factories were established to make fish oil and meal, yet these developments and new technologies also impacted agrarian lifestyles (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 91).

After the first World War, imported bulldozers dug ditches and drained moorland, which allowed farmers to grow hay in new pastures (Ibid., p. 93). Better roads, trails, and paths improved Iceland's infrastructure. Community officials planned to harness the power of waterfalls for hydroelectricity, and to utilize geothermal energy in new ways (Oslund, 2011, p. 84). Although raising sheep was still the most common practice, dairy farms emerged in greater numbers alongside new farming technologies (Jóhanesson, 2013, p. 93). Further changes in Icelandic lifestyle appeared in urban spaces, as more and more people traveled to the city from the countryside in search of better work and opportunity (Þór Sigurðsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016).

Although Icelanders congregated in multiple cities, the greatest urban development centered in Reykjavík. Important events took place in the city, or close by, and helped establish Reykjavík as a cultural and social center (Karlsson, 2001, p. 153). In 1904, the Iceland bank was founded, and Denmark, in collaboration with the *alþingi*, Iceland's parliament, agreed to a minister of Iceland housed in Reykjavík. In 1915, women gained the right to vote and in 1922, Ingibjörg Bjarnarson became the first female elected into the *alþingi*. Sewer systems and plumbing were installed, and stores and work buildings were erected (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 90-94). As infrastructure and economic outlets grew, Reykjavík, as a site of modernistic authority, also became essential to the development of the *rímur* tradition in the 20th century. Although *rímur* had declined in popularity by the end of the 19th century, as mentioned earlier, many still valued its intoning practices and cultural values. And if some new technologies and lifestyles threatened the *rímur* tradition, others helped its preservation during the 20th century (Þorarinn Hjartarson, personal communication, January 3, 2017).

As families travelled to urban spaces from rural areas, those who valued the texts of *rímur* began to mingle with practitioners who intoned *rímur* melodies, reconnecting the once divided aesthetics between text and melody, urban and rural lifestyles, and upper and lower classes (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016). By pervading multiple social domains, the historical development of *rímur* parallels the social, cultural, and political development of Iceland as a nation. By 1903, new recording technologies allowed practitioners to record the first *rímur* melodies, signifying the first documented sounds of intoning (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 64). Other musicians and scholars aided in the preservation of traditional music, and helped resonate *rímur* melodies into the new century.

Similar to European countries in the 20th century, Iceland also rallied behind national

romantic aesthetics. Collecting folk tunes, composing national music, and practicing indigenous traditions were ways to assert a national identity (Viðar Hreinsson, personal communication, July 28, 2016). Although Icelandic folk tunes, *rímur* melodies, ballads, and hymns had been somewhat documented in previous centuries, scholars and musicians were more active in documenting and composing types of *þjóðlög* (folk tunes, national music) in the 20th century. From 1906-1909 Bjarni Þorsteinsson, compiled a collection of “national music” into a book entitled *Íslensk þjóðlög* (Icelandic National Songs) (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 61). Within his text, he includes melodies from manuscripts and printed books, as well as those transcribed from oral tradition. He also documented *rímur* melodies from recordings and live intoning (Þorsteinsson, 1906-1909; Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 61). Jón Leifs, a 20th-century Icelandic composer, recorded and wrote about *rímur* in German journals during the 1920s, as well as featured traditional Icelandic musical styles such as *tvísöngur* (twin songs), the singing of parallel fourths and fifths, in his compositions (Pickard, 1999, pp. 9-11). More importantly, Leifs’s collections and discussions of Icelandic folk melodies further influenced work by musicologist Erich von Hornbostel (Ibid., p. 13). This lineage of collecting melodies and Icelandic folk traditions characterizes the 20th century as a period of Icelandic cultural introspection and an interest by scholars abroad.

Additionally, Sir William A. Craigie, an expert of *rímur* composition in the 20th century, founded the *Rímnafélag* (Rímur Society) in 1947, through which scholar Finnur Sigmundsson was able to publish his *Rímnatal* (1966), an exhaustive catalogue of *rímur* texts (see Figure 2.4). Sigmundsson was a literary scholar who taught at the University of Copenhagen from 1898-1928. Although he admitted being heavily influenced by foreign attitudes, Sigmundsson was still interested in Icelandic culture, and spent his life studying the Nordic language, Eddas, Sagas, and *rímur* (Sigmundsson, 1966). Individuals such as Þorsteinsson, Leifs, Craigie, and Sigmundsson

helped raise awareness of the state of folk traditions and *rímur* melodies in Iceland. Further developments in the *rímur* tradition were affected by the mobilization of community and social groups.

In 1929, the *Kvæðamannafélagið Iðunn* formed in Reykjavík as the first intoning society in Iceland. Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir (2011) claims that the formation of the *Iðunn* became “the main reason why the [*rímur*] tradition did not vanish completely” (p. 77). Ólafsdóttir further states that the *Iðunn* also significantly re-shaped the tradition. She remarks,

Stanza making and intoning can be seen as the members’ way of documenting events in their lives and relating their new way of life in the city to the old in the country, for instance by intoning stanzas indicating sadness and loss (of the farm life and closeness to nature), and by composing stanzas about new experience (Ibid., p. 77).

In this way, the formation of the *Iðunn* becomes another significant development in the history of the *rímur* tradition, and concurrently, the history of Iceland. As members united, multiple individual, personal experiences combined to form a collective experience, emphasizing community as an important aspect of intoning societies. Moreover, the idea of an Icelandic community outlines notions of place and identity. Here, Icelandicness was negotiated through societies such as the *Iðunn*, and showed how *rímur* melodies sound the lived experiences of intoners (Ingold, 2011).

Rímur persevered through Iceland’s industrial revolution in the 20th century, as new technologies and ways of life completely reshaped society (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 91). With its close association to rural lifestyles and natural elements, *rímur* melodies resonate the sound and setting of early Iceland within a 21st-century context, and highlight Iceland’s history as a nation.

Notably, as the cultural elite of Iceland began to shape public aesthetic, *rímur* was deemed as a musical practice of rural farmers in comparison to other musical practices of more industrialized communities. Although its significance as a form of music may have adapted over time, *rímur* remained an anchor of cultural identity through Iceland's history, and continues as a form of Icelandic identity today. *Rímur* has traversed the paths of Iceland's history, with societies such as the *Iðunn* plotting the paths of its future. Although this tradition began to gain new footing in the 20th century, the 21st century marks an increase in intoning activity. More *kvæðamannafélagið* have organized in recent years to continue the practice of their ancestors. This phenomenon is a response to globalization in Iceland surrounding the environmental and outdoor tourism industries, and indicates further negotiation of Icelandic identity in the 21st century.

CHAPTER III

SONIC PATHS

The first function of music, especially of folk music, is to produce a feeling of security for the listener by voicing the particular quality of a land and the life of its people (Lomax, 1960, p. xv).

Kvæðamannafélagið

As I stepped out of the car, I realized I should have brought an extra sweater. If it's not already obvious, Icelandic winters are cold, a sort of relentless chill that breaks through your clothing and reaches the bone. I was sporting my great-uncle's Navy-issued pea coat, and assumed, at the onset of my travel preparations, that the thick wool could handle most intense climates—that was a mistake. I had failed to consider the full ramifications of my actions until now, as another gust of North Atlantic wind penetrated my layers.

I quickly locked the car door and started to make my way to a small event building two blocks away near the Akureyri city center. Both the sidewalk and road were almost completely frozen over, resulting in a clumsy, and slow-moving, two block commute. Navigating the ice coated ground was made more difficult by the powerful wind, which forced me hunch over to prevent my eyes from watering and my cheeks from freezing. Just as I reached my destination, a car packed with musicians carefully coasted to a stop nearby. I made my way over and realized they were members of the *Gefjun* that arrived early to their monthly meeting. We exchanged greetings, and walked inside a small meeting room. I savored both the warm temperature and warm company, and was excited to experience my first official *Gefjun* event.

Over the next half-hour, the room filled with community members. We pushed several tables together to make one large table, which we then sat around. Although the group was small

in number (only around fifteen) and cultivated a casual atmosphere, I felt that something meaningful was about to take place. After a short welcome, everyone opened folders filled with poetic texts, and began to intone together. Although rhythm, pitch, and text articulation were nearly uniform, there was no attempt to unify vocal timbres. Although many considered there to be a proper way to intone, each individual sounded their own unique voice, sonically contributing their character, personality, and experience to the group. And as they ended the fourth stanza of the text, I reflected upon how these age-old melodies were still being sounded today, and that more and more were starting to listen.

There are currently seven intoning societies in Iceland. As stated in previous chapters, five of the seven intoning societies have been founded within this century beginning in 2005, and most recently, in 2016 (see Figure 1.2, p. 6). They have organized under a national association founded in 2013 called *Stemma* (Stanza), which hosts an annual meeting of all intoning societies. In part, the actions of intoning societies reflect a renewed interest in Icelandic traditional music practices, since its devaluation in the 19th century.

As Chapter Two outlines, the Icelandic cultural elite at end of the 19th century lacked interest in the performance *rímur*, because they associated it with the lower classes, and therefore considered it a lower art form. It was not until the efforts of the *Iðunn* in the early 20th century, that a spark of interest began to ignite revivalist action, as I've discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. Yet, the events of World War II did not create the best environment for traditional music practitioners to thrive in Iceland. From the 1930s until the late 20th century, the conditions of war, a globally felt economic depression, and the influx of musical influences from abroad, hindered a growth of traditional music practices in Iceland (Karlsson, 2000, pp. 308-312). Not until later, at the turn of the 21st century, did another type of revival of the *rímur* tradition begin

to take place (Þórarinn Hjartarson, personal communication, January 3, 2017). Þórarinn Hjartarson, a founder of the *Geffun*, recounted these historical periods, and stated that,

In the 19th century, *rímur* were somehow oppressed by the cultural elite of the country. And even in the nationalistic moment, in the struggle for independence [from Denmark in 1944] many of the cultural elite despised *rímur*. They managed to somehow make *rímur* sound dull and something very rural and old-fashioned. As the Icelanders started to learn something about music, our scholarly educated musicians began to develop our music[;] it was closely tied to the music in Denmark and Germany. But they somehow did not use the *rímur* tradition much. However, there was an awakening when *Iðunn* was founded in 1929. There was some activity in Reykjavík especially, but it never did go very far. And then came the war with a lot of influence from outside, especially from America, and even *Iðunn* somehow had problems to survive. In the 40s, 50s, 60s, they [the societies] were in a very defensive position still, so in the 90s when *Iðunn* was stronger, the time was right for folk traditions to thrive (personal communication, January 3, 2017).

Although the 20th century began to see a renewed interest in these practices by those that formed the *Iðunn*, the 21st century marks a period of greater significance, when intoning voices that were once suppressed and considered rural, old-fashioned, and inferior, become empowered and placed within a contemporary and global context. One such example that outlines this aesthetic shift, centers on Steindór Andersen, a famous 20th and 21st-century intoner, and his role as a trail-blazer of traditional Icelandic practices.

In the early 1990s, Andersen was asked to discuss and perform intoning on an Icelandic TV program (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 193). Through this exposure, he met members of the internationally renowned rock group Sigur Rós, which resulted in a 2001 collaboration and world tour (McLean, 2007, para. 12). The combination of Sigur Rós's music and *rímur* also marked a significant period in the tradition's history. Icelandic youth began to seek an interest, albeit brief, in *rímur* practices, and world audiences were exposed to *rímur* melodies through performances by Andersen during the 2001 world tour with Sigur Rós (Bára Grimmsdóttir, personal communication, August 7, 2016). Part of Steindór's popularity and acclaim centered on his work with Sigur Rós, but also reflected his prowess as an intoner. Þórarinn states that,

Of course, his work with Sigur Rós was part of it, but that was not the beginning.

He did not grow up with it [the *rímur* tradition], but he was so obsessed with the thing that he became a good performer. And everyone, even the old people that knew this tradition, they all agreed that he did it the right way as it was supposed to be done. They said, this is genuine (personal communication, January 3, 2017).

Community members and veteran intoners rallied behind Steindór's timbre and skill, asserting his role as both a domestic and international influence on the *rímur* tradition. This is particularly interesting since many skilled *kvæðamenn* learn this tradition through their families, yet, as Þórarinn and Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir state, Andersen learned to intone on his own by listening to recordings (Þórarinn Hjartarson, personal communication, January 3, 2017; Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir, personal communication, January 11, 2017). Therefore, the use of recordings is significant to the transmission of *rímur* melodies today. Although there are strong opinions on a correct way to intone, Andersen's example implies that anyone can become a *kvæðamaður*.

Additionally, Anderson's fame as an intoner helped place Icelandic traditional music practices on the global stage, and ignited a type of folk music revival movement into the 21st century. His actions have plotted the beginnings of sonic paths for other cultural enthusiasts to walk. During this period, new folk festivals emerged, the *Silfurplötur Iðunnar* was published in 2004, and *Gefjun* was founded in 2005 (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 42). More recently, within the past seven years, four other intoning societies have formed, establishing their own responses to global influences and placing their own unique footprints within a larger sonic pathway.

Throughout Iceland's history, *rímur* and other traditional practices have fluctuated in popularity, marking periods of both interest and disinterest by practitioners and Icelandic citizens in general. At a moment of growing interest, specifically from the late 90s into the turn of the 21st century, musicians and revivalists rallied, and breathed renewed life into traditional Icelandic music. Drawing heavily from my interviews with members of the *Gefjun* and *Iðunn*, I show how the practices of these societies shape local identity, and argue that each group negotiates a response to global change in Iceland. Furthermore, I claim that the *rímur* tradition continues today through the practices of *kvæðamannafélagið*. Inspired by Ingold's view of sound as lived experience, and of our being in the world as directly linked to a process of *wayfaring*, I argue that the national unification of intoning societies form, what I call, a *sonic meshwork*—knots of cultural significance that highlight the lived experiences of past and present intoners.

Gefjun

The *Gefjun* was founded in Akureyri in 2005 through the efforts of Þórarinn Hjartarson, Þór Sigurðsson, Anna Fornadóttir and her daughters, Anna and Kristín Sigtryggadóttir. Its origin begins with the folk revival at the turn of the 21st century. In the summer of 1998, Þórarinn

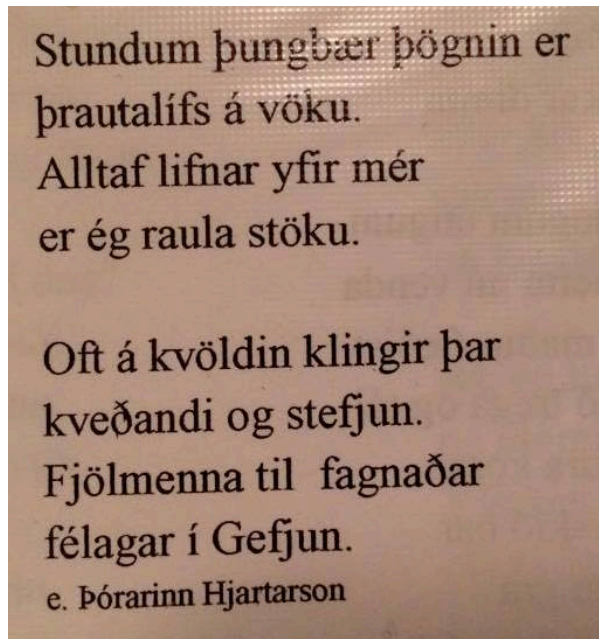
helped organize a folk music festival in Akureyri that primarily focused on Icelandic music.

Þórarinn explained his efforts, and stated that,

In those days, it was rather rare that people were working on this genre [traditional Icelandic music]. This was the first festival of this sort, and it was very traditional and nationalistic in its focus. There were a lot of people performing *rímur*, actually *kvæðlög*, as we call it. For example, Steindór Anderson, he had just recently become the chairman of *Iðunn* [in Reykjavík], and I met him then [at the festival in Akureyri] for the first time. It was inspiring really, and it was a good festival in my opinion... In a way, our work was leading up to [the founding of the *Geffun*]. We were predecessors (personal communication, January 3, 2017).

From 1998 to 2005, practitioners began to collaborate and other festivals began to organize through grants and local support in various locations, such as the first folk festival in Akureyri, and later festival in Siglufjörður (Þórarinn Hjartarson, personal communication, January 3, 2017).

The original mission of the *Geffun* was to bring together practicing *kveðamenn*, and to cultivate community interest in traditional music practices. Þórarinn states that the founding members wanted to, “create an environment for those who knew [intoning practices] already, and make it known to others as well” (personal communication, January 3, 2017). Each meeting begins with the intoning of a particular text, written by Þórarinn, which outlines the purpose of *Geffun* as an organization (see Figure 3.1).



*Sometimes the silence is hard to bear
When staying awake in the hardness of life.*

I'm always cheered up,

When I chant a verse.

Oftentimes in the evening,

There are rhythms and verses

They are gathering for joy,

The members of Gefjun.

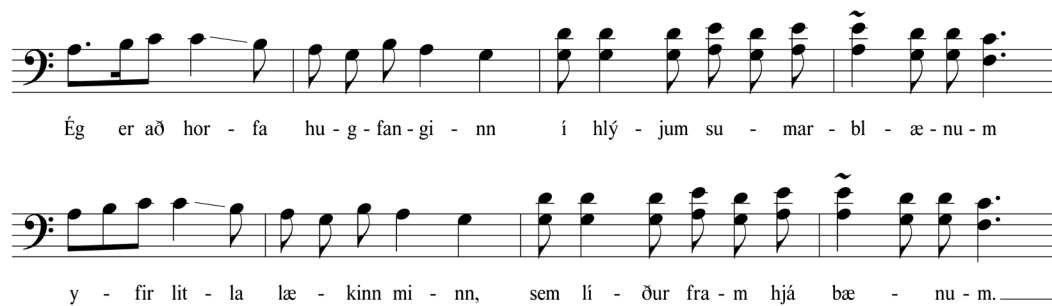
Figure 3.1 Excerpt from Gefjun kvæðalög

Part of this musical and cultural revitalization then, centers on the performance of traditional music, the unification of community members, and educating others in intoning and traditional music practices.

Similar to other *kvæðamannafélagið*, *Gefjun* meets once a month from September through May. Each meeting is held at a public space, such as a museum or a cultural site in the city, and is made-up of approximately twenty individuals (Þór Sigurðson, personal communication, July 28, 2016; Anna Sigtryggisdóttir, personal communication, January 13, 2017). Members sit around a large table and intone melodies, recite texts (excerpts of *rímur*, as well as other poems using the poetic compositional form), discuss the monthly agenda, and sing other *Þjóðlög* (national songs). For example, Þórarinn Hjartarson's background and interest in Icelandic traditional and popular music, including ballads, national songs, and *rímur*, pervades

the practices of the *Geffun*. Although *rímur* melodies were originally intoned without instruments, Þórarinn sometimes leads the group in various songs, accompanied by the guitar.

In addition to the singing of various types of *Þjóðlög*, the *Geffun* places a strong emphasis on the act of intoning melodies. If someone incorrectly intones a line or stanza, the group stops and addresses the problem. Usually Anna and Kristín Sigtryggsdóttir, two founding members of the *Geffun* that grew up with tradition of intoning in their family, provide examples of the correct way to intone. During their January 2017 meeting, the first *kvæðalög* that the *Geffun* intoned, was titled *Lækurinn* (Stream), which describes the flow and movement of a small stream, and portrays a type of nostalgia towards the rurality of the landscape (see Figure 3.3). All the members began to intone together, alternating lines between a monophonic texture, and *tvísöngur* (twin-song), a form of polyphonic *kvæða* in parallel fifths (Hopkins, 2008, p. 405) (see Figure 3.2). After the first complete stanza, one member intoned an incorrect rhythm. The group stopped, corrected the problem, and continued to perform *Lækurinn*.



Ég er að hor - fa hu - g - fan - gi - nn í hlý - jum su - mar - bl - æ - nu - m

y - fir lit - la læ - kinn mi - nn, sem lí - ður fra - m hjá bæ - nu - m. —

Figure 3.2 *Lækurinn* melody

By rhythmically intoning together, the group performs a type of sound synchronicity—synchronizing their individual timbres into a single, voluminous voice. The concept of sound synchronicity in nature, as it relates to *kvæðamannafélagið*, is discussed in greater detail in the

following chapter. However, sound synchronicity exists as a key characteristic of all intoning societies today. After the first stanza of *Lækurinn*, when a member fell out of sync with the group, Anna stopped to point out the mistake. There was a short discussion, followed by a corrected example, sounded by Anna.

This performance of *Lækurinn* in January of 2017, shows how the *Gefjun* practices melodies in specific ways. Þórarinn Hjartarsson describes Anna and Kristín, and their mother, Anna Fornadóttir as,

Genuine disciples of the tradition. They are very genuine. I knew that this was how it was done really [from their example]. I had just come from outside and learned it when I was grown up, so I will not be as good a performer or as genuine (personal communication, January 3, 2017).

Hjartarsson's use of the term "genuine" implies a type of authentic intoning. In the part, the idea of authenticity problematizes the practices of intoning societies today, because authenticity is based on a subjective position. Ethnomusicologist Tim Taylor (1997) describes the ever-expanding definitions of authenticity as having multiple positions of inquiry, and states that, "the problem is that there are multiple subject positions available to anyone and multiple interpretations and constructions of those positions" (p. 21). Describing an authentic intoner or way to intone is also problematized through the idea of good and bad, right and wrong.

During an interview, Anna and Kristín Sigtryggadóttir spent significant time playing me recordings of past *kvæðamenn*. Both Anna and Kristín were excited to share their analyses of these recordings, especially when one of their family members was intoning. They would often comment, "This one is bad," "listen how she does this," or state, "you can really hear this sounding clear," when describing the nuance of intoning (Anna and Kristín Sigtryggadóttir,

personal communication, January 13, 2017). And although both Anna and Kristín represent the legacy of familial intoning, and show how voices of the past continue to resonate today, what makes for good or bad intoning? For the Anna and Kristín Sigtryggisdóttir, the value of intoning is partly surrounded by personal taste. In Chapter One, I described intoning as having a specific timbral quality, yet, there is no consensus among intoning societies about an authentic, correct intoning sound. Most examples that individuals have described as genuine or authentic, are drawn from past recordings of intoners.

In 2004, the *Silfurplötur Iðunnar (Iðunn Silver Lacker)* was published as a collection of *rímur* and *kvæðalög* melodies. It contains the texts and transcribed melodies of over 150 *kvæðalög*, and additionally contains recordings of the accompanied melodies. The *Silfurplötur* is a revised edition of an early text used by the *Iðunn*, which contains *lagboðar* and *kvæðalög* (see Figure 3.3). Chris Foster states that, “The whole point of the original recording project in the 1930s was to get the *lagboðar* [a system for oral transmission that uses the first line of text to remind performers of a specific melody] recorded as a reference source. It was not about recording songs as such” (personal communication, February, 17, 2017). He further explains the relationship between *lagboðar* and *kvæðalög*, stating that,

Lagboðar (singular: *lagboði*) is a bit difficult to explain [although the idea is simple]. It is a designation of a particular text to be the reminder of a particular tune. Each entry tells the meter e.g. *Hringhenda*, then the text of the verse (*vísa*) followed by who wrote the verse and the source of the tune... It’s basically a system for remembering and transmitting tunes orally for people that can't read music and was used before there was recorded media (personal communication, February 17, 2017).



**LAGBOÐAR
VIÐ
KVÆÐALÖG**

Figure 3.3 Title page from Iðunn book of lagboðar and kvæðalög (1935)

Many *kvæðamannafélagið* today use the *Silfurplötur Iðunnar* as, what Chris Foster describes, “a dictionary of tunes” (personal communication, February 17, 2017). Yet, Kristín Sigtryggisdóttir argued that the best way to learn and practice melodies was to simply listen to, or study with, an already well-established *kvæðamaður*, and jokingly said, “They can just listen to us [me and my sister]” (personal communication, January 13, 2017).

Collective memory and the use of the *lagboðar* system within intoning societies shows how members attempt to embrace an authentic historical past (Taylor, 1997, p. 21). However, these notions of authenticity are wrapped up in a subject’s positionality and, for intoning society members, are perpetuated through the use of recordings and copies of *kvæðalög* and *rímur* texts. Since the use of recordings are often prioritized over text, certain continuities and performance practices are lost over time and become part of a historical memory. When asked about the future of the *Geffun*, Anna and Kristín argued for the importance of *kvæðamannafélagið*, intoning, and raised awareness by community members. Kristín and Anna stated,

We hope to see societies like *Geffun* grow bigger and for many more to form. We hope that more people show interest in this kind of music and to use the songs. We hope that people will be interested and show this music with respect, because we think we are showing it respect by doing it like our grandmother did it, not changing it or singing it. There’s a big difference between singing and *kvæða* (personal communication, January 13, 2017).

For Anna and Kristín Sigtryggisdóttir, authenticity becomes saturated with familial tradition and imitation. As memory and oral transmission continue to pervade intoning tradition, new performance practices emerge, such as communal intoning, which help establish new approaches to the *rímur* tradition today and situate the actions of the *Geffun* in Akureyri. Other societies,

such as the *Iðunn* in Reykjavík, also emphasize intoning and the practice of traditional music in their meetings. However, as a *kvæðamannafélag* that has been active since 1929, the *Iðunn* has begun to implement new structures within their society and try new and innovative ways to educate or garner interest by the public.

Iðunn

While the practices of the *Iðunn* are similar to those of the *Gefjun*, there are still striking differences with how each society is organized and run. The *Iðunn* is well-established and has a greater following than other societies. This engagement reflects the *Iðunn*'s operation since 1929, and its location in Iceland's largest urban space—Reykjavík. Whereas the *Gefjun* has a total membership of around thirty individuals, and a regular attendance of around twenty persons, the *Iðunn* has a membership of over two-hundred, and the regular attendance of around sixty (Þór Sigurðson, personal communication, July 28th, 2017; Chris Foster and Bára Grímsdóttir, personal communication, August 7, 2016). *Iðunn* meetings are also held in a larger space, and utilize technology such as PowerPoint presentations and microphones to accommodate the number of attendees.

Originally, the *Iðunn* primarily focused on the collection of *rímur* and *kvæðalög* texts, and the preservation of *rímur* melodies (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 45). Although Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir considers the early efforts of *Iðunn* as policing the *rímur* tradition, in recent years, it is more appropriate to consider the *Iðunn* as innovative (2011, p. 46). Instead of only collecting texts and monitoring melodies, the *Iðunn* hosts rehearsal meetings, encourages composition of new poetry, and has begun to highlight other folk traditions during their meetings. These

endeavors serve as a way to bridge the old and new, and serve as ways for the *Iðunn* to continue the *rímur* in the 21st century.

Rósa Jóhannesdóttir, an active member of the *Iðunn* and well-practiced musician, leads an educational class that focuses on the intoning and performance of *kvæðalög* (personal communication, August 7, 2016). This event takes place two days before the actual *Iðunn* monthly meeting, in order for members and visitors to practice *kvæða*. Writing new poetry that conforms to the rules of *rímur* composition have also become a recurrent *Iðunn* activity. During the January 2017 meeting, members were impressed most by the writing skills of a younger member who was only ten years old. At the same meeting, a duo performed well-known Icelandic folk melodies on an accordion and bowed-saw, revealing one way that other folk traditions are practiced at the *Iðunn*. Additional activities of the *Iðunn* extend beyond the boundaries of their monthly meetings, to include public performances at folk festivals and music venues throughout Reykjavík.

Although extended performances of entire *rímnaflökkur* (*rímur*-cycle) are non-existent, to the best of my knowledge, members from various intoning societies have begun to perform abridged versions of *rímur* at festivals and venues for educational and entertainment purposes. While discussing *rímur* performances during the Vaka Festival in Akureyri in 2015 and 2016, Chris Foster stated that,

That kind of thing [*rímnaflökkur* performance] just doesn't fit into today's world.

We have to lift it up and put it into a different social environment. And we have to make it work. The one interesting thing about the performances in Vaka, both years, because we had people coming from other countries and not Icelandic speakers.... They came particularly to the *rímur* presentation because they were

keen about learning. They found it quite fascinating... They often talked about how it was a hypnotic effect of just hearing these verses going on, and on, and on, and on. And they were completely gripped, literally! But even so, it was something people could latch on to and sit with for an hour and forty minutes (personal communication, August 7, 2016).

Bórarinn Hjartarson further comments on the two *rímur* performances from the Vaka folk festival in 2015 and 2016, and argues that *rímur* can indeed exist in today's world. He states that,

I feel that the public likes it when we perform *rímur*. It [*rímur*] is very tied to the lyrics, and the poetry is a very rich tradition in Iceland. You mentioned you were witnessing us performing *rímur* [in 2015]? tThat was the first time that I was a part of a festival performance. I feel it worked out quite well, however the more recent performance [in 2016], in my view, was much better. I did not take part in this performance, so maybe that's why it was better. But I honestly believe the narrative was better. It was easy to understand and was more appealing as a story. The performers included Bára Grímsdóttir, Rósa Jóhannesdóttir and Anna Sigtrggysdóttir, as well as some others. It was very good. I originally thought that to *rímur* performance was not really possible today. I thought that people would not accept it and be fascinated. But I changed my mind at [Vaka 2016], and I found that it was possible and actually makes sense today (personal communication, January 3, 2017) (see Figure 3.4).

Because of the success of these *rímur* performances at summer folk festivals, the *Iðunn* has begun to perform at music venues in Reykjavík. Two such venues include the popular restaurant



Figure 3.4 Þórarinn Hjartarson performing a ríma at Vaka 2015 (May 2015)

and music venue Café Rosenberg, and the hip-hostel and bar, Kex Hostel. Bára Grímsdóttir explains that *Iðunn* members performed full *rímur* at Kex Hostel, and composed new *ríma* for Café Rosenberg. She states,

For the past two years now, we have had a kind of entertainment concert at Café Rosenberg in January. And at Kex Hostel, we performed the full *rímur* from the Vaka festival. But a lot of the Rosenberg *ríma* are funny. People write them about modern topics and try to really make them funny, while also following the rhyme form and composition rules. But those are the sort of things we have had at Rosenberg, and it was a very good turn-out last time with around 100 people or more (personal communication, August 7, 2017).

Since these performances are held during January and February, and not during the peak tourist season in the summer, most of the attendees at the *Iðunn* performances in Reykjavík are

Icelandic. Therefore, these performance events are not only forms of entertainment, but also serve as an educational method. By performing *rímur* at live music venues in Reykjavík, the *Iðunn* educates community members on indigenous music practices, asserts traditional music as a form of local identity, and places a once rural tradition within an urban context.

Additionally, the educational efforts of the *Iðunn* not only include community and public outreach, but also include scholarship and university study. Members of the *Iðunn* such as Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir and Ragnar Ingi Aðalsteinsson, have published literature on the *rímur* tradition and the history of the *Iðunn*. Rósa Þórsteinsdóttir, another influential member, works at the Árni Magnússon Institute at the University of Reykjavík and continuously updates the *Ismus* website (personal communication, August 6, 2016). More recently, Chris Foster and Bára Grímsdóttir have begun to lecture on Icelandic folk music at the art academy in Reykjavík. When asked about their involvement and educational efforts, Bára stated,

I think it's also important that it goes more into the educational system, in general.

It should be an integral part of what goes on in ordinary schools and music schools, both. That's really crucial I think, and both singing and instrumental music are part of education systems in some places. We do lecture at the art academy but not every year. It's not enough (personal communication, August 7, 2016).

Chris continued, stating,

The course we teach is not long enough, so we can't go into enough depth, and it just bounces the surface. You might just catch the interest of one or two people but it's not something where we can go into the amount of depth that people need (personal communication, August 7, 2016).

These educational efforts, together with contemporary performances of *rímur* in Reykjavík, outline the characteristics of *Kvæðamannafélag Iðunn* today. In the 21st century, the *Iðunn* has adapted its practices in unique ways in response to global influences, and has attempted to reinvigorate Icelandic traditional music as a form of local identity.

The continued activity of the *Iðunn* blends the preservation of a tradition with creative and innovative community engagement. In the final words of their interview, Bárá and Chris attempt to explain the belief and rationale behind *Iðunn* practices. Chris states,

As performers, all we can really hope to do is give it our best shot, in terms of not just skating over the surface, and regurgitating the same old stuff that everyone does. We must come at it with creativity and originality and dig deep, as Bárá always says, because there's a lot there to be dug (personal communication, August 7, 2016).

Bárá takes over, stating,

And for *kvæðamannafélagið* like *Iðunn*, don't just be at meetings. Go out to Rosenburg and places like that. You must go out to the community... I can feel like in the last ten years that more people are interested (personal communication, August 7, 2016).

Sonic Paths

Just as the actions of the *Iðunn* and *Gefjun* respond to globalization, other intoning societies react to global forces in various ways. The *Iðunn* is the largest *kvæðamannafélag*, is centered in Reykjavík, holds monthly educational practice sessions in addition to their monthly meetings, and performs *rímur* at popular urban venues. The *Gefjun* in Akureyri primarily focuses

on the process of intoning, as well as practicing members' favorite *kvæðlög* and other types of folk songs. When asked about other intoning societies, Anna Sigtryggsdóttir described the *Félag ljóðaunnenda á Austurlandi* in Egillstaður as, “not practicing *kveða*, they are more just making *vísur* (verses), or publishing books or something like that” (personal communication, January 13, 2017). Additionally, several friends described *Ríma* in Siglufjörður as focusing on the *tvísöngur* (twin-song) tradition (Bára Grímsdóttir, personal communication, August 3, 2016; Anna and Kristín Sigtryggsdóttir, personal communication, January 13, 2017). Therefore, each intoning society has certain characteristics unique to their location and membership, which assert local practices against global influences.

Kvæðamannafélagið today have seen tremendous growth, in part, because of their relation to one another on a national scale. Þórarinn states that in the early 21st century, there was some form of national advocacy for traditional music, but the timing was not right to mobilize. He states that, “We tried to start something on a national level, but it never came to be anything. It never managed to. We were spread all over and we were rather few...” (Þórarinn Hjartarson, personal communication, January 3, 2017). Today, with more intoning societies across Iceland, well-established festivals, and internationally known figures, *kvæðamannafélagið* have been able to unify under a single organization called *Stemma*.

Although many individuals and societies are part of *Stemma*, the project was spearheaded by Guðrún Ingimundardóttir (Rúna). Additionally, Rúna helped organize *Kvæðamannafélag Ríma* in Siglufjörður, has studied the *tvísöngur* tradition extensively, serves as deputy director for the music school in Akureyri, created and continues to monitor the *þjóðlög* website, works as project director of the North Folk Database Project, and holds a doctoral degree in composition and a minor in ethnomusicology from the University of Arizona (Sturman,

2009). As a strong advocate for Icelandic traditional music, Rúna can be viewed as another trail-blazer of the 21st century. Similar to the influence of Steindór Andersen on the *rímur* tradition at the turn of the 21st century, Rúna has galvanized action and unified intoning societies across Iceland by creating *Stemma*.

The national unification of intoning societies is best understood by examining Tim Ingold's (2011) concepts of *wayfaring* and sound as lived experience. Ingold argues that, “*wayfaring* is our most fundamental mode of being in the world,” and that our existence relies on our movement and role as *wayfarers* (2011, p. 152). In further defining *wayfaring*, Ingold states,

The wayfarer is continually on the move. More strictly he *is* movement... It is a line that advances from the tip as he presses on, in an ongoing process of growth and development, or self-renewal. As he proceeds, however, the wayfarer has to sustain himself, both perceptually and materially, through an active engagement with the country that opens up along his path. Though from time to time he must pause for rest, and that—like holding one's breath—becomes ever more intense and less sustainable the longer it lasts. Indeed the wayfarer has no final destination, for wherever he is, and so long as life goes on, there is somewhere further to go (2011, p. 150).

By conceptualizing *rímur* melodies and intoning practices as a form of *wayfaring*, the historical movement of this tradition, as discussed in previous chapters, acquires additional significance.

Social and political forces, perceptual and material global influences, and periods of interest and disinterest, all characterize the movement of this tradition through Iceland's history, and its continuation, into the 21st century. Moreover, the intimate connection between melodies and the lives of Icelanders manifest through active, sonic-engagement with *rímur* melodies.

Today, the actions of *kvæðamannafélagið* are not permanent destinations for these melodies, but instead serve as sites of cultural significance along sonic paths. As Ingold claims, wayfaring is an ongoing process of growth, development, and self-renewal (Ibid.). Similarly, recent actions of intoning societies spur the growth of traditional music practices in Iceland today, and spark renewed interest.

As these metaphorical sonic paths of wayfaring intersect, they create knots, which Ingold describes as a *meshwork*: the “binding together of lines” (2011, p. 151). He further explains that,

To the wayfarer, the world is not presented as a surface to be traversed. In his movements he threads his way *through* this world rather than routing *across* it from point to point. Of course the wayfarer is a terrestrial being, and must perforce travel over the land. The surfaces of the land, however, are *in* and not *of* the world, woven from the lines of growth and movement of inhabitants. What they form, as we have already seen, is not a network of point-to-point connections, but a tangled mesh of interwoven and complexly knotted strands.

Every strand is a way of life, and every knot a place (Ingold, 2000, p. 246; Ingold, 2011, p. 151).

In the accompanying figures, I visually show how Ingold delineates between the movement of wayfaring, transportation, and the resulting meshwork that is created. Ingold considers a wayfarer’s, “presence on the land as the ever-growing sum of his trails,” whereas the idea of transportation, is merely a point-to-point connection between destinations, decontextualized from experience or personal inscription along paths (Ibid., p. 152) (see Figures 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7).

Therefore, a meshwork, is the tangling of paths of lived experience by wayfarers, where a *sonic*

meshwork, in my definition, exists as the sounding of lived experiences and cultural histories through sonic and auditory practice.

Here, intoning societies serve as knots within a sonic meshwork of Iceland. This national meshwork is built upon the practices of *kvæðamannafélagið* that are organized under *Stemma*. Although the literal movement of music across history and place is complicated, and ultimately, impossible to precisely trace, the sonic meshwork of intoning societies link the past and present through the sounding of *rímur* melodies, intoning practices, and other types of *Þjóðlög*.



Figure 3.5 Wayfaring as a continual, fluid form of movement (Ingold, 2011, p. 150)

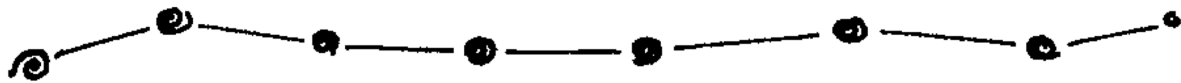


Figure 3.6 Transportation as movement between destination; decontextualized experience (Ingold, 2011, p. 151)

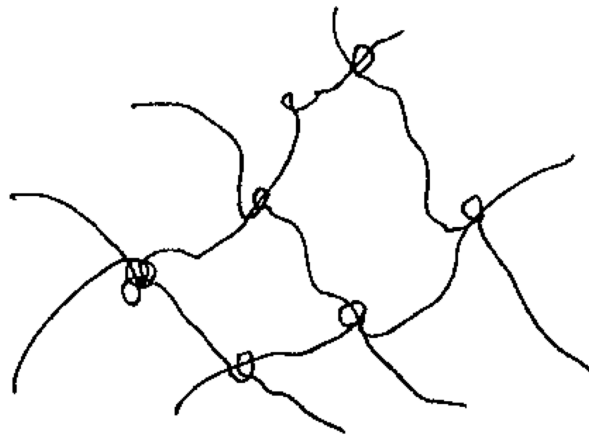


Figure 3.7 Meshwork as knots within a series of wayfaring paths (Ingold, 2011, p. 152)

Rúna describes the importance of *Þjóðlög* and traditional Icelandic music during her childhood, and states,

I learned them [songs] from my grandparents. It was the way of taking care of a child; I would sit on my grandfather's knee and he would rock me and chant or recite, so would my grandmother. I learned folksongs from all around me. My parents sang to me too and we sang in school during class periods just called "song." Later, I would sing all the time for my sons. They had their favorite songs that they would ask me to sing (Sturman, 2009, p. 3).

Rúna's example, among others, demonstrates how these metaphorical sonic paths represent the literal lived experiences of Icelanders. Within this context, Ingold's statement, "Each strand is a way of life, and every knot a place," can be interpreted as, each melody is a way of life, and every *kvæðamannafélag* a place (2011, p. 151).

The actions of intoning societies today, such as imitating recordings, intoning old verses and texts, and learning about past *kvæðmenn*, connect historical preservation to the preservation of identity, a topic I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 5. Sonic paths that were once faded, are now more frequently traveled and aurally ingrained as a form of local identity. Additionally, Chris and Bárara's efforts to incorporate traditional music practices in university study, the *Iðunn*'s performances at popular music venues in Reykjavík, the formation of *Stemma*, and the *Geffun*'s emphasis on community intoning, illustrate how new sonic paths attempt to maintain a local identity while maneuvering along the paths of global wayfarers. Whereas *kvæðamannafélagið* inscribe metaphorical sonic pathways, the majority of global wayfarers carve literal paths in Iceland's landscape. Many of these paths originate from the boom in Iceland's tourism industry in recent years.

CHAPTER IV

PHYSICAL PATHS

Who has ever wandered through such forests, in a length of many miles, in a boundless expanse, without a path, without a goal, amid their monstrous shadows, their sacred gloom, without being filled with deep reverence for the sublime greatness of Nature above all human agency, without feeling the grandeur of the idea which forms the basis of Vidar's essence? (Snorri Sturluson, excerpt from Prose Edda, 13th Century)

A Global Statement

On April 14, 2010, Eyjafjallajökull, a volcano near the southern coast of Iceland, erupted. For the next six days, ash fumed from its crater, spreading across the North Atlantic and reaching parts of North America, Europe, and Asia (Bye, 2011 para. 2). This event was experienced globally as substantial sections of European airspace were shutdown because of ash clouds. Astrophysicist Bente Lilya Bye, estimated that over 10 million travelers were affected by the eruption, which is an impressive global footprint from a country with just over 320, 000 citizens at the time (Ibid., para. 4). It was as if Iceland, the land itself, was making a global statement.

Iceland has often been imagined as an isolated, mythical landscape (Chris Foster, personal communication, August 7, 2016). Glaciers, volcanoes, rivers, mountains, desert-like spaces, and deep ravines make up the island's unique topography. Although these geographical phenomena have existed in Iceland for centuries, they have begun to take on new roles in the 21st century. Similar to the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in 2010, tourism in Iceland has exploded during the 21st century, and primarily focuses on outdoor activities, wildlife, and geographic phenomenon—making the once geographically remote island a thriving tourist destination (Ólafsdóttir, 2015, para. 3).

Icelandic tourism industries market an untouched, isolated landscape, which paradoxically, results in less isolation. As visitors and other global influences continue to grow in

Iceland, they concurrently challenge notions of Icelandic identity. Furthermore, since most tourism centers on the natural environment, geography, landscape, and topography are domains where local and global perceptions of the Icelandic experience are negotiated. This chapter focuses on the growth of ecotourism in Iceland—both its metaphorical and literal reshaping of Iceland and Icelandic culture. I align changes of the tourism industry alongside the changes in intoning societies to show how both traditional music and geography enhance a sense of Icelandicness. In so doing, I provide connections and similarities between intoning societies and the natural world.

Ecotourism?

The eruption of Eyjafjallajökull is not the only contributing factor of Iceland's global growth. As I outlined in Chapter 2, it could be argued that the history of Iceland, in general, is a slow progression towards a more and more globalized nation. But within the 21st century, economic decisions and natural events in Iceland helped plot the path for new forms of income and global connectedness—mainly, tourism. Although many enjoyed visiting Iceland before the increase of its tourism industries, two events arguably led to the boom of tourism: the economic crisis in 2008 and the 2010 eruption of Eyjafjallajökull.

From 2008-2011, the Icelandic *króna* collapsed and the three largest banks in Iceland failed. The government implemented capital control, which limits how much money citizens can withdraw from banks, and international hedge funds had to invest in the Icelandic economic system in hopes of realizing larger capital gains (O'Brien, 2015, para. 4). Yet, other domestic means of income were necessary for financial recovery. Kimiko De Freytas-Tamura (2016), a reporter for the *New York Times*, links the 2008 financial crash, as well as the Eyjafjallajökull

eruption, to the boom of Iceland's tourism industry. In the opening of her article, De Freytas-Tamura writes, "Iceland has discovered the secret to a booming tourist industry: First have a mammoth financial implosion, then an enormous volcanic explosion" (2016, para. 1). The growth of Iceland's tourism industry then, has partly emerged out of economic necessity and natural happenstance.

What makes the eruption of 2010 so fascinating is not only its timing to the financial crash and its impact globally, but the resulting recourse. Massive volcanic explosions have occurred throughout Iceland's history quite often, sometimes even dusting parts of Europe with ash (Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 73). So, why was Eyjafjallajökull so significant in 2010? This volcanic eruption was heard by so many because of its impact on airline companies and the grounding of countless flights. Aviation technology, at least on its current scale in the 21st century, did not exist when such massive volcanic events had taken place in Iceland in the past. Therefore, the Eyjafjallajökull eruption was the big bang of Iceland's tourism industry in this century, one that, although hindered flight and travel initially, has ignited an influx of travel to the now more visible, yet still geographically isolated country.

Moreover, Eyjafjallajökull made a statement about the geographic uniqueness of Iceland, and helped center the focus of tourism industries on Iceland's landscape. Waterfalls, glaciers, and rivers that were once simply part of the landscape now have visitor centers, parking lots, and local businesses that highlight the tourist destination (Muskett, 2014, para. 6). Landmarks and natural sites have taken new roles as marketable commodities. Eyjafjallajökull, itself, has become a famous tourist stop and, through its unique spelling and pronunciation, highlights the Icelandic language (see Figure 4.1). Icelandic stones and sand are also available for purchase as a way for travelers to literally take a piece of Iceland home. Expedition and travel services have

assumed names such as *Saga Travel* or *Fóss Hotel* (Falls Hotel), as a way to assert their businesses as “Icelandic” (see Figure 4.2). In this way, geography, language, and history have all been swept up by tourism industries, which attempt to provide a distinct Icelandic experience for visitors.



Figure 4.1 “What Part of Eyjafjallajökull Don’t You Understand?” (*Gulfoss.is*)



Figure 4.2 *Foss Hotel Promotional Photo* (*tripadvisor.com*)

Businesses, travel services, and even architecture all center on outdoor tourism and attempt to portray geography as being Icelandic. These industries and tourism efforts are often classified or portrayed as ecotourism, but ecotourism proves a rather complex term. Part of the complexity and confusion surrounding ecotourism stem from its association with multiple travel experiences. In 1996, the World Conservation Union defined ecotourism as,

environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features, both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socioeconomic involvement of local populations (Hoyt, 2005, pp. 144-145).

This definition highlights mutually beneficial relationships between visitor, local, and environment, yet in Iceland, these relationships are not so easily classified. Indeed, most individuals traveling are able to enjoy and appreciate nature, and of course, their financial contributions are socioeconomically beneficial to local populations. However, much of the outdoor tourism endeavors in Iceland would be difficult to classify as ecotourism, since many lack a conservationist aesthetic.

Although activities such as whale watching or visiting puffin nests may leave smaller footprints, others tourist attractions inadvertently impact the Icelandic landscape in massive ways. During my travels, I spoke with a glacier guide who said that within a hundred years, Vatnajökull, the largest glacier in Iceland, will be completely melted away. Although part of this destruction results from global warming, daily glacier tours, walks, and climbs, literally chip away at the ice (personal communication, May 2015). Other tours have outfitted vehicles with durable shock systems and suspensions to navigate visitors throughout the Icelandic highlands,

carving new paths across a once unmarked landscape. Furthermore, new businesses have broken ground near landmarks or popular destinations to cater to large crowds. The increase of gas emissions, the formation of new roads, and recently established infrastructure force industries to confront the benefits that ecotourism provides.

Anna Tsing (2005) describes the emergence of conservational activism in Indonesia as a direct result of environmental destruction (p. 2). For many tourism industries in Iceland, the environment is an investment that must be protected. In my own wanderings in Iceland, I frequently encountered signs and regulations condemning litter, land destruction, or other forms of environmental degradation. Once, during an ice cave tour, our guide recounted the history and importance of various geographic formations. These warnings and commentary suggest the complex nature of ecotourism as a domain that includes multiple spheres, such as edu-tourism, conservationism, and environmental activism. In this way, even if tourism industries lack conservationalist tendencies, ecoconsciousness is inevitable. As Tsing suggests, if industries have greater impact on the environment, means to preserve the environment will also become greater.

Physical Paths

Part of the impact of ecotourism in Iceland centers on the massive number of visitors every year. Transporting so many travelers to various locations across Iceland results in the formation of new paths, trails, and roads. Therefore, tourism industries literally reshape Iceland's topography and landscape to accommodate the influx of tourists. Trails, roads, pathways, bridges, and parking areas wind through historically remote regions, and have crossed and overtaken pathways that were once only traveled by Icelanders (Hastrup, 2008, p. 58).

Christopher Tilley (1994) states that “a journey along a path can be claimed to be a paradigmatic cultural act, since it is the following in the steps inscribed by others whose steps have worn a conduit for movement which becomes the correct or ‘best way to go’” (p. 31). Following Tilley, the formation of the first paths in Iceland were worn by Icelanders themselves. As my earlier discussions of Ingold suggest, visitors can claim their movement as a cultural act—placing their own footsteps along strands of lived experience. Here, walking paths inscribed by global forces are still cultural acts that are invoking a specific aspect of Icelandic culture.

The friction between global and local can be understood through the changing role of landscape and geography in Iceland. Hastrup (2008) describes how landmarks are personal to Icelanders and how certain geographic formations have characters and histories. Hastrup states that there are, “place-names and legends attached to almost every rock, knoll, and hillock, even the most arid and forbidding landscape is packed with latent meaning and memory” (p. 66). These memories and meanings of place experienced by many Icelanders are not understood in the same manner by tourists, which creates a disconnect between local and global perceptions of Icelandic identity and the Icelandic experience. Hastrup further states that that words and images of place are constantly developing and adjusting (2008, p. 63). As outdoor tourism grows, nature and social spaces shift in cultural significance. Hastrup argues that,

In the landscape, boundaries are drawn between the cultivated and the wild, between inside and outside, and everywhere these boundaries are more than lines on a map. They are also social markers; people cannot be on both sides at the same time. Similarities and distinctions are created by way of borders that are projected as natural; territories are social spaces rather than geographical places (Ibid.).

Tourism industries metaphorically shift the role of geography, and physically reshape aspects of the landscape. Here, the social boundaries that Hastrup describes dissolve. She further states that, “landscape is not simply a surface, or a stage upon which people play their social roles; it is a part of the social space. It infiltrates practice and makes history” (Ibid., p. 53). Spaces that were once wild or natural in Iceland have now become modern and accessible to tourists, and have dismantled past social and geographical territories.

The economic benefits of tourism partly outweigh its negative impact on the environment. Further, efforts in ecotourism provide positive ways to navigate the complex global interactions between production, economic stability, and political hierarchies. Tsing suggests ecological efforts, industrialization, and consumerism intertwine and complicate one another. She states, “making, saving, and destroying resources are utterly mixed up, where zones of conservation, production, and resource sacrifice overlap almost fully, and canonical time frames of nature’s study, use, and preservation are reversed, conflated, and confused” (2005, p. 32). Yet, these complex relationships not only show how global influences might negatively impact landscape, but indicate positive outcomes of ecotourism. In the following examples, I show how the friction between economic, political, and aesthetic interchanges of globalization have impacted both Icelandic geography and music through tourism spheres, and outline the complicated exchange between local and global forces that Tsing describes.

Lagoons, Dams and Parks

In 1976, a pool of warm, mineral rich water formed in a lava field in Grindavík, in between the Keflavík airport and the city of Reykjavík. Icelanders began to bathe in the water for its rumored, healing powers, and by 1992 the Blue Lagoon was officially formed and open to the

public (Gross, 2008, para. 2). Today, the Blue Lagoon is arguably Iceland's leading tourist destination and is consistently packed with visitors and locals alike. Although many perceive the lagoon as a giant, naturally formed hot spring, in reality the lagoon was formed from the waste water run-off of Svartsengi, the nearby geothermal power plant (Ibid., para. 4).

The Svartsengi Power Station feeds the lagoon, and includes six different energy plants. It was the world's first geothermal plant that distributed both electricity and hot-water for an entire district (Guðmundsdóttir, 2010, pp. 1-3). The lagoon's milky blue color comes from minerals such as silica and sulfur, which is speculated to help with skin conditions such as psoriasis (Gross, 2008, para. 7). The lagoon also serves as a research center for discovering new ways to adapt the mineral rich water for other skin ailments. As a spin-off of the power plant, the Blue Lagoon was an unintentional byproduct, and exists as both a man-made site and natural phenomenon. By manufacturing the natural geothermal features of Iceland's geography, heated waste water from the energy plant settled, and bacteria naturally formed.

As a means of sustainable and renewable energy production, together with tourism endeavors, the relationship between the Svartsengi Power Station and the Blue Lagoon illustrates a global friction of production and consumption, and industry and conservation. The power station was created for local needs, yet, may cater more importantly to global crowds that visit the Blue Lagoon. This example tangles socioeconomic endeavors in Iceland. Tsing relates investments and finance to the process of globalization stating, "the global is defined as the opening-up process in which remote places submit to foreign finance. Every time finance finds a new site of engagement, we think that the world is getting more global." However, the Blue Lagoon should be considered a form of domestic finance supported by foreign investment. Here,

the relationship between the Svartsengi Power Station and the Blue Lagoon creates an unexpected form of ecotourism that satisfies local needs, as well as global demands.

As a tourist destination, the Blue Lagoon outlines the friction between local and global as a socioeconomic product of the Svartsengi Power Station. Other constructions, such as the Kárahnjúkar Hydropower Plant, highlight both the economic and political scope of global and local interactions. In 2002, Landsvirkjun, Iceland's national energy company, the Icelandic government, and Alcoa Aluminum Company executed plans to build multiple dams near Reyðarfjörður in East Iceland (Time has told, 2011, para. 1). These barriers flooded miles and miles of Icelandic wilderness, so that water could run through the dams to create, store, and distribute energy through the Kárahnjúkar Hydropower Plant. However, most of the benefits of these efforts were felt by foreign investments such as Alcoa.

Since its beginning, the main consumer of energy from Kárahnjúkar has been a nearby Alcoa aluminum smelting plant, 70% of whose employees are foreign to Iceland (Ibid., para. 8). Reykjavík Energy, a domestic energy company and backer of the Kárahnjúkar project, has lost money on its investment. Additionally, the environmental impact of building dams that many feared and acted against has come to fruition in recent years. Color change of water has affected the photosynthesis of vegetation, fish have diminished in size, and land erosion threatens nearby residents (Ibid., para. 13). Although the Kárahnjúkar project serves the needs of foreign investors, rather than local companies and residents, global forces have spurred an activist response to these events led by the local Icelandic post-rock group, Sigur Rós.

In the summer of 2006, Sigur Rós performed a two-week long free concert series throughout various locations in Iceland. The tour was filmed by a cast and crew of over 40 members and was released as a documentary film entitled *Heima* (2007) (at home or homeland)

by Dean DeBois in 2007 (Mitchell, 2009, p. 191). Although this tour emphasized the group's home country and existed as a means of local interaction, it also reflects influences from around the world and highlights the friction between local and global forces. Most notably, the *Heima* tour immediately followed the 2006 Sigur Rós world tour. Tsing argues that traveling to other places reimagines the way that we engage with our own homeland, or the landscape that we know. Tsing states that,

The landscape, re-visioned through travel, is transferred to become a moving personal commitment of love. Traveling ideas often stimulate us in just this way. We see the landscape we know in relation to other place; we are moved to change how we think at both local and global scales. Social movements—including movements to preserve rural landscapes—grow from traveling forms of activism as well as the transformation of consciousness... mobilization refigures identities even as it draws from foreign connections and comparisons (Tsing, 2005, pp. 213-214).

In this example, friction does not serve as resistance across difference, but exists as a vital component of movement and mobility, kindling new perspectives of place for Sigur Rós. This type of global and local negotiation becomes more relevant when considering Sigur Rós's sonic embodiment of Iceland's topography.

Many have described the post-rock music of Sigur Rós as conjuring images of Iceland, where their electroacoustic layers of sounds create an ethos of expansive space and landscape. This musical topophilia is further explained by Tony Mitchell, who states,

Sigur Rós's music could be said to embody, express or evoke sonically both the remote isolation of their Icelandic location and to induce a feeling of hermetic

isolation in the cartographic recomposition of the music by the listener through the climactic and melodic intensity of their sound. A metaphorical process, certainly, but one which arguably grounds the music in its country of origin, just as most of the group’s music [in this film] is recorded in particular Icelandic environments and localities which imprint themselves on to the music (Mitchell, 2009, p. 188).

In considering *Heima* as both a local and global manifestation, the sonic-cartographic affect of Sigur Rós’s music assumes a political role during a performance at a camp at Snæfellsskala.

In the documentary, Sigur Rós plays an acoustic set in protest to the building of hydro-electric dams in the area (Ibid., p. 192). The “unplugged” live footage near the dam is interspersed with clips of both flooded and unflooded regions of the landscape (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4).



Figure 4.3 Screenshot from *Heima* (2007), acoustic set near dam



Figure 4.4 Screenshot from *Heima* (2007), flooded area

During this segment, Sigur Rós performs the first track of the album *()* (2002), which utilizes a nonsensical language unique to the group called *Vonlenska* (Hopelandic) (Ibid., p. 193). Through Sigur Rós's sonic cartographic embodiment of the landscape, *Vonlenska*, as a language semantically unintelligible to humans, acts as the voice of the landscape. This idea is amplified through an additional clip from *Heima*, where Sigur Rós plays the same track while facing a hillside (see Figure 4.5). In this instance, as both a sonic and physical environment, Icelandic



Figure 4.5 Screenshot from *Heima* (2007), performing to/with a hillside

geography acts as a member of the group, and sounds against environmental detriments of the Kárahnjúkar project, while simultaneously asserting a specific topophilia. Through this form of sonic-environmental activism, Sigur Rós unifies sound and place to reclaim and re-empower a local voice from the drowning power of political and economic global forces.

One way to combat the environmental impacts of industries and projects such as Kárahnjúkar Hydropower Plant, is to protect regions of land through law, specifically, establishing national parks and registering geographic sites as culturally valuable. Tsing (2005) discusses the establishment of the first national parks and the importance of environmental advocates such as John Muir in the United States, together with businesses and tourism sectors, stating,

Muir's rhetoric galvanized an emergent movement of nature appreciators, bringing together natural scientists and lay people to create a new kind of public advocacy. Together with businessmen who promoted tourism and patriots who imagined U.S. wilderness as an equivalent to European monuments, these nature appreciators invented the idea of national parks, an idea that proved charismatic enough to spread around the world (Tsing, 2005, pp. 95-96).

As Tsing suggests, the formation of national parks includes political, economic, and aesthetic interactions. A similar phenomenon has helped form the nature reserves in Iceland today.

There are currently three national parks in Iceland. Þingvellir was established in 1928 in South Iceland and, as the meeting location of the *alþingi*, Iceland's parliament from the 10th century until the 18th century, was deemed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004. However, more notable is the establishment of the two most recent nature reserves in Iceland. Similar to the rise

of tourism and the number of intoning societies across Iceland, the majority of Iceland's national parks have been established within the 21st century. Snæfellsjökull park was founded in 2001 in west Iceland, and highlights Snæfellsjökull—a stratovolcano whose summit is covered by a glacier (Bye, 2011, para. 12). In 2008, Vatnajökull National Park was established as the largest park, and includes the Vatnajökull glacier, Skaftafell park at its southern most point and Jökulsárgljúfur park at its northern most point. And as these nature sites begin to experience more and more visitors through outdoor and ecotourism industries in the 21st century, their parallel increase in activity correlates to the activities of *kvæðamannafélagið*.

National parks are protected by law. For some *kvæðamenn*, *rímur*, *kvæðalög*, and other *Þjóðlög* should be similarly protected. To them, indigenous music, just as indigenous geography, is important to cultural identity. As landmarks within national parks, the Þingvellir trenches, Vatnajökull glacier, and Deitifóss waterfall serve as sites that are unique to Iceland's geography and culture. If we consider traditional music and intoning practices as, what Murray Schafer calls, soundmarks—related to landmarks; sounds that are unique and significant to a specific soundscape—why should these sonic forms of cultural identity not also be protected (Schafer, 1994, pp. 9-10)? Similar to national parks, *kvæðamannafélagið* serve as spaces of cultural importance, where traditional Icelandic melodies are considered soundmarks of Icelandic culture. As Iceland continues to face the complex overlap and mixing of political, economic and aesthetic powers of the 21st century, national parks, together with *kvæðamannafélagið*, mediate local culture and practices, and global forces such as tourism. Further examination of traditional music and geography reveals astonishing comparisons between natural elements and music-making in the 21st century.

The Nature of Intoning

As forms of Icelandic identity, intoning societies and geography situate a sense of Icelandicness against global influences. As in the examples of Sigur Rós's *Heima* and the formation of national parks, music begins to embody aspects of landscape. Mitchell states that,

Music can be heard as a way of expressing the tones, moods, atmospheres and force fields of landscapes and cityscapes through mimetic means, where purely musical forms, dynamics, structures and movement both mirror and embody contours of the landscape (2009, p. 179)

In this sense, the actions of intoning societies mirror specific Icelandic natural elements. Seasonal changes, sound synchronicity, and historical echoes, help connect *kvæðamannafélagið* and Icelandic geography in the 21st century, and further show how ecological efforts help preserve both forms of Icelandic identity.

Originally, the *rímur* tradition was practiced in the *baðstofa* (living-room). Since family members needed lengthy entertainment during the long, cold Icelandic winters, this performance context was directly linked to seasonal changes (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. xi). Today, *kvæðamannafélagið* are most active during the winter seasons from September through April. While monthly meetings are not typical from May to August, some intoning societies meet once during the summer months as a type of group retreat (Jóhannesdóttir, personal communication, August 7, 2016). Moreover, the seasonal change within intoning societies directly relates to the tourism industry, since many members have summer jobs that involve the peak tourist season (Þór Sigurðsson, personal communication, July 28, 2017). Whereas seasonal changes are characterized by shifts in temperature and climatic activity, intoning societies also mirror aspects of Icelandic wildlife.

During an interview, Bárá described the voice of her grandfather as having a great deal of vibrato and, “almost sounding like a sheep” (personal communication, August 7, 2016).

Although this individual example of sound mimesis is interesting, the collective sounding of intoning societies and their unification under *Stemma* more notably relates to sonic activity of fauna. Here, the sonic unity of group intoning mirror sound synchronicity in animals and bugs.

Sound synchronicity in nature often manifests as a means of defense or survival among wildlife species (Titon, 2015, p. 76). Crickets, frogs, and other organisms will sonically sync their calls and sounds to distract predators, or at least make it more difficult for a predator to isolate prey. Likewise, the *rímur* tradition today is characterized by the musical synchronization of intoning society members. Originally, the performance of *rímur* melodies only featured a single performer; however; today, intoners sync into a single collective voice. When asked about the practices of the *Geffun*, Þórarinn Hjartason stated,

We do a lot of intoning together. That’s not what *rímur* was meant to be, there was not performance together, just one performer usually. But some of those tunes are better suited for collective intoning. We almost always perform together (personal communication, January 3, 2017).

Although this sound synchronization does not confuse predators for intoning societies, it still reflects a type of defense against certain global influences that many consider a threat to traditional practices. In this way, sound synchronicity within a group simultaneously increases volume, in comparison to sounding alone, heightening the strength of local communities. Yet, the process of syncing sounds also increases a sense of identity among individuals. In discussing participatory music-making, Thomas Turino states that synchronicity in movement and sound also creates a raised awareness of how individuals fit into a social group, further emphasizing the

importance of local practices within a global context. Turino states,

It is in participatory settings, however, that focal attention to synchrony becomes the most pronounced and important. Because the music and dance of participatory performances are not scripted in advance, participants have to pay special attention to the sounds and motions of others on a moment-to-moment basis...

Thus special attention to what is going on in the moment is required. This enhances the potential for flow and a special awareness of other participants as realized through their sounds and motions. This need to pay attention results in a kind of heightened, immediate social intercourse; when the performance is going well, differences among participants melt away as attention is focused on the seamlessness of sound and motion. At such moments, moving together and sounding together in a group creates a direct sense of *being* together and of deep felt similarity, and hence identity, among participants (emphasis in original, Turino, 2008, p. 43).

Other processes of unification or coalescing in number are found throughout Icelandic nature. Meltwater from glaciers and snow merge to form massive rivers that flow to the ocean. A volcano erupts because of the combined power of tectonic activity, heat, and pressure. Lichen grows in thick patches across parts of the landscape. And teams of horses and herds of sheep gather in groups during harsh or freezing weather to stay warm (see Figure 4.6). Not only has the *rímur* tradition become a group practice, but additional mobilization has taken place through *Stemma*. This national unification represents an amalgamation of all intoning societies, where local practices unite, gain momentum, and benefit through collective practice.

Lava flow, meltwater, and animal trails also leave marks across terrain. When these



Figure 4.6 Melt water from glaciers and snow join to form powerful rivers (Haarberg Photography)

forces are greater in number, the more significant their presence and impression. The recent activity of *kvæðamannafélagið* in the 21st century, suggests that local traditionalists want their presence known and want to leave a significant impression within Icelandic culture. The unification of practitioners on both a local scale, communities mobilizing in single *kvæðamannafélagið* like the *Geffun* and *Iðunn*, as well as the national unification of intoning societies under *Stemma*, are paramount to the concept of path formation. In this context, Anna Tsing's (2005) notion of global *friction* gains traction as well, where the friction between local and global difference stimulates movement on a national level. Paths are literally made with the continuous and consistent friction between an object and the ground, and are the visual representation of movement. Although physical paths of nature and sonic paths of *kvæðamannafélagið* connect through processes of unification and conjoining, sonic paths are also formed through echoes.

Echoes are created by specific environments. The existentialist writer, Henry David Thoreau, describes the allure of an echo as a conversation with nature. He states,

There comes to me a melody which the air has strained, which has conversed with every leaf and needle of the woods. It is by no means the sound of the bell as heard near at hand, and which at this distance I can plainly distinguish, but its vibrating echoes, that portion the sound which the elements take up and modulate,—a sound which is very much modified, sifted, and refined before it reaches my ear. The echo is to some extent an independent sound, and therein is the magic and charm of it. It is not merely a repetition of my voice, but it is in some measure the voice of the wood. (Thoreau, as cited in Titon, 2015, p. 76).

Therefore, an echo is not merely one's own voice, but includes the sonic commingling of multiple experiences, environments, and objects. Similarly, contemporary intoners perform melodies of past intoners, echoing the lived experiences of multiple generations. This historical aspect of echoes gains greater significance when considering ecomusicologist Mark Smith's statement that, "an echo is nothing if not historical" (2015, p. 55). For Smith, echoes are rich with latent meaning and histories of the people and place from which they resonate (Ibid., p. 57). Relating sound to changes in season, wildlife synchronicity, and echoes of an environment, fall within an ecomusicological context. Ethnomusicologist Stephen Feld considers the echo vital to our understanding of this field, and uses a play on words to describe study of sound and nature as an "echo-muse-ecology." Feld argues that, "a way of hearing the world comes from interacting with it, but is also has to do with appreciating it, imagining it as one's very own" (as cited in Mitchell, 2008, p. 188). As a parallel between sound and environment, echoes outline the intimate connection between intoning societies, Icelandic natural elements, history of place, and

how we imagine the world in which we live today. The exchange between traditional Icelandic music and geography are further affected by the growth of ecotourism in Iceland, which has complicated the way local and global forces image Iceland in the 21st century.

CHAPTER V

FUTURE PATHS

It is rare for large groups or even individuals to use a singular, consistent and cohesive voice—metaphorically or literally—and when a social group re-establishes long lost independence, reconstructs national identity, enjoys phenomenal change in economic fortune and opens itself to myriad novel influences, it might need a very good ear indeed to hear exactly what song it is that is being sung, and by whom (Faulkner, 2013, p. 47).

Sjálfsmýnd

In downtown Reykjavík, along one of the main popular strips, lies a string of bars. These local watering holes are unique, in that they each cater to a specific nationality, and are all in the same location. During my first trip to Iceland, I visited American bar, with its giant American flag on the inside back wall and a limited menu of chicken wings, cheeseburgers, and BBQ ribs. Adjacent to American Bar was the English Pub, which heavily advertised Guinness beer. After walking through the English Pub, I reached Café Paris, with a more quaint and upscale design including outdoor, café style seating.

Although there are numerous other bars in Reykjavík inspired by various countries, cities, and locations from around the world, including Iceland, my own experiences with American Bar, English Pub, and Café Paris, exhibit how nationalities and places are represented or portrayed, sometimes in stereotypical and preconceived ways. Iceland itself, is often romanticized as an isolated, mythical, otherworldly place, where elves, Vikings, powerful volcanoes, and slowing moving glaciers exist in an untamed landscape (Crowder, 2015, para. 3). While it's difficult to describe Iceland without reference to its landscape and geography, it is also characterized by thriving urban centers, internationally recognized figures, and modern, industrialized lifestyles. These realities break down some of the stereotypes associated with the small country, and help reframe Icelandicness through local and global perspectives. As globalization and tourism

industries continue to grow in Iceland, local practices continue to be increasingly impacted. The dialogue between these local and global forces often affects the perception of people and place, and reshapes their cultural identity.

There is not a specific translation for *identity* in Icelandic. The closest word, *sjálfsmynd*, literally translates to *self-image*. In this way, local forces assert a type of *sjálfsmynd*, a self-image of what it means to be Icelandic, against globally inscribed perceptions of Iceland. I consider *kvæðamannafélagið* to be a local practice that presents a specific local identity, while Icelandic geography is a more contested medium. The Icelandic landscape serves as a local form of history, memory, and identity, while concurrently acting as a global appropriation. At the same time, hegemonic global influences reshape Icelandic culture, especially through tourist industries. Yet, the movement of Icelandic cultural identity in the 21st century, which for me, encompasses both traditional music practices and geography, is much more a response to global friction than its victim. The recent actions of *kvæðamannafélagið* assert a national Icelandic identity, and further detail the changing relationship between Icelandic traditional music and Icelandic geography. The significance of intoning societies, Icelandic geography, and globalization, on a larger scale, reveal the possibilities of future engagement between local and global forces, in general.

Global and Local

The study of identity is problematic. It often involves generalizing or selecting subjective qualities to represent self, communities, or nations. In this study, identity has been described in two ways, *local* and *global*. Global is self-explanatory through its broad definition, as anything outside of Iceland. But where do we draw the line? Tourism, for example, while benefiting local

socioeconomic needs and highlighting local geography, is primarily marketed for global consumption. Cheap airline pricing and special layover deals entice travelers to visit Iceland, if only for a day or two (Negroni, 2016, para. 2). In such a global world, it becomes more and more complicated to delineate between local and global, especially when attempting to define a specific cultural identity.

If global refers to anything outside of Iceland, local must refer to anything within Iceland. This further complicates the actions of *kvæðamannafélagið* as trying to assert an Icelandic identity through traditional music practices. Which local identity do they embrace? While examining the process of identity formation, it's important to consider that even within a specific, small, community, such as an intoning society, there are multiple forms of identity. Every individual has a history, background, culture, and identity that is unique and serves as a form of self-expression. Turino explains the relationship between *self* and *identity*, stating,

Nowadays people use the word *identity* as if it means the same thing as *self*, yet it is important to differentiate the two terms conceptually because of the ways individual and collective identities function in the social world. The *self* is the composite of the total number of habits that determine the tendencies for everything we think, feel, experience, and do. In contrast, *identity* involves the *partial* and *variable* selection of habits and attributes that we use to represent ourselves to ourselves and to others, as well as those aspects that are perceived by ourselves and by others as salient (2008, pp. 101-102).

Through this process of representation to ourselves and others, the term *sjálfsmynd* (self-image) becomes more relevant.

Intoning societies have a specific *sjálfsmynd* that centers on the practice of traditional music, which they are attempting to carve more deeply and permanently within the national Icelandic social space. Here, self-image is split into two categories: individual-self and collective-self. I consider individual-self as belonging to each member of intoning societies and their own personal voice and sense of identity, which Tim Taylor describes as a “true self” (1997, p. 21). In contrast, I use collective-self to include numerous individuals, where the combined voices and identities of individual-selves unite as a single form of identity.

For these practitioners, the advocacy for a local identity and the formation of a collective-self becomes a declaration of a national identity. By mobilizing under *Stemma* and reaching out to community members in new ways, *kvæðamannafélagið* attempt to nationally reshape the Icelandic social space by acoustically redesigning parts of their community soundscape in the 21st century. Furthermore, Turino states that, “in realizing our own identities, we tend to foreground aspects that are regarded as important by the people around us” (2008, p. 102). For members of intoning societies, traditional music is important, and through their growth and belief, other Icelanders will realize its importance as well. This type of national identity exists to continue Icelandic heritage and cultural practices within a more globalized society today.

As a form national identity, these indigenous music practices empower Icelandic voices above global influences that might diminish indigenous practices. Just as Hastrup (2011) describes geographic phenomenon as having histories, characters, and meaning, Chris Foster, a collaborator, states, “voices have real personalities” (personal communication, August 7, 2017). During the January 2017 *Gefjun* meeting, each member was eager to intone a few stanzas for me, so that I could hear their voices and how they intone. Because these sonic representations of lived experience are so closely tied to Icelandic history and culture, their communal intoning

became a way to identify the collective-self as Icelandic. Although these practices of intoning, organizing under *Stemma*, and reaching out to modern day communities are characteristics of *kvæðamannafélagið* in the 21st century, intoning practices remain closely tied to Icelandic history and place. Intoning together combines the voices of many individuals, mixing personalities and experiences within a national sonic meshwork. To silence the voices of intoners would be to silence their sense of Icelandicness.

Sounding and Placing Identity

As discussed in previous chapters, the intoning practices of *kvæðamannafélagið* form sonic pathways that resonate the experiences and voices of past intoners and practitioners. These paths are not engrained into a landscape, but instead become engrained into the minds and hearts of individuals to enhance a sense of Icelandicness. Melodies echo between past and present, and conjure nostalgia and a sense of tophillia for all Icelanders. Rúna, the organizer of *Stemma*, describes the link between Icelandic nature and music, stating,

The remote areas of the northern periphery are endowed with a unique and fragile acoustic environment. Our sonic environment is linked with the creation, perception and national characteristics of music, and as such should be valued, researched, catalogued and preserved to the same extent as is our air, water and soil (Sturman, 2009, p. 9).

Johannes Áugustsson, a co-owner of *12 Tónar* record store, views the link between traditional music and geography broadly.

The record store *12 Tónar* is located on a busy street in Reykjavík that leads to Hallgrímskirkja, a massive Lutheran church at the heart of the city. Tourists and visitors frequent

the store, which also serves as the home of a local record label (Johannes Áugustsson, personal communication, May 21, 2015). Although there is a large selection of musical genres and artists, Áugustsson dedicates a portion of his shop to the advocacy and promotion of local music. In so doing, he chooses to market Icelandic music by combining musical advertisement with images of Icelandic geography (see Figure 5.1). In this context, Icelandic music exists as a local identity, while simultaneously embracing global geographic perceptions of the Icelandic experience.

The collection of local music that Áugustsson promotes comprises various genres, including *rímur* melodies, other folk tunes, and internationally recognized Icelandic musicians. When asked about his exposure to *rímur* and intoning practices, Áugustsson gave a visceral response. In explaining his experience of first hearing a performance of Steindór Andersen, heralded as the preeminent *kvæðamaður* today, Áugustsson stated,

... it was just like having a big hit in the stomach. It was like hearing something very, very old, centuries back. It was something... it was inside you... in your genes, that would suddenly burst alive when you heard his [Steindór's] voice. It triggered something incredibly strong (personal communication, May 21, 2015).

For Áugustsson, the depth of Icelandic history characterizes this traditional music and enhances his sense of Icelandic identity.

Although Áugustsson's response to hearing Andersen was a brief aural experience, imagine how his understanding of intoning might further affect his personal perceptions of traditional music if he engaged with the genre in greater capacity. Chris Foster insinuates that deep understanding and engagement with folk traditions are forms of Icelandicness. He suggests that the sentiments behind traditional practices are distinct from the speedy, multifaceted careers of gigging musicians. Moreover, Foster states that these differences represent a shift in social

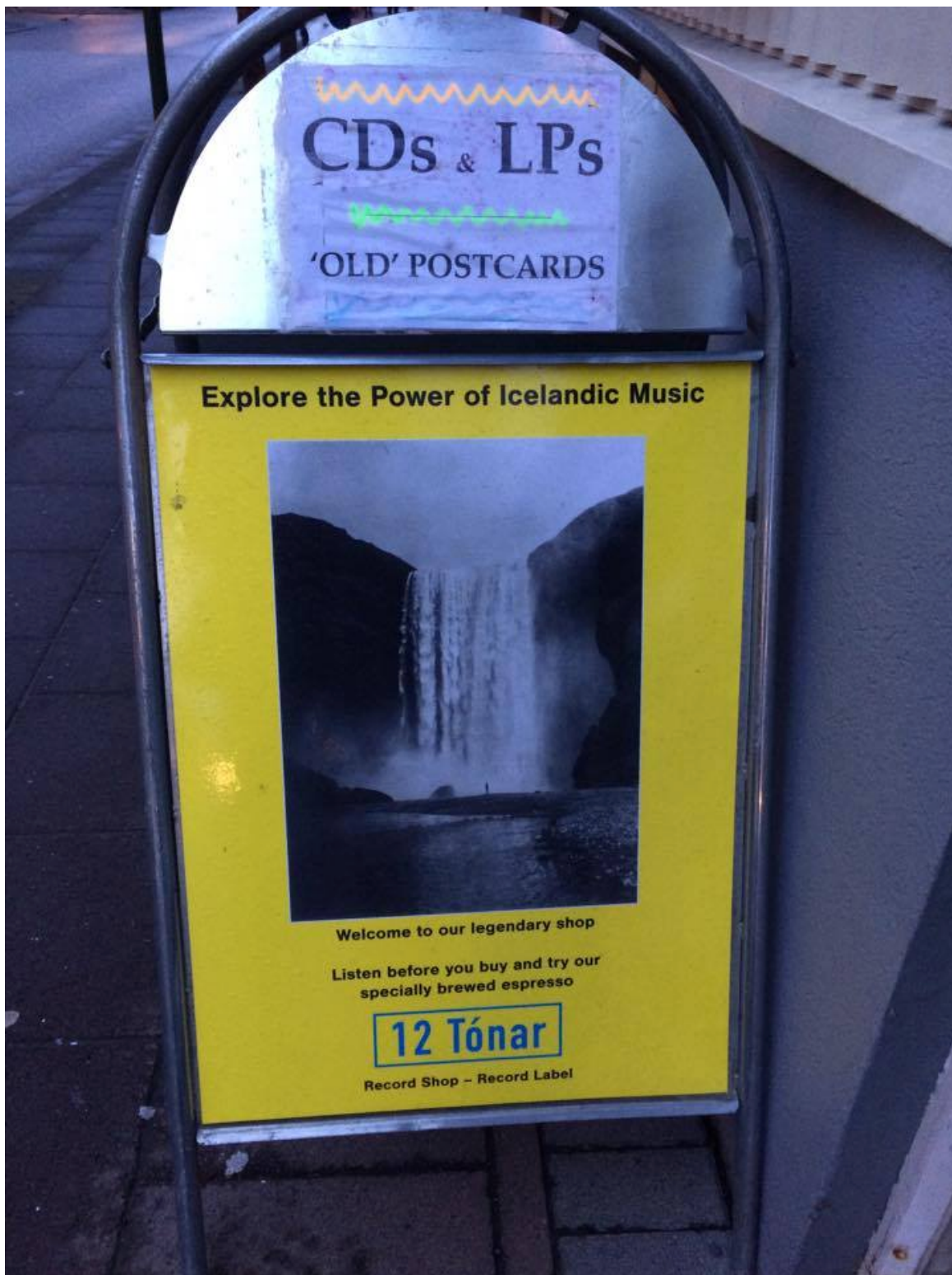


Figure 5.1 The power of Icelandic music

structure and what it means to be Icelandic today. He states,

I think the ownership thing is really crucial. And I think there are a lot of people nowadays... and it's part of this musical world in this country, being the size it is with its population. There's a lot of gigging musicians—one minute they're playing jazz, the next they're in the symphony orchestra, then they're playing a gig at [Café] Rosenberg as a singer-songwriter kind of thing. But in the [*rímur*] tradition these [Icelandic] people, this is what they did, this is who they were, and they owned it totally and they owned it for a lifetime. And that's another social shift. Today, people are just not invested (personal communication, August 3, 2017).

Chris Foster argues that the current social structure surrounding music differs from that of past intoners, and suggests that Icelandic identity, in general, has become more multifaceted and global. For him and others, music-making of all genres and styles exists as part of an Icelandic identity. Interest in other musical styles by the public at large, confronts and challenges intoning societies today and complicates their advocacy of traditional music. Musicologist Mitchell Morris describes such relationships as continuous, stating, “Identity formation through music is an active, fluid process of production, creation and construction, not a question of mere reflection of nation state, place, landscape or environment” (2009, p. 187). Therefore, just as the *rímur* tradition has changed over time, this particular *sjálfsmynd* embraced by *kvæðamannafélagið* has also had to adjust and shift alongside global and local forces.

For members of intoning societies, however, *rímur*, *kvæðalög*, and other traditional practices are distinct forms of identity and act as a link between sound and place. In part, Foster delineates between traditional music practices and other forms of Icelandic music making, to

highlight the importance of indigenous intoning practices. Kristín Sigtryggisdóttir also reflects the importance of traditional music, exclaiming, “You have to know your story. You have to know how Iceland was in the old days” (personal communication, January 13, 2017). For Sigtryggisdóttir and others, intoning melodies serves as a medium through which to know oneself, and to understand what it means to be Icelandic. Turino comments on a similar process, stating, “Knowing and hence being able to perform appropriately in the style is itself a decent index of belonging and social identity, because performance competence *is both a sign and simultaneously a product of* shared musical knowledge and experience—shared habits” (2008, p. 43, italics in original). Moreover, the sense of *knowing* that Kristín Sigtryggisdóttir describes is not only linked to the history of Iceland and intoning traditions, but also ties the experiences and lives of past intoners to the contemporary world today.

Future Paths

Although friction between local and global forces complicates the formation of a national cultural identity, it has also sparked global interest from abroad. During an interview, Anna and Kristín Sigtryggisdóttir explained, “Other countries are interested in learning about it [*rímur* and intoning]. I feel like you, and two other girls from South Africa and Australia... and Canada and then you, of course. You are young people that are interested in learning about this and that’s great” (personal communication, January 13, 2017). Bára Grímsdóttir also recounts her hopes for the future of these practices, stating,

We just have to hope that the next generation takes over and performs this stuff their own way. It would also be good if they dug in and know their roots. We are very pleased that Rósa Jóhannesdóttir’s girls always come to the [*Iðunn*] meetings

because I always say, ‘This is our future.’ I am hoping my son will find a need to keep this going too (Bára Grímsdóttir, personal communication, August 7, 2016). However, younger ensembles from today’s generation have already begun to rework these traditional music practices for the 21st century.

At the 2016 folk festival in Siglufjörður, I met a trio of musicians that study at Norges musikkhøgskole (Norwegian Academy of Music). Their group is called *Húmið*, and their repertoire centers on traditional musical practices throughout Scandinavia. Ásta Soffía Þorgeirsdóttir, an accordionist and leader of the group, explains her first detailed study of folk traditions in Iceland, which partly inspired the formation of the ensemble. She states,

It was not until I was in my second year in the Icelandic Academy of Arts that I took a course called *Íslensk þjóðlög* (Icelandic National Music) that I really began thinking about Icelandic folk music. Before that I always took the Icelandic folk music for granted, that it was just there and I did not think more deeply about it... The teachers Bára Grímsdóttir and Chris Foster opened my eyes to how lucky we are to have this beautiful folk music which is so connected to us and our heritage. It was then that I became interested in Icelandic traditional folk music, became inspired by it and realized that it has to grow with us (personal communication, November 28, 2016).

Eline Refvem, the vocalist of *Húmið*, states that the group signifies a collaboration with multiple countries and cultures, and therefore, has attempted to examine and portray folk traditions throughout Scandinavia on the same stage. Refvem states,

Since we are a Nordic trio, and not just Norwegian or Icelandic one we decided together to play different Nordic folk-melodies as well, and so the group and its

goal has changed a little over time when we started to see how many similarities and differences there are between the different countries and their music (personal communication, November 28, 2016).

Additionally, *Húmið* uses their instruments in avant-garde or improvisational ways to highlight the sentiment of traditional music. Oftentimes, this emphasizes geographic and climatic events that are referenced in the musical text, or the group utilizes techniques such as *kveða* and *tvísöngur*. When composing a piece, the group states they use,

techniques to create a sound-platform, how we want to arrange it to paint the picture through sounds. For now, we have not changed the folk-melody in itself—often the vocals are the most traditional part of the music. So mainly how we use folk music is through the melody and our feeling and expression of the text to each melody... But we use it [embellishments] to keep some of the traditional elements, as seasoning, not as our main base (*Húmið*, personal communication, November 28, 2016)

These musical elements are further emphasized through the specific use of instruments and vocals. Þorgeirsdóttir states,

I try to think outside the box when it comes to what kind of sounds I can create with my accordion. This includes tapping it, using it as a drum, using the bellow to create wind or sea-like sounds. Imitating birds etc. (personal communication, November 28, 2016).

Refvem discusses her vocal technique, stating,

For me this has been all about learning new genres and the singing-technique that comes with them. The technique varies from song to song because we experiment

with different genres and moods: improvisation, chant, cattle-calling (*lokk*), *kveða* (personal communication, November 28, 2016).

Húmið represents both a continuation of traditional folk practices in Iceland as well as collaboration of other Scandinavian genres. In this example, the educational efforts of Foster, Grímsdóttir, and intoning societies have been successful in teaching the next generation about the intoning practices, while at the same time, encouraging new practitioners to perform in their own way. By using traditional melodies as a foundation for their repertoire and using instruments and vocal techniques in new ways, *Húmið* provides one possible path for Icelandic music. Surely other paths will continue to form, while others end. As for *kvæðamannafélagið* in the 21st century, the start of future paths have begun through the voices of Iceland's past.

Great Thaw

While working on Fellshlíð farm, I often admired the landscape around me. One of my favorite activities was scanning the two mountain ranges on either side of the valley. Snow began to heavily thaw in the early summer, resulting in innumerable, lush, green pathways that scarred the mountainsides. Meltwater conjoined in streams, ran the length of the mountain, and settled in various patches or ran all the way to the rivers below. It looked as if the mountains had veins, and were moving and breathing as living creatures.

This memory and its relation to freezing and melting, reminds me of the work of Ragnheidur Ólafsdóttir, who has completed extensive research on *Kvæðamannafélagið Iðunn*. She describes the actions of the *Iðunn* as a type of “deep freeze,” where freezing and policing the *rímur* tradition of the past, “unintentionally brought changes to the tradition they meant to preserve” as heard today (Ólafsdóttir, 2011, p. 212). Yet, her “deep freeze” could also suggest a

“great thaw” in contrast to today’s *kvæðamannafélagið* activities across Iceland. Global friction has thawed and melted the boundaries between local practices and global influences within the 21st century. Intoning societies have sounded melodies within a collective sonic meshwork, and found new ways to adapt traditional music practices. Yet, a “great thaw” not only encompasses the metaphorical flow of *kvæðamannafélagið*, but embodies a global sentiment in relation to geography, climate, and nature, environmental crisis. The 21st century is marked as a period of cultural renegotiation in Iceland that is not only led by traditional music and global tourism, but by a greater global connectedness and heightened environmental awareness. Our world is in a great thaw.

Attempting to place music, geography, and identity within a more global context in the 21st century is to challenge the way we think globally. Tsing states, “Yet to ‘think globally’ is no easy task. To recognize the globe as the relevant unit for our imaginations requires work. Moreover, establishing Nature has never been simple” (Tsing, 2005, p. 89). Our global place in the world is so closely tied to our natural environment, and should require a deep ecological perspective—the equal status of all life forms; prioritizing human and natural life together, since we as humans, are of course, part of nature (Morris, 1999, p. 133). Tsing further describes this idea of Global Nature as igniting action both nationally and internationally. She states,

Global Nature can inspire moral views and actions. In nature appreciation and the parks model, localities are charged with global insight; they are microcosms of universal knowledge. Global Nature can also form a common object for the formation of international standards. In global climate models, the material primacy of the globe seen in the model can impel the urgency of international negotiation (Tsing, 2005, p. 112).

If we can approach the study of traditional music, geography, identity and globalization through the lenses of Global Nature and deep ecology, new ways of negotiating power across differences, may have beneficial outcomes. Iceland's leading musical figure, Björk states, "Solar power, wind power, the way forward is to collaborate with nature—it's the only way we are going to get to the other end of the 21st century" (as cited in Stanley, 2011, para. 12). Realizing the deep connection between music and place, as I've shown for contemporary practices of *rímur* in intoning societies, provide new and positive ways to negotiate globalization in the 21st century.

Understanding the interaction between local and global forces, realizing the importance of music and place, and embracing a deep ecology and Global Nature mindset, can shape the way we think globally, leading to new advocacy and action towards our slowly advancing great thaw today. We must synchronize our actions and realize the significance of strength in numbers. We must submit our individual-selves within a greater collective-self. And we must welcome the idea that our individual voices can echo wide-reaching messages far into the future. New groups such as *Húmið* sound the melodies of past intoners in new ways, joining the echoes of a global, sonic meshwork. We must use their example in traversing our own means of wayfaring across both sonic and physical pathways, and other paths of friction in the 21st century.

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APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Key:

Singular/plural (part of speech): definition

*All definitions are drawn from personal communication, interviews, and field experience

Kveða (verb): to intone

Kvæðalag/Kvæðalög (noun): tunes used for intoning verses made using the meters of rímur

Kvæðamaður/Kvæðamenn (noun): a person who intones; masculine word, but also means human

Kvæðamannafélag/Kvæðamannafélagið (noun): intoning societies, societies of kvæðamenn

Kvöldvaka (noun): Evening-awakening; entertainment on Icelandic farms in former times

Lag/Lög (noun): tune, refers to melody

Lagboði/Lagboðar (noun): first line of text, a system for remembering tunes

Lausavísa (noun): verse or stanza

Ríma/Rímur (noun): Specific poetic compositions that began in the 14th century; text and melody

Rímnalag/Rímnalög (noun): similar to kvæðalög, may have smaller melodic range

Staka (noun): verse or stanza; 2, 3, or 4 line stanza

Stemma/Stemmur (noun): verse of stanza, *Stemma* also refers to national association of intoners

Þjóðlag/Þjóðlög (noun): national song, includes kvæðalög, rímnalög, tvísöngur, ballads, etc.

Tvísöngur (noun): twin-song, polyphonic vocal genre in parallel 4ths and 5ths

Vísa/Vísur (noun): verse or stanza

VITA

Konstantine Allen Vlasis graduated from Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville, TN, with a Bachelor of Music in Percussion Performance. He received his Master of Music from the University of Tennessee Knoxville in 2017. At Tennessee, Konstantine won the Student Music Research Contest as part of the University of Tennessee’s Distinguished Lecture Series in 2016 and 2017, presenting papers based on his research of the Icelandic *rímur* tradition and the EP *Rímur* (2001) by post-rock group Sigur Rós.

Konstantine’s research interests involve the music of Iceland, the formation of cultural identity through globalization, and the relationship between music and nature. Additionally, he presented his work, “The Somewhere of Nowhere: East Tennessee Soundscapes in the Film, Ain’t it Nowhere,” at the Society for Ethnomusicology, Southeast and Caribbean chapter meeting in San Fernando, Trinidad and Tobago in 2016 and “Ecotourism and *Rímur* Song: Intoning Societies, Geography, and Identity in 21st century Iceland, at the Society for Ethnomusicology, Southeast and Caribbean chapter meeting in Charleston, SC in 2017.