SOCIAL ISSUES IN BALLADS AND SONGS

Edited by
MATILDA BURDEN

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SOCIAL ISSUES
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Social Issues in Ballads and Songs

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MATILDA BURDEN

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Introduction

Matilda Burden

As the 43rd International Ballad Conference of the Kommission für Volksdichtung was the very first one ever to be held in the Southern Hemisphere, an opportunity arose to play with the letter 'S' in the conference theme. The repetition of 'S' in the name and location of the venue, namely Stellenbosch, South Africa, Southern Hemisphere, led to the theme of 'Social Issues in Ballads and Songs'. Over centuries ballads have addressed multiple social issues, among other themes. For this conference the sub-themes suggested for the papers included Status, Social Customs, Singing and Society, Singing and Social Class, Servants/Service, Slavery, Subservience, Spirituality, Scorn, Sanctity, Sacrifice, and Sexuality. Seven of the twenty-eight papers presented at the Stellenbosch conference have been reworked into peer-reviewed articles for this publication.

The social issue addressed by Ingrid Åkesson in the first article is that of structural violence built into the social fabric of society. This violence can be physical or mental in nature and can emanate from institutionalized elitism, ethnocentrism, classism, racism, sexism, or homophobia, amongst others. The article focuses on narrative songs containing motifs of structural violence, and more specifically discusses the abuse and violence connected to gender power structures and ideas of family honour. The examples are taken from the Scandinavian and Anglo-Scottish corpora of ballads.

The Afrikaans ballad of 'Daantjie Okso' is set in the old Cape Colony of South Africa. It sheds light on nineteenth-century Cape colonial history and on the local social conditions of the time. Apart from revealing some of the social history of the Cape, the ballad of 'Daantjie Okso' also has much to offer through an analysis of the texture and context of the text. This becomes the focus of the article. The way that Alan Dundes, well-known American folklorist of the latter half of the twentieth century, conceptualizes the terminology of 'text', 'texture', and 'context' is applied to the ballad of 'Daantjie Okso'.

Marjetka Golež Kaučič discusses the Slovenian ballad 'The Peasant's Oxen', which she describes as a social narrative ballad. It

speaks about class conflict during the Middle Ages between the peasant without any rights and the feudal overlord who had power over the peasant's property, life, and sometimes even his death. The article aims at changing perspectives on human–animal relationships and also, indirectly, bringing an end to damaging cultural and traditional practices in the treatment of animals by humans.

In an extensive discussion and analysis of the Flemish ballad 'Tjanne'/'Barbel', Isabelle Peere investigates in depth various perspectives on texts and contexts. The ballad belongs to the widespread international ballad type indexed in Grundtvig's canon as 'The Buried Mother', the narrative relating a dead mother's return to, or contact with, her children, who have beenleft at the mercy of their remarried father and/or the neglect or cruelty of his new wife. While comparing five Flemish versions, she also glances briefly at Danish and French equivalents, and finds that the ballads reveal significant information on plots, singer profiles, and performance and socio-historical data. The examples are categorized into two generalized but divergent plot lines, one religious and one parodic. One of her conclusions is that 'by mediating marriage, motherhood, and mortality, the ballad articulates a positive response, not only to life but to the major challenges of their [women's] lives'.

The use of the letter 'S' in sub-themes and titles is carried further by Gerald Porter in his article 'Sin, Slaughter, and Sexuality: Clamour against Women Child-Murderers by Irish Singers of "The Cruel Mother"'. He points out that women with illegitimate children have almost always had to face social disapproval, which was particularly true when the mothers murdered their newborn babies. This social stigma is clearly illustrated by traditional ballads in England, Scotland, and the United States. However, he focuses his study on the fewer versions of 'The Cruel Mother' recorded in Ireland. He suggests that the way in which the possible punishments of the mother appear in a developing sequence in the same singer's performance provides a means of suggesting both the symbolic and the social significance of the punishments.

Another social phenomenon falling into the 'S' category is that of separation. Evelyn Birge Vitz discusses separation and loss in three traditional French *chansons* with the aid of an attachment theory approach. This very interesting theory, which in her article strongly relies on the work of British psychologist John Bowlby, analyses different categories of human attachments, as well as different styles of attachments, namely secure and insecure attachments. These attachment styles determine individuals' responses to interpersonal

loss. In the article the focus is on separation and loss that relate to marriage. The three French ballads used as examples represent three different styles of response to loss.

Wonderfully refreshing and different is the contribution from Salim Washington on contemporary rap songs, '"Nobody loves me but my mother, and she could be jivin' too': The Blues-Like Sentiment of Hip Hop Ballads'. He points out that various sources defining 'ballad' make provision not only for the conventional perception of what a ballad should contain and how it should be constructed, but also for a different ballad tradition that started in the mid-twentieth century in Britain and North America; that tradition eventually led to the interpretation of a ballad as 'a slow, personalized love song', one in which the narrative element is subordinate to a pensive, lyrical mood. Washington emphasizes that the gangsta rap ballad combines elements from both of these ballad traditions. He then goes on to compare gangsta rap, blues, and soul music, and to explain the differences between these genres.

Geographically covering vast areas of Europe, from France and Slovenia to Belgium and Sweden, the United States of America, and the southernmost tip of Africa, thematically covering structural violence, class conflict, cruel mothers, sin and sexuality, poverty, separation, and gangsta rap, this collection of articles makes for fascinating reading and contributes significantly to ballad scholarship.

Beaten or Burned at the Stake: Structural, Gendered, and Honour-Related Violence in Ballads

Ingrid Åkesson

> Her father struck her wondrous sore,
> As also did her mother;
> Her sisters also did her scorn,
> But woe be to her brother.
>
> Her brother struck her wondrous sore,
> With cruel strokes and many,
> He broke her back in the hall door,
> For liking Andrew Lammie.

Violence of various kinds is a common theme in the European corpora of ballads and other narrative songs: some examples are historical or fictive battles, fighting between families, revenge, ritual killings, rape, murder, and private rage and jealousy. Some of these expressions of violence may be characterized as being based upon individual, personal conflicts, or connected to accidents and disasters. Other emanations of violence and abuse can more properly be defined as *structural violence*, built into the social structures of a society; in a trend-setting article Johan Galtung associated the phenomenon with inequality, above all in the distribution of power, and the intention to preserve the status quo.[1] Violent acts, whether physical or mental in character, and emanating from phenomena such as institutionalized elitism, ethnocentrism, classism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and so forth, are today studied in relation to social structures either in the present or in the past. A number of historians, for example, have used literary sources in their studies of violence in past centuries.[2]

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[1] Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research*, 6.3 (1969), 167–91.

[2] Cf. Jonas Liliequist, '"Pigans nej, det är hennes ja. Då hon säger mest nej, då vill hon helst ha": Om gränsen mellan frieri, förförelse och sexuellt tvång i 1600- och 1700-

In this article I shall focus on narrative songs containing motifs of structural violence – that is, acts of violence emanating from certain social and mental structures, not only from a violent individual. More precisely, the article discusses abuse and violence connected to gender power structures and ideas of family honour.

In a number of ballads women, and sometimes men, are the subjects of conspicuous violence exercised by their own families as a punishment for in some way having broken the social rules around relationships between masculine and feminine, and also rules of obedience. For example, they may have fallen in love with the wrong person, or entered upon a premarital relationship. Sometimes the punishment is based only on accusation and rumour. In addition, rules around ethnicity, nationality, and class may play a part. I am going to discuss some cases of gendered and family-related abuse and violence in a number of ballads in the Scandinavian and English-Scottish corpora. My examples are the Scandinavian 'The Ordeal by Fire' (TSB B 29), 'Sir Peder and his Sister' (TSB B 20; SMB 46; DgF 109), and 'King Valdemar and his Sister' (TSB D 346; SMB 160), and the Anglo-Scottish 'Lady Maisry' (Child 65) and 'Andrew Lammie' (Child 233), the last partly quoted above as an epigraph.[3]

These five ballads represent but a small selection of ballad narratives that might be interpreted as including this kind of violence. Besides commenting on these examples of gendered violence, I will search for some ideological roots of these patterns in social history and the history of ideas. The framework for the discussion is constituted by a problematization of gender blindness and bias in the Scandinavian ballad-type catalogue, as well as by a connection to the conspicuous problem of honour-related violence in contemporary

talens Sverige', *Nätverket*, 15 (2008), 106–16 http://publications.uu.se/journals/1651-0593/1512.pdf.

[3] TSB = Bengt R. Jonsson, Svale Solheim, and Eva Danielson (eds), *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv, 1978) [B = Legendary Ballads, D = Ballads of Chivalry, E = Heroic Ballads]; SMB = Bengt R. Jonsson, Sven-Bertil Jansson, and Margareta Jersild (eds), *Sveriges Medeltida Ballader*, 5 vols (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv/Almqvist & Wiksell, 1983–2001); DgF = Svend Grundtvig, et al. (eds), *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, 12 vols (København: Samfundet til den danske Literaturs Fremme, Universitets-Jubilæets danske Samfund, et al., 1853–1976); Child = Francis James Child (ed.), *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols (Bosoton: Houghton, Mifflin, 1882–98). The English titles given here for Scandinavian ballads were constructed for the TSB catalogue and for an international readership/audience; each ballad type has different titles in the different Scandinavian languages and Danish and Swedish ballads are referenced in the respective national ballad editions.

Swedish society. This small study is part of a work in progress focusing on gender power structures in older narrative songs in a wider perspective.[4] The main questions considered in this article are: What kind of society, and what kind of views on gender and power, are reflected or represented in these ballads of violence within the family? Where do we find the origins of the gender patterns of the ballads, in which periods and which systems of thought? Why are these ballads and these issues relevant to present-day society? How are relations between gender, power, and violence presented in the Scandinavian ballad-type catalogue?

My methodology involves a close re-reading of and re-listening to the ballads from a perspective based on thoughts about gender power relationships in the past and the present. The conceptual point of departure for my study is that in the 'ballad universe' we find several merging layers of ideas about gender and power, ranging from the Old Testament and ancient philosophers in the Mediterranean area to the law and praxis of later periods.[5] These ideas and conceptions belong to deeply rooted, persistent, and more or less invisible structures that had prevailed for centuries despite great changes in society. Scholarly networks and research projects in Sweden in recent decades have produced a number of publications in the fields of the history of ideas, social history, and ethnology that focus on gender-related power structures, especially in relation to violence and crime seen from the victim's perspective.[6] These studies have provided inspiration and useful historical facts.

My re-reading of the ballads is in dialogue with the system of classification and the headings used for groups of ballad narratives in the influential catalogue *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad*. The catalogue was conceptualized in the 1950s and, besides being an eminent and very useful piece of scholarly work, it also represents an older folkloric tradition from which theories and problematizations of

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[4] Ingrid Åkesson, 'Mord och hor i medeltidsballaderna – en fråga om könsmakt och familjevåld', *Noterat*, 21 (2014), 45–66 http://statensmusikverk.se/svensktvisarkiv/files/2014/01/Noterat21_webversion.pdf. See also Ingrid Åkesson, 'Whose Voice, Whose Gaze?' https://musikverket.se/artikel/negotiation-in-song/?lang=en.

[5] Åkesson, 'Mord och hor i medeltidsballaderna'.

[6] Inger Lövkrona (ed.), *Mord, misshandel och sexuella övergrepp: Historiska och kulturella perspektiv på kön och våld* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2001); Eva Bergenlöv, Marie Lindstedt Cronberg, and Eva Österberg, *Offer för brott: Våldtäkt, incest och barnamord i Sveriges historia från reformationen till nutid* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2002); Eva Österberg and Marie Lindstedt Cronberg (eds), *Våldets mening: Makt, minne, myt* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2004); Gabriella Nilsson and Inger Lövkrona, *Våldets kön. Kulturella föreställningar, funktioner och konsekvenser* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2015).

gender and power are absent. A detailed study of ballad variants may shed new light on categories such as 'courtship', 'seduction', 'miracle', or 'murder'; it may also reveal patterns of dominance and subordination. Yet another field of reference is current research on honour-related violence against young women, and sometimes young men, in contemporary Swedish society, to which I will return later.[7]

Songs that have been performed for generations are, among other things, presumed to be carriers of ethical norms and codes of behaviour. Contributions to the conformity of social norms and to the continuity of culture are, for example, mentioned among Merriam's much-discussed functions of music.[8] These norms might be valid in the singer's own lifetime, or they might represent lingering patterns of values and concepts from earlier periods. I am thinking particularly of norms concerning relationships between classes, the approach towards clerical or secular power, attitudes towards family and property, crime and violence, or the relationship between the feminine and the masculine, and between gender and power.

Norms may also be implicitly negotiated and processed through singing. Tullia Magrini draws attention to the importance of ballads as a means for singers, especially women, to reflect upon their own situation as well as their relation to the surrounding society.[9] The individual singer has the possibility of presenting her/his own approach to these norms in a performance by stressing certain motifs or omitting others, by choosing a good, bad, or open ending to the story, and so on.[10]

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[7] Paulina de los Reyes, *Patriarkala enklaver eller ingenmansland? Våld, hot och kontroll mot unga kvinnor i Sverige* (Norrköping: Integrationsverkets skriftserie IV, 2003); Shahrzad Mojab and Amir Hassanpour, 'The Politics and Culture of "Honour Killing": The Murder of Fadime Sahindal', *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal*, Special Issue 1 (2003), pp. 56–70; Minoo Alinia, 'Den jämställda rasismen och de barbariska invandrarna: "Hedersvåld", kultur och skillnadens politik', in *Våldets topografier: Betraktelser över makt och motstånd*, ed. Carina Listerborn, Irene Molina, and Diana Mulinari (Stockholm: Atlas, 2011), pp. 287–327.

[8] Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 219.

[9] Tullia Magrini, 'Introduction: Studying Gender in Mediterranean Musical Cultures', in *Music and Gender: Perspectives from the Mediterranean*, ed. Tullia Magrini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 1–32 (pp. 3 ff.).

[10] Mary-Ann Constantine, and Gerald Porter, *Fragments and Meaning in Traditional Song: From the Blues to the Baltic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 54; Åkesson, Ingrid, 'Re-creation, Re-shaping, and Renewal among Contemporary Swedish Folk Singers: Attitudes toward "Tradition" in Vocal Folk Music Revitalization', *STM online*, 9 (2006) http://musikforskning.se/stmonline/vol_9/akesson/index.php?menu=3.

Whether or not the origin of the ballads in different parts of Europe goes as far back as medieval times, in many of them the ethos and general structure of the society of the 'ballad universe' reflect pre- or early modern societies. We may find fragments of gender structures (for example, concerning courtship, marriage, pregnancy, and seduction versus sexual violence) originating in early modern times as well as from later periods, or from very far back in time. These different layers of norms subsequently merged over a long period, when the songs were sung and were part of the singers' and listeners' mental baggage, or horizons of understanding. They have probably also prompted reaction and reflection among the singers, especially as their contemporary societies moved away from the oldest patriarchal structures.[11] It is essential to point out that the ballad narratives are, of course, not isolated; old layers of ideological content or ethos are also to be found in literary traditions, in drama, or in hymns and other religious literature, as well as in stories and other mainly oral traditions, in popular or vernacular culture as well as in high culture.

Over a number of years several ballad scholars have commented on gender issues in songs. The perspectives differ, from mere descriptions, without analysis, of control- and violence-related motifs such as blood-stained bridal sheets,[12] or parents commanding a daughter to commit suicide as a consequence of pregnancy,[13] to more problematizing perspectives. Ildiko Kríza opens up a new perspective by discussing the value of virginity in a society.[14] Lynn Wollstadt asks questions about gender and an individual's power to make personal decisions.[15] Pauline Greenhill has shed light on gender issues

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[11] Cf. Ann-Mari Häggman, *Magdalena på Källebro: En studie i finlandssvensk vistradition med utgångspunkt i visan om Maria Magdalena* (Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1992); Lövkrona, *Mord, misshandel och sexuella övergrepp*.

[12] Beatriz Mariscal Hay, 'A Question of Honor: The Gitanos of Andalucia and the Romancero', in *Ballads and Diversity: Perspectives on Gender, Ethos, Power and Play*, ed. Isabelle Peere and Stefaan Top (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlischer Verlag Trier, 2004), pp. 176–81.

[13] Carlos Nogueira, 'Portuguese Narrative Songs – Love and Death', in *Ballads and Diversity: Perspectives on Gender, Ethos, Power and Play*, ed. Isabelle Peere and Stefaan Top (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlischer Verlag Trier, 2004), pp. 190–98.

[14] Ildikó Kríza, 'Sin and Punishment in Folk Ballads', in *Folk Ballads, Ethics, Moral Issues*, ed. Gábor Barna and Ildikó Kríza (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2001), pp. 51–59.

[15] Lynn Wollstadt, '"A Good Man Is Hard to Find": Positive Masculinity in Ballads Sung by Scottish Women', in *The Flowering Thorn: International Ballad Studies*, ed. Thomas A. McKean (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2003), pp. 67–75.

problematized in cross-dressing ballads in a couple of essays.[16] Boel Lindberg considers a jocular ballad where a woman is tricked into marrying a rogue, dressed up as a gentleman, from the perspective of patriarchal power.[17] Éva Guillorel has studied rape and the concept of honour in Breton narrative songs.[18]

Alleged disobedience leading to violence within the family

Let us first consider some ballad narratives that end with the female protagonist being burned at the stake by her own relatives. In the Scandinavian ballad 'The Ordeal by Fire' (Swedish title 'Eldprovet', Danish title 'Ildprøven'), Inga, a young woman, is the victim of an unfounded accusation of an illicit sexual relation that is said to have resulted in pregnancy and child murder. The accusation is made by jealous persons (or in some versions by her own fiancé). She assures her father, Sir Peder, that these accusations are all lies constructed by ill-wishers, but he does not listen to her and the fire is built and lit. However, Inga escapes unscathed by a miraculous intervention and enters a convent instead.

Another legendary ballad, including an incest motif, is 'Sir Peder and his Sister'; there is also a Danish version called 'The Maid at the Stake'. When Sir Peder fails to seduce his own sister, he accuses her before their father of adultery and murder. The words of the brother have more impact than those of the sister, and she is burned by her own family. In this ballad, as well as in 'The Ordeal by Fire', the falsely accused woman is saved by a miracle as the fire refuses to burn her. One can imagine that the miraculous *peripeteia* in these two ballads might have counteracted the otherwise harsh outcome of the story for the singers and listeners alike. Both are classified in *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballads* as legendary ballads, 'The Ordeal by Fire' under the heading 'Miracles' and 'Sir Peder and his Sister' under the

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[16] Pauline Greenhill, '"Neither a Man nor a Maid": Sexuality and Gendered Meanings in Cross-Dressing Ballads', *Journal of American Folklore*, 108 (1995), 156–77; Pauline Greenhill, '"The Handsome Cabin Boy": Cross-Dressing Ballads, Sexualities, and Gendered Meanings', in: *Undisciplined Women: Tradition and Culture in Canada*, ed. Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), pp. 113–30.

[17] Boel Lindberg, 'Patriarkatets höga visa: Balladen om Tiggargubbens brud', in *Gamla visor, ballader och rap: Från muntlig förmedling till publicering på nätet*, ed. Boel Lindberg (Hedemora: Gidlund, 2013), pp. 94–143.

[18] Éva Guillorel, 'Chanson, honneur féminin et rapt de séduction: La place du discours juridique dans les complaintes criminelles bretonnes (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)', in *Discours juridique et amours littéraires*, ed. Jean-Pierre Dupouy and Gabriele Vickermann-Ribémont (Paris: Klincksieck, 2013), pp. 215–37.

heading 'Anonymous martyrs'. The classification is thus built solely around the Christian/legendary elements, with the result that the gender power relations between the characters, as well as the violence that is exercised, become invisible.

Burning at the stake also occurs, without miraculous intervention, in the Scottish ballad 'Lady Maisry', where the conflict is similar to that in 'The Ordeal by Fire'. In most versions, all we are told is that Lady Maisry has fallen in love with an Englishman, someone of the wrong nationality; it is also sometimes implied that she is pregnant. One of the versions, 'Bonnie Susie Cleland', was published by William Motherwell in 1827:

There lived a lady in Scotland,
Hey my love and ho my joy;
There lived a lady in Scotland,
Who dearly loved me;
There lived a lady in Scotland,
An' she's fa'n in love wi' an Englishman,
And Bonnie Susie Cleland is to be burnt in Dundee.

The father unto the daughter came,
Who dearly loved me
Saying, Will you forsake that Englishman?
And Bonnie Susie Cleland is to be burnt in Dundee.

If you will not that Englishman forsake,
Who dearly loved me
O I will burn you at a stake,
And Bonnie Susie Cleland is to be burnt in Dundee.

I will not that Englishman forsake,
Who dearly loved me
Though you should burn me at a stake,
And Bonnie Susie Cleland is to be burnt in Dundee.
[. . .]
Her father he ca'd up the stake,
Hey my love and ho my joy,
Her father he ca'd up the stake,
Who dearly loved me
Her father he ca'd up the stake,
Her brother he the fire did make,
And Bonnie Susie Cleland was burnt in Dundee.[19]

[19] William Motherwell, *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern* (Glasgow: John Wylie, 1827), pp. 221–24 (see also Child 65 I). There is a beautiful performance by Scottish singer Maureen Jelks at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2bVqhuDLSk.

When Susie Cleland/Lady Maisry does not agree to leave her beloved, she is burned at the stake. I omit a great part of the narrative here, including her message to her fiancé asking for help in an ambiguous way; in any case, it is clear that the father and the brother together burn the daughter/sister and that her only proven crime is her disobedience.

These ballads are examples of named individuals who are victims of violence executed by other individuals within their family. However, the reasons for the violence are not specific, uniquely individual conflicts, but a patriarchal response to the female characters' alleged crimes against the rules of family and society. Sir Peder punishes Inga, acting on an unproven accusation, not only in his role as father but as a representative of the forces that maintain the structure of society. It is so important to him to maintain that set of rules that he refuses to listen to his daughter rather than her fiancé or those other, probably male and high-born, persons who have accused her in court. The incestuous brother in 'Sir Peder and his Sister' tries to conceal his own attempted crime by accusing and murdering his sister; in some versions it is he who lifts her bodily into the fire.

Susie Cleland/Lady Maisry is punished for her obstinacy, not primarily as an individual case but as an offender against the rules who has brought shame on her family. The violence in these ballads is not only an expression of a father's anger, but also an impersonal act of control and maintenance of the family's honour. The (falsely) accusing brother likewise appears in many ballads and participates in the family's control over its female members. This kind of violence is very often connected to concepts of honour and shame that are projected on to women's bodies, and it is a theme that is found in many ballads.

Historical social structures and layers of ideas

The ideas and conceptions expressed in traditional ballads provide a spectrum of perspectives. We have to assume a conglomeration or accumulation of ideas and world views derived from myths, the Old Testament, ancient philosophy, medieval thought, and so on, in oral as well as in literate cultures. Also, over the centuries of transmission and variation, individual singers have had the opportunity to emphasize motifs or narrative aspects of their own choice, by additions, omissions, changes, and shifts of emphasis. Behind each documented variant of a ballad we might find several layers of ideas and perspectives.

For example, in the 'ballad universe' we may discern merging layers of (sometimes contradictory) ideas of gender and power. Many ballad narratives express a gender power structure, which may be representative of a society with general medieval or early modern characteristics. Division of gender, the subordination of women, and the concept of the male as the general norm are structures fundamental to pre-Christian as well as Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim societies.[20] Certain ideas go very far back in time, at least to the early monotheistic cultures in the Near East, which are depicted in the books of the Old Testament. In accordance with those laws, for example, a husband was allowed to put his wife to a test if he suspected her of infidelity, even without any proof. Unless she could provide four witnesses, a woman had to bear the blame for having been raped, even if she was not in a position to call for help (for example, if she was working in the fields alone).

In Greek mythology, the goddess Athena had been born without a mother from the forehead of Zeus, and ancient philosophers like Aristotle claimed that a woman likewise played no constructive part in the procreation of children but served only as a vessel, a container. The majority of the Church Fathers, as well as the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas, adopted antiquity's view of females as biologically and mentally imperfect males. Thus the pattern of man-as-norm and woman-as-deviation was reinforced for centuries in Christian parts of the world. The (male) thinkers of the Church also adhered to the belief that women were more closely bound up with nature and sexuality than men, a notion that was founded partly on the assertion in the Book of Genesis that woman was mainly responsible for the Fall of Man (*sic*) and should be punished by forever bringing forth her children in pain.

Several of the ideas of hierarchy, power, and gender expressed and codified in the Old Testament became rules and praxis in all three of the monotheistic religions, which all originated in the Near East. There are historical similarities between the different cultures of the old civilizations around the Mediterranean, whether Christian,

[20] Cf. Maud Eduards (ed.), *Kön, makt, medborgarskap: Kvinnan i politiskt tänkande från Platon till Engels* (Stockholm: Liber, 1983); Yvonne Hirdman, 'Genussystemet – Reflexioner kring kvinnors socialaunderordning', *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*, 3 (1988), 49–63; Ann-Sofie Ohlander and Ulla-Britt Strömberg, *Tusen svenska kvinnoår: Svensk kvinnohistoria från vikingatid till nutid*, 2nd edn (Stockholm: Prisma, 2002).

Muslim, Jewish, or other, concerning gender power structures, family control of individuals, and concepts of honour and shame.[21]

Ideas of gender and power changed over the course of time in Europe. German law, which was influential in northern Europe, meant that inheritance mainly followed paternal lines and that women had to have a male guardian (father, husband, or brother), unless they were widows, a structure that is reflected in many ballad narratives. However, in Scandinavian law both maternal and paternal lines of inheritance were valid; daughters as well as sons could inherit, but the greater part of the property went to sons.[22] The historian Birgit Sawyer describes how vernacular law and custom, which was based on the sharing of land and other property, usually carried more weight than the Christian idea of mutual agreement between man and woman in marriage, which was introduced later.[23] Jonas Liliequist highlights the point that the husband had a legal right to discipline his wife, including the use of physical violence, from the medieval period onwards, well into modern times.[24]

Scholars in disciplines such as the history of ideas and gender studies have analysed how elements from these (and other) traditions of thought merged in pre- and early modern Europe and have survived in different forms until the present time. The historian Eva Österberg comments on how medievalists can sometimes 'provide new insights into the modern, not by using the past as a simple opposite to the modern, but by showing how the present is a complicated mixture of old and new'.[25] Current cross-disciplinary research on violence in historical societies and in the present has focused on the cultural and structural meaning of acts of violence against individuals, as well as, among other things, on how these acts can become a factor in the construction of masculinity.

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[21] For example, Eva Österberg, 'Civilisationen, våldet och kvinnorna', in *Kvinnor och våld: En mångtydig kulturhistoria*, ed. Eva Österberg and Marie Lindstedt Cronberg (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2005), pp. 285–303.

[22] Birgit Sawyer, *Kvinnor och familj i det forn-och medeltida Skandinavien* (Skara: Viktoria bokförlag, 1992), p. 35.

[23] Sawyer, *Kvinnor och familj i det forn-och medeltida Skandinavien*, pp. 44 ff.

[24] Jonas Liliequist, 'Mannens våld och välde inom äktenskapet: En studie av kulturella stereotyper från reformationstiden till 1800-talets början', in *Mord, misshandel och sexuella övergrepp: Historiska och kulturella perspektiv på kön och våld*, ed. Inger Lövkrona (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2001), pp. 88–123.

[25] Eva Österberg, 'Våldets känslorum: Berättelser om makt och moral i det förmoderna samhället', in *Våldets mening: Makt, minne, myt*, ed. Eva Österberg and Marie Lindstedt Cronberg (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2004), pp. 19–39 (p. 21) (my translation).

Structural violence in connection with family patterns, marriage, and women's sexuality is a common theme in ballads from many parts of the world. A culture defined by honour and shame exists not only in the cultures around the Mediterranean but also in northern and western Europe. Helga Kress, literary scholar, maintains that the Icelandic sagas represent a literate, male-dominated, and often misogynistic culture, but were adopted from an oral tradition of storytelling in great part carried on by women.[26] Eva Österberg characterizes the Nordic or Germanic cultures behind the Icelandic sagas as:

> an archetype for that kind of society where violence between individuals and families has constituted a legitimate method for the solving of conflicts. Male-dominated societies that were strongly influenced by a culture of honour, renown, and shame. By sensitive interpretations of the Icelandic texts, we might [. . .] gain new insights into this type of culture in general – and about violence and the representations of violence as general phenomena.[27]

Several authors also emphasize the misogynistic attitude of the Danish historian Saxo; it is essential to acknowledge this, as his *Gesta Danorum*, dating from around 1200, played an important part in creating the image of the Nordic Middle Ages in later centuries.

Whether or not the Icelandic sagas reflect a specific historical period, they indicate circumstances and phenomena that would have been present in people's minds when the sagas were created and recited. The idea that fathers and brothers had the deciding power over the marriages of their daughters and sisters, and that they could respond drastically if a woman tried to follow her own wishes, was prevalent in the worldview of storytellers, listeners, and collectors of these tales. The same goes for the ballads. We cannot look for direct connections between ballad texts, on the one hand, and medieval laws and society, on the other. The 'ballad universe' is not equivalent to any real historical society. However, authoritarian patterns of power and gender, similar to those visible in the Icelandic sagas, also characterize many expressions of the universe of the northern European ballads and were probably present in the minds of singers, song-makers, and listeners. Some scholars have described the social and mental frames

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[26] Helga Kress, 'Vad en kvinna kväder: Kultur och kön på Island i fornnordisk medeltid', in *Nordisk kvinnolitteraturhistoria*, vol. 1, ed. Elisabeth Møller Jensen and Anne-Marie Mai (Höganäs: Wiken, 1993), pp. 22–81.

[27] Österberg, 'Våldets känslorum', pp. 21–22 (my translation).

of the narratives, where family structures dominate the lives and emotions of the individuals, and commented that authority is outwitted mainly in jocular songs.[28]

Violence exercised by several family members

One common issue in ballads is the control of women's sexuality by their male relatives. The ballad 'King Valdemar and his Sister' is found in the Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Faroese, and Icelandic repertoires. In *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* it is listed under the neutral heading 'Revenge and punishment', where most of the other ballad narratives focus on revenge for earlier violence, which is not a motif in this ballad. 'King Valdemar and his Sister' is one example of narratives where women, as actors in a patriarchal system, bring about violence towards other women. A queen, who is the stepmother or sister-in-law of the king's sister Kirsten, initiates her punishment because she has given birth to a child without being married. The queen makes her husband force Kirsten to dance for hours, challenging her to prove that she is not weak after the recent childbirth, a motif that is also found in 'Fair Janet' (Child 64).

In some ballad versions Kirsten succeeds in doing this, but otherwise the queen either makes Kirsten dance to her death or else makes her loosen her dress whereupon milk starts flowing from her breasts (a motif that occurs frequently in ballads and stories as a proof of childbirth). In those cases in which Kirsten has survived up to this point, the king kills her with a knife or flogs her to death. However, in some other versions Kirsten is pardoned by the king, or else the high-born father of her child suddenly turns up; the story ends with the marriage, and the queen is punished for having accused an innocent woman. In this ballad, therefore, a woman is killed if she cannot produce a husband, but pardoned if she can.

One ballad in which a whole family takes part in ill-treatment and abuse is the Scottish ballad 'Andrew Lammie'. Annie is a rich man's daughter and falls in love with Andrew Lammie, a trumpeter to the lord of Fyvie. As a musician, he belongs to the servant class, so she is not allowed to marry him. While Andrew is away for a while, Annie dies. In a number of versions the causes of her death are vague, ranging from lovesickness to ill-treatment. However, in the version

[28] For example, Jens Anker Jørgensen, *Jorden og slægten: En indføring i folkevisens univers* (Viborg: Fabula/Fremad, 1976); Sven-Bertil Jansson, *Den levande balladen: Medeltida ballad i svensk tradition* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1999).

from Peter Buchan's *Gleanings of Scarce Old Ballads* quoted in the epigraph to this paper, she is beaten to death by her whole family:

Her father struck her wondrous sore,
As also did her mother;
Her sisters also did her scorn,
But woe be to her brother.

Her brother struck her wondrous sore,
With cruel strokes and many,
He broke her back in the hall door,
For liking Andrew Lammie.[29]

Violence is exercised not only by fathers or male relatives; in this kind of authoritarian society and family pattern different members of the family cooperate in maintaining gender power structures. As in some of the ballads discussed above, here it is a brother who actually kills the sister. Brothers often have a crucial role in fictional as well as factual family violence as guardians of their sisters' sexuality. On the surface level, the story of Annie and Andrew seems to tell of an individual conflict, but in the background we have a glimpse of a society in which a young woman can be beaten to death by her own relatives for reasons of shame and honour, and without consequences for the killers.

One reason for discussing this topic is the lamentable relevance of these ballad narratives today in Swedish society (as well as in other European countries). Many cases of so-called honour-related violence have attracted attention in the media and general discourse over recent decades; in most cases the violence has been directed towards young women from immigrant families, usually exercised by their brothers, fathers, or other male relatives, sometimes with help from female family members.[30] Sisters and daughters, and the boyfriends/fiancés of their own choice, have been attacked and murdered by male relatives in an organized way, and for the same reasons as those portrayed in the ballads, namely family control of women's lives and sexuality. The killing of fiancés or lovers, the male breakers of rules, is a motif that also occurs in Child ballads such as 'Clerk Saunders' (Child 69), 'Lady Diamond' (Child 269), and their Scandinavian

[29] Peter Buchan, *Gleanings of Scarce Old Ballads* (Aberdeen: D. Wyllie & Son, 1891 [1825]), pp. 98–105 (see also Child 233 C).

[30] Cf. de los Reyes, *Patriarkala enklaver eller ingenmansland?*; Mojab and Hassanpour, 'The Politics and Culture of "Honour Killing"'; Alinia, 'Den jämställda rasismen och de barbariska invandrarna'.

equivalents. Old ballads are thus relevant today; a great number of ballad narratives besides the few I have studied here contain examples of the kind of subordination and abuse that are found in European history as well as in present-day societies.

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Song scholars are aware of the fact that ballad types and categories are conceptualized by scholars, editors, and archivists, not by singers. *The Types of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballad* is one example of the sorting and classification that is necessary for ballad research. As in the case of other older products of categorization, however, current discussion may benefit from a rethinking from new perspectives. The relationship between gender and power is one such perspective. I have mentioned above some examples of gender power issues made invisible in the catalogue's system of concepts through placing narratives characterized by what we today would regard as honour-related violence under headings connected only to the elements of miracle. Furthermore, sub-headings such as 'Conflict or fight between suitor and maiden's family' or 'Bride rescued from unwanted marriage' are placed under the neutral heading 'Erotic complications lead to conflict' (TSB E 64–112). None of these headings reflect patterns of domination and subordination, although power structures are evident in the narratives. Under the heading 'Violent or unwanted courtship' (TSB D 145–193) are gathered a number of ballad narratives where the boundary between seduction (which might be placed under the heading 'courtship') and rape (which in contemporary scholarship is regarded as a matter of abuse and violence) is unclear.

In this paper I have discussed examples of ballad narratives in the Scandinavian and Anglo-Scottish corpora, focusing on structural and gendered violence in the context of the family and of certain notions projected on to the family and the surrounding society. These notions principally concern honour, shame, control, obedience, and (female) sexuality. The issue of structural, honour-related violence is examined in relation to the history of ideas as well as the social history of Europe. I have sketched a framework within which ideas are accumulated and amalgamated from early myths, ancient philosophers, and the monotheistic religions, through pre- and early modern times and up to the present day. In addition, I have related these ballad narratives to recent cases of so-called honour-related violence in northern Europe.

With this small study I wish to contribute to the (rather slowly) emerging field problematizing gender and power in song scholarship. There are several possible ways of studying social issues in ballads and other songs from the perspectives of gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and other social categorizations. Such studies may shed light on aspects of ballads that are still relevant in contemporary society but that have not yet been discussed to any great degree.

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The Social Dilemmas of 'Daantjie Okso': Texture, Text, and Context

Matilda Burden

The ballad of 'Daantjie Okso' has much to offer with regard to narrative as well as analysis of the texture and context of the text. It is an Afrikaans song set in the old Cape Colony of South Africa. It sheds light on nineteenth-century Cape colonial history and on the local social conditions of the time. Some problems or questions that will be investigated in this paper are: Can this be considered a folk ballad? Are its textural features unique and have they been applied deliberately? Can the term *context* be understood and applied in more than one way?

First, it is necessary to discuss the origin of the ballad. The Cape Town newspaper *Het Volksblad* published a report on 17 November 1860 from the magistrate's court about a Khoikhoi man named Daantjie. The Khoikhoi people were the indigenous inhabitants of the South Western Cape (which forms the south-western corner of South Africa) at the time when the Dutch East India Company opened a refreshment station at the Cape in the seventeenth century.[1] Daantjie was arrested because he was drunk on the street and was throwing stones. He was clothed in a soldier's jacket and had a cock's feather in his frizzled hair. The magistrate addressed him, 'So, Daantjie, are you here again?', to which Daantjie replied, 'Okso, baas' (Scholtz n.d.: 315), which means *Yes, master, that is so*.[2] His reply is a composite of the two Afrikaans words 'ook' (also) and 'so' (so/like that). That composite became transformed colloquially into *okso*, which became his name because it was his reply to all the questions and remarks of the magistrate.

In 1893 Melt Brink, one of the very first writers in Afrikaans, published this ballad of 'Daantjie Okso' in his book *Grappige stories en ander versies* (*Humorous Stories and Other Verses*).[3] It is not known whether

[1] L. Hattingh, 'Die Kaapse Koina', in *Die VOC aan die Kaap*, ed. C. de Wet, L. Hattingh, and J Visagie (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2007), p. 270.

[2] J. du P. Scholtz, *Afrikaans uit die vroeë tyd* (Cape Town: Nasou Beperk, n.d.), p. 315.

[3] Melt Brink, *Grappige stories en ander versies* (Cape Town: Juta & Co., 1893), pp. 41–45.

Brink created the song from scratch, or if there was already some form of these verses in popular currency. If the latter were the case, it would probably have been a short song and not the thirty-one stanzas of Brink's poem. In the nineteenth century there was not yet a tradition of creating new ballads in Afrikaans; with a few exceptions, the only ones known were those inherited from Dutch or German, transformed into Dutch-Afrikaans and adapted to local social conditions. Whatever the case may be, the Brink ballad was sung in bits and pieces until it became a true folk song. In some variants the structure diverged from four-line stanzas and became one long verse from which many of the original stanzas and content had disappeared.

In the late twentieth century, only three versions that I know of were recorded, one by the folklorist Pieter W Grobbelaar, and two by myself. Grobbelaar, however, in his book on Afrikaans ballads, *Kinders van konings*, did not publish the version that he had recorded but used a shortened version consisting of twelve stanzas from Brink's original song.[4] In Brink's ballad (henceforth version I) Daantjie was known as Oeksoo, and in the two versions I recorded he was Ooksowa (version II) and Okskondaan (version III), respectively.[5]

As the theory of Alan Dundes, the well-known American folklorist of the second half of the twentieth century, applies specifically to the texts of folk genres, there will be no discussion of the music of the different variants here. However, because a song is not a song without its melody, two musical notations are provided as *Appendix 1* (published by Grobbelaar) and *Appendix 2* (recorded by Burden).

Texture, text, and context as defined by Alan Dundes

The subtitle of this paper is borrowed from the title of a chapter in Alan Dundes's *Interpreting Folklore* (1980). Dundes maintains that all genres of folklore should be defined and analysed on three conceptual levels, those of texture, text, and context.[6]

> *Texture*: Dundes locates texture in language, so in verbal forms of folklore, textural features are linguistic features. The more important the textural features are in a given genre of folklore,

[4] P. W. Grobbelaar, *Die kinders van konings* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2009), pp. 206–07.

[5] Matilda Burden, 'Die Afrikaanse volkslied onder die bruin mense' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 1991), pp. 663–66.

[6] Alan Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 22–23.

the more difficult it is to translate an example of that genre into another language.

Text: The text is essentially a version or a single telling of a tale, a recitation of a proverb, a singing of a folk song; it is independent of texture and can therefore be more easily translated into any language. The result, however, is that the text will be translated with the loss of the texture.

Context: Dundes defines context as the specific social situation in which a particular item is actually employed. In the process he differentiates between context and function.

The ballad of 'Daantjie Okso' – texture

The textural features listed by Dundes are rhyme, alliteration, stress, pitch, juncture, tone, and onomatopoeia. The song of 'Daantjie Okso' displays some of these elements, but also other linguistic aspects that may also be considered as textural features. For instance, the original verse compiled by Brink is a total mixture of Afrikaans/Dutch and English. This phenomenon is a manifestation of the confusion experienced by Afrikaans speakers confronted with a British regime that forced on them a foreign language over which they had no mastery. J. du P. Scholtz in his book *Die Afrikaner en sy taal, 1806–1875* (*The Afrikaners and their Language, 1806–1875*) provides an in-depth discussion of the difficulties experienced by Dutch/Afrikaans speakers after the Second British Occupation of the Cape in 1806, especially in the courts, parliament, and the schools, where English gradually became entrenched as the only official language of communication.[7]

Another feature is the folk etymology evident in the variations on Daantjie's second name in the different variants. The fact that Okso became Okskondaan and Oksowa is extremely interesting, because it seems as if another word, which is untraceable, might have been part of the composite. In the first variant, Okskondaan, it sounds as if his first name Daan has been added again at the end, but it could have been a totally different word.

Phonology is another textural feature. In the version of Daantjie's name that he chose, Brink used the regional phonology of the Boland, a region in the Western Cape Province of South Africa (meaning 'higher-lying land'), which has an 'oo' sound in Afrikaans (as in

[7] J. du P. Scholtz, *Die Afrikaner en sy taal, 1806–1875* (Cape Town: Nasou Beperk, 1964), pp. 47–71.

English 'moor'), but which regional speakers change to 'oe' (as in English 'hook') – so the name became Daantjie Oekso. That is a typical example of a textural feature that cannot be translated into any other language.

Alliteration is also present, although not conspicuously so. All the stanzas of Brink's version use rhyme. In versions II and III, however, almost nothing of the rhyme has remained, with the result that it almost sounds like modern free verse.

The ballad of 'Daantjie Okso' – text

It seems that the meaning Dundes applies to 'text' is what some folklorists might describe as 'content' or 'meaning'. It is implied that the text or words of a story, a song, a riddle, or a proverb can be translated so that it tells the same story in another language – it will carry the same meaning but the textural features of the original language will disappear. This is the level of analysis that, according to Dundes, was the only one that folklorists have worked with in the past, and maybe are still working with. This is not surprising, because folklorists are not in the first place linguists and their work is to analyse social life and to interpret the verbal genres of folklore as evidence or representations of a culture or a specific society.

In the case of 'Daantjie Okso', the text tells the story of a poor individual coming from the Onderveld, a region in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa (meaning 'lower-lying land'), to the Boland in order to find greener pastures. When the text is analysed some discrepancies emerge – for example, the fact that he says his mother was a 'Hottentotsvrou', or Khoikhoi woman, and his father a soldier, and that he comes from the Onderveld. Although relationships between Khoikhoi women and soldiers were common at the Cape,[8] the chances that he was born in the Onderveld if his father was a soldier were very slim. Soldiers were mainly working in Cape Town and the vicinity, and the Onderveld was very far away. This is probably an example of where the textural feature of rhyme (*–straat* and *soldaat*) took precedence over text (meaning); for the creator of the song it was more important that '–straat' and 'soldaat' should rhyme than that the meaning of the words should be historically probable:

> My naam is Daantjie Oeksoo, hoor!
> ek woon op Dassie-straat,

[8] H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), p. 18.

my mama was een Hottenotvrouw
my tata een soldaat.

(*My name is Daantjie Oekso*
I live in Dassie Street
my mother was a Hottentot woman
my father was a soldier.)

The text further relates how Daantjie could find neither a job nor money, but plenty of drink. He refers to the police who arrested him as 'die blauwrok' (the bluecoat) (version I) and 'die blou duiwelsgoed' (the blue devils) (version II), which is a form of nickname or colloquial name for the police, referring to the old blue uniforms with knee-length jackets that the police wore:

Ek val toe neer, net op 'n stoep
want ek is nie meer jonk
toen kom die blauwrok van een vent
en ry my naar die tronk!

(*I fell over, on a stoep*
because I'm no longer young
then the damned bluecoat came along
and took me to jail!)

When he is brought to court, the dialogue between Daantjie and the magistrate is a humorous conversation consisting of a mixture of Afrikaans, Dutch, and English words and phrases. The magistrate promised him twenty (version I), or plenty (version II), lashes with the cane. This is followed by Daantjie's absolute indignation and the conclusion that his trousers will definitely tear:

No, Daantjie, all what you daar sê
I cannot so believe
and therefore shall I in die tronk
you veertien dagen geef!
Of this shall four – onthou dit goed –
op rice and water wees
en twenty slagen met die kats
shall you then well genees!
Almattie, dis tog al te veel!
Wees tog genadig, Seur!
myn ouwe broek is pas gelap
dit sal weer open scheur!

(*No, Daantjie, what you are saying there*
I definitely can't believe
and therefore I shall put you in jail
for fourteen days!
Of these shall four – remember that well –
be on rice and water
and twenty lashes with the whip
will then cure you well.
Goodness! that's too much!
have mercy, Sir!
my old trousers have just been mended
and they will certainly tear open again!)

This translation of the text into English here illustrates exactly Dundes's point about the difference between texture and text – the story could be told in English, but not a single one of its textural features would be conveyed.

The ballad of 'Daantjie Okso' – context

Dundes's use of the term 'context' is the one that interests me most, because it differs from my own understanding – and maybe that of other researchers as well – and the usual application of the concept in relation to songs. For me, the context of a ballad or song is that in which the story unfolds. For instance, the context of 'Daantjie Okso' would be one of miserable social conditions, starting off with an unstable, non-permanent relationship between his parents. He is unemployed and travels from the Onderveld to the Boland in search of work. Apparently he does not find a job, but he does find more than enough in the way of alcohol. Then he is wary of the police and the magistrate, and ends up in jail several times. That is the picture of Daantjie's surroundings and the factors that forced him to move and that further influenced his life.

For Dundes, however, the context is 'the specific social situation in which that particular item [in this case the folk song] is actually employed'. [9] He emphasizes that it should not be confused with function: 'function is an analyst's statement of what (he thinks) the use or purpose of a given genre of folklore is in its specific social context'.[10] It should be pointed out that function is not always what the analyst *thinks* it is, because the researcher usually asks (or should ask) the informant about the function of the specific piece of folklore

[9] Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, p. 23.
[10] Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, p. 24.

that is being recorded. Dundes's context is not the function of the specific item of folklore; it is the context or circumstances in which this item is presented, referring therefore to the surroundings, not of the protagonist in the story or song, but of the presenter(s), which includes his/her/their audience.

When the researcher is working with items of folklore such as riddles, jokes, or folktales, it is an acceptable hypothesis to assume a presenter and an audience, because some kind of audience is necessary in order for those genres of folklore to be performed successfully or meaningfully. What makes the case of folk songs different, in my opinion, is the fact that an audience is *not* necessary; the performer can sing to him/herself, and often does. The context in that case may be described as a solitary performance without any listeners, which is still a context that might influence the nature of the performance, but not the text.

The only instances I have experienced where the presence of the researcher making the recording influenced the text is when certain words are known to be of a crude or derogatory nature and the performer has replaced them with more acceptable terms. It is recognizable as a replacement when other variants with the crude or derogatory terms present were also recorded. An example is an Afrikaans children's song which concludes with the two lines 'hier is my vinger / wat die meide van skinner' (here is my finger that the girls gossip about). In one variant the word 'meide' ('girls') was replaced with 'mense' (people), because 'meide' had acquired a derogatory connotation over time.[11] It should be added, though, that sometimes the researcher who hears a 'replacement' might assume that it is one because he/she knows about another variant with a crude or derogatory reference. The possibility remains, however, that the performer in question always sang it as in the recording (with the so-called 'replacement'), and did not replace it on the spur of the moment for the sake of the researcher.

In Dundes's theory, the context has much to do with the receivers and their reactions to what they hear, and also with the presenter: 'Two of the most vital constituents of contextual structure are the person telling the joke and the audience listening to it. It is a commonplace that context can influence text.'[12] It seems that he moved from one performance to another of jokes and riddles and captured as part of his research the way audiences reacted to the

[11] Burden, 'Die Afrikaanse volkslied onder die bruin mense', p. 79.
[12] Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, p. 27.

presenter, but also the way the presenter then reacted to the audiences. It is well known that a person telling a joke or riddle will respond to the audience's level of participation.

The researcher documenting and recording a song can only capture context and its influence on text and texture – the evolution of the song – if it is performed for the benefit of an audience, even if that audience consists of only one or two persons. Dundes is critical of folklorists who in the past completely ignored context when recording different genres of folklore.[13] He says that they concentrated on texts only, and consequently the way folklore changed and developed through performances was not documented. Their findings were therefore context-less and of limited value to the social scientist. I think, however, that value depends on what the social scientist wants to achieve. Surely there are many other valuable conclusions researchers can come to by focusing on texts alone?

If Dundes's understanding of context is applied to the recordings made by a researcher when collecting folklore, especially folk songs, with reference to his requirement for an audience to supply context, then most of the material will be without, or with very little, context. These types of recordings are often made with only the researcher and the performer present, so there is no audience context to influence the performance. That is why other meanings or applications of the term 'context' need to be explored and considered.

Other theories of context

There is another interpretation of the term 'context' which may be more applicable to folk songs, which refers to the circumstances in which the song was created and in which the story unfolds – the historical, geographical, and social context of the era. Numerous recordings of Afrikaans folk songs collected in the latter part of the twentieth century serve as examples of how text was influenced by its context in this sense. To corroborate and highlight this view, a song consisting of three tercets is discussed very briefly.

The song was probably created in the late nineteenth century, in an area where drought is common and grazing land scarce. The farmers had the custom of moving sheep from a summer region to a winter region – they had farms in areas with different climatic conditions. This custom was called 'seasonal nomadism'. The herder who took the sheep to the winter farm often stayed there on his own while his

[13] Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, p. 23.

family remained behind on the more established farm with better living conditions. One such herder created a song full of sadness and longing for his beloved:

O die môre- môrester
ja die ware môrester
dis die ster wat in die oostekant opkom

O die doekie op my oë
ja die doekie op my oë
dis die doekie om my trane af te droë

O die ster die blink
en die maan die skyn
en dan dink jy net aan my al is ek ver.

(*Oh the morning star*
yes, the true morning star
it's the star rising from the east

Oh the cloth on my eyes
yes the cloth on my eyes
it is the cloth to wipe away my tears

Oh the star is bright
and the moon is shining
and you're thinking of me although I'm far away.)[14]

The contexts of geography, climate, and agricultural practices all had an influence on the text of this song. When it was recorded, there was no audience that could have influenced the text or manner of performance.

In the case of 'Daantjie Okso' it is known that in the year 1860, when he was arrested, Cape Town had been through an economic depression that had had a significant impact on the lifestyle and psyche of its inhabitants.[15] So, no wonder that Daantjie could not find work. As the report of the court case does not mention any of Daantjie's feelings about the natural beauty of the Cape, or the way he experienced the winter rain and storms, it was up to the songwriter to place words in his mouth about the geographical context. He says that the Cape is far more beautiful than the Onderveld, although his motive for being there is because food and wine are abundant:

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[14] Burden, 'Die Afrikaanse volkslied onder die bruin mense', pp. 407–08.
[15] F. Bradlow and E. Bradlow, *Here Comes the Alabama* (Cape Town: Balkema, 1958), p. 63.

Dit is baie mooier in die Kaap
dan in die Onderveld
want kos en drank is volop hier,
dis net maar skaars van geld.

(*It is far more beautiful in the Cape*
than in the Onderveld
because food and drink are abundant here
It's just that money is so scarce.)

The social conditions of his birth, the poverty that has forced him to look for something better, his susceptibility to alcohol and the resulting intoxication, are all factors that formed the context of the song.

But it is also clear that this term 'context' can be interpreted and applied in more than one way, with more than one meaning and different implications. The meaning used by Dundes is certainly valid and it can be accepted that what he interprets as context influences folklore and its evolution in many ways. It is, however, important to remember that not all genres of folklore present themselves in the same way; not all genres are dependent on audiences, and not all recordings need necessarily be executed with the same methodology.

Dundes also holds the view that the first task of the folklorist should be the analysis of text, because text, he says, is less variable than texture and context.[16] But the context of the story – and here I am referring to the second, diegetic interpretation of context, and not that of Dundes – is so important for the folklorist to be able to interpret the meaning of the song that it is of the utmost importance that it be studied and analysed. In the end, though, Dundes comes to the conclusion: 'The well-rounded folklorist should hopefully attempt to analyze all three levels [. . .] Furthermore, the vital relationship between folk and folklore, now virtually ignored by text-oriented folklorists, may finally be given the attention it so richly deserves.'[17]

Conclusion

Elliott Oring in his book *Just Folklore* remarks that the principles on which the study of culture was conducted before the middle of the twentieth century have begun to be questioned. He writes that the methodological, philosophical, and moral aspects of anthropological and folkloristic practice have been increasingly scrutinized since that

[16] Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, p. 32.
[17] Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore*, p. 32.

time, and concurs that 'Radical, reflexive, deconstructive, and postmodern perspectives coalesced to destabilize knowledge and undermine the possibility of description, explanation, and that of knowledge.'[18] This view is important with regard to the interpretation of folk songs, because in the end the question should be raised as to whether over-analysing (as described below) will in any way contribute to the 'possibility of description, explanation and [. . .] knowledge' concerning a song. If both the interpretations of context considered in this paper are applied to the study of a song, in addition to the interpretations of text and texture, the result will probably be far more useful conclusions, from a folkloristic point of view, than are to be gained from 'Radical, reflexive, deconstructive, and postmodern perspectives'.

The question raised at the beginning of this paper, namely whether the ballad of 'Daantjie Okso' can be considered a folk ballad, has been answered in the affirmative. But an aspect connected to the matter of the folk ballad is always that of authenticity. There is no intention here to go into an in-depth consideration of the term, which would require a whole new investigation. It is only mentioned because what Sabra Webber calls 'hierarchies of folklore' seem to be applicable when a song that was written by a known and acknowledged author gradually becomes a folk song. How authentically 'folk' is it? It is not possible to answer this without in-depth discussion, but it should be borne in mind that the so-called authenticity of a song lies not only in the origin but, surely, also in what the folk made of it. Webber writes: 'This desire for authenticity, however imagined, was and still often is shared by artists and folklorists studying expressive culture.'[19] In my opinion, it is impossible to label a piece of folklore as pure or authentic, because it undergoes changes through every performance, transmission, and recording, and therefore its authenticity will always be 'imagined'.

It is important for the researcher not to be limited by the theories of well-known folklorists or cultural historians whose works have been published and who are seen as the leaders in their academic field. To become a leader in the field one should use one's own documented material, or that of earlier researchers, and realize the possibilities for academic analysis that it presents, even if the results

[18] Elliott Oring, *Just Folklore: Analysis, Interpretation and Critique* (Los Angeles: Cantilever Press, 2012), p. 284.
[19] Sabra J. Webber, *Folklore Unbound: A Concise Introduction* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2015), p. 61.

depart from, or challenge, more familiar theories. This view has a strong connection to that of Roger Renwick, distinguished scholar of Anglo/American folk song, who refers to 'hypertheorizing', by which he means that folk song scholars have allowed theory to hold sway over textual study.[20] Instead, he argues, the folklorist should try to liberate the material's own voice rather than to impose a dogma that is personally compelling or appealing.[21] The application of the theories of Dundes to the song of 'Daantjie Okso' is considered here as an example of how theory, when applied moderately and not 'hypertheorizing', can actually enhance the understanding and appreciation of a ballad. For the ballad scholar, however, it will always remain of the utmost importance to delve into and analyse what Renwick refers to as the 'data banks' of folk song.[22]

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[20] Roger deV. Renwick, *Recentering Anglo/American Folksong: Sea Crabs and Wicked Youths* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), p. xiii (and *passim*). David Atkinson, review of *Recentering Anglo/American Folksong: Sea Crabs and Wicked Youths* by Roger deV. Renwick, *Folklore*, 115 (2004), 376–77 (p. 376), describes 'hypertheorizing' as a 'euphemism for forcing data into the mould of borrowed theory'.

[21] Renwick, *Recentering Anglo/American Folksong*, p. xv.

[22] Renwick, *Recentering Anglo/American Folksong*, p. x.

Appendix 1. Music notation for version I.

G C D7 G

Mijn naam is Daan-tjie Oek- soo, hoor! Ik woon op Das - sic- straat; mijn
me - me was een Kaap - se vrouw, mijn ta - ta een sol - daat.

Appendix 2. Music notation for version II.

My naam is ou Daan-tjie Ook-so -wa ek woon in die Das-sie-
straat my moe-der was n Hot-ten-tots-vrou my
va- der 'n sol- daat ek het ge- kom van die On-der-veld gaan
kyk hoe die Bo- land lyk maar jong dit gaan maar naar en droog
daar in die On-der- veld.

‘Tlačanova voliča’ (‘The Peasant’s Oxen’): A Social and Speciesist Ballad

Marjetka Golež Kaučič

The aim of this paper is to offer two readings of the Slovenian ballad ‘Tlačanova voliča’ (‘The Peasant’s Oxen’), one drawing on folklore studies, ethnology, law, and history, the other presenting an ecocritical and zoofolkloristic analysis. The first reading provides a classical folkloristic interpretation of the ballad. The second reading offers a novel interpretation of the ballad in the light of the relationship between different species, taking into account the historical period of the ballad. The aim is to go beyond an exploration of the deeply rooted relationships between species to shift the focus from anthropocentrism towards ecocentrism.

The ballad of ‘The Peasant’s Oxen’ is a social narrative ballad. It speaks about class conflict during the Middle Ages between the peasant without any rights and the feudal overlord who had power over the peasant’s property, life, and sometimes even his death. The protagonist of the ballad is not the lord, but the peasant himself. The predominant topics are a critique of the ruling class, the social hierarchy, and the opposition between species – the last exemplified by the peasant’s power over the life and death of the animals he owns. The goals of this study are:

- to offer a new ecological-ethical-empathic axis in the reading that effects a changed perspective on the human–animal relationship
- indirectly to facilitate an end to damaging cultural and traditional practices in the treatment of animals by humans, so that animals are not treated as chattels
- to enable a transition from a paradigm of exploitation towards a paradigm of equal coexistence of human and non-human subjectivity, and from speciesism towards non-speciesism.[1]

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[1] In her book on speciesism, Joan Dunayer, *Specizam: Diskriminacija na osnovi vrste* (Zagreb: Čakovac – Institut za etnologijo i folkloristiku& Dvostruka duga, 2009), p. 29, argues that speciesism, discrimination on the basis of species, can also be

Figure 1. ‘Tlačanova voliča’ (first page) from the manuscript collection Odbor za nabiranje narodnih pesmi/Committee for Collecting Folk Songs (Ljubljana, Archive of the Institute of Ethnomusicology ZRC SAZU, archive no. OSNP 8106).

linguistic. This is illustrated by the distinction between ‘a pig was slaughtered’ and ‘a horse perished’; further examples would be ‘a bird in a cage’, ‘a chained dog’, ‘a fish in an aquarium’. Inja Smerdel, ‘Étudier les animaux en Slovénie: Des hommes et des boeufs’, *Ethnologie française*, 42 (2012), 281–90 (p. 283), cites the Slovenian expressions ‘to be as slow and dumb as an ox’ and ‘to work like an ox’, which I would consider to represent examples of anthropocentricism and speciesism.

Classical folkloristics

There are three known poetic versions of the ballad 'Tlačanova voliča' (*Figure 1*).[2] They differ in minor details and length, but the core elements remain the same. The peasant, who in some versions is St Martin (*Šmarten*), has a cow called Maverca. The cow has not had a calf for seven years and so the peasant wants to slaughter her. However, Maverca promises to calve and to give him two miraculous calves with silver hooves and golden horns (or little golden feet, little golden horns, with a golden coat, in some versions) which will serve him loyally. In one version of the ballad, the peasant's wife tells this secret to her godmother (a so-called *šnofarica*, meaning a snoop or busybody), who immediately passes it on to the lord's bailiff, whereas in the other two versions the bailiff finds out about the incredible animals on his own and passes on the news to the lord.

The story then develops differently in each version. The lord requires of the peasant that the oxen drink a pond of water and/or eat a stack of hay, or plough an enormous field in one day. With God's help, the oxen succeed in doing what is demanded and the peasant (or St Martin) can keep the animals. However, in one version the lord orders the oxen to be fitted with yokes and the peasant and his family to be taken from the mountain to the valley. In response, St Martin (the peasant) wishes that 'a *pregelj* would come loose' – a *pregelj* being a strong peg that holds the yoke and the harness together. The peg does indeed come loose and the 'noble lord rolls down the hill'.

'Tlačanova voliča'	**'The Peasant's Oxen'**
V Šmarten imajo eno kravico, pa je z imenom Maverca.	St Martin has a cow Maverca is her name.
Kravca se je rešiva, je dva telička striva.	The cow has saved herself Two young calves are born.
Oba sta zlatonoga, oba srebrnoroga.	Both have golden legs Both have silver horns.
Po zvatih parklih hodita, srebrne rožičke nosita.	They have golden hoofs, Wear silver horns.
Na varh je zvata dvaka, po strani pa glih taka.	On the top is golden coat From the side the same.
Vawpet s je eno zmislu,	The bailiff was thinking

[2] Marko Terseglav, Marjetka Golež, et al., *Slovenske ljudske pesmi* [*Slovenian Folk Songs*], vol. 3 (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1992), pp. 339–46 (SLP III/190).

gospodu se perliznu:	How to flatter his lord:
'Morjo volič eno nivo zvorat, dowgo nivo Rebernico, gor bomo vsjal ušenico.	'The oxen have to plough one field A long field Rebrnica, There we will sow wheat.
Če je ne bodo dopowdne zvoral, volič bojo gospodove!'	If they do not plough it by noon, The oxen become the lord's property!'
Šmarten je biw pač žavosten, Šmarten je biw pač žavosten.	St Martin became very sad, St Martin became very sad.
Tko so rekle voliči: 'Kaj je teb, najen gospodar, da tako milu zdišeš?'	And so say the little oxen: 'What is wrong with you, our master, That your sigh is so low?'
Vawpet m je tvako napovedow, Vawpet m je tvako napovedow:	The bailiff predicted so, The bailiff predicted so:
'De mormo nivo zvorate, dowgo nivo Rebernico, gor bojo vsjal ušenico.	'That we have to plough the field, The long field Rebernica, There will sow wheat.
Če je na bmo dopowdne zvoral, volič bote gospodove!'	If we don't plough the field by noon, The oxen become the lord's property!'
Tko so rekle voliči: 'K bojo mežnarji dani zvonili, ti naj lepo napoji:	So, said the little oxen: 'When the clerks ring the bells for the new day, Give us a plenty of water:
Lepo Bogu sporoči, pogosto naj protiči, na rožo Marijo kliči!'	Pray to God, Beat us from time to time, Call upon the Virgin Mary!'
K so mežnarji powdne zvonili, je nivo zavoravow, ni voličev zapadow.	When the clerks rang the bells for noon The field was ploughed, The oxen stay with their master.
Vawpet si je drugo zmislu, gospodu se perliznu:	The bailiff was thinking of a different way How to flatter his lord:
'Morjo voliči ene svisli sena snesti preden bo sonce zahajow, če ne, bojo gospodove!'	'The oxen have to eat the whole hayloft of hay Before the sun sets, If not, they will become the lord's property!'
Šmarten je biw pač žavosten, Šmarten je bil pač žavosten.	St Martin became very sad, St Martin became very sad.
Tko so rekle voliči: 'Kaj je teb, najen gospodar, de toko milu zdišeš?'	And so say the little oxen: 'What is wrong with you our master, That your sigh is so low?'
'Vawpet m je tko zapovedow: de morte vi ene svisli sena snest, če ne, bote gospodova!	'Well, the bailiff commands, That you have to eat the whole hayloft of hay, If not, you will become the lord's property!
Če ga ne bte vi snedle	If you are not able to eat

preden bo sonce zahajow, volič bote gospodove!'	The whole hayloft of hay before sun set, You will become the lord's property!'
Tko so rekle voliči: 'K bojo mežnarji dani zvonili, ti naj lepo napoji:	So they said, the little oxen: 'When the clerks ring the bells for the new day, You give us a plenty of water:
Lepo Bogu sporoči, pogosto naj protiči, na rožo Marijo kliči!'	Pray to God, Beat us from time to time, Call upon the Virgin Mary!'
Predno je blo sonce za gore, volički so že seno snedle.	When the sun was behind the mountains The oxen ate all the hay.
Šmerten je biw (pa) prow vesew, k ni voličev zapadu.	St Martin was very happy, That is why he did not lose his oxen.

What is the meaning of this song? What legal, historical, and social traces can we detect? The ballad contains hints of feudal law and suggestions of the nature of the medieval social order. We can recognize both the social hierarchy and the hierarchy of species in its attitudes towards the Other. As the creator of the song was one of the peasantry, it is not surprising that the nobility are not represented positively in the folk poetic tradition.[3] The poet's sympathies lie with the peasant, who occupies a low position in the social hierarchy. The feudal overlord occupies the highest position, followed by the bailiff, then the peasant, then his wife, and at the bottom are the two oxen.

St Martin, who appears in some versions of the ballad as a substitute for the peasant, represents a more powerful kind of transcendence than the feudal overlord. Joyce Salisbury describes the relationship between animals, humans, and 'superhumans/saints' thus: 'Animals were marked by bondage, humans by freedom, and superhuman saints by the most freedom of all.'[4] To this day, animals are perceived as property and not as the equals to humans.[5] Only a saint, in our case St Martin,[6] who appears in place of the peasant, can

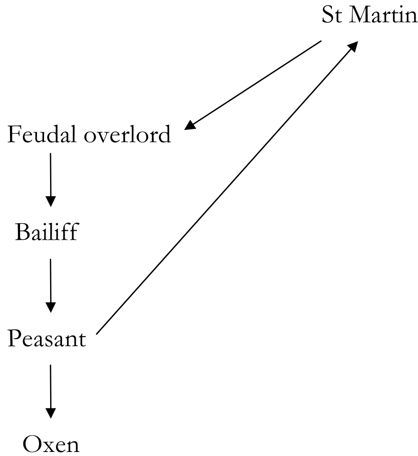
[3] Terseglav, Golež, et al., *Slovenske ljudske pesmi*, p. 346.

[4] Joyce. E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 169.

[5] The inequality of animals has remained unchanged even in later times, because of the perception of animals as property. As Darwin stated, 'Animals whom we have made our slaves, we do not like to consider our equals'; quoted in James Rachels, *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 132.

[6] The *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine incorporates parts of the Dialogue of Sulpicius Severus and Gallus, and also from the *Vita di Santi Martini*, in which we read that inanimate nature, plants, and 'non-rational' beings – animals – obeyed St Martin, who became a patron of the animals, similar to St Francis. See Jacobus de Voragine,

accord the animals magical attributes and protect them, and humans as well, from the feudal overlord.



According to Sergij Vilfan, the peasant was a part of the feudal manor's workforce of bond-servants – a field worker, a tool – in just the same way as an animal (*Figure 2*).[7] The feudal peasant's status differed from that of the classical slave in that the peasant had a right to his own family and the lord did not have the right to kill him. Those two features distinguish the status of the human from that of the animal. The use of an animal, in our case an ox, represents an economic relationship between man and animal, the animal occupying the lowest position in the hierarchy.[8] A majority of Slovenian songs and narratives about the social situation in the Middle Ages refer to the low status of the peasant within feudal society.[9] The peasant is tied

The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints, trans. William Granger Ryan, introd. Eamon Duffy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 295. The connection with oxen is also present in the stories of St Florian: oxen were supposed to have brought St Florian to the place where he was to be buried, and along the way, as they became exhausted from thirst, a spring emerged which had healing powers. See Niko Kuret, *Praznično leto Slovencev* (Ljubljana: Družina, 1989), p. 288.

[7] Sergij Vilfan, *Pravna zgodovina Slovencev* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1961), p. 77.

[8] Francoise Sigaut, 'Regard critique sur la notion de domestication', *Ethnozootechnie*, 71 (2003), 45–50 (pp. 45, 49). See also Inja Smerdel, '"Bol si pámeten ku člóvk", je rekel volu? O razmerju človek – vol v vsakdanu in kulturi pivškega kmeta', in *Slavinski zbornik*, ed. Janko Boštjančič (Vrhnika: Galerija 2, 2000), pp. 341–79; Smerdel, 'Étudier les animaux en Slovenie'.

[9] Sergij Vilfan, 'Pravni motivi v slovenskih narodnih pripovedkah in pripovednih pesmih', *Etnolog*, 66 (1943), 3–29 (p. 9).

to the land and cannot move away without the lord's consent. Feudalism involved the dual obligations of paying dues and fees to the lord and of carrying out manorial work.

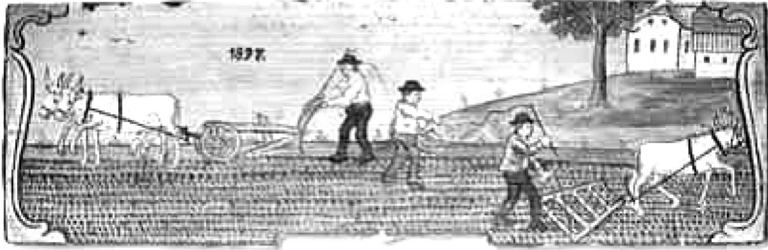


Figure 2. Beehive panel, 'Working in the Fields', Archive of the Slovenian Ethnographical Museum, no. 2459. Published in Gorazd Makarovič and Bojana Rogelj Škafar, *Poslikane panjske končnice* [*Painted Beehive Panels*] (Ljubljana: Zbirka Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja, 2000), no. 288.

The peasant's overlord was typically the lord of the manor or castle (usually a foreigner), who appears as an evil character in ballads. For example, the ballad 'Hudi graščak kaznovan' ('The Evil Lord Is Punished') portrays a ruthless lord who takes all the work animals away from a peasant. The lady of the manor takes pity on the peasant and returns the animals to him, which angers the lord and prompts him to go after the peasant. The peasant hides behind a cross to seek protection. The lord shoots at the cross, but this is a grave offence and the cross starts bleeding. The lord repents and makes a pilgrimage to Rome. Still, he is not forgiven and the final judgement is that he will be forever doomed in the afterlife. This ballad shows, among other things, that the social classes are not independent, but are established by God and subject to God's authority. Similarly, in the ballad 'Tlačanova voliča' the social hierarchy within the song is absolutely fixed, but we can still detect a sense of rebellion, at least in the version in which St Martin causes the lord to tumble down the hill. Such rebellion, however, is associated with a transcendent power and is not possible without it.

What about the role of an ox within the feudal order and the farming economy from the Middle Ages up until the second half of the nineteenth century? In the Middle Ages (*c.*400–1400), according to Salisbury: 'Thinkers moved from the idea that humans and animals were qualitatively different (Augustine's view) to the notion that we

have more in common with animals than we might like to admit (Gerald of Wales's view).'[10] Most of the Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages made a sharp distinction between animals and humans on the basis of intellect. According to Salisbury, this clear distinction persisted until the twelfth century, but afterwards became more blurred.[11] Esther Cohen argues that the hierarchical, even objectified, relationship with the animal world was not maintained in the Middle Ages: 'It was precisely those people who spent every moment of the day in the ubiquitous presence of animals who employed them as scapegoats, mirror images and representations of human reality.'[12]

Historically mostly small and weak cattle were kept in Slovenia, mainly on demesne and manorial lands. The worst conditions were in the Dolenjska and Notranjska regions.[13] Because of the constant presence of contagious diseases in these two regions there was a lack of working cattle, and as a result feudal overlords were forced to lend animals to their peasants so that the fields could be ploughed and all their feudal obligations met.[14] Inja Smerdel claims that this led to a special form of leasing of (predominantly working) cattle, whereby the peasants had to pay a certain rate of interest on the borrowed animals. These so-called 'interest-rate' animals (*Zinnsviehe*, *Kirschenzinnsviehe*) were a widespread phenomenon in Slovenia. Representatives of the peasants referred to them as *železna živina* ('iron livestock'), and in 1525 demanded the abolition of the system which meant that peasants and their descendants were burdened with a recurrent fee which did not cease even after the death of the animal.[15] The ballad 'Tlačanova voliča' is a reflection of the hardships of the peasantry in feudal society, whose livelihood depended on cattle, especially oxen, but who suffered under the burden of the cruel institution of the 'iron livestock'.

Let us consider here some facts about oxen. An ox is a castrated bull calf. For the castration the animal was placed on the ground, the front and the hind legs were usually tied lightly, and a razor was used to cut into the scrotum and remove the testes (in later years, the calves

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[10] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 2.
[11] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 10.
[12] Esther Cohen, 'Animals in Medieval Perceptions: The Image of the Ubiquitous Other', in *Animals and Human Society*, ed. Aubrey Manning and James Serpell (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 59–81 (p. 76).
[13] Smerdel, 'Bol si pámeten ku člóvk', p. 349.
[14] Marijan Britovšek, *Razkroj fevdalne agrarne structure na Kranjskem* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1964), pp. 130–37.
[15] Smerdel, 'Bol si pámeten ku člóvk', p. 350.

were castrated by veterinarians who used special forceps to extract the testes). The wound was rubbed with arnica and the calf was left to rest on a straw bed. The castration must have been distressing for the calf, one reason why it was carried out soon after birth.[16] Rudolf Schenda claims that oxen initially had a sacrificial role and only later did they come to be used as working cattle.[17]

According to Nikola Visković, there are two views of the role of animals in history, which can be applied to folklore as well. The first view is synanthropic, whereby the animal is regarded as malicious; the second view is anthropophilic, whereby the animal is seen as useful.[18] Our ballad adopts an anthropophilic position; the peasants' love for the oxen is undoubtedly related to the fact that their lives depended on the animals. All modern cattle are descended from the wild aurochs, the *Bos primigenius*, and the earliest inhabitants of northern Europe built their economy on oxen, which were, for instance, twice as valuable as sheep in Germanic law.[19] The domestication of oxen in the seventh century BCE generated three important terms to describe the relationship between oxen and humans, all three of which are wholly anthropocentric: appropriation, supremacy, and use.[20]

Juliet Clutton-Brock defines a domesticated animal as 'one that has been bred in captivity, for purposes of subsistence or profit, in a human community that maintains complete mastery over its breeding, organization of territory, and food supply'.[21] Domestication was a reflection of a patriarchal model of society, which was the archetypal expression of social subordination, including among people (for example, the subordination of women to men). Other types of domestication likewise indicate social stratification. For example, horses and dogs were the domesticated animals of the aristocracy; cows and pigs were the domesticated animals of the rural peasantry. Social inequality was also evinced through this. Cozette Griffin-Kremer defines this social stratification as 'une formidable machine

[16] Smerdel, 'Bol si pámeten ku člóvk', p. 363.
[17] Rudolf Schenda, *Das ABC der Tiere: Marchen, Mythen und Geschichten* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1995), p. 284.
[18] Nikola Visković, *Životinja i čovjek*: *prilog kulturnoj zoologiji* (Split: Književni krug, 1996).
[19] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, pp. 17, 19, 21–22, 36.
[20] Sigaut, 'Regard critique sur la notion de domestication', pp. 45–50.
[21] Juliet Clutton-Brock, 'The Unnatural World: Behavioural Aspects of Humans and Animals in the Process of Domestication', in *Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspective*, ed. Aubrey Manning and James Serpell (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 23–36 (p. 26).

qui a transformé la surface de la terre' ('a great machine that reshaped the surface of the earth').[22]

Smerdel also says that oxen were like gold for people, as they were used to produce wheat for bread and to indicate wealth, and the health of the oxen was often more important than the health of members of a peasant's family. Naturally, people developed a fondness for the animals, caressing them and taking care of them, but only because they were useful. The ox was the lowest in the hierarchy, although sometimes peasants would tell the animal: 'Bolj si pameten ku človk' ('You are cleverer than a man').[23] In an article on *boškarin*, the indigenous cattle of Istria, Ivona Orlić writes: 'The owner of oxen would talk to their "thing, goods", they would caress it and treat it as a friend. In multilingual Istria people would communicate with oxen in the Croatian language, with donkeys in Italian and with horses in German.'[24]

Oxen have also been considered in relation to symbolic, metaphorical, and thematic motifs. In the ballad, for example, the animals needed to be magical in order successfully to complete the tasks demanded by the feudal lord and the bailiff, and at the same time to receive help from the saintly and transcendent figure of St Martin. Thus the two oxen encourage the St Martin to slap them with a branch: 'Lepo Bogu sporoči; / pogosto naj protiči (v pomenu tepsti), / na rožo Marijo kliči!' ('Give a message to God, / Give a slap often / Pray to the Virgin Mary!'). Two other versions do not have these lines, only the oxen's request that they be well fed and watered.

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[22] Cozette Griffin-Kremer, 'Du joug de tête au joug de garrot: Récit mythique et changement technique?', *Ethnozootechnie*, 79 (2007), 51–67 (p. 66).

[23] Smerdel, 'Bol si pámeten ku člóvk', pp. 341, 367.

[24] Ivona Orlič, 'Boškarin: od težaka do izložbenog eksponata', in *Kulturni bestijarij, I*, ed. Suzana Marjanić and Antonija Zaradija Kiš (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada in Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2007), pp. 311–33 (p. 316). The city of Pula in Croatian Istria has been promoting *boškarin* as a gastronomic phenomenon through a project called Boškarin with Potatoes (2012–14). Hence *boškarin* have been 'revitalized' in the twenty-first century as economic and gastronomic victims/sacrifices. See Ivona Orlić and Suzana Marjanić, 'Heritage Animals – Why Not, Anthropocentrism Notwithstanding? *Studia Mythologica Slavica*, 21 (2018), 189–215. In Slovenian Istria, the Boškarin Association was established with purpose of revitalizing the old ox and preserving the breed. This still amounts to an anthropocentric view of animals, now preserved as a nearly extinct species in order to revive the remains of the natural and cultural heritage of Slovenian Istria. See http://drustvo-boskarin.si/park-avtohtonih-rastlin-zivali-hrastovlje/.

Zoofolkloristics and ecocriticism

According to France Veber, every new reading or reception of literary or folkloric works includes an emotional response to or experience of the work.[25] The reader/hearer receives the work within the framework of his or her own personality and associated personal and theoretical elements, knowledge, and preferences. The reader/listener who is also a researcher paradigmatically enhances the reading/listening experience with goals that are related to their own written work after the reading and analysis have been completed. Reading works that originate in spiritually and historically distant periods presents a specific problem. These are historical texts that have had an impact on all subsequent texts within the genre. Especially symptomatic of the problem is the situation that arises when the researcher wishes to research established texts that are rigid in genre by applying new theories to them. It is just such an endeavour that I wish to undertake with the help of zoofolkloristics (a discipline for which I am developing the relevant theory), critical animal studies, ecocriticism, and the theory of speciesism.[26] Consequently, I intend to read the ballad in a new, ecocentric way, instead of anthropocentrically, and thereby shed light on the relationship between an animal and a human being.[27]

The application to the analysis of folklore texts is related to the critique, and even denial, of anthropocentrism as a basic ethical concept, which has sadly endured for centuries; it is also related not just to the need for substantial change in perception of the human–animal relationship, but to the active pursuit of such change. All these new methodological directions within literary theory, folkloristics, and cultural anthropology share a common starting point in the recognition of the paramount importance of the ethical scope of a work, be it of literature or folklore. As the author and eco-feminist Ursula K. Le Guin wrote: 'Because we must [. . .] experience being othered, and because we also form an empathic relationship with the characters by whom we are othered, we must question both sides of

[25] France Veber, *Estetika* [introd. Frane Jerman] (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1985), pp. 351–52.

[26] Marjetka Golež Kaučič, 'Zoofolkloristics: First Insights towards the New Discipline', *Narodna umjetnost*, 52 (2015), pp. 7–30.

[27] Carrie Packwood Freeman, 'Embracing Humanimality: Deconstructing the Human/Animal Dichotomy', in *Argument about Animal Ethics*, ed. Greg Goodale and Jason Edward Black (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), pp. 11–30 https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/communication_facpub/12/.

equation. The use of fable is the best form for defining how we construct "the other", so that we can see both sides of the coin.'[28]

Therefore, the reader's 'empathic relationship' with the other, the animal, is important. Literary and folkloric texts enable the transition from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism, with a new emphasis on the context and messages they convey. With such new readings we can show how folkloric texts reflect morally unjustified and discriminatory human attitudes towards animals in the past. But at the same time, they can provide a challenge that leads to a change in the moral paradigm.[29] Despite realizing that each animal, apart from being a part of nature, is also a part of culture, our attitude to animals in folklore and literature remains distinctly hierarchical. According to Esther Cohen:

> The basic difficulty lies in the common occidental perception of the relationship between man and nature. Starting with the Bible, both Judaism and Christianity have consistently viewed man as the only creature in God's image and likeness, the only one possessing a reasonable soul, aspiring to salvation and destined for an afterlife [. . .] the same concept meant that the vegetal and animal kingdom existed solely for man's use. The perception of a universal hierarchy with man at the top of the mortal creation was current in learned circles throughout the middle ages and still accepted as an axiom in the early modern period.[30]

Analysing Aesop's fables, Naama Harel, a literary researcher who applies a critical animalistic point of view, maintains that fables do not always ignore the non-human in the animal and that at least some of them describe authentic animal behaviour and enable a critical view of

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[28] Cited in Tonya Payne, 'Dark Brothers and Shadow Souls: Ursula K. Le Guin's Animal "Fables"', in *What Are the Animals to Us? Approaches from Science, Religion, Folklore, Literature, and Art*, ed. Dave Aftandilian (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), pp. 169–83 (p. 169).

[29] Branislava Vičar, 'Moralna vrednost živali v diskurzu biotske raznovrstnosti', in *Meddisciplinarnost v slovenistiki*, ed. Simona Kranjc (Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2011), pp. 509−14; Suzana Marjanić, 'Zoosfera Tita Andronika: Ljudska, odviše ljudska bestijalnost', in *Književna životinja: Kulturni bestijarij, II*, ed. Suzana Marjanić and Antonija Zaradija Kiš (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada in Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, 2012), pp. 542−44.

[30] Esther Cohen, 'Law, Folklore and Animal Lore', *Past & Present*, 110 (1986), 6–37 (p. 15). See also Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), pp. 17–41.

human treatment of, or attitudes towards, animals.[31] It is this aspect, according to Harel, that allows for a non-allegorical literary reading, as well as an applied anthropomorphism whereby we draw on personal experience to try to figure out what it might be like to be a member of another species.[32]

Apart from pointing out the social differences among the human characters, a new reading of the ballad 'Tlačanova voliča' should also emphasize the attitude of all human social classes towards the animals being used as a workforce, maimed, and treated as valuable chattels and not as living beings. Much like a fable, the ballad gives the animals a human voice; however, they are turned into magical creatures and not real oxen. With this new reading, we can re-evaluate our perceptions of folklore.

In one version, when the peasant intends to slaughter the cow Maverca because she had not had any calves for seven years, she expresses her desire for life in a loud voice. In return for sparing her life, Maverca offers to give birth to two calves with special powers. That was just an exchange of goods, since the cow was the peasant's property, and both of them were the property of the feudal lord. However, the fact that, anthropomorphically, the cow can speak enables a different reception of her situation:

Hej, hej, Hej, Maverca!
Mi te hočmo zaklati,
sosedam koline dati.

Maverca pa spregovori:
'Nikar me ne zakolite!

(*Maverca, we want to slaughter you*
And give the meat to the neighbours.

Maverca begins to speak:
'Don't slaughter me!')

This fictitious speech is a sign of 'mental life', which, according to Mark Rowlands, is the key to arguing that animals have some rights.[33] Or, as Tonia Payne puts it: 'Contemporary Western society has cut

[31] Naama Harel, 'The Animal Voice behind the Animal Fable', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 7.2 (2009), 9–21.
[32] Randall Lockwood, 'Anthropomorphism Is Not a Four-Letter Word', in *Perceptions of Animals in American Culture*, ed. R. J. Hoage (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1989), pp. 41–56.
[33] Mark Rowlands, *Animals Like Us* (London: Verso Books, 2002), pp. 23–24.

itself off from the willingness, and thus the ability, to hear animal voices, and the lessons that might be learned are lost along with the voices of those speaking others.'[34]

We can derive two philosophical concepts from the desire to live: first, a 'moderate moral humanism', whereby an animal has a moral status, but that status is judged from a human perspective; and secondly, an 'egalitarian moral animalism', whereby an animal has a moral status equal to that of a human.[35] As Garry Francione argues: 'If animal interests are to be morally significant, we must accord to nonhumans the basic right not to be treated as property, and this requires that we seek to abolish, and not merely to regulate, institutionalized animal exploitation.'[36]

This new reading should not remain at a purely academic level. It should be linked to activism and striving for a change in socio-political conditions. As Steven Best argues:

> The reactionary effect of animal studies theorists [. . .] is apparent: as one struggles through their writing, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Levinas, Kristeva, Deleuze and Guattari, and Derrida are rumbling in our ears, but the concrete realities of animal suffering, violence and exploitation, economic crisis and social power, and the rapidly worsening planetary ecological catastrophe are entirely muted and virtually barred from the hermetically-sealed chambers of theory-babble.[37]

* * *

To have a moral status is not the exclusive right of humans. It can be applied to non-human subjects. It is the power of words in folkloric and literary works that enables empathy with non-human beings and the ability implicitly to experience their suffering. If we can enter into the animal space in folklore texts without the animal/human dichotomy, then we may be able to change our traditional perceptions of animals – from seeing them in terms of hierarchy to acknowledging them in terms of equal rights. Or, as the South African Nobel laureate J. M. Coetzee argues in *The Lives of Animals*: 'I urge you to read the poets who return the living, electric being to language; and if the poets

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[34] Payne, 'Dark Brothers and Shadow Souls', p. 171.

[35] Friderik Klampfer, *Cena življenja: Razprave iz bioetike* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 2010), p. 243.

[36] Gary Francione, *Animals as Persons: Essays on the Abolition of Animal Exploitation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 70.

[37] Steven Best, 'The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: Putting Theory into Action and Animal Liberation into Higher Education', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 7.1 (2009), 9–52.

do not move you, I urge you to walk, flank to flank, beside the beast that is prodded down the chute to his executioner.'[38]

Perhaps it is also time to recognize not only the moral status of animals but also that of persons, and then there will be no need for slaughterhouse chutes and executioners any more.[39] The parallel implementation of old and new modes of reading opens a horizon of comprehension of different classes of humans, who in the past (as well as in the present) faced discrimination within the same species, and makes possible a new investigation of the relations among different species. With stories such as the ballad 'Tlačanova voliča' we can see the song as a combination of ballad and fable; we can expand our understanding to a new vision of the relations between animals and humans; and we can apprehend a change in the world paradigm, whereby morality is appointed by humans but they are not its only subject.[40] In this light, we can at least strive for the implementation of a new ecological–ethical–empathic axis in the reading and interpreting of folklore and literature.

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[38] J. M. Coetzee, *Življenja živali*, trans. Ana Pepelnik (Ljubljana: LUD šerpa, 2007), p. 97 [J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)] https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/c/Coetzee99.pdf (p. 162).

[39] Tim Ingold (ed.), *What is an Animal?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. xxiv.

[40] Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, p. 128; Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012 [1962]); Riley E. Dunlap, et al., 'Measuring Endorsement of the New Ecological Paradigm: A Revised NEP Scale', *Journal of Social Issues*, 56 (2000), 425–42.

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From Textual to Cultural Meaning: ‘Tjanne’/‘Barbel’ in Contextual Perspective

Isabelle Peere

The ballad world lies somewhere between fiction and reality – but *where* exactly? In addressing essential, universal, and timeless life issues, such as self-realization *vis-à-vis* social norms and family authority, loyalty and fidelity in love, sense and courage in bereavement, and so on, traditional ballads show no leaning towards escapism or triviality. Their protagonists’ trials, however dramatized, still speak to us as they surely did to their living and singing communities. But what did these dramas mean to them that might be lost to us? Where do traditional song and individual and social reality connect? How do song texts articulate cultural meaning?

Such complex questions underlie modern interpretive folk song research, as they do all folkloristic research. Back in 1985, David Buchan had already said that it was ‘a truism that from a correlation of a piece of folklore with its social context, its cultural context, and its performance context emerges the full meaning of that text or item’.[1] Soon after, Michael Pickering paved the way for this fascinating task, while cautioning against pitfalls and shortcuts in either direction, from text to context, and conversely:

> Cultural texts do not relate in any transparent way to a social context. Song, as an artistic product and activity, cannot be understood simply in its own terms [. . .] But song as well cannot be understood as if it stood in direct correspondence to specific social and historical conditions. Song texts do not simply reflect or mirror a society [. . .] While they are inextricably bound up with social contexts and relations, with ideology and consciousness, it is important not to lose sight of the specificity of song texts and tunes – their particular aesthetic texture and value – and important as well to see song as always in some sense a mediation and construction of social reality.[2]

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[1] David Buchan, ‘Performance Contexts in Historical Perspective’, *New York Folklore*, 11 (1985), 61–78 (p. 61).

[2] Michael Pickering, ‘Song and Social Context’, in *Singer, Song and Scholar*, ed. Ian Russell (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), pp. 73–93 (pp. 74–75).

The same sound precepts have been verified in fields beyond folk song. Concluding his review of Evald Tang Kristensen's 127 informants Bengt Holbek suggests that 'there are strong indications that close connections existed between the living conditions of the narrators and their fairy tales', and Lutz Röhrich, assuming that 'tales reflect the experiences of the poor in their daily lives', nonetheless states that fairy tales 'are a means of transforming what one sees, of re-creating reality'.[3] Still, Michèle Simonsen has felt the need to respond to the 'insidious drift from *connection to reflection*':

> the relationship between reality and fiction is not a direct reflection, but a complex process of transformations [. . .]
>
> The question of folktales' relationship with reality is directly connected with the question of their function. Of course, folktales get their starting point and their basic dynamics from the real life of their audience, otherwise they would be irrelevant, indeed downright meaningless. But simple common sense can tell us that people do not need a mirror image, a cloned image, of reality. What they need is to come to terms to reality; and that is something quite different. Fiction – storytelling – is one way of coming to terms to reality.[4]

Thus forewarned, I set out on my own venture: exploring the *connections* between a traditional Flemish ballad and its singing and living community as an approach to its cultural meaning.

'Tjanne'/'Barbel', as this ballad is indexed in the Dutch/Flemish song database,[5] belongs to the widespread international ballad type indexed in Grundtvig's canon as 'Moderen under Mulde' ['The Buried Mother'] (*DgF* 89).[6] The type's narrative hinges on a dead mother's return to, or at least contact with, her children, left at the mercy of their remarried father and/or his new wife's neglect and/or cruelty. True to its genre, the ballad makes little concession to sentimental

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[3] Bengt Holbek, *Interpretation of Fairy Tales: Danish Folklore in a European Perspective*, FF Communications, 239 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia/Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1987), pp. 182–83, 601.

[4] Michèle Simonsen, 'Some Remarks on the "Reflection Theory" as Applied to Folktales', in *Telling Reality: Folklore Studies in Memory of Bengt Holbek*, ed. Michael Chesnutt, Nordic Institute of Folklore Publications, 26 (Copenhagen and Turku: University of Copenhagen, 1993), pp. 121–41 (pp. 121, 124).

[5] Nederlandse Liederenbank http://www.liederenbank.nl/resultaatlijst.php?zoek=1073&actie=incipitnorm&lan=nl.

[6] Sven Grundtvig, *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Forlagt af Samfundet til den Danske Literaturs Fremme, 1856), pp. 470–91.

effusion, even less to the illusory denial of death and its inevitable consequences. True also to its sub-generic group, this ballad revenant returns to her loved ones for their own benefit. Yet if untimely death and mourning for a loved one are common in balladry, this plot addresses bereavement in a specific and extreme case – that of young children whose grief for their mother is aggravated by the effects of their father's remarriage.

The ballad in Flemish tradition: 'Tjanne'/'Barbel'

I start out from Pickering's methodological recommendation that 'we need first of all to recognize the genesis of a song's meanings in the text itself [. . .] What a song means at any time is, to varying degrees, conditioned by the poetic text: the text delimits and initially generates the possible number and type of meanings which can be derived from it.'[7] Luckily, the five Flemish versions of the ballad, entitled 'Tjanne', 'Barbel', or variants thereof, were all recorded from oral tradition and are remarkably contextualized (*Table 1*).

	de Coussemaker	**Lootens–Feys**	**Blyau–Tasseel (no. 38)**	**Blyau–Tasseel (no. 37)**	**Cafmeyer**
Title	'Tjanne'	'Barbel'	'Van Tjanneke'	'Van Tjannetje'	–
Singer	?	Lootens's mother	Ms Valérie / Ms Ingelaere	Ms Ingelaere / Ms Valérie	Babetje
Place	Cassel-Bailleul	Bruges	Ypres	Ypres	Moerkerke
Date	1856	1879	1900–02	1900–02	1957
Extent	8 stanzas	17 stanzas	18 stanzas	16 stanzas	24 stanzas

Table 1. Summary of Flemish records of 'Tjanne'/'Barbel'.
Sources (with abbreviations used in *Table 2* below):
E. de Coussemaker, *Chants populaires des Flamands de France* (1930 [1856]), pp. 211–13. = **de C**
Ad.-R. Lootens et J. M. E. Feys, *Chants populaires flamands* (1990 [1879]), pp. 107–08. = **L–F**
Albert Blyau en Marcellus Tasseel, *Iepersch Oud-Liedboek* (1962 [1900–02]), pp. 110–13 (no. 38). = **B–T (38)**
Albert Blyau en Marcellus Tasseel, *Iepersch Oud-Liedboek* (1962 [1900–02]), pp. 106–09 (no. 37). = **B–T (37)**
Madga Cafmeyer, 'Babetje van de kosters vertelt over Damme', *Biekorf*, 58 (1957), 238–39. = **C**

[7] Pickering, 'Song and Social Context', p. 75.

Of the five versions,[8] four were collected and published with text and music in the three earliest Flemish scholarly song collections (de Coussemaker, Lootens–Feys, Blyau-Tasseel), two of which, fortunately, consist of essentially individual repertoires with fair to ample information on the singers' social backgrounds and performance contexts. The fifth and most recent version, untitled and without music, was collected and published verbatim by Madga Cafmeyer as one of her informants' personal oral testimonies, which also gives a sense of the singer's personality.

The five Flemish texts of 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' fall into two divergent plot lines, one 'religious' and the other 'parodic', as I would call them (*Table 2*).

religious plot	**parodic plot**	**de C**	**L–F**	**B–T (38)**	**B–T (37)**	**C**
opening husband–wife dialogue		•	•	•		
dying wife leaves him recommendations			•	•		
husband's hasty remarriage		•	•	•		
	mother's rapid decline, death, and burial				•	•
dying mother is taken up to heaven						
stepmother mistreats the children		•	•	•		
eldest son comforts his siblings			•	•		
children go to their mother's grave		•	•	•		
their prayer causes grave to open						
they say they are hungry, ask her to go begging with them		•		•		
she answers that she cannot move		•		•		
mother feeds and tends to her younger two		•	•	•		
mother sends her eldest to beg, with Christian instructions			•	•		
he applies her instructions perfectly			•	•		
he dies and is taken up to heaven			•	•		

[8] The Nederlandse Liederenbank lists nineteen instances of the ballad, but fourteen of these are reprints.

religious plot	parodic plot	de C	L–F	B–T (38)	B–T (37)	C
	peaceful family life, wife's sudden death				•	
	husband mourns her bitterly				•	
	three days later, wife returns home at midnight				•	•
	she knocks on the door				•	•
	neighbours cry out to husband to open				•	
	wife reassures her husband				•	•
	wife–husband dialogue				•	•
	wife returns to heaven, happy and triumphant				•	
	'the song was composed by an angel'				•	
	wife leaves by the back door, but decides to stay					•

Table 2. Motifs in Flemish versions of 'Tjanne'/'Barbel'.

Let us consider the structural meanings of both types on the basis of two versions, chosen on the basis of the data available concerning their individual contexts.

The religious plot

I have chosen the Lootens–Feys version, entitled 'Barbel', to illustrate the religious plot line:

Andante.
Wel, Bar-bel, zei hij, Bar - bel, en waar - om en
zingt gij niet meer? Wel, Jan, en wat zou - de ik
zin - gen, bij drie da-gen en ziet gij mij niet meer.

'Wel, Barbel, zei hij, Barbel, / En waarom en zingt gij niet meer?'
'Wel, Jan, en wat zoude ik zingen? / Bij drie dagen en ziet gij mij niet meer.
(*'Well, Barbel, he said, why don't you sing any more?'*
'Well, Jan, and what would I sing, three days from now and you won't see me any more.')

'Wel, Jan, als ik kome te sterven, / En trouw met geen booze huisvrouw.
Alle drie onz' onnoozele kinderen, / Hun hertje zou scheuren van rouw.
(*'Well, Jan, if I come to die, don't marry a wicked housewife*
Our three innocent children their heart it would break from grief.')

's Nachts omtrent den twaalf uren, / Vrouw Barbel die gaf haren geest;
Er kwamen bij duizende engeltjes / Al om haar ziele 't was allermeest.
(*Around twelve that night, Barbel passed away,*
And a thousand small angels came by her to receive her soul, it was most important.)

Als 't drie dagen en drie nachten geleden was, / En Jan trouwde met een ander huisvrouw.
All drie die onnoozele kindertjes / Hun hertje die scheurde van rouw.
(*When three days and three nights had passed, Jan married another housewife,*
These three innocent children their hearts broke from grief.)

Maar 's nachts omtrent den twaalf uren, / 't Kleenste kind die gaf een schreeuw,
En zij riep naar haren oudsten zone: / 'Kom, paai er uw booze Machiel!'
(*But around twelve that night, the youngest child cried out,*
And she called out to her eldest son: 'Come and quieten your naughty Machiel!')

En zij gaf het wel een kaaksmete, / Dat het met zijn hersens vloog tegen den steen.
'Zij zoete, mijn jongste gebroedertje, / Zij zoete, en en krijsch er niet meer.
(*And she slapped his cheek so hard that his brains hit the floor.*
'Be good, my sweet youngest brother, be good and cry no more.)

Morgen uchtend ten negen uren / Zullen wij naar 't graf van ons eerste vrouw-moedertje gaan.'
's Morgens om negen uur / Zagen wij deze drie kinderen gaan.
(*Tomorrow morning at nine we'll go to our dear first mother's grave.'*
The next morning at nine we saw these three children on their way.)

Als zij op 't kerkhof kwamen, / Zij vielen op hunne knieën,
En zij lazen en zij baden en zij baden, / En de aarde sprong open in drien.

(*When they came to the churchyard, they fell upon their knees,*
And they read and recited prayers, and the earth opened up in three.)

En zij nam het eerste kind op, / En zij steld' het op haar schoot,
En zij gaf het wel eens te zuigen, / Gelijk een vrouw in haar leven zou doen.

(*And she took the first child up, and took it on her lap,*
And she suckled it as a living woman would.)

En zij nam het tweed kind op, / En zij steld' het nevens haar zij.
En zij gaf het wel eens te spelen, / Met de beentjes die op de gewijd' aarde zijn.

(*And she took the second one up, and she sat it by her.*
And she got it to play with the bones that lay on the consecrated ground.)

En zij riep naar haren oudsten zone: / 'En ga bedel uw dagelijksch brood.
En als de lieden komen te geven, / Zeg er nu altijd: "God loon't!"'

(*And she called her eldest son: 'Go and beg your daily bread.*
And when you receive any, always say: 'God will reward you for it!'")

En doe drie maal uw reverentie, / Ja, uw reverentie geheel schoon.
En als de lieden komen te vragen, / 'Wie heeft er u dat geleerd?'

(*And three times make a gentle bow, yes, do so the nicest way you can.*
And if anyone asks you, 'Who taught you so?')

'Vrouw Barbel, mijn eerste vrouw-moeder, / En ik hoop dat zij is bij den Heer.'
De zoon keerde hem omme, / En hij ging er alzoo zijnen gang,

(*'Barbel, my dear first mother, and I hope you are with the Lord.'*
The son turned round and so went his way.)

Tot aan een koningspoorte / Waar hij aan de belle klonk.
En hij vroeg er zijn dagelijksch brood.

(*Until he came to a king's gate where he rang the bell.*
And he asked for his daily bread.)

De lieden kwamen te geven, / En hij zei er altijd: 'God loon't!'
En hij deed er wel drie maal zijn reverentie, / Ja, zijn reverentie geheel schoon.

(*He received some and always said: 'God will reward you for it!'*
And he made three gentle bows, yes, very nicely so.)

De lieden kwamen te vragen: / 'Wie heeft er dat u geleerd?'
'Vrouw Barbel, mijn eerste vrouw moeder, / En ik hoop zij is bij den Heer!'

(*They asked him: 'Who taught you so?'*
'Barbel, my dear first mother, and I hope that she is with the Lord!')

En de zoon keerde hem omme, / En hij ging wel zijnen gang.
Maar 's nachts omtrent den twaalf uren / En de zoon gaf zijnen geest.
(*And the son turned round and went his way.*
But around twelve that night he passed away.)

This and the other two versions realizing the religious plot line are articulated around the following constant motifs: the initial husband–wife dialogue, the husband's hasty marriage, the stepmother's mistreatment of the children, the children going to their mother's grave, their prayer causing her grave to open, and their mother feeding and tending to the younger two. In addition, at least two of these texts include the wife's recommendations to her husband before she dies, the eldest child comforting the younger ones after their stepmother's abuse, the mother answering their plea saying that she cannot rise to go begging with them, her sending the eldest child begging with Christian instructions (piety, humility, and gratitude), and his perfect obedience followed by his own blessed death. This plot line delivers an unequivocal meaning: the drama unfolds between the death of a saintly mother and that of her worthy eldest son, who, following in her footsteps, will soon join her in heaven. Her only concern for her children as she lies dying is reiterated by the eldest son's tender comforting and leading of his siblings to her grave. So her piety is carried on in her children's own fervent prayer, which 'opens' her grave as well as heaven for them all.

Within the same narrative tension and logic, the father's ignorance of his dying wife's recommendations 'not to marry an evil housewife' (Lootens–Feys), or to remarry at all (Blyau–Tasseel), for their children's sake, and his rushing into remarriage all the same – when she is 'hardly buried' (de Coussemaker), 'after three days and three nights' (Lootens–Feys), or 'two or three months' (Blyau–Tasseel) – leads to his victimizing the children after offending his dying wife. In contrast to their father and their stepmother, the children visit and pray at their mother's grave, proving their unwavering attachment to her as much as their faith in God's providence. Thus by resolving the drama through blessing and bliss for the wronged children, this plot articulates a lesson of active resilience in the deepest grief and loneliest hardship, sustained by faith and a mother's loving and inspiring memory. Its good versus evil characterization – a saintly mother compared with an inadequate father and a hostile stepmother – and

the spotlight on the eldest son as a role model cast in the perfect mould of his mother, suggest the plot's edifying function.

The parodic plot

The very different scenario of the two texts following the parodic plot line is illustrated here by Magda Cafmeyer's version:

> Den eersten dag is zij ziek geworden,
> den tweeden dag is zij gestorven,
> den derden dag naar Gods behagen
> zag men dat vrouwtje naar 't kerkhof dragen.
> 't Werd nacht, 't werd nacht, 't werd middernacht,
> dat vrouwtje verrees al uit haar graf.
> Al uit haar graf is zij verrezen
> en naar haar huis is zij getreden,
> zij gaf een klopje op de deur
> en heur man zei: wie is er daar?
> Ach lieve man verschrik niet zere,
> ik ben gezonden van God den Here.
> Zijt gij gezonden van God den Heer?
> zeg waarom dat gij wederomkeert.
> – Omdat gij ons kindertjes wel zoudt leren
> en brengen tot 's hemels Heren,
> omdat gij ons kindertjes wel zoudt spijzen
> en brengen tot 's hemels paradijzen.
> Zij is al 't achterpoortje uitgegaan
> en zei: och God hier zal ik staan,
> ze zei: och God hier zal ik rusten
> met all zesse mijn onnozele dutsen,
> ze zei: och God hier zal ik slapen
> met all zesse mijn onnozele shapen.

> (*On the first day she became ill,*
> *On the second day she died,*
> *On the third day by God's will*
> *we saw that dear woman carried to the churchyard.*
> *Night came, night came, midnight came*
> *that dear woman rose yet from her grave*
> *yet out of her grave she rose*
> *and to her home she went*
> *she knocked on the door*
> *and her husband said: Who is there?*
> *Ah, dear husband, don't you be afraid*
> *I am sent by the Lord God*
> *Are you sent by the Lord God?*

Say why it is that you come back
– So that you'd bring up our dear little children well
and lead them to the Lord's heaven,
so that you'd nourish our dear little children well
and lead them to the Lord's paradise.
She's come out by the back door
and said: Oh Lord here I shall stay,
she said: Oh Lord here I shall rest
with all six of my poor innocent ones,
she said: Oh Lord here I shall sleep
with all six of my innocent sheep.)

This plot, surprisingly, dispenses with the father's remarriage and even with the physical presence of the children. No tragic staging of a dying mother and her deprived children versus their callous husband and cruel stepmother, no grave opening miraculously, no exhortation to prayer and faith, no empathy or admiration for a saintly mother and her children. And not much of a narrative either, just an exchange between a dead wife returning to her husband with a heavenly mission: that of reprimanding him for his neglect of the children's proper care and Christian education.[9]

We might think that this is far removed from the former scenario and its pathos. A closer look at the plot, though, reveals recognizable motifs, however distorted or shifted: *this mother* leaving her grave as soon as she is buried is evocative of the former husband's hasty remarriage, whereas her unsolicited return to her husband stands in complete contrast to the grieving children visiting Barbel's grave for succour; so, too, does *this husband*'s fright at seeing his wife return offset the former husband's casual ignorance of Barbel's deathbed recommendations. Yet what essentially distinguishes the two plots is the shift of the opening husband–wife dialogue to centre-stage, with the effect that *this couple*'s confrontation replaces the mother–children interaction as the song's narrative and emotional core.

The couple's exchange still concerns their children's well-being, namely their receiving 'good food' and a proper 'Christian education', both of which the mother of the religious plot herself provides from her grave. However, *this saintly wife* is sent to her husband because his care of the children in these respects has been found lacking – and,

[9] In his article on the Flemish ballad's theme, Hervé Stalpaert, 'Uit de dood verrezen moeder verzorgt haar kinderen', *Biekorf*, 75 (1974), 343–52, considers Cafmeyer's text a 'fragment' of a lacemakers' work song: 'Uit de dood verrezen moeder verzorgt haar kinderen.'

with God's help, she gets the better of him. More facetiously still, on her way out she suddenly chooses to 'rest' right outside his door (an embarrassment to him?), preferring her sweet children's company to that of heaven. There can be little doubt that this humorous twist, parodying the narrative by turning it into a domestic quarrel, serves a different function from the religious plot, which our examination of the respective singing and performance context(s) needs to elucidate.

Individual and performance contexts

As David Hopkin points out, 'the Flemish folksong corpus [. . .] would be thin indeed if it were not for the collections made among the lacemakers of Douai, Bruges and Ypres'.[10] Indeed, at least four, if not all five, of the versions of 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' are directly connected to lacemaking, a fact that is easy to explain in the light of social history. Up until the early decades of the twentieth century, Flanders was mostly rural; in the summer many men were forced to seek farm work in France, and in the winter, when male labourers were without work, it was the women's lacemaking that fed the families. For most of its history, Flemish lacemaking, poorly paid as it was, was a remedy against misery, and even after its rapid decline in the wake of the First World War it still compensated for the men's mostly insufficient earnings.[11] Bobbin lacemaking, as a cottage industry, employed the large majority of the female population in town and country.

Lacemaking also had other virtues. Lootens and Feys's field collection provides exceptional information on the collective singing and performance contexts of its contents. In his foreword Lootens (the collector) explains that up to 1790, prior to the creation of nursery schools, infants, including children of the better classes, were sent to lacemakers' schools and would sit in the space left free behind the workers, whose monotonous activities were interspersed with prayer, Christian teaching, and singing. Twice a day an hour of silence was set aside for prayers, learning the alphabet, and some reading. As for the girls of the more modest families, once aged six or seven they would commit themselves to working for the workshop's mistress for another five years, which was the time necessary to become accomplished in the craft. After hearing the same songs sung morning

[10] David Hopkin, *Voices of the People in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 225.

[11] Emiel Buysse, 'Spellewerkend zie 'k u geerne . . .!', *'t Beertje*, 28 (1969), 49–54 (pp. 51–52). For a brief history of the Flemish lacemaking, see Jos De Smet, 'Spellewerk in Vlaanderen', *'t Beertje*, 28 (1969), 12–19.

and evening for three or four years, they would be able to join in the singing while being closely monitored by their elders.[12]

Lootens further explains that the 161 songs and twenty-one recited pieces comprising his collection came to him from virtually a single source: a lady born in Bruges in 1795, who, gifted with a remarkable intelligence and an outstanding memory, managed to remember practically 'all the pieces that her father and mother sang to her in her early years, as well as those that were repeated on and on in the lacemakers' schools'; this, the collector adds, might be called 'the repertoire of a lady of the polite middle class of Bruges'.[13] Here, then, is the singer of 'Barbel'.

If, for all this lady's remarkable memory and talent, Lootens's portrait of his source is of little help in interpreting what her version of the ballad meant to her and her peers, her vast and representative repertoire is a testimony in itself. My previous analysis of this repertoire reveals the coherence of our ballad's textual meaning within the overall mental universe projected through its diverse contents.[14] The categories of 'Christmas carols and canticles', 'mystical and moral songs', as well as the 'narrative songs, sagas, ballads and legends', which together account for about one third of the song material, articulate a coherent message recommending faith and family as supreme values.

Of these song categories, the twenty 'Christmas carols and canticles' give the clearest demonstration of this twofold foundation, here proposed as a guideline through the tribulations of life and a guarantee of eternal bliss. In these songs belonging to the repertoire of the lacemaking schools, the Virgin Mary's smile directed at her baby and Saint Joseph's zeal to provide for mother and child are emblematic of the Christian family: a hardworking and devoted father next to a pure, humble, and self-effacing wife and mother. As 'the queen of heaven and protector of the family',[15] as one of these songs calls her, she is *the* female role model, in this repertoire as well as in

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[12] Ad.-R. Lootens et J. M. E. Feys, *Chants populaires flamands, avec les airs notés et poésies populaires diverses recueillies à Bruges* (Antwerpen: K. C. Peeters-Instituut voor Volkskunde, 1990 [1879]), pp. vi–vii.

[13] Lootens et Feys, *Chants populaires flamands*, pp. iii–iv.

[14] Isabelle Peere, 'Le répertoire d'une dame de la bonne bourgeoisie de Bruges (1879): Pièces d'identités, traces de mentalités', in *Balada şi studiile despre baladă la cumpana dintre secole*, ed. Nicolae Constantinescu, Proceedings of the 30th International Ballad Conference (SIEF), University of Bucharest (Bucharest: Editura Deliana, 2001) pp. 175–86 (pp. 179–80).

[15] Lootens et Feys, *Chants populaires flamands*, p. 26 ('Nieuwjaar lied', stanza 4).

Flemish religious culture. And as the iconography mostly presents her carrying, if not suckling, the Christ child, there is not a great distance to the saintly ballad mother 'Barbel' and her children.

Whether or not Lootens's informant learned 'Barbel' from her parents or from her early years in lacemakers' school, there is evidence that our ballad was known and sung by lacemakers at their work. Some decades after Lootens recorded the pieces of his collection, Blyau and Tasseel published theirs.[16] Again, the 234 songs in their collection also originate essentially from a single source, a 'Ms Ingelaere, known as Mietje Weuten', whom Blyau (the collector) describes as 'a middle-aged, practically illiterate, lacemaker from Ypres'. He also collected songs from another middle-aged lacemaker from the same area, 'Ms Valérie', whose lesser contribution to his collection, he explains, was mostly used 'for additions and corrections' to Ms Ingelaere's repertoire.[17] What is noteworthy is that each of them delivered versions both of the religious and the parodic types of the ballad, both indexed among *tellingen* ('tells'), the counting songs used to pace the lacemakers' collective work. On this evidence that both plot lines of the ballad coexisted in the lacemakers' repertoire, let us try and account for their opposite treatments of its narrative.

The answer, I suggest, lies in the only existing singer's oral testimony relating to 'Tjanne'/'Barbel'. This we owe to Magda Cafmeyer, a keen observer of all aspects of folk life and collector of oral history in and around her native Bruges. Whereas Blyau deplored the difficulty of finding lacemakers willing to sing or even able to remember much of 'the old lacemakers' repertoire', Cafmeyer's personal relationship with and genuine care for her informants – elderly working-class women born around the 1870s – gave her access to such testimonies.[18] It is in one of these uninterrupted monologues about 'the old days', delivered in the local West Flemish dialect of Bruges, that a complete version of the parodic plot line came up.

With this text comes the single individual voice (and personality) behind 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' in Flemish oral tradition: that of 'Babetje van de kosters' ('Babetje of the sacristans' family'), as she was known. As

[16] Albert Blyau en Marcellus Tasseel, *Iepersch Oud-Liedboek: Teksten en Melodieën uit den volksmond opgetekend* (Brussel: Koninklijke Belgische Kommissie voor Volkskunde, 1962 [1900–02]).

[17] Blyau en Tasseel, *Iepersch Oud-Liedboek*, pp. 13–14.

[18] Blyau en Tasseel, *Iepersch Oud-Liedboek*, pp.11–13; Stefaan Top, 'In Memoriam Magda Cafmeyer (1899–1983)', *Volkskunde*, 84 (1983), 76–77. Besides Magda Cafmeyer's other articles cited below, see also 'Leerschool en spellenwerkschool te St.-Kruis', *'t Beertje*, 28 (1969), 20–48.

for knowing how the ballad might relate to the individual life and context of its tradition-bearers, Babetje's personal introduction is informative:

> Of my parents I needn't speak 'cos I never knew them; father and mother died of smallpox in 1871, ten days apart from each other, and they put me in St Laureins' orphanage and I stayed there until I was thirteen.
>
> But I went [back] there for the installation of the new priest and I saw something that I won't forget in my life; I can still see it happen in front of my eyes, you'll hear:
>
> There was a funeral and the old priest couldn't get through his prayers any more: reek . . . reek . . . reek and this ree-quie-em couldn't come out any more; they carried him right away to the sacristy on the same stretcher [the one on which the coffin lay] and he died.
>
> This priest had never been priest elsewhere than at St Laureins: deacon[?], curate, vicar and finally dead of asthma; so that half of the parishioners had never seen an installation and everybody from Balgerhoeke wanted to help install the new priest.
>
> We, the orphans, were also marching in the procession behind the donkey with which the Virgin represented the flight into Egypt, and when we got to the church all the people wanted to get inside to hear the new priest. The Virgin Mary was spurring the donkey on to get inside too, right up to the confessional and there too we were standing just behind them. That went very well until at the opening of the mass; all at once the music started with these copper trumpets which made the windows tremble, and then a musician too beat a big drum which startled the orphans. At such noise the donkey kicked out his hind legs high up in the air and our Virgin Mary in her coat fell flat on the floor and scrambling up to our feet and chairs trying to get herself up again. Saint Joseph was doing his best and quietly swearing 'Ko, God damn you, God . . .' but the donkey sang and brayed louder than anyone: 'ie, aa, ie, aa' echoing throughout the church. We, the orphans, giggled and brayed along. All the people, even the elderly bigots, burst out laughing and the men were struggling to hasten through the overturned chairs. But our Ko wouldn't budge, and with all the pulling and pushing around it, and in obvious pain, the little animal dropped what formed a small heap and passed water all around the confessional until they had to move the stubborn beast out and tie it up to the church fence outside.[19]

[19] Magda Cafmeyer, 'Babetje van de kosters vertelt over Damme', *Biekorf*, *58* (1957), 203–09, 232–42 (pp. 203–04).

It would be hard to find a more vivid illustration of a humorously subversive narrative: a funeral mass ending up with the celebrant stretched out on the catafalque, a new priest's solemn installation embellished by a nativity play turning to eschatological farce, hymn singing giving way to braying, and rows of hilarious orphans leading on the 'elderly bigots'.

Akin to this carnivalesque account, Babetje's other memories hinge on the humorous deflating of figures of authority, such as a killjoy priest celebrating the village feast, and a man 'who played mayor all his life until he lay on his deathbed'. Then comes a legendary narrative about a young man betting with his friends that he will dare to fetch his coat from the churchyard at midnight; once there, his sleeve gets stuck on the beam of a cross and the fright kills him the next day. 'And talking of the churchyard', Babetje goes on, 'this old lacemakers' song that they sang in Moerkerke [her village] comes to my mind', and there follows her recitation (or singing?) of the ballad (above).[20] Is such a rebuff of male bragging as 'performance context' not fully in line with the ballad husband learning his script from his dead wife?

If this is the only song text Babetje recalled, it shows the same subversive humour as runs throughout her recollections. I found a similar self-affirming rhetoric among the memories of another of Cafmeyer's elderly informants. Lene recalls how, as a beginner at school, she outwitted her imposing questioner, and was rewarded for it:

> I was quite good at studying by heart and as we sat at the table, the inspector priest came up: 'What are the things that you know and that you don't?' – 'That we must die and don't know when.' The priest laughed: 'Well said, girl'. And I, who couldn't read, was called up sixteenth out of sixty-nine girls. I was clothed by the priest from head to toe, and on Friday evening mother got a full basket of food and a bar of soap, as well as the church book. On the Saturday she got raisin bread and a voucher for one kilo of meat soup from the butcher's opposite the presbytery.[21]

These unique testimonies tally with Gerald Porter's data on English lacemakers and David Hopkin's on lacemakers in the Vellay region of France, suggesting that such humour has less to do with Babetje's

[20] Cafmeyer, 'Babetje van de kosters vertelt over Damme', pp. 206–07, 238–39.

[21] Cafmeyer, 'Oude Brugse spellewerksters vertellen', *Biekorf*, 69 (1968), 214–23, 276–83, 360–66 (p. 219).

personality than with these women's collective life experience and sub-culture within a patriarchal society.[22]

Fietje Perre, another of Cafmeyer's informants, recalled her own father's authority:

> I won't be able to tell you much more about the lace, but my sister Kletje would help you better. Well, Lord, the little girl had been bewitched on her potty while she was biting into an apple with her two teeth. They offered all the masses they could, to Job in Saint-Salvator and Idesbald in the Pottery, but the little girl remained handicapped. Well, Kletje went to the parish school in the Meulemeers and stayed there making lace until she was thirty-eight. Oh, she had such a nice voice, and when she sang about 'Alfons en Dalia', everybody listened to her in the street, it was really worth it.
>
> But I, when I turned ten, 'You stay at home', father said. 'It couldn't be otherwise: mother had become ill from having had so many children and when I got home from catechism – I still had to make my first communion – we had no mother any more. Yes, dear, so it happened, so don't ask, I was a slave by the age of ten.[23]

In contrast to this, the testimonies from the women variously evoke their close relationships with their mothers and other female relatives, and acknowledge their hard work, responsibility, and resourcefulness as an early example to themselves. This comes from Lene:

> Surely you've known my dear departed mother? She would go to Dudzele and Saint-Joris on pilgrimage every year and saw that she had put enough money aside to join in. Good God, how this woman toiled to raise her pack of children; but people had a heart for each other, what else would they have done? [. . .]
>
> Oh! Mum was so good at counting out and bartering for the best [. . .]
>
> When did I go to lacemakers' school? Mum went when she was six [. . .] in my time you could join at eleven or twelve, after your first communion [. . .] The sister paid a small amount to keep parents and children happy from these first little jobs. At thirteen, I had earned 14 francs in three months and I hurried home, so glad that I was to give the money to mother.[24]

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[22] Gerald Porter, '"Work the Old Lady out of the Ditch": Singing at Work by English Lacemakers', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 31 (1994), 35–55; Hopkin, *Voices of the People in Nineteenth-Century France*, pp. 210–52.

[23] Cafmeyer, 'Oude Brugse spellewerksters vertellen', p. 217.

[24] Cafmeyer, 'Leerschool en spellenwerkschool te St.-Kruis', p. 36.

Marie spoke with pride about her aunt, who 'raised her disabled boy alone by giving catechism classes for next to nothing a week'.[25] Fietje Pere remembered a woman 'who sold more meat than a butcher; her husband worked in a slaughterhouse and brought all the entrails home and she cleaned and cooked them with salt and pepper: so cheap and good that the street ate nothing else'.[26]

Hopkin observes that the Vellave lacemakers' work 'had some compensations, of which the most important was their collective life' and that 'this collective life found expression in song'. Evoking their *maison d'assemblée*, where women 'worked and socialized outside the family in multi-generational but single-sex groups', he quotes a former lacemaker: 'It wasn't bad, we laughed there, we sang! We sang hymns and religious songs obviously but that didn't matter, when together we joked anyway.'[27]

The fact that the Flemish lacemakers also knew how to work, sing, and joke together outside of their own domestic environment is illustrated in another of Lene's accounts:

> If I may say this of myself, I was a fine lacemaker and earned good money, 'cause I went to school until I was twenty, and I married in 1912. Did I work on at my cushion? Well, yes, in between my work. In the summer we would sit nicely three or four of us in a row in the shadow of the street, and whoever had a voice sang the songs of the time:
>
> Mietje was sitting moaning
> her coat was stuck
> she couldn't get it free
> as there was rot already in the pocket.
>
> [*Refrain*]
> Yes, yes, it will be okay
> the lace will go up
> and we're going to wear the crinoline
> to please the young men
> allee allee allong
> van klietse kletse hoepze maar
> cut them alright!
>
> The man came home from his work
> where he found no meal

[25] Cafmeyer, 'Oude Brugse spellewerksters vertellen', p. 223.
[26] Cafmeyer, 'Oude Brugse spellewerksters vertellen', p. 215.
[27] Hopkin, *Voices of the People in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 227.

he made a scene
and he knocked Mietje to the floor.[28]

Here, then, is an emblematic 'Mietje', wretched to the point that bad luck ruins her threadbare coat, but the only effect is to boost her lace production and turn around her bad fortune: the crinoline she is making she will wear *herself*, and with it turn the heads of young seducers – until her husband calls her back to order and daily reality.

Beyond its pace-setting function, can there be much doubt that these women's self-derisive play in reversing their workaday reality is a fruit of the same subversive loom, or lace cushion, as that of Babetje, of Blyau's two lacemakers, and, as Porter claims, of their English counterparts? 'Since changing the textual system is easier than changing the social system, the lacemakers' songs were a consciousness-raising activity empowering a group that had no collective authority within patriarchal discourse.'[29] Seen in the light of the Flemish (and other) lacemakers' narrative style and singing repertoire, surely Babetje's parodic version of 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' is no greater surprise than Cafmeyer's photograph of her, showing this sacristan's widow delivering her churchyard humour, her rosary beads in her hands. Not to forget that de Coussemaker, who published the earliest religious version of the ballad in his *Chants populaires des Flamands de France*, writes both of the 'Flemish people's profoundly religious character showing through everything', and, two pages further on, that 'the Flemish folk has an inborn mocking spirit'.[30]

The ballad in inter-cultural perspective: 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' versus 'Moderen under Mulde'

Let us turn now to the international representation of the ballad type to test the textual meanings of the Flemish texts against their structural meanings. In addition to my analyses of the French-speaking records of the ballad,[31] Larry Syndergaard's generous translations and guidance have enabled me to consider the most relevant Danish versions of 'Moderen under Mulde'. Svend Grundtvig

[28] Cafmeyer, 'Oude Brugse spellewerksters vertellen', p. 220.
[29] Porter, ''Work the Old Lady out of the Ditch', p. 42.
[30] Edmond de Coussemaker, *Chants populaires des Flamands de France* (Lille: Giard, 1930 [1856]) pp. xix, xxi.
[31] Isabelle Peere, '"Les orphelins sur la tombe de leur mère" at the Crossing with Flemish Tradition,' in *Ethnic Mobility in Ballads: Selected Papers from the 44th International Ballad Conference of the Kommission für Volksdichtung*, ed. Andrew C. Rouse and David Atkinson (Pécs: Spechel, 2017), pp. 109–29.

was persuaded that, of all the European realizations of the ballad, the Danish versions were the oldest, a view that has not been challenged since. Erik Dal describes forty-eight of them (some admittedly fragmentary) falling into three types.[32] The version discussed here (*DgF* 89 øa) is representative of the third and most interesting type for illuminating the ballad's oldest form.[33] It was recorded from oral tradition in 1869 by Evald Tang Kristensen, and translated into English by Henry Meyer.[34] This is one of the rare renditions of the ballad into English to satisfy the criteria for close translation.[35]

Its singer, Sidsel Jensdatter (1793–1871) came from Ringkøbing Gellerup in West Jutland. To Bengt Holbek we owe the following information about her.[36] Born into the rural proletariat, this maidservant's daughter married a farmer's son but was left a widow two years later, with four children and only her knitting to subsist on. Holbek describes her as 'one of Kristensen's most renowned ballad singers and a capable fairy-tale narrator'. By the time he recorded this version from her she had sunk into poverty and was living alone, on parish relief, in a small miserable cottage. A biographical website provides the further information that she 'loved the old ballads' and knew many of them, along with facetious songs and a few tales and legends.[37] She lived a very isolated life and was on bad terms with the other villagers, who mostly belonged to the *Indre mission*, a strongly puritan popular movement that was opposed to dance, music, and so on. Rumour had it that she did not get on well with her husband.

Sidsel Jensdatter's ballad version is as follows. 'Fair Ellen rests with God in the sky' and there 'hears her little ones cry'. She asks the Lord permission to go home to them. Her request is granted, on condition that 'this time she does not cause any woe'. As she 'quietly walks in the dark', her approach to her former home sets the dogs barking. She is greeted by her eldest daughter, though not recognized at first. The revenant explains that she has long been dead and lying in her grave.

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[32] Grundtvig, *Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser*, vol. 2, pp. 470–91.
[33] Svend Grundtvig, Axel Olrik, Hakon Harald Grüner-Nielsen, Karl-Ivar Hilderman, Erik Dal, & Iørn Piø (eds), *Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser*, vol. 10 (Copenhagen: Forlagt af Samfundet til den Danske Literaturs Fremme, 1933–65), pp. 151–52.
[34] Erik Dal (ed.), *Danish Ballads and Folk Songs*, trans. Henry Meyer (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger; New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1967), pp. 43–47.
[35] Larry E. Syndergaard, *English Translations of the Scandinavian Medieval Ballads: An Analytical Guide and Bibliography* (Turku: Nordic Institute of Folklore, 1995), p. 69. I thank Bo Snyder for forwarding this version to me.
[36] Holbek, *Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, p. 63.
[37] Sidsel Jensdatter Biografi http://www.balladeskolen.dk/bio_sj.htm.

On finding the front door sealed with a cross and locked, she enters through a mouse hole. Her presence fills the children with joy, and as she starts brushing the hair of one and plaiting another's, she reminds her eldest of her responsibility: 'Your brothers and sisters you must thus treat, / you know full well that their mother is dead.' She suckles her youngest child: 'her milk is blessed'. She finds the bedroom also locked, but enters as before and there confronts her husband, Sir Peder, with a warning:

> Arise, Sir Peder, and speak to me:
> how have you acted and how may you be?
>
> Left I not gold enough so red,
> my little ones shouldn't cry for bread?
>
> Left I not candles by the score,
> my little ones should be in the dark no more?
>
> Left I not covers without flaw,
> my children shouldn't sleep on straw?'
>
> Again I surely must come to you,
> but this time I may not cause any woe.
>
> If I again must rise from the dead,
> I shall turn your eyes to the back of your head.
>
> And if again I must come back from the grave,
> the greatest misfortune you shall have.

Then, as she walks across the floor 'in wrath', and 'with all her little ones in her path', she tenderly takes leave of them, saying that 'in heaven the angels pine for her'. She hears the cock crowing as a signal that 'the dead must be back into earth', for 'heaven's doors are closing'. The ballad ends with the scene of her 'walking quietly in the dark again', which suggests that her warning has been heeded – if only for a short time yet:

> Fair Ellen walked quietly in the dark,
> and all the small dogs began to bark.
>
> The parents heard the little dogs bay,
> and then they bread to the children gave.
>
> And when they heard the little dogs growl,
> – *in the coppice* –
> they lit for the children candles all,
> – *in the coppice wither the roses.*

Regardless of whether the children's father and/or stepmother mend their ways or not, what stands out – here as in the other two types of the Danish ballad – is the centrality of the mother's accusing questions. As they consistently focus on how her legacy of material goods falls short of providing her children with food, proper clothing, light, and bedding, it would seem that in Denmark the ballad at its core addresses the misappropriation of a mother's inheritance by a father who remarries, at the expense of the children.

The Danish narrative combines the elements of both Flemish types: the mother–children interaction and the mother–husband confrontation; a 'pale and disfigured' revenant 'walking quietly in the dark' and a caring mother; her submission to God and indictment of her husband (with such powerful rhetoric that he is apparently pinned down speechless in his bed). In this tragicomic plot, the wrongdoers are confronted, the vital needs of the victims are addressed, and their rights (temporarily) restored. Fair Ellen's mission is accomplished – yet for all 'the angels pining for her in heaven', and her emphatic warning, sadly, if ironically, the 'dogs are soon heard to growl again'. Earthly life resumes its bitter course – for her (and her children) as it does for the emblematic Flemish 'Mietje' (*Table 3*).

Remarriage is not the same as marriage

Except for the Flemish parodic plot version, all the texts examined above reveal consistent dramatization – a young mother's premature death, her spouse's remarriage, her children's cruel neglect – and make coherent, if paradoxical, sense: the children's succour comes from their dead mother. The ballad sets at opposite poles a mother whose loving care for her children endures beyond death against a stepmother and/or father, whose indifference – if not hostility – endangers their lives. Suggestively, the children's cries are an imperative reminder of their presence – however problematic this may be for the new couple. The ballad thus embodies sound wisdom: remarriage cannot be embarked upon in denial of marriage; the children born of a first marriage are the 'crying' evidence of its indelibility. The existing family – as the locus of blood relationships, vital affective ties, and prime responsibilities – does not 'die' with the loss of a mother. This trauma, on the contrary, calls for reinforced attention to the vital needs, emotional as well as material, of those who are the most vulnerable to her loss.

plot elements/ agents	**West Jutland (Denmark)** (*DgF* 89 øa)	**Flanders (religious plot)** (Lootens–Feys)	**Flanders (parodic plot)** (Cafmeyer)
children's mother	'her milk was blessed'	dies a saintly death	dies a sudden death
father's remarriage	–	hasty	–
children's abuser(s)	'the parents'	evil second wife	father
nature of the abuse	neglect and deprivation	violence + food deprivation	neglect (food – piety)
contact initiator(s)	mother hears her children's cries	children go to mother's grave	mother is sent back by God
contact agent	mother's request to God	children's fervent prayer	–
	she visits her children	her grave 'opens in three'	she visits her husband
mother	is granted to return to her children	tends to them from her grave	–
	until the cock crows	just as a living mother does	
	brushes, suckles, clothes them	suckles, comforts	–
	berates the eldest	teaches the eldest	berates her husband
resolution	mother confronts and warns	–	mother confronts him
	the abusers 'in wrath'		(humorously)
	willingly returns to heaven	–	mother chooses to stay
	children are safe	the eldest is reunited	–
	(their rights restored)	with his mother and siblings in heaven	

Table 3. Comparison of Danish and Flemish ballad types.

Devotion and loyalty – or marriageability – as pillars of the family

Revealingly, whereas the pernicious effect of the situation should be obvious to their father (the children's cries being 'heard in heaven'), this father is conspicuous by his absence or his muteness before his returning wife. So, contrary to what a literal reading of the plot suggests, the ballad's prime concern, whether in Flanders or Denmark, could be neither with a father's remarriage nor even with an evil stepmother's mistreatment aggravating the orphans' bereavement, but with the man's shortcomings as a husband. The Danish mother's angry accusations about her husband's misappropriation of her inheritance (regardless even of the children's deprivation) reveals his disloyalty to her in the first place. Likewise, by opening its drama with the man's ignorance of his wife's last wishes and his hasty remarriage

(disrespecting the normal mourning period), the Flemish ballad shows him no more devoted to his children than to his wife, and no more competent in remarriage than in marriage.

The ballad thus portrays a paradoxical *paterfamilias*. It is his inability to 'recompose' the family responsibly around its existing members, thereby ensuring his children's wellbeing, whether by bringing in a 'proper' new wife, or through his new wife's 'proper' care, that brings about the further disintegration of the family. His own failure could be the cause of his new wife's failure to integrate the family as a stepmother in the etymological sense of becoming a new mother to a child whose natural mother has died. This one, instead, 'steps out' of the role ('feeding, clothing, comforting', and so on).

The children's helplessness ('What is your father doing at home?' asks Tjanne in de Coussemaker's version), deprivation ('food, gold, candles, covers') and/or abuse (physical and verbal violence as well as rejection) all speak of their alienation from their home and legacy (and even from their father) as a result of the brokenness of the vital parental relationship, and hence of the household. In keeping with the ballad genre's central concern with human relationships,[38] as attested by its stock of immature lovers, ruthless relatives, and so on, this ballad plot enacts yet another drama of family dysfunction, where rivalry wins over affection and young dependants find themselves at the mercy of undependable adults. The ballad's structural meaning could be formulated like this: boundless as a mother's devotion may be, family harmony also demands a father's ability to live up to his domestic role and responsibilities – and to be a loyal husband in the first place.

A woman's song

Whether in Denmark or in Flanders, the ballad enjoyed popularity: the numerous records of 'Moderen under Mulde' cover all the Nordic lands and 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' appears in all three nineteenth-century Flemish field collections. Moreover, all the texts studied here (including four, if not all five, of the Flemish records) were recorded from women singers, and its French equivalent is noted as 'one of the most popular songs among women in the [Velay] region'.[39] Granted that the ballad commonly belongs to the repertoire of rural Vellave women, that of 'middle-class ladies from Bruges', (poor) Flemish

[38] David Buchan, 'Propp's Tale Role and a Ballad Repertoire', *Journal of American Folklore*, 95 (1982), 159–72 (p. 168).
[39] Hopkin, *Voices of the People in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 245.

lacemakers, and Sidsel Jensdatter (living in even greater misery), the reason for its popularity must lie beyond individual, social, and regional particularities. We may hypothesize that the ballad, sung by women among themselves, whether in lacemakers' schools or women's social circles, would have been a medium through which 'women addressed women', including themselves.

The ballad's plot, whether religious, parodic, or tragicomic, features a central female protagonist whose only specification, apart from her name, if it is mentioned at all, is that she a wife and mother. Does this ballad mother's devotion to her own children, submission to her lot in life as in death, and to God's own will, not project a valorizing and inspiring role model for women – and the more so for all brave Flemish 'Mietjes' under the domestic rule of a questionable *paterfamilias*? Does the Danish revenant mother, as a divinely empowered restorer of rights and provider of luxuries for her children, not bring an (albeit illusory) compensation to the miserable, disrespected, and isolated Sisdel Jensdatter, who, 'born as an illegitimate daughter of *a husmand*'s [cottager's] daughter with a farmer's son',[40] had no right to anything – with barely a roof over her head, a self-made stove, a bed without either sheet or blanket, and only her hose-knitting beside her tragic ballads, facetious songs, fairy tales, and song compositions to support herself and her four children? And who knows if the 'dead' central protagonist of this ballad, sung by lady and lacemaker alike, is not a poetic cover or 'double' for *every* woman's 'dream of disalienation' from all forms of inferiority – social, domestic, and economic?[41]

The ballad in socio-historical perspective: Remarriage in the past

At the macro-level of our contextual perspective on 'Tjanne'/'Barbel', the proceedings of an international conference of historical demographers on marriage and remarriage in populations of the past affords a yet wider angle on the topical issue of the ballads. Alongside the narrative's psychological perceptiveness, these researchers' insights reveal its congruence with sociological realities, as these extracts from the introduction to the conference proceedings suggest:

> In the first place, remarriage is more important in populations of the past than is apparent at first sight. It was widespread in societies in

[40] Holbek, *Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, p. 63.

[41] The phrase is borrowed from Porter, ''Work the Old Lady out of the Ditch', p. 50.

> which death had the same relation to marriage that divorce has today [. . .] Secondly, it is impossible to study remarriage in isolation from the central institution of marriage itself [. . .]
>
> It [marriage] is an institution of major importance, not only to the spouses themselves, but to their kin, their offspring and to society as a whole. Because it is so fundamental, it is in most societies life-long and its indissolubility has been supported by religion. But, in populations of the past, life was short [. . .] The termination of the marriage through the death of one of the spouses was a disaster for the members of the household who were faced with possible extinction. Thus, remarriage may be regarded as a first line of defence, entered into in order to safeguard the continued existence of the surviving members of the household. Viewed in this way, remarriage in the past was very different from what it is today, when it often is a wholly new venture and frequently constitutes a fresh start for the surviving spouse in a new environment and with new equipment.[42]

Although Philippe Ariès cautions us to be aware of the evolving perception of remarriage over time, as well as to distinctions between doctrine and practice, town and country, and aristocratic and peasant families, what is certain is that remarriage was a familiar aspect of the daily life of all communities in the past, and the more so in the country.[43] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remarriage accounted for as many as 25 or 30 per cent of all marriages. Widowhood was frequently brief, sometimes lasting just a few months or even weeks. In the nineteenth century, however, this very high percentage declined, and the interval between one spouse's death and the other's remarriage became longer – too short an interval was no longer considered morally acceptable.

Martine Segalen, examining popular attitudes to remarriage in Europe over these centuries, remarks on the constant gender dissymmetry in remarriage.[44] As a rule, widowers outnumbered widows at all ages, which probably followed from the higher death

[42] J. Dupâquier, E. Hélin, P. Laslett, M. Livi-Bacci, and S. Sogner (eds), *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past / Mariage et remariage dans les populations du passé* (London: Academic Press, 1981).

[43] Philippe Ariès, 'Introduction to Part I: Laws and Customs Relating to Remarriage', in *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past / Mariage et remariage dans les populations du passé*, ed. J. Dupâquier, E. Hélin, P. Laslett, M. Livi-Bacci, and S. Sogner (London: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 27–34.

[44] Martine Segalen, 'Mentalité populaire et remariage en Europe Occidentale', in *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past / Mariage et remariage dans les populations du passé*, ed. J. Dupâquier, E. Hélin, P. Laslett, M. Livi-Bacci, and S. Sogner (London: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 67–77.

rate of women during the first twenty years of marriage, largely as a consequence of childbirth – which largely accords with the ballad scenario. Men also remarried more often and far earlier than widows, for reasons linked to economic, social, and cultural factors, of which the most determining were the status of women within the household and regional inheritance systems.

The remarriages of young men within two, three, or six months of their spouse's death have often been explained by the need for a woman's presence in the home to take care of the children. To this, Segalen objects that, in that case, other women of the family or community could have offered their contribution to the task. She considers instead that in traditional societies, given the complementary character of the division of labour between husband and wife in the family organization, a woman's presence was as indispensable to her husband as to her children. She also points to the taboo that prohibited a man from carrying out 'woman's work,' whereas there existed no specifically masculine sphere of activity. The same reason would explain why even older widowers (without dependants) married more often and more quickly than widows. A widower's remarriage would take place more rapidly if he had no other option – a farmer with servants could afford more time to choose a new wife than a day-worker living alone, whose 'haste to remarry was a race against ruin'.

Thus, because in peasant societies the marital dyad is founded on an economic entity (the farm or smallholding), the purpose of remarriage was essentially to fill a gap. This necessity allowed for 'softer' social norms in remarriage than in marriage, in terms of age, dowry, social condition, and endogamy. Hence some remarriages might take place between distant relatives for the sake of maintaining control over the family patrimony. Others contained the seeds of disruption of the established order and, as *charivaris* suggest, were subject to community hostility or distrust. Other rituals, too, testify to different perceptions of marriage and remarriage – remarriage, as the term *noces réchauffées* ('warmed-up wedding') implies, was not supposed to involve so much expense. Proverbs such as *'La première épousée est la servante, la seconde la maîtresse'* ('The first wife is the servant, the second one is the mistress') reflect the man's tendency to allow his second wife better treatment or greater autonomy. Such an unbecoming wedding is explicitly illustrated by a version of 'Moderen under Mulde':

King Solomon rides up to the isles,
[There he courted so ill a maid.]

> He courted little Kirsten and carried her home:
> For precious gold crowns and five nobles[?].
> And held their wedding for five days:
> The three small children got no food from them.
> And they held their wedding for nine days:
> The three small children got no drink from them. (*DgF* 89 D)

While many of the insights above could be inferred from the ballad plot, the following hits the mark: remarried widowers found themselves bound to three family lineages – their own and those of their first and second wives – so that the challenge for the new spouse was to avoid either breaking them up, setting them against one another, or substituting one for the other, especially regarding the rights of the children.

Next to these data for Western Europe, our reference to the Danish ballad naturally draws our attention to Gaunt and Löfgren's analysis of the cultural and socio-economic background of remarriage in the Nordic countries.[45] Their data, which largely coincide with the above pattern, suggest that there, too, complementary work roles were the most important reason for the often speedy remarriages of farmers.[46] In Denmark, while the mourning period for widows was one year and for widowers three months, there was not only a wide gap between law and custom but often ignorance of the mourning period. Here again, these authors' account of the clash of interests between the new spouses and the children born of the first marriage – and of the latter's rights as the crux of the matter – is substantially relevant to our ballad, let alone its alleged Danish origin:

> Among farmers it was rare for widows and widowers to intermarry, for such a marriage would involve merging two already existing economic units – something which geography normally made difficult. Instead, widows and widowers had to choose unmarried partners of farming stock – usually servants younger than themselves.
>
> This pattern of remarriage often meant considerable differences in age and social status between the new spouses, and we often find angry complaints about these *mésalliances* by contemporary observers such as parish priests [. . .] Such remarriages could be viewed as being both morally and economically dangerous.

[45] David Gaunt and Orvar Löfgren, 'Remarriage in the Nordic Countries: The Cultural and Socio-Economic Background', in *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past / Mariage et remariage dans les populations du passé*, ed. J. Dupâquier, E. Hélin, P. Laslett, M. Livi-Bacci, and S. Sogner (London: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 49–60.
[46] Gaunt and Löfgren, 'Remarriage in the Nordic Countries', pp. 49–50.

> From the point of view of the new couple there were obvious advantages in these types of marriage, however. To secure a young partner was in many cases sound domestic economy. It meant a fresh supply of good and long-lasting labour (not to mention other benefits) [. . .] older persons brought expertise, which was a very important asset in the peasant economy [. . .]
>
> From the point of view of the children of the first marriage there were obvious disadvantages in this pattern of asymmetrical marriage. A Scanian priest has commented on a number of such cases in the mid-eighteenth century. These raised special problems, since there was common property in marriage so that the children of the first marriage lost many of their advantages when a parent remarried; they had to leave home and were sometimes forced to beg [. . .] Much of the animosity against remarriages between partners of very different ages was caused not by a violation of sexual mores, but must be seen against the background of the material problems faced by the children.[47]

Considering all the above, one can only wonder at the ballad's apt illustration of the challenges of remarriage in rural societies, and hence of its social relevance to its living context: a young mother's death (in the Nordic, Flemish, and French-language texts); a widower's (hasty) remarriage (in Flanders); his poor choice of a wife, whose youth (in some French-language texts) or rude ways (in Nordic, Flemish, and some French-language texts) might signify her inferior social status; and his children's deprivation as a result of his misappropriation of his first wife's inheritance and his privileged treatment of his second wife at their expense (in Denmark).

To these explicit correspondences, one might add the Danish ballad mother's legacy of 'gold', 'candles', and 'covers' or 'bolster blue', silk, beer, food, field and meadow, stockings, and shoes. Last but not least, her vehement condemnation of her husband's misappropriation of her legacy could allude to the fact that the dowry remained the property of the woman's family and could not be appropriated by her husband except in case of famine or in order to pay a ransom.[48] In pagan as well as Christian Iceland, matters concerning material property regularly came up as evidence in law, which suggests that a heightened concern with material possessions (land, cattle, equipment, valuables, and clothes) derived from the fact

[47] Gaunt and Löfgren, 'Remarriage in the Nordic Countries', pp. 52–53.

[48] Jean-Marie Maillefer, 'Le mariage en Scandinavie médiévale', in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen-Age: Accord ou crise?*, sous la direction de Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), pp. 91–106 (p. 94).

that these were more indispensable for survival in the extreme living conditions of the North than elsewhere.[49]

The Flemish ballad's culture-specific meanings

To come to the final step of this enquiry into the Flemish ballad's cultural meanings, I return to its recreation of the Danish narrative in distinct yet coexisting plots in the lacemakers' repertoire. Departing from the original tragicomic Danish narrative, in which Fair Ellen, on hearing her children's cries, sets out on a rescue mission, climaxing with a confrontation with her husband, an indictment of his misdemeanours, and an explosive (albeit naive) threat, 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' distinguishes the religious overtones of the ballad from the parodic ones.

To this textual distinction correspond distinct social and performance contexts: on the one hand, the formal setting of lacemakers' school workshops where young girls learned the rudiments of lacemaking in between catechism, reading, and counting, under the strict control of a mistress/teacher; on the other, the informal circle of married and/or middle-aged women, such as Blyau's and Cafmeyer's informants, gathering to work at their cushions to earn extra money while also enjoying a temporary escape from their domestic workaday reality. Indeed, although exhaustively collected, the 'typical repertoire of a middle-class lady from Bruges' features only a religious version of the ballad, sung and accurately transcribed in the refined idiom of the singer's socio-cultural milieu,[50] whereas Blyau's two middle-aged lacemakers, one of whom he explicitly presents as 'practically illiterate', gave him both a religious and a parodic version.

We can thus see that the middle-aged women's parodic rendition of the ballad gives explicit expression to the standard plot's structural meaning. The revenant mother's returning to her husband as God's envoy, to reprimand him for his neglect of his children's good care and pious upbringing, provides divinely sanctioned evidence of his shortcomings as a *paterfamilias* – irrespective of his remarriage. Likewise, through the derisive mischief of the lacemakers' verbal play, the saintly Barbel is turned into a teasing shrew, empowered by her divine 'Master' to turn the tables on the would-be 'master' of her

[49] Jenny Jochens, 'Sexualité et mariage dans l'Islande païenne et chrétienne', in *Mariage et sexualité au Moyen-Age: Accord ou crise?*, sous la direction de Michel Rouche (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2000), pp. 81–90 (pp. 82, 86).

[50] The foreword to Lootens's collection specifies that 'all songs have been transcribed and published as transmitted and dictated without any editorial revisions or corrections' (Lootens et Feys, *Chants populaires flamands*, p. iv).

household. In contrast with comedy provided by Fair Ellen's eloquent confrontation with her husband in the Danish text, the Flemish ballad's explicit parody only enhances its standard message.

Last but not least, let us consider the ballad's religious overtones. The Danish mother, hearing her children's cries 'from the sky' (*DgF* 89 øa) or 'from the blackest earth' (*DgF* 89 X*), and her ensuing rescue plan illustrate that 'you shall not hurt a widow or an orphan; if you hurt them they will cry out to me, and I will hear their cry' (Exodus 22:21–22). Furthermore, the disastrous effects of the Flemish husband's hasty remarriage go to prove that 'there is a time to mourn and a time to dance' (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Clearly, though, what distinguishes the standard Flemish ballad plot from the Danish one is its enhanced spiritual character, drawing on Roman Catholic dogma and belief – the communion of saints, salvation, and the paradise of the blessed – along with the image of a mother who naturally evokes the Holy Mother.

While Fair Ellen, 'resting with God in the sky' and by His grace visiting her children 'until the cock crows' and 'the angels pine for her in Heaven', hovers between the religious and the supernatural, the Flemish ballad mother's appearance from her grave, in response to her children's fervent prayer, verges on the mystical. Neither avenger nor restorer of rights, she is a saintly mother in life as in death, whose inspiring example results in her children proving their worth. Whereas Fair Ellen returns to her children to succour them and confront her husband in order to defend their rights to her inheritance ('Left I not gold enough so red, my little ones shouldn't cry for bread?'), Barbel's care and her legacy take on a deeper dimension. While 'brushing and plaiting' one child's hair, Fair Ellen 'mildly berates her eldest daughter' that she should 'be a mother to her siblings', but Barbel sends off her eldest son with explicit instructions to observe piety, humility, and gratitude. The Flemish narrative then closes with her claim that she has filled her God-appointed mission, and that her son has proved himself worthy.

Thus the mother's determining influence over her eldest child is at the core of the Flemish narrative. Even more, it is enhanced by its effect on an exemplary son, whose inner qualities – piety, tender care, and responsibility for his siblings, humility, gentleness, gratitude, and, last but not least, obedience to his mother – provide the answer to the ballad's central concern. Besides manifesting his devoted attachment to her, such a son, in contrast to his father, is well equipped to become a faithful and loyal husband – that is, a qualified *paterfamilias* in his own right. Does not this 'woman's song' thus address women's

responsibility for transmitting 'feminine' virtues, not only to their daughters but to the next generation of men, so providing sure protection for all future 'Barbels' and their children?

There is more to be said about the Flemish ballad's mystical depth. As its outcome purports to demonstrate, Barbel's precepts of virtue and piety see her and her own through their life's tribulations safely and happily to heaven. While tragic ballads advocate human responsibility as a strategy for survival,[51] and the revenant sub-group presents 'cognitive models providing guidelines for those affected by the dislocations of death',[52] the Flemish ballad, translating this message into its own cultural ethos, goes so far as to show the way to eternal life and bliss. That the religious plot totally ignores the faithless husband and the evil stepmother, as well as any suggestion of punishment for their wrongdoing, suggests that the only things that matter are the bonds uniting those who love (in conformance to the example of the Holy Family) and the confidence they can have in the eternity of these bonds.

Concerning the puzzle of the sudden death of Barbel's son as soon as he has proved his worth, a Flemish mystical legend (which is alluded to in another song found in the same repertoire as 'Barbel') provides a clue. This tells how Matteke (or Matthea), a poor, disabled, and friendless Beguine (lay sister), saddened at not being asked by anyone to celebrate Shrove Tuesday, heads for the church to seek Christ's comfort. As she kneels in front of a large crucifix and addresses the 'friendless Christ' as her very best and only friend, He tells her to go to the mother abbess and request, in His name, that she invite Matteke to her well-provided table. Returning from the feast, Matteke kneels in front of the crucifix again to give thanks. Shortly afterwards, the church bells are heard to ring 'happily and sweetly', and as folks haste to the church in wonder they find Matteke dead but still kneeling with her hands raised and joined together. The legend concludes:

> Geen twijfel of 't heilig beggijntje, tot loon van zijn goed leven en van de dankbaarheid aan Christus betoogd over 't lichamelijk tractement

[51] As developed in Isabelle Peere, 'Death and Worldview in a Ballad Culture: The Evidence of Newfoundland' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Department of Folklore, 1992).

[52] David Buchan, 'Sweet William's Questions', in *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore*, ed. G. Thomas and J. D. A. Widdowson (St. John's: Breakwater, 1991), pp. 111–25 (p. 125).

> genoten ten huize van de Grootjouffrouwe, is van den Heere geroepen geweest tot het eeuwig *banquet* in den Hemel.
>
> (*There is no doubt that the saintly little Beguine, as a reward for her good life and thanks given to Christ for the treatment received from the mother abbess's table, was called by the Lord to heaven's eternal banquet.*)[53]

Thus, by analogy with the saints of pious legends and songs,[54] Barbel's eldest son is taken up to heaven to enjoy the family bonds that he so faithfully honoured in his short but accomplished life. That the ballad plot closes on this scene highlights its emphasis on this meaning. Its articulation around the bipolarity of faith, as the path to salvation, and family, reproduces the ideological pattern that Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie describes in his ethnography of the thirteenth-century village community of Montaillou in the French Pyrenees. This, in his concluding chapter on 'La maison et l'au-delà', he sums up as follows:

> Après *domus*, *salus* [. . .] La *domus* en ce monde et le paradis dans l'autre, tel serait, en toute simplification, l'idéal vécu de Montaillou [. . .] L'un dans l'autre. L'un portant l'autre.
>
> (*After* domus*, salus* [. . .] Domus *in this world and paradise in the other: such would, in simple terms, be the lived ideal of Montaillou* [. . .] *The one in the other. The one carrying the other.*)[55]

As for explaining the Flemish ballad's enhanced religious character as its most salient trait, let us return to de Coussemaker, who, with regard to the 'sagas, ballads and legends' of his collection, comments:

> the fictions and narratives of nearly all our songs in this category rely on some truth, event or religious feeling. It sometimes appears that some of these songs have undergone transformations with respect to this; it is even likely that it is only thanks to these changes that they have remained in the memory of the Flemish people, whose profoundly religious character comes out in everything.[56]

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[53] 'Mattekes Legende', in *Rond den Heerd: Een leer-en leesblad voor all lieden*, no. 28 (8 juni 1867), pp. 221–22.

[54] The Lootens–Feys collection includes a version of the sung narrative 'Matthea', indexed among the 'moral and mystical songs' (pp. 52–53); the song is also in the Blyau–Tasseel collection (pp. 104–06).

[55] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982 [1975]), pp. 620, 623, 625.

[56] de Coussemaker, *Chants populaires des Flamands de France*, p. xix.

* * *

To conclude, this study of the culture-specific meanings of 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' has taken us from a close analysis of its texts, with a brief glance at Danish (and to a lesser extent French) equivalents, to a multi-level contextual investigation. This encompassing perspective on texts and contexts, individuals and cultures, has highlighted specific versus structural traits concerning plot realizations, singer profiles, performance, and socio-historical data. What comes out of this holistic exploration is the perceptiveness of the ballad type's structural meaning, the obliqueness of its expression, and its subtle accommodation of culture-specific sensibilities and purposes. Such findings closely accord with Hopkin's assessment of ballads and songs as 'aesthetically powerful, psychological acute and rhetorically complex texts'.[57] Against this backdrop, the Flemish lacemakers' realizations of the ballad appear even more impressive for their devising of two different narrative types to suit the distinct purposes of their performance contexts and audiences – religious edification versus derisive sublimation – while only making the point more forcefully. A mother may be powerless or dead, and God may seem impassive or mute in the face of ordinary life's woes and domestic cruelties, but the mother's legacy to her children is equal to His – intangible yet comforting, inspiring and lasting.

To return, then, to the question of the ballad genre's relation to reality or *cultural meaning*, this analysis corroborates the qualified views quoted at the beginning of this paper. Relevant and illuminating as contextual data may be, our ballad type clearly does not boil down to issues of female mortality and widowers' remarriage in past centuries. Nor does its original scenario merely reflect its rural society's economic necessities and concerns about inheritance. In line, rather, with David Buchan's assessment of the ballad of 'The Battle of Harlaw' as 'an aesthetic correlative which fulfills a certain sociological function in that it focuses the emotional conceptions of a particular culture',[58] it is reasonable to suggest that by demonstrating the failings of men's moral character, 'Tjanne'/'Barbel' draws attention to women's responsibilities as wives and especially as mothers (if not also in their choice of a marriageable man). Or that by mediating marriage, motherhood, and mortality, the ballad articulates a positive response, not only to life but to the major challenges of their lives.

[57] Hopkin, *Voices of the People in Nineteenth-Century France*, p. 16.

[58] Buchan, 'History and Harlaw', *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, 5 (1968), 58–67 (p. 67).

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Sin, Slaughter, and Sexuality: Clamour against Women Child-Murderers by Irish Singers of 'The Cruel Mother'

Gerald Porter

Women with illegitimate children have nearly always had to face social disapproval. This is particularly true of cases where women had murdered their newborn babies (infanticide). In the nineteenth century several European writers featured the trauma of seduction and child murder in their work,[1] and similarly many ballads in Scots and English have taken as their subject women who deviate from the social norms of nurture and motherhood in this way. Vic Gammon suggests that songs about women's sexual transgressions (which the newborn represented) reproduced and policed the principles underpinning the *habitus*, or social system.[2]

That is certainly one possible reading of the printed street ballads, but it cannot account for the way in which such songs as 'The Cruel Mother', which features the murder of one, or sometimes more, newborn babies, were widely sung by women. One collection of women's songs goes so far as to describe it as 'the most popular ballad about childbearing'.[3] Singers have included Scottish Travellers like Elizabeth Stewart and Lizzie Higgins, and revival singers like Frankie Armstrong and Katherine Campbell (covering Amelia Harris's 'Rose o Malindie'). Traditional singers often leave ambiguities in the narrative:

1. What is the mother's motivation? Speculation ranges from the medieval preoccupation with demonic possession to Victorian criminality deserving death, or the modern diagnosis of momentary mental imbalance.

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[1] For example, Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust*, Part I (1808), Effie Deans in Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), and Hetty Sorrel in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859).

[2] Vic Gammon, *Desire, Drink and Death in English Folk and Vernacular Song, 1600–1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 209.

[3] Kathy Henderson, Frankie Armstrong, and Sandra Kerr (eds), *My Song Is My Own: 100 Women's Songs* (London: Pluto Press, 1979), p. 97.

2. How and why do her children return from the dead?

3. What is the mother's punishment to be? Even in Ireland, where fewer than twenty versions have been found, there is a wide range of punishments, including:

(*a*) the folkloric, which meant being transformed into something animate (such as a miaowing cat, a frog in a well, or a pigeon in white), or

(*b*) the scriptural, which meant being sent to hell to burn or to serve as a gate porter, or to heaven after a suitable period of penance (typically seven years), or

(*c*) the judicial, which meant being hanged after a formal trial.[4]

In this study of Irish examples over a period of more than a century, from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth, I consider the way in which, as with the various motivations for the crime, the punishments often appear in a growing sequence in the same singer's performance. I suggest that these incompatible aspects of the drama of the murdered babies are a way of suggesting both its symbolic and social significance, and are related to Freud's relevant concept of 'overdetermination' in *On Dreams* (1914), in which he represented such repetitive narratives as a way of resolving outright contradictions in the punishment of a traumatized mother. Perhaps significantly, in Ireland many of the traditional performers of this 'women's song' have been men.

'The Cruel Mother' (Child 20), is a relatively common ballad, with numerous oral versions recorded, particularly in Scotland and the United States.[5] It has attracted particular attention because of the diversity of melodies to which it is sung. Bertrand Bronson printed more than fifty, mostly from North America.[6] Maud Karpeles wrote:

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[4] Anne O'Connor, *Child Murderers and Dead Child Traditions*, FF Communications, 249 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia/Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1991), pp. 83, 240–44. I am indebted to this excellent study at many points in this article.

[5] Francis James Child (ed.), *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1882–98), I, 218–27; II, 500–01; III, 502; IV, 451; V, 211–12, 287–88. All but two of the versions Child printed in his first volume are Scottish, although he added English versions in later volumes, including the seventeenth-century broadside *The Duke's Daughter's Cruelty*, of which he was apparently unaware when he wrote the headnote to 'The Cruel Mother'.

[6] Bertrand Harris Bronson (ed.), *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*, 4 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959–72), I, 276–96; IV, 456.

'This is one of the most poignant of all ballads. There is probably no other ballad which attracts so many varied and beautiful tunes.'[7]

In this paper I concentrate on singers in Ireland, where the ballad has been collected since 1860, starting with a fragment of the song learned by Margaret Reburn in County Meath (Child 20 M). After a gap of nearly a hundred years, it was found being sung in the Irish diaspora, by Cecilia Costello in Birmingham in 1951, and owing to the increased activity of collectors from the 1970s onwards versions have been collected from counties Antrim (two), Carlow, Clare, Leitrim, Roscommon (three), Meath, Wexford, Tipperary.

The story of the ballad is a tragic one from almost every point of view. In a Belfast version (below), two sisters on their way to school come across a woman by a pool. She 'leans her back against a thorn' and gives birth. She takes the baby (often more than one) on her knee and kills it with a little penknife. Other singers continue with details of what happens to both baby and mother. It (sometimes they) returns as a spirit to haunt her and to seek peace. In longer versions there are often several children – she encounters three boys playing ball and they say she will either burn in hell or spend time in purgatory to wipe away her sin. In a version widely sung by schoolchildren she is arrested and hanged.

'The Cruel Mother' has been recorded only twice in the north of Ireland. Hugh Quinn sang 'All round the loney-o' to Peter Kennedy in Belfast in 1955, a year before his death, using almost the same refrain as Margaret Reburn in County Meath a century earlier:

There (down) were two sisters going to school
All around the loney-o
They spied a lady at a pool
Down by the greenwood side-o
All round the loney-o
They spied a lady by a pool
Down by the greenwood side-o.

She had a baby on her knee
A cruel penknife they could see.

She stabbed the baby to the heart
Till from his breast the blood did start.

She washed away the blood so red
The more she washed, the more it bled.

[7] Cecil J. Sharp and Maud Karpeles, *Eighty English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, ed. Maud Karpeles (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 103.

She pressed the baby to her breast
And said, young [dear] babe, we'll both find rest.[8]

In terms of the mother's motivation, this minimalist text might be described as unspecific. The mother's cruelty, foregrounded by Child's title, is transferred to the penknife, as if to divert the blame. Quinn himself referred to the song as 'All round the loney-o', explaining that it referred to Pound Loney and to the River Pound, both in west Belfast. Pound Loney could not be said in any way to equate with the 'greenwood', which is the location of most versions, an unspecific place of rural retreat beyond the reach of social norms. Another significant feature of Quinn's song, and one that is shared by almost every other Irish version, is that the mother is described as a 'lady'. Two of the Irish versions collected (and a large number of the Scottish ones) identify her pregnancy as the result of an affair with her father's clerk, raising questions of class as well as gender but reversing the conventional politics of seduction.[9]

Hugh Quinn (1884–1956) was a teacher at Milford Street School in Belfast, on the cusp of traditional Protestant/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist areas, near the modern Divis Flats, between the Falls Road and the Shankill Road. As he said himself, he spent his whole life at school, and playground songs and rhymes were an important part of his repertoire. He was a speaker of what is now known as Ulster Scots, although that term was barely used before 1992 when the then First Minister David Trimble encouraged its use to counterbalance the onward march of the Irish language movement in Northern Ireland. Although the words of the refrain are also found in Scottish and English versions, Hugh Quinn regarded it as a local song, as the refrain makes clear.

The revenants and overdetermination

Hugh Quinn's song is purely circumstantial, almost resembling trial evidence. Even for a ballad, it seems to end rather abruptly, whereas other singers in Ireland, such as Pat McNamara, a farmer from County Clare, extended the narrative of 'The Cruel Mother' to fifteen stanzas or more.[10] In many versions the child/children return to

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[8] Hugh Quinn, *The Doffin Mistress: Belfast Street Songs and Games*, ed. Peter Kennedy (Folktrax FSA 60-072, [recorded *c.*1955]), side B, track 13.
[9] O'Connor, *Child Murderers and Dead Child Traditions*, p. 81; *Cecilia Costello* (Leader LEE 4050, 1975).
[10] O'Connor, *Child Murderers and Dead Child Traditions*, p. 81.

encounter their mother, who sometimes recognizes them. Cecilia Costello, who sings of three boys, put it like this:

Years went by and one summer's morn,
All alone and aloney-o
She saw three boys they were playing bat and ball,
Down by the greenwood sidey-o.[11]

Returning spirits (revenants) are not, of course, uncommon in folk narratives and they are fairly common in traditional ballads, with about ten different instances in Child, including some of the most popular. However, outside of Ireland it is unusual in ballads for newborn babies to come back as children old enough to play ball games in this way. In Ireland, however, this has been a widespread folk belief, linked to the need for an unbaptized child to be named before it could enter purgatory. As in Brittany, it is not the murder itself, but dying before having been baptized and thereby forfeiting the right to enter heaven, that is expected to shock the audience.[12] This grim belief, often symbolized by the lack of a name, appears in several of the Irish versions of 'The Cruel Mother', such as one collected by Tom Munnelly in County Clare in 1975, where Pat McNamara sang of the three returning babies:

An' one was Peter an' the other Paul
And the other had no name at all.[13]

In fact, the 'babies' were old enough to play a ball game. The casualness of their return many years later is similar to the return of a murdered daughter in Toni Morrison's magical realist novel *Beloved* (1987), where the return of Sethe is given an entirely new dynamic: a daughter who has been killed by her mother to save her from the degradation of slavery comes back to the family as an adult. Although the mother's motive is not the usual one of trying to conceal an illegitimate birth, the same underlying trajectory of the ballad, namely the folkloric (and Freudian) one of the return of the repressed, is powerfully present. Indeed, the cross-cutting of accounts by different storytellers is one of Morrison's main narrative modes in the novel,

[11] *Cecilia Costello.*
[12] Mary-Ann Constantine, *Breton Ballads* (Aberystwyth: CMCS Publications, 1996), p. 37.
[13] O'Connor, *Child Murderers and Dead Child Traditions*, p. 82.

just as it is one of the richest and most exhilarating features of oral narratives such as 'The Cruel Mother.'

A nuanced interpretation is required because singers typically allow, or suggest, a wide range of possible explanations for the mother's act. Her motivation may be given as devilry, madness, or criminality. Often several of these are given at the same time, or her motive is left open, or subsumed under the general heading of 'cruel', which is what Child chose out of several other titles that singers used. Such a diversity of explanations, each of which might reinforce or cancel out others, was termed overdetermination by Sigmund Freud in relation to the role of the unconscious in dreams. It was later developed along Marxist lines by Louis Althusser as a way of unpicking the symbolic complexity of the novel and, more importantly, of history. In this way, 'multiple, overlapping, often contradictory, social conditions and processes' can be interpreted as a 'complex but unified totality'.[14]

A simpler model is Henry James's idea of the figure in the carpet,[15] which may dominate one person's vision but not another's, and which does not eliminate the other elements of the pattern. A straightforward example of overdetermination would be the common practice of having an image of Ganesh or St Christopher in a car at the same time as the driver and passengers are wearing seat belts. The first is rooted in belief, while the other is based on hard-headed accident statistics. Through such apparently contradictory behaviour we express some of the complex identities that define us – race, gender, class, age, religion. In traditional song this offers a warning against treating different versions of a song, or variants by one singer, as if they made up a vast hermeneutic text inviting explication.

The mother's punishment: hell, justice, madness

Irish versions of 'The Cruel Mother' offer clear examples of such overdetermination. In Cecilia Costello's version, for example, the returning children tell their mother that she will be punished in three quite different ways to wipe away her sin:

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[14] Julian Markels, *The Marxian Imagination: Representing Class in Literature* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003) p. 17; Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (London: Edward Arnold, 2001), pp. 250–52; Gregory Elliott, 'Overdetermination', in *A Dictionary of Cultural Theory*, ed. Michael Payne (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), p. 393.

[15] An expression based on the title of Henry James's short story, published in 1896.

You'll be seven long years a bird in a tree

You'll be seven years more a tongue in a bell
And you'll be seven long years a porter in hell.

Tristram Coffin distinguishes between songs where the children condemn their mother to hell in this way and those that offer repentance.[16] However, several versions clearly portray hell as being not only a place of punishment but also a stage in the process of redemption, as in the final stanza of Pat McNamara's version:

Now then, baby, surely you can tell
Whether I'll gain heaven or [I'll gain] hell.

Now you'll be seven years a roarin' bull
An' even more a frog in a well.

You'll be seven more a mouse in a mill
An' seven more a poor little cat.

When all those years are past an' gone
Come to the gates an' I'll get you in.[17]

'The Cruel Mother' is one of the few traditional ballads where some versions call for forgiveness in this way. In the earliest printed version of the story, *The Duke's Daughter's Cruelty*, which later Scottish versions closely resemble, 'Hell's gates stand open to let you in', with no option of repentance.[18] Baffled by the unscriptural and confused juxtaposition of folkloric, Christian, and pagan imagery, some editors have attempted to mediate by asserting that the 'seven years' references have passed into 'The Cruel Mother' from 'The Maid and the Palmer' (Child 21), more usually known in Ireland as 'The Well below the Valley'. David Buchan was perhaps the first to draw attention to the distinction between child murder as a crime and as a sin, with particular reference to these two ballads.[19] 'The Maid and the Palmer' is a ballad with similar features but a distinct narrative of incest centring on a remarkable woman, with features of both Mary

[16] Tristram P. Coffin, *The British Traditional Ballad in North America* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1963), p. 9.
[17] O'Connor, *Child Murderers and Dead Child Traditions*, pp. 82–83.
[18] *The Duke's Daughter's Cruelty: or, The Wonderful Apparition of Two Infants Whom She Murther'd and Buried in a Forrest, for to Hide her Shame* (London: printed for J. Deacon, at the sign of the Angel, in Guiltspur Street) [ESTC R227629].
[19] David Buchan, 'The Maid, the Palmer and the Cruel Mother', *Malahat Review*, 3 (1967), 98–107.

Magdalene and the woman of Samaria, who has been expelled from her community.[20]

In fact 'The Cruel Mother' and 'The Maid and the Palmer' merely record the promiscuous, overdetermined nature of most such child-murder narratives, which have been paralleled by contradictions in the law, at least in England. For example, an act of 1624 ruled that a woman who concealed the death of her illegitimate child was assumed to have murdered it unless she could prove that it had been born dead. As a consequence, more women were executed for infanticide during the seventeenth century than for witchcraft, and early street ballads, which often took up the subject, usually demonized the woman, garishly depicting her trial and execution in a manner reminiscent of sensationalist modern media.[21]

Even today, sin and criminal guilt are constantly confused, even in the law courts, often quite bizarrely in a modern context. Thus the lawyer Carlo Pacelli described Amanda Knox, the 24-year-old American convicted of killing the British student Meredith Kercher, as 'Lucifer-like, demonic, Satanic [and] diabolic' at her appeal trial in Italy in 2011.[22] In contrast, the ballad 'Mary Hamilton' (173), dating from the 1790s but apparently not known in Ireland, describes the conviction and execution of a woman connected with the Scottish court in moving and personal terms, without moral judgement.

In Dublin, the same confusion of sin and guilt is found, in a more restrained way, when, in a textbook example of overdetermination, Catherine Skelly, charged with 'the drowning of her child at Leeson Street Bridge', confesses in a nineteenth-century broadside to a 'mortal sin', a 'wicked crime', and having been led astray by 'wicked

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[20] Coffin, *British Traditional Ballad in North America*, p. 45; Tony Conran, '"The Maid and the Palmer" (Child 21)', in *Ballads into Books: The Legacies of Francis James Child*, ed. Tom Cheesman and Sigrid Rieuwerts (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 211–24.

[21] Seventeenth-century examples include: *No Naturall Mother, but a Monster; or, The Exact Relation of One Who for Making Away her Owne Newborne Childe about Brainford, neere London, Was Hang'd at Teyborne on Wednesday the 11. of December 1633* (London: printed for F. Coule[s]) [ESTC S94604]; *The Unnatural Mother, being a True Relation of One Jane Lawson, Once Living at East-Barnet, in Middlesex, Who Quarreling with her Husband, Urged Him to Strike Her, and Thereupon the Same Night, being the First of Sept. 1680, Drowned her Self and Two Poor Babes in a Well* (printed for F. Coles, T. Vere, J. Wright, I. Clarke, W. Thackeray, and T. Passinger) [ESTC R187648]. A nineteenth-century Irish example is *The Lamentation of Jane M'Cullen, for the Murder of her Child* (Haly, printer, Cork) [Oxford, Bodleian Library, 2806 c.8(94)].

[22] *USA Today*, 26 September 2011, p. 18 http://content.usatoday.com/communities/ondeadline/post/2011/09/lawyer-amanda-knox-is-diabolical-demonic/1#.UlLuM1Pw-us.

Satan'.[23] David Atkinson has pointed out that, unlike the broadside ballads, judicial punishment does not play a significant part in 'traditional' ballads, which concentrate on the possibilities of penance and forgiveness.[24] This is certainly the case with Hugh Quinn's 'Cruel Mother', and indeed most of the versions by Irish singers, but it is not possible without more circumstantial accounts of other singers and their milieu to attribute their more judgemental stance to the church, the community, or the singer.

In both England and Ireland infanticide continued to be a popular subject of ballads into the nineteenth century, when, according to Vic Gammon, 'depictions of child death are more melodramatic, more pathetic and much less stoical than earlier treatments [indicating] a changing structure of feeling linked to the advent of industrial society, increasing urbanization, the emergence of new commercial forms of mass entertainment, and the breakdown of the relative stability of traditional forms of mass expression'.[25]

In addition to these factors, Tom Cheesman, in a study of nineteenth-century German broadside ballads, suggests that increasing social and geographical mobility and the spread of an individualistic mentality encouraged increasing numbers of men to abandon women they had made pregnant.[26]

Given this commercialization and sentimentalization of the popular song, it is highly significant that children should have evolved a burlesque version of 'The Cruel Mother' to accompany skipping or ring games. This version has been collected in most parts of the English-speaking world, but to my knowledge was first printed only in 1931.[27] However, there are reports of it having been sung in Ireland in the 1890s by a Dublin man who taught it to his grandson in the 1950s:

> There was an old woman who lived in the woods
> *we la, we la, wall la*,
> and that old woman she wasn't very good
> *Down by the River Sáile* [= salt water].

[23] Hugh Shields (ed.), *Old Dublin Songs* (Dublin: Folk Music Society of Ireland, 1988), pp. 50–51.
[24] David Atkinson, *The English Traditional Ballad: Theory, Method and Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 185–232.
[25] Gammon, *Desire, Drink and Death in English Folk and Vernacular Song*, p. 229.
[26] Tom Cheesman, *The Shocking Ballad Picture Show: German Popular Literature and Cultural History* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), p. 129.
[27] See R. Vaughan Williams and A. L. Lloyd (eds), *The Penguin Book of English Folk Songs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), p. 112.

She had a baby three months old
and that little babby was very bold.

She had a penknife long and sharp
She stuck the dagger in the babby's heart.

She stuck the penknife in the baby's head
The more she struck the more it bled.

She buried the baby in the wood
The neighbours they all saw the blood.

Three hard knocks came knocking on the door
And the woman fell down in a faint on the floor.

'Twas two policemen and a man
and another outside waiting in the van.

'Are you the woman that killed the child?'
She said 'I am' and they went wild.

They took her away and they put her in the jail
Loudly she did bawl and loudly she did wail.

They put a rope around her neck
And dragged her up onto the deck.

The rope was pulled and she got hung
Round and round her body swung.

Now that was the end of the woman in the woods
And that was the end of the babby too.

The moral of the story is
Don't stick a penknife in a babby's head.[28]

The morbid detail and grisly humour shown here are characteristic of children's games. There are still residual elements of 'The Cruel Mother', with the moralizing comment that the old woman 'wasn't very good', and the spirits of the three children replaced by three hard knocks on the door (the appearance of the police is another feature of children's games).

Conclusion

The dramatically shifting role of the mother in 'The Cruel Mother', 'The Well below the Valley', and the children's rhyme show much more awareness of the effects of trauma than is commonly granted to

[28] http://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=6876#40590.

such narrative songs. Today a mother's murder of her newborn child would be more likely to be regarded as a sign of mental disorder than as either a crime or a mortal sin. 'The Cruel Mother', according to Alison McMorland, 'pinpoints the fear of an unmarried mother that she will become the victim of the community's malicious gossip' – and she adds, 'Whenever people say to me that folksongs are archaic and have no relation to today's way of life, I think of "The Cruel Mother."'[29] This humane attitude is anticipated by the ending of Hugh Quinn's 'All around the loney-o':

> She pressed the baby to her breast
> And said, young [dear] babe, we'll both find rest.

Seventeenth-century street ballads were generally more concerned with guilt and punishment as a form of social control, but one example, *A Warning for Wives*, offers a smidgen of understanding. It describes the case of Katherine Francis who murdered her husband by stabbing him in the neck with a pair of shears (according to the ballad text) or scissors (according to the subtitle).[30] She was burned at the stake on Clerkenwell Green. The broadside's refrain, 'Oh women, / Murderous women, / whereon are your minds?', suggests some consciousness of the pressures experienced by women, although the ballad still overdetermines the outcome by observing that 'Those women [that] in blood delight/ Are ruled by the Deuill' and by printing a vivid woodcut of the burning.

Although there is a reference in 'All around the loney-o' to blood which, like Lady Macbeth's, cannot be washed away, the Belfast singer Hugh Quinn makes no reference to punishment of any kind. There is no place for hell, seven years' penance, or the gallows in any of his songs that I have encountered. Hugh Quinn sang to Hugh Shields a placid final verse that is missing from the earlier 1955 Peter Kennedy recording:

> There is a river wide and deep,
> *All around the loney-o*

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[29] Elizabeth Stewart, *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen: Travellers' Songs, Stories and Tunes of the Fetterangus Stewarts*, ed. Alison McMorland (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), p. 334.

[30] *A Warning for Wiues, by the Example of One Katherine Francis, alias Stoke, Who for Killing her Husband, Robert Francis, with a Paire of Sizers, on the 8. of Aprill at Night, Was Burned on Clarkenwell-greene on Tuesday, the 21 of the Same Moneth, 1629* (printed at London, for F. G., on Snow Hill) [ETC S126169].

Deep down both babe and mother sleep
Down by the greenwood side-o
All round the loney-o
Deep down both babe and mother sleep
Down by the greenwood side-o.[31]

O'Connor writes that this could perhaps be accounted for by the fact that Quinn was 'an "improver" apparently', as if this was an unexpected characteristic of singers.[32] However, a similar stanza appears in another Belfast version published, without provenance, by David Hammond, suggesting that this is not just another 'version', with all the alienating and print-centred thinking that that term implies, but a man performing what is widely seen as a 'woman's song', with a consciousness of the irrelevance of arcane debates about purgatory and hellfire for either infants or their traumatized mothers.[33]

Such an expression of both personal and communal identity, intertwined in the context of a history of radical dispossession, strongly recalls the fate of Ireland, which reinforces the case that this ballad was performed by singers precisely because of these connotations. Drawing on the psychological practice of overdetermination, and the literary image of the figure in the carpet, I have attempted to consider the complexity of the representation of the deviant women in versions of 'The Cruel Mother' found in Ireland, and also, inevitably, of their role in the narratives of history itself. In this way, something of the totality of the multiple, overlapping, often contradictory, social conditions and processes of oral performance can be exposed.

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[31] O'Connor, *Child Murderers and Dead Child Traditions*, p. 244.
[32] O'Connor, *Child Murderers and Dead Child Traditions*, p. 245.
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Digital images of the seventeenth-century broadsides cited here are available at http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/.

Separation and Loss: An Attachment Theory Approach to Emotions in Three Traditional French *Chansons*

Evelyn Birge Vitz

This paper proposes a new way of analysing traditional ballads, using an attachment theory approach. The focus is on a small number of French *chansons populaires*.

It has long been recognized that traditional ballads are often filled with violent behaviours and intense reactions of all kinds, but, as many readers have noticed, it is frequently difficult to understand why people do the things they do in ballads. The ballads in the French tradition are, in most respects, similar to those from other regions and languages: in many a ballad-type *chanson* we are not told why the characters behave as they do, what motivates them, what emotions they are feeling. Unless we choose not to care about this question and simply turn our attention to other issues, we have to try to infer what those feelings might have been. And this can be very hard, if not impossible, to do.

It may, however, be more fruitful to look at the human situations to which the songs draw our attention, rather than focusing directly on the emotions themselves. Some of the great French ballads concentrate on an intense moment of separation. Two people (sometimes more) who are in a powerful or intimate relationship are about to be, or are in the process of being, separated from one another. Some songs lead us/the characters toward permanent loss – very often towards death. In other cases there is recovery – something of a happy (or at least happy-ish) ending, a reunion, or at least some consolation. There are a good many such songs about separation.

As it happens, the important mid-twentieth-century British psychologist John Bowlby spent his entire professional career focusing on the psychological phenomenon of separation – or, more precisely, on the related phenomena of attachment, separation, and loss – and the often intense and complex feelings associated with these great fundamental human experiences, these great emotional

realities.[1] Bowlby's work has been very influential in the world of psychology, especially perhaps in psychotherapy and social psychology, though he can also be classified as a cognitive psychologist. A number of scholars and researchers have followed up on his basic theories, for which there is now a considerable amount of empirical support. Among the major early continuers of Bowlby's work was Mary Ainsworth,[2] but many others are now also working in this theoretical vein.

The fundamental theory has roughly three parts. First, our need for secure attachments to others is our deepest human need, rooted in our nature as primates. It is worth recalling that Freud's psychoanalytical theory did not bear in any significant way on attachment issues. Bowlby, in contrast, saw attachment within an evolutionary framework. Not only are human beings primates, but human infants are particularly vulnerable given the length of time they are deeply dependent on their mothers or other major caretakers, and therefore they are powerfully attached to them. The work of Bowlby (and of others who have followed his lead) thus breaks quite strongly with Freudian tradition.[3]

Secondly, based on our experience of life and of past attachments, especially our attachments early in life, all of us have an 'inner working model' of relationships that informs our attachments and determines our ability to cope with separation and loss.[4] Thirdly, there is a small

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[1] John Bowlby's 'Attachment and Loss' series: *Attachment* (New York: Basic Books/Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1969; 2nd edn, 1982); *Separation: Anxiety and Anger* (New York: Basic Books/Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1973); *Loss: Sadness and Depression* (New York: Basic Books/Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1980). A few studies devoted to Bowlby's work are: Phyllis Erdman and Kok-Mun Ng (eds), *Attachment*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2010); Jeremy Holmes, *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Frank D. P. van der Horst, *John Bowlby: From Psychoanalysis to Ethology* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). An example of recent work is Jean Mercer, *Understanding Attachment: Parenting, Child Care, and Emotional Development* (London and Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006). A recent and highly useful volume is Jude Cassidy and Philip R. Shaver (eds), *Handbook to Attachment Theory: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications* (New York: Guilford, 2008).

[2] See, for example, Mary D. S. Ainsworth, *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2015).

[3] In John Bowlby's *Attachment*, Part I 'The Task', chapter 1 'Point of View,' makes very interesting reading on the differences between his approach and that of Freud to our fundamental human needs and motivations. Aside from the fact that Freud does not talk about attachment, Bowlby sees his approach as being scientific – that is, both drawn from direct observation and testable – in ways that Freud's is not.

[4] For the concept of a psychological or inner 'working model', see, for example, Bowlby, *Attachment*, pp. 80ff., and Mercer, *Understanding Attachment*, p. 100.

number of basic attachment styles, going back to childhood. Generally, there are thought to be three major patterns or styles (though research, theorizing, and controversy around the issues continue). The first is 'secure attachment'; these are people with a 'secure base.' In contrast, there is 'insecure attachment', which is commonly viewed as falling into two types (hence three types in all): 'insecure: preoccupied/anxious' and 'insecure: avoidant/dismissive'.[5]

These attachment styles also largely determine people's reactions to interpersonal loss. People with a secure attachment style are apt to be confident in their attachments, based on early experience; after interpersonal loss they suffer like anyone else, but they tend to bounce back. People with an 'insecure: preoccupied/anxious' attachment style are anxious and fearful of loss, having generally suffered unresolved losses or unresolved parental attachment in early life, and often do not recover from loss. People with an 'insecure avoidant/dismissive' response to loss are even more wounded in their ability to relate to others; often out of unconscious fear, they are apt to avoid all close relationships for fear of rejection or loss, and/or to dismiss their importance.

What makes the work of Bowlby and others in attachment theory particularly useful to the study of emotions in the ballad is, first, the emphasis they lay on the very mixed and powerful emotions found at moments of separation: there can be a complex blend of love and anger, anxiety and hope, sorrow, sometimes relief, and other emotions as well.[6] The particular blend of these emotions tends to vary with attachment styles (though, of course, other factors can play an important role). An attachment theory approach can also help us categorize the ways in which different ballads, and groups of ballads, handle these major issues. We can indeed find secure attachment, insecure anxious, and insecure dismissive or avoidant styles expressed within ballads.

A note before proceeding. In many ballads separation is followed by reunion – characters who have been separated get back together. In this paper, however, our focus is exclusively on songs in which the

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[5] See, for example, Bowlby, *Attachment*, Part IV 'Ontology of Human Attachment', chapter 26 'Patterns of Attachment and Contributing Conditions', pp. 337 ff. There is now abundant literature on the issue of patterns of attachment. There is also thought to be a fourth, more minor pattern, termed 'disorganized attachment', which I do not address here.

[6] See, for example, the discussion in Colin Murray Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, 3rd edn (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 1998), chapter 14 'Reactions to Other Types of Losses'.

separation is lasting – thus on separation involving a permanent loss. In addition, I concern myself here solely with songs in which the separation and loss relate to marriage. My corpus is thus quite narrow, and intentionally so. My focus is on the French tradition (which is my own field of research) and on a small handful of ballads in which the issue of separation is clear. I have selected ballads that can be taken to exemplify the three basic attachment styles.

'Le Roi Renaud'

The first ballad that I will consider is commonly titled 'Le Roi Renaud'.[7] Though written much earlier, it became known in France primarily after 1842 when the famous writer Gérard de Nerval published a version of it in the review *La Sylphide*. Versions of this ballad exist in many parts of France; around sixty of them had been documented by 1904 when George Doncieux and Julien Tiersot published their collection of French ballad-type songs titled *Le Romancéro populaire de la France: Choix de chansons populaires françaises*.[8] They also documented eight from Piedmont. There are also Venetian, Catalan, Basque, and Spanish versions of the story, which they discuss. The song appears to have been of medieval Scandinavian origin. By 1937, when Marius Barbeau published his *Romancéro du Canada*, the number of known versions had risen substantially to ninety from France, plus sixty-nine Scandinavian versions.[9] The number has continued to rise since then.

In French the title for this ballad varies. The key character is not always a king, and his name varies a good deal – Ernaud, Arnaud, Renon, and other related names, also Louis, Carlin, and so. The ballad is apparently an old one, perhaps dating from the sixteenth century.[10] Here follows a brief summary of the plot (here and below I use the basic Doncieux text, supplemented by other versions, both from the *Romancéro* and from other collections).[11]

[7] Eugène Rolland (ed.), *Recueil de chansons populaires*, 5 vols (Paris: Chez l'Auteur, 1887), III, 32, gives as its title 'Renaud ou Le retour du mari mortellement blessé ou La Femme à qui l'on veut cacher la mort de son mari'. Rolland provides almost a dozen versions of the song, including a Catalan and two Danish versions (pp. 32–55).

[8] George Doncieux (ed.), *Le Romancéro populaire de la France: Choix de chansons populaires françaises*, with foreword and musical index by Julien Tiersot (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1904), pp. 84–124.

[9] Marius Barbeau, *Romancéro du Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937), pp. 71–80.

[10] Doncieux, *Le Romancéro populaire de la France*, pp. 96–98.

[11] A number of scholars have criticized Doncieux and Tiersot's methodology, but their *Romancéro* provides not only a useful base text for each song under consideration

Renaud comes home, obviously back from a battle, holding his 'tripes' (his guts) in his hands; he is terribly badly wounded. He is welcomed by his mother, who tells him to rejoice, his wife has just had a baby son. He replies that he cannot rejoice, he is about to die. He asks that a bed be made for him downstairs where his wife cannot hear – by implication, so that his wife will not know that he is dying. Generally implicit in the song (and explicit in some versions) is the idea that a woman who has just given birth is particularly fragile. Renaud gives up the ghost at midnight: '*Et quand ce vint sur la minuit, / Le roi Renaud rendit l'esprit.*'

Most of the rest of the rather lengthy *chanson* (twenty-one stanzas in the version under consideration here) is devoted to the numerous attempts on Renaud's mother's part to conceal from his wife, who is increasingly anxious, the news of her husband's death. The wife asks question after question about the strange things going on: '*Dites-moi, ma mére m'ami', / que plourent nos valets ici?*' ('Tell me, my mother my friend, / why are our serving boys weeping here?'). Why are the servant girls weeping? Why the noise of carpenters? Why are the bells ringing? Why so many priests around? And so on. The mother-in-law keeps telling her lies to hide the reality of Renaud's death; the serving boys are weeping because a beautiful horse drowned; the servant girls are weeping because one of the linen sheets floated away while they were washing it; the carpenters are fixing the floor; the bells are being rung and the priests are present for a Rogation Day procession. The young wife/widow is puzzled by the answers, finding them unsatisfactory. But when the young woman goes to the church and asks, '*Dites-moi, ma mére, m'ami', / Pourquoi la terre est rafraîchi?*' ('Tell me, my mother my friend, / Why is the earth fresh?'), her mother-in-law finally tells her, '*Ma fill', ne l'vous puis plus celer, / Renaud est mort et enterré*' ('My daughter, I cannot conceal it from you any longer; / Renaud is dead and buried').

Whereupon, in the version that I take as my primary text, the widow hands her mother-in-law the keys to the treasury and her jewels, tells her to take care of Renaud's son, and asks the earth to break open to receive her so she can go to be with her Renaud. '*Terre, ouvre-toi, terre, fens-toi, / Que j'aille avec Renaud mon roi! / Terre s'ouvrit, terre fendit, / Et si fut la belle englouti.*' She dies, swallowed up, at her request.

here but also a clearly indicated and wide array of variants, which I will also address. Their *Romancéro* is, moreover, widely available in reprint form, which is surely a indication of its popularity and usefulness, and which also makes it easy for scholars and students to consult.

'*Englouti*' ('swallowed up') is not a particularly positive word. Other more or less similar versions present her death in a somewhat more attractive or romantic light, as in a Basque version: '*"Terre sainte, ouvre-toi, que j'entre dans ton sein!" / La terre sainte s'est ouverte, et moi, j'ai embrasseé le roi Jean*' ('"Holy ground, open up, that I may enter your breast." / The holy ground opened up, and I embraced King Jean').[12] Her choice – for it is clearly presented as such – is not to go on living after this great loss and either simply to be swallowed up by the earth or to be reunited in death with her dead husband. This sort of decision – to die of grief and ideally to be reunited with the lost loved one – is, of course, found in many traditional ballads and tales.

In some versions of the ballad she proposes to take her baby with her to the grave. She requests that the gravedigger make a space large enough for three: '*Ma mère, dit' au fossoyeux / Qu'il fasse la fosse pour deux, / Et que l'espace y soit si grand / Que l'on y mette aussi l'enfant.*' In two Danish versions, the man dies not from a battle wound but because of an encounter with an elf-woman, the couple were not yet married and there is no baby, the mother (the future mother-in-law) dies of grief as well, and the three are buried together.[13]

Many aspects of this famous ballad invite comment. One of the many interesting issues around it is the category of ballads to which it belongs. Some see it as an example of a '*la mort occultée*' ('concealed death') type. That is, the death of the husband is hidden or concealed from the wife as long as possible. This motif is found in many ballads, in many countries.[14] It occurs in other works as well: we see it as early as a thirteenth-century version of the famous French epic *La Chanson de Roland*. Here Charlemagne tries at length to hide from Roland's fiancée, Aude, the fact that the hero is dead.[15] Moreover, as in 'Le Roi Renaud,' the young woman is lied to repeatedly about what has

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[12] Discussed in Doncieux, *Le Romancéro populaire de la France*, pp. 103–04.

[13] Rolland, *Recueil de chansons populaires*, III, 49–55.

[14] For example, Ruth House Webber, review of *Romancero tradicional, XII, Le muerte ocultada* by Beatriz Mariscal de Rhett, *Hispanic Review*, 55 (1987), 522–24: 'What seems manifest is that in its spread southward from the Nordic countries, there was a progressive shift of focus from the portrayal of cause of the hero's death to that of its subsequent concealment, or at another level, from a mythological punishment for a transgression to a moving family tragedy' (p. 523). A moving family tragedy is certainly what we have here.

[15] J. J. Duggan (ed.), *The Song of Roland: The French Corpus, Part 3: The Châteauroux-Venise 7 Version* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); English translation in Joseph J. Duggan and Annalee C. Rejhon, *The Song of Roland: Translations of the Versions in Assonance and Rhyme of the Chanson de Roland* (Turnout: Brepols, 2012). The scene in question starts around line 7023.

happened, until the tragic news finally has to be revealed – and the heroine dies on the spot, clearly voluntarily.

This ballad, in almost all its versions, raises other issues as well. Why does the king/hero want to be alone as he dies? Why not at least with his mother, who appears to be his agent? Why no last rites? (Religious issues do arise later in the ballad.) In versions where the hero is a king, we can perhaps understand his desire to keep his wife in the dark out of a desire to protect the life of his newborn son *cum* royal heir, but in versions where the central figure is not a king, what is the point of this? And indeed we saw a version in which the baby is to be buried with his mother. Why is the wife so credulous? Why so many questions, like a child asking why? why? why? Is the new widow in 'Le Roi Renaud' supposed to be very young? She does seem somewhat infantilized and under the strong (if loving) thumb of her mother-in-law, whom in this version she calls '*ma mère, ma mie*' ('my mother, my friend'); in the Canadian version discussed by Barbeau the mother-in-law is '*o mère, ô grand*'.

This is, then, in several regards a rather mysterious ballad. It presents numerous features that invite lengthy discussion and analysis. But let me focus attention primarily here on the sudden and voluntary death of the widow. What we see in this ballad in almost all its versions is part of what we can call the grand, tragic, romantic tradition: when one lover dies, the other lover chooses to die too. We see it manifested in a great many songs, in many cultures, and in other kinds of works. One could even say that the traditional ballad *specializes* in it: many famous ballads in French and other languages end with the death from sorrow of the bereaved person. In this regard, this type of ballad is unlike many folk tales where characters who have often been orphaned, abandoned, or suffered grave interpersonal loss recover from these harsh experiences and indeed thrive. In many folk tales, orphaned/unprotected children or animals go out and make their fortunes – some more successfully than others, of course.

This sort of ending, where one lover chooses to join his or her mate in death, also exemplifies an outcome that results from what Bowlby and other attachment theorists term 'insecure attachment'. That is, the people who are least likely to survive bereavement or loss – those least likely to want to go on living – are precisely the ones with insecure or broken or wounded attachments going back to early life. Now, of course, in the ballad, and in general in works of the remote past, we are not in a position to look at characters' or poets' or audiences' childhood experiences; people in the past did not talk much about such things. There are interesting exceptions that we

cannot explore in detail here, but let us just recall the famous name of Tristan, the adulterous lover of Iseult (his uncle's wife). Medieval tales present Tristan as a boy whose mother died giving birth to him; his very name means 'sad'.[16] The two lovers are reunited in death. In the version of the *Song of Roland* mentioned above, Aude is also, we are told, an orphan, who was raised by another woman than her mother.[17]

We can certainly say that the medieval and early modern periods offered a great many situations of early attachment loss and sorrow for children, including the death of mothers in childbirth, the many plagues and epidemics that carried young parents away from their children, and the (sometimes permanent) absence of fathers at war. The picture today would be somewhat different and would presumably include the impact of divorce on children, largely absent mothers and fathers as a result of career pressures, the coming and going of nannies and caretakers in day care, and so on.

In traditional ballads we cannot generally see the precise causes or experiences of attachment failure and loss; we can just witness the *sequelae*, the effects of such traumas. Bereaved characters want to die, to be with the person they have loved and lost.

'Le Mariage anglais'

We turn now to a ballad often titled 'Le Mariage anglais' ('The English Marriage') or sometimes 'Maudit Anglais' ('Cursed Englishman'). This ballad also focuses on an experience of intense loss, but in a very different way from 'Le Roi Renaud', and with another sort of outcome, another style of response to loss.

'Le Mariage Anglais,' like 'Le Roi Renaud,' is also a famous song. It appears to date from the seventeenth century and perhaps refers to the marriage between Henriette de France and King Charles I of England in 1625.[18] It was, however, first edited in 1845, apparently in a rewritten form which is markedly dissimilar from the other surviving versions. We will return to the 1845 version later, but here I use the basic Doncieux and Tiersot version, supplemented by other versions.

A young French princess, the daughter of the king of France, is being forced to leave home and go to marry the king of England. She cries out, '*O mes chers frères, empêchez / De m'emmener! / J'aimerois mieus soldat François / Que roi anglois*' ('O my dear brothers, don't let them /

[16] See, for example, Norris J. Lacy (ed.), *The Arthurian Encyclopedia* (New York: Peter Bedrick, 1986), p. 575.
[17] Lines 6697–99.
[18] Doncieux, *Le Romancéro populaire de la France*, p. 309.

Take me away! / I would rather [marry] a French soldier / Than the English king'). Every woman in Paris weeps as she passes through the city. When it is time to embark, the girl has her eyes covered so she will not have to see the sea she is about to cross; alternatively, she refuses to have her eyes covered, so that she can see the sea that she is reluctantly crossing.[19] She refuses to have any music played on board; or again, in the other version, she complains that the violins are not those of the king of France. When they have arrived and it is time to sup with her new husband, she will not allow him to cut her bread and she calls him '*maudit Anglais*' ('cursed Englishman'). She says she cannot eat or drink when she looks at him: '*Je ne pui boire ni manger, / Quand je te vé*'. Other versions present similar insults to the new husband. When it is time to go to bed and he wants to take off her shoes she tells him to take off his own shoes, she has people from her own country to serve her.

All these are intense emotional reactions to separation from her country and the loss of her loved ones. Might she die of sorrow, or kill herself, or otherwise avoid facing up to her situation? In the 1845 version referred to above, she does indeed 'expire' of sorrow. But in the primary version under consideration, and in most other versions, the last stanza is a game-changer. When midnight comes, the beautiful young woman is not asleep and she says to her husband: '*Retourne-toi, embrasse-moi / Mon cher Anglois! / Puisque Dieu nous a assemblés, / Faut nous aimer*' ('Turn over and kiss me, / My dear Englishman. / Since God has brought us together, / [We] must love each other').

Thus we have in this ballad a young woman who, after grieving, protesting, and being angry and insulting about the changes and losses in her life that her marriage entails, and being abusive towards her new husband, and refusing to eat or drink, decides at last to make her peace with the situation. She decides to love her husband and she invites him to love her. It may be that reason has kicked in, or perhaps sexual desire as she lies in bed next to him. In this version (but not in all) she speaks of God's will: God has brought them together. In any case, she is now ready to move forward and stop grieving.

Doncieux comments on the dénouement as follows:

> *A l'animosité nationale – et plutôt encore provinciale – contre les gens d'outre-Manche, ce poète alliait un sentiment très juste des réalités de la vie, cette résignation au fait accompli qui fait la solidité des mariages aussi bien que la force des gouvernements* [. . .] *cette fille de France, comme elle déteste les Anglais de tout*

[19] Charles Guillon, *Chansons populaires de l'Ain* (Paris: Monnier, 1883), pp. 13–15.

> *son cœur! Mais quoi? elle est femme, et couchée, et l'Anglais peut-être est joli garçon.*
>
> (To the national, and really provincial, animosity against people from the other side of the Channel, this poet joined a very accurate sentiment of the realities of life, that resignation to things-as-they-are that makes the solidity of marriages as well as the strength of governments. This daughter of France, how she detests the English with all her heart! But what can you say? She is a woman, and lying in bed, and the Englishman is perhaps an attractive young man.)[20]

Aside from 'resignation to reality', as Doncieux puts it, this ballad can be said to provide an example of 'secure attachment'. Here we see someone who is able to grieve loudly and openly, and then to move on (as the current idiom has it). This is by no means a particularly common ending in a ballad, but it is certainly an interesting one.

Another example of this sort of ending – a medieval example – would be the famous *chanson de toile* (or 'weaving song') 'Belle Doette'. In this song a beautiful young woman, Doette, is sitting at her window, reading, and thinking about her '*ami*', Doon, who is away at a tournament. A messenger arrives and tells her that her lover has been killed. Doette is very sorrowful, and the refrain of the song from the start is '*E or en ai dol!*' ('And now I have sorrow from this!'). But she does not die, or even speak of dying. She announces that she will become a nun, and she founds an abbey to which everyone who has suffered in love is invited to come: '*Toz cels et celes vodra dedans atraire / Qui por amor sevent peine et mal traire. / Et or en ai dol. / Por vostre amor devenrai nonnne en l'eglyse saint Pol*' ('She seeks to draw to it all those [men and women] / Who know how to endure pain and suffering for love. / And now I have sorrow from this. / For your love I will become a nun in the church of Saint Paul').[21] The refrain changes at the end of the song to include a new line, expressing her will to go forward in a positive way: 'For your love I will become a nun in the church of Saint Paul.'

'Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre'

We have been looking at intense and powerful feelings elicited by separation and loss in French ballad-type songs. But strong feelings

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[20] Doncieux, *Le Romancéro populaire de la France*, pp. 310–11.

[21] Samuel N. Rosenberg and Hans Tischler, with Marie-Geneviève Grossel (eds), *Chansons des trouvères: Chanter m'estuet* (Paris: Lettres gothiques/Livre de Poche, 1995), pp. 102–05.

are not *always* present where separation and loss occur. We turn now to my third text, a *chanson* that handles the themes of separation and death in a curiously light-hearted, indeed comic, fashion. This ballad is often titled 'Le convoi de Malbrough' or 'Malbrough s'en va en guerre' or 'Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre' ('The Funeral Procession of Malbrough' or 'Malbrough Goes off to War'). The spelling of the key character's name varies a good deal – we find 'Malbrouck' and even (in Catalonia) 'Mambru'.[22] This ballad, like others we have looked at, also exists in a great many versions. In French Canada alone there are multiple versions, from different regions. Seven of them have been carefully studied, though primarily from a musicological point of view, by Mieczyslaw Kolinski.[23]

This ballad has an interesting history, though there are a number of controversies about its origins.[24] What seems clear is that in 1781 a peasant woman applied for the position of wet nurse for the French Dauphin (born 22 October 1781) and was hired for the job. She received the amusing nickname '*Madame Poitrine*' ('Madame Breast'). Queen Marie-Antoinette heard her singing or humming the song 'Malbrough s'en-va-t'en guerre' and the queen, and soon the court, learned the words and the song, which became very popular. Indeed, it had an extraordinary success – Beaumarchais included the melody in 'Le Mariage de Figaro', but that story is beyond our purview here.[25]

The words of the song were probably composed by a French soldier shortly after the Battle of Malplaquet in 1709, which was part of the War of the Spanish Succession (pitting France and Bavaria against Britain, the Holy Roman Empire, and Prussia). Apparently, there was at the time a rumour that John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, one of the key generals on the British side, had died in the battle (in fact, he died in 1722 after a distinguished career). This rumour provides the narrative frame of the ballad, which was probably set to a pre-existent tune (see below).

Let us examine the story the ballad tells, in the text provided by Doncieux and Tiersot (variations will also be addressed below). The

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[22] Henri Davenson (ed.), *Le Livre des chansons* (Paris: Club des Libraires de France, 1958), pp. 260–63 ('Malbrouck'); Doncieux, *Le Romancéro populaire de la France*, p. 460 ('Mambru').

[23] Mieczyslaw Kolinski, 'Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre: Seven Canadian Versions of a French Folksong,' *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, 10 (1978), 1–32.

[24] See C. D. Brenner, 'The Eighteenth-Century Vogue of "Malbrough" and Marlborough', *Modern Language Review*, 45 (1950), 177–80.

[25] On the story of its success, see Brenner, 'The Eighteenth-Century Vogue of "Malbrough" and Marlborough'.

ballad begins thus: '*Malbrough s'en va en guerre / Mironton, tonton, mirontaine*' ('Malbrough goes off to war / *Mironton, tonton, mirontaine*'). These two lines serve as a refrain repeated unchanged between the short stanzas. Malbrough declares, as he leaves, '*Ne sai quand reviendrai, / Ne sai quand reviendrai*' ('I don't know when I will return'), but he adds, '*Reviendrai à Paques ou à la Trinité*' ('I will return at Easter or at Trinity'). A rather similar version, in Parisian broadside format and titled *Mort et Convoi de l'Invincible Malbrough*, has the refrain: '*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine*'.[26] In this version Malbrough does not speak in the first person but instead the line in question reads, '*Ne sait quand reviendra*' ('He doesn't know when he will return').

In any case, the character of Malbrough never speaks again in the ballad. Easter passes, and Trinity season, but he does not come back. His wife climbs high up in her tower and sees her page coming, dressed in black. '*Beau page, ah! Mon beau page, quel' nouvelle apportez?*' ('Handsome page, ah! My handsome page, what news do you bring?'). He answers in successive stanzas: '*Nouvelle que j'apporte, vos beaus yeus vont pleurer. / Quittez vos habits roses et vos satins brochés. / Prenez la robe noire et les souliers cirés. / Malbrough est mort en guerre, est mort et enterré*' ('At the news I bring, your beautiful eyes are going to weep. / Take off your pink robes and your brocaded satin. / Put on the black gown and waxed shoes. / Malbrough is dead in the war, is dead and buried').

The page then describes the funeral: 'I saw him put into the ground by four officers. One wore his breastplate, another carried his shield, the third his helmet, the fourth his sword. Around his grave they planted rosemary; a nightingale sang, in his language: "Rest in peace."' Then everyone went home to bed: '*La cérémoni' faite, chacun s'en fut coucher*.' In some versions, the page then talks about who slept with whom – 'some slept with their wives; others by themselves' – and he talks about the beautiful women he knows.[27]

That is the end. The wife does not speak after originally asking for news. Neither the wife nor the page expresses any sense of loss or sorrow. The page simply tells her what happened at the funeral. Those four officers, as they carried the body of Malbrough to his grave wearing the fallen lord's military equipment – breastplate, shield, helmet, sword – were also in a sense taking over, piece by piece, his demolished identity. Malbrough is truly *gone*.

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[26] *Mort et Convoi de l'Invincible Malbrough* https://www.metronimo.com/fr/partitions_chansons/pdf/malbrough.pdf.

[27] Jean Allix (ed.), *Chansons de France* (Paris: L'école des loisirs, 1976), pp. 16–18.

It is striking that in this song separation, loss, and the death of a soldier husband are handled in such a light mode in terms of verbal expression: no one actually grieves. Indeed, if we also take into consideration the familiar melody (known primarily today as 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow'), the loss is even more dramatically trivialized. Today, this is a bright, cheery French children's song. There are numerous recordings of it, virtually all of them included in collections of songs for children.

Essentially, we do not care that the husband is dead. This way of dealing with the topic is remarkable if we think of the history of France and of early modern Europe in general: how many husbands and fathers went off to war, leaving wives and children behind; how many soldiers, though awaited, and though they had said they would come back home, never returned.

The song is surprisingly dismissive about the loss and the death of a husband.[28] Its rhetorical strategies in this regard are worth analysing. How and why does this *chanson* offer emotional distance from the often painful realities of separation and loss through death? First, 'Malbrough' is obviously a deformation of the English name 'Marlborough'. This is a song about an English lord, indeed a famous one.[29] He is not a Frenchman, not one of 'us'. He is, in fact, an enemy, a British general. The first syllable of his reconstituted name, 'Mal' (instead of 'Marl') may indeed mark him out as a 'bad' man.

It is the messenger, a young man, who does most of the talking. Beyond asking for news, the wife does not speak (though women certainly talk quite a good deal in traditional ballads). Everything is told in the voice of a '*beau page*' who clearly does not care much about Malbrough. Moreover, his initial message to the wife largely bears on the necessity for her to change from her pretty pink clothes into what appear to be ugly black mourning garments, with waxed shoes. This necessary sartorial come-down may even be interpreted as the reason why she is going to weep. And perhaps we are to suspect the wife of being in love with this '*beau page*' . . . or he with her.

But what of the consolation offered by the fact that rosemary was planted on the tomb and that a nightingale sang, in his own language,

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[28] There are also songs in which a husband or wife is decidedly happy at the death of his/her unloved spouse. Examples are 'L'Enterrement du bossu' ('The Burial of the Hunchback') and 'Le Mari débarrassé de sa femme' ('The Husband [who has got] Rid of his Wife') (Rolland, *Recueil de chansons populaires*, II, 246–49). Both of these spouses are presented as physically abusive.

[29] Brenner, 'The Eighteenth-Century Vogue of "Malbrough" and Marlborough', p. 179.

Requiescat in pace? Can these details be said to provide emotional closure, consolation, peace? Perhaps a bit, but they are surely rather flattened out and diminished by the final detail that 'then everyone went home to bed', and, in some versions, that some of the men slept with their wives, others alone, and that there are lots of pretty women out there, blondes, brunettes, and women with chestnut hair.[30] These elements, along with the jolly melody and the lively nonsense syllables '*Mironton, tonton, mirontaine*', all undercut whatever potentially sombre, elegiac elements this *chanson* might be said to have. So this ballad, with its dismissive, even essentially cheerful, way of depicting separation and death, corresponds very well to the attachment style termed 'insecure avoidant/dismissive'.

As noted above, in this case an important component of this dismissiveness derives from the fact that Malbrough is, to the French, a foreigner; 'we' French do not care about him or his death. But, of course, it is surprising that his page and especially his wife do not seem to care much either. Moreover, dealing with grief and mourning in a parodic manner raises larger issues of dismissive attitudes in ballads and other works.

It is, moreover, not always clear that audiences would have recognized the name 'Malbrough' as English, and therefore foreign, or 'other'. If we look at the seven French Canadian versions studied by Kolinski, some of them are remarkably playful about this death. Even the nationality, and indeed the gender, of the deceased seem not to be clear. For example, two versions refer to Malbrough as '*elle*'. In another, the refrain is '*Courez, courez, courez / Petites filles jeunes et gentilles, / Courez, courez, courez / Venez ce soir pour vous amuser*' ('Run, run, run / Young and charming little girls / Run, run, run, / Come this evening to have fun'), although the final line of the song is '*Monsieur Malbrough est mort, / Est mort et enterré là-bas*' ('Mr Malbrough is dead, / Is dead and buried over there').

How common is this sort of trivializing of death and funerals, this kind of dismissiveness of human suffering? One does see it in parodic works about the suffering of animals, such as the medieval French *Roman de Renart*, where Pinte the hen's violent grief over the deaths of her sisters and brothers, all of them murdered – 'martyred'– by the fox, is handled mockingly.[31] To jump the Atlantic Ocean and several

[30] Davenson, *Le Livre des chansons*, p. 262.

[31] Jean DuFournet (ed.), *Le Roman de Renart (Branches I, II, III, IV, V, VIII, X, XV)* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1970), pp. 75–76; English translation in D. D. R. Owen, trans., *The Romance of Reynard the Fox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 9.

centuries, we see this as well in American songs such as 'Go Tell Aunt Rhody that the Old Gray Goose Is Dead', which are in the same general tradition. The suffering of animals can allow respectably for such emotional distance. We can perhaps laugh without guilt at weeping goslings who have lost their mother.

* * *

We have looked at three traditional French *chansons*. What have Bowlby and attachment theory to offer that is of use to us in making sense of these and similar ballads? First, the theory help us recognize the importance of moments of intense separation from close and (theoretically) beloved persons. Separation, and the permanent loss that follows it, can be caused by any of a number of factors – war, death, seduction or another kind of disloyalty, for example. Attachment theory reminds us that such moments are typically fraught with powerful, sometimes conflicting or surprising, emotions which may be difficult to parse out. People – or characters – may not themselves recognize what they are feeling, or why they are feeling so strongly, so strangely. Finally, Bowlby and attachment theory give us ways of making sense of the different basic styles in which characters respond to loss in ballads To die of sorrow? Or to go on living, and how, in what frame of mind?

It is my hope that this approach will turn out to be fruitful in analysing other traditional ballads, from both the French and other traditions.

I dedicate this paper to the memory of †Larry Syndergaard, a fine ballad scholar and a generous and lovely man. I learned much from him. The paper is related to a large project I am working on examining the role of the emotions in medieval and early modern French literature. My thanks to my husband, Paul C. Vitz, of the Institute for the Psychological Sciences, for his valuable guidance on the psychological issues raised here.

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‘Nobody loves me but my mother, and she could be jivin’ too’: The Blues-Like Sentiment of Hip Hop Ballads

Salim Washington

This paper is a meditation on the lyrics and music of hip hop ballads. Specifically under consideration is the commercial genre known as gangsta rap, most especially in the ways in which it inverts the heterosexual ballad traditions of Afro-America. I will analyse two important hip hop ballads, ‘Dear Mama’ by Tupac Shakur, and ‘Miss U’ by Biggie Smalls, also known as the Notorious B.I.G., *nom de plume* of Christopher Wallace. Both of these artists remain widely regarded by hip-hop heads as MCs.[1] That is, they are practitioners of the art form in ways that both precede and supersede the commercialization of rap music.[2] Imani Perry cites rap duo Eric B. and Rakim defining the MC as the person that ‘moves the crowd’. MCs used their narratives, vocalizations, and bodies, along with DJs and beat boxers, to involve the audience in the call and response that has been a constant in African and African diasporic musics for centuries.[3]

Tupac and Biggie were two of the leading rappers during the golden age of hip hop in the 1990s, and their practices represent the

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[1] Tupac Shakur, ‘Dear Mama’ (Atlantic, 1995); The Notorious B.I.G., ‘Miss U’, *Life after Death* (Bad Boy, 1997).

[2] At root, hip hop culture is multifocal and includes graffiti art, breakdancing, as well as DJ and MC performance as integral parts of its cultural worldview. Started as an underground movement in New York, hip hop quickly became an internationally beloved reality in vernacular cultures among the youth in many places. Eventually, rap music rose to become one of the most important genres of commercial music, though many purists deny that the commercialized versions truly represent hip hop. Biggie Smalls’s first runaway hit, ‘Give Me One More Chance’, for example, had a radio version, a hip hop version, and a remix. For a theoretical investigation of rap music as a black cultural code, especially in the ‘relationships between oppression and cultural resistance’, see Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).

[3] Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 72. For discussion of the trope of call-response see Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford, 1995).

social values of the 'keeping it real' part of the hip hop community. Tupac claimed the West Coast with his contradictory performances of 'thug life', while Biggie represented the East Coast through humour and lyrical precision. This stylistic, aesthetic war devolved into a bloody period of internecine fighting. This beef was associated with both men, and Shakur in particular spurred it on through his taunting expressions of violence in some of his released songs.[4] Both men were shot to death within a year of each other at the height of their popularity, both only in their mid-twenties. Despite widespread speculation about their having been assassinated, no one has been brought to justice for either of the murders.

Their early deaths and the deep-seated mourning that followed have contributed to their present-day hallowed status within the world of hip hop and wider popular culture. Tupac Shakur has a James Dean-like aura as an icon of the rebellious aspirations of a generation. Like Elvis, he has inspired diehard fans who even refuse to accept his death as a fact, believing that he lives on as Makaveli. For his part, Biggie is still revered as the 'King of NY', the genre's master craftsman and lyricist. Because of their early deaths, neither rapper has had to endure the indignity some of their peers have suffered in their search for more mainstream and lucrative careers. Snoop Dogg's pandering to mainstream America, and Busta Rhymes selling Seven Up, are two high-profile examples. The ballads under discussion in this paper, however, while both commercially successful, represent cultural shifts among the youth in the nation's inner cities. These cultural values are reflected in the African-American ballad tradition, starting from the classic blues of the 1920s and continuing in the gangsta rap tradition of the late twentieth century.

It probably occurs to some that gangsta rap is a strange place to locate ballad tradition. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* defines a ballad as a 'concise composition known throughout Europe since the late Middle Ages'. This description says that the popular song form 'combines narrative, dramatic dialogue and lyrical passages in stanzaic form sung to a rounded tune, and often includes a recurrent refrain'. It also notes a different ballad tradition starting in the mid-twentieth century in Britain and North America that eventually created a popular understanding of a ballad as 'a slow, personalized love song or one, such as the "blues ballad" in North America, in which the narrative element is slender and subordinated

[4] Jeff Weiss and Evan McGarvey, *2Pac vs Biggie: An Illustrated History of Rap's Greatest Battle* (Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 2013).

to a lyrical mood'.[5] But even early ballad scholars admitted that there is wide latitude with respect to the variants of ballad *style*, and according to Louise Pound, as wide as the variations in the song style in general. Despite this expansiveness, as late as 1933 Reed Smith made no mention of black traditions or styles in his article 'The Traditional Ballad in America, 1933'.[6]

In fact, the gangsta rap ballad combines elements from both of these ballad traditions. It is the inheritor of the older narrative-focused ballad through the primacy of narrated stanzas in hip hop music reminiscent of the blues stanzas (not to be confused with the genre of 'blues ballad'), and the musical tradition of the sentimental American love ballad. The narrative tradition is the dominant one, however, and the second tradition is rendered as ironic.

Just as the traditional ballad changed in content and form as the merchant class rose against feudalism, the ironic use of African-American sentimental ballads marks the decline of the nation's inner cities during the rise of post-industrial economics. Their ballad progenitor, however, lay in the broadsides that became popular in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In these ballads sensationalized crimes and heroic outlaws were celebrated, much as they would be a century later in African-American toasts about 'bad niggers', created and performed and cherished on street corners and in jail houses.[7]

These profane utterances are problematic, and some people even view them as obscene. Sympathetic observers, however, recognize these artists as organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense – that is, they articulate the thoughts and values of persons who are not in concert with or even within the purview of institutional intellectuals. Or in the words of Peter McLaren, they articulate 'an oppositional performative politics'.[8] In effect, the strength of rap music lies in its ability to 'prioritize black voices from the margins of urban America'.[9] Even some who remain sympathetic to the prophetic role played by

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[5] Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 2001), p. 541.

[6] Louise Pound, 'The "Uniformity" of the Ballad Style', *Modern Language Notes*, 35 (1920), 217–22; Reed Smith, 'The Traditional Ballad in America, 1933', *Journal of American Folklore*, 47 (1934), 64–75.

[7] Bruce Jackson, *Get Your Ass in the Water and Swim Like Me: African American Narrative Poetry from Oral Tradition* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

[8] Peter McLaren, 'Gangsta Pedagogy and Ghettocentricity: The Hip-Hop Nation as Counter Public Sphere', *Counterpoints*, 96 (1999), pp. 19–64 (p. 23).

[9] Rose, *Black Noise*, p. 4.

hip hop culture in general, and rap in particular, can bristle at the thought of accepting gangsta rap specifically. Tricia Rose, the godmother of serious rap music studies, avers that the style emerged from a narrative specific to poor, young, black, male subjects in Los Angeles. This is a cultural practice that is built upon the historical relevance of black nationalist oppositional practices by activists and artists (Malcolm X, Black Panthers, Gil Scott Heron, The Last Poets) within a context that gives response to rampant police brutality, the loss of industrial employment and the concomitant decline in social and economic infrastructure, and the rise of the crack economy. The music has its detractors, to be sure – one thinks of the critic Stanley Crouch, the historian Martha Bayles, and Congresswoman Maxine Waters. But for sympathetic listeners and millions of fans, this music has a relevance that outstrips its widespread commercial degradation.

Gangsta rap is a continuation of the blues sensibility in form and content. Paradoxically, while the lyrical content derives from the cultural bent of the blues, the harmonic, melodic content is built primarily upon the music and musical tropes of soul music from the 1960s and 1970s. Historically, this musical tradition was associated with a sentimentality that was anything but blues-like. It is the combining of the sentimentality of classic R&B (a black version of mainstream American pop love ballads) with the lyrics and feeling that reinforce the profane grittiness and philosophic stance of classic blues that makes the hip hop ballad ironic.

Like the first recorded masters of the blues, the personal biographies of these hip hop artists are marked by economically driven migration patterns, shifting gender roles, and other displacements that occurred during the Great Migration.[10] The social context of gangsta rap, however, derives not from the migration of peoples, but from a flight of capital and government support in the post-industrial inner city. Classic blues dealt with a wide variety of themes, but love is a central theme, if only because it was in the realm of personal relationships that the freedmen found their most dramatic freedom. Gangsta rap flourished during another economic and political nadir in African-American history, the time when the scourge of crack cocaine plagued inner-city black communities. The political and economic freedoms won by African-Americans through the previous century of civil rights militancy left them with greater agency

[10] Farah Jasmine Griffin, *Who Set You Flowin?: The African-American Migration Narrative,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010).

than they had enjoyed during the classic blues age. Consequently, love is not the monolith that it was in the classic blues. As Cornel West would have it, the social conditions of the time led to a rise of nihilism,[11] and it is in gangsta rap where we see this displayed most dramatically. In particular, heterosexual love is reduced to sexual conquest, even spawning a subsidiary genre, headed by artists such as Too Short, dealing with resurgent turn-of-the-century pimp tales.

Gangsta rap ballads manage to avoid the wholesale misogyny that plagues the pimp tales, but they do share an artistic ancestor – the toasts, the mid-twentieth century narrative tradition that is much closer to rap music genealogically and historically than even the blues. The toasts celebrate the exploits and attitudes of tricksters and bad men, outsiders who fashioned their lives against the grain of social respectability to reign supreme in 'the streets', the putative domain of black working-class and poor men. Thus, the hip hop ballad that deals with love, whether frustrated or celebrated, is marked out stylistically and philosophically by the toasts from the poetry and sensibilities of the blues. Like the urban classic blues of the 1920s, these late twentieth-century ballads are not sentimental. There are few declarations of undying romantic love. Speaking of the queens of the blues that put the genre on the map in the 1920s, Angela Davis explains how the theme of love in the blues differed from mainstream expectations:

> By contrast, the popular song formulas of the period demanded saccharine and idealized nonsexual depictions of heterosexual love relationships. Those aspects of lived love relationships that were not compatible with the dominant, etherealized ideology of love--such as extramarital relationships, domestic violence, and the ephemerality of many sexual partnerships--were largely banished from the established popular musical culture. Yet these very themes pervade the blues. What is even more striking is the fact that initially the professional performers of this music – the most widely heard individual purveyors of the blues – were women.[12]

Similarly, in the gangsta rap ballad life is existentially always already problematic. The quotidian concerns of employment, feeding a family, establishing security and so on are the background even for stories of

[11] Cornel West, 'Nihilism in Black America', in *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

[12] Angela Y. Davis, 'I Used to Be Your Sweet Mama: Ideology, Sexuality and Domesticity', in *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (New York: Pantheon, 1998).

celebration. The tragic-comic view of life in the blues universe assumes that every love relationship could bring its own troubles and even betrayal. This obtains for both 'Miss U' and 'Dear Mama'. In 'Miss U' the narrative tells of a homicidal lover; 'Dear Mama' celebrates a mother who was at one point a drug addict. Both ballads take the vagaries of ghetto life as a veritable actor within the drama.

The constructed images and lyrical persona of the MC incarnated in Tupac and Biggie reveal a revival of the blues persona. LeRoi Jones famously pointed out that the use of the first-person singular was a result of the shift from the corporate consciousness that obtained during slavery, as evidenced in the lyrics of the slave songs, and the possibilities of individual differentiation brought about by emancipation. While the blues singer used the word 'I' rather than the 'we' or 'us' of the spirituals, she sang of things that resonated with the lives of her intended audience. Both of our rappers altered their presented biographies to represent social truths that were generally accepted but not always perfectly present in their own experiences.[13]

If the classic blues were non-sentimental and reflected everyday black experience, then the toasts were downright disreputable glorifications of *outsiders* within that demographic. The ghetto-styled braggadocio of the pimp toasts such as 'Pimpin' Sam' and the bad man ballads such as 'Stagolee', as well as blues songs such as 'Mannish Boy', are all relevant models for the MC claiming to own the streets, smash the dance floor, vanquish his foes, be they rivals or the police, or whatever test of 'manhood' might be relevant. These and other working-class black ballad conventions, especially those that are learned and practised in prisons, inform the content and tone of gangsta rap. The blues-like disdain for sentimentality and the eschewal of any concession to the politics of respectability brought the subaltern perspective into music in ways that were severely attenuated by the soul genre, despite its providing much of the form and rhythmic character of hip hop.

While both the blues and soul music present ballad traditions that are based on the yearnings of love, soul hits are more sentimental, with an ideal consonant with the dominant narrative of 'boy meets girl', implicitly living 'happily ever after'. By contrast, the blues complicate mainstream understanding by expanding the normative understanding of who is deemed a fit protagonist of the love ballad. For instance, in the blues there is an openness about sexuality, even including taboo topics for pop music such as homosexuality and

[13] Leroi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Morrow, 1963).

bisexuality. The blues narratives teach that anyone can fall in – or out of – love, and as blues theorist, Albert Murray, would have it, anyone's woman or man (including yours) can do you wrong.

Gangsta rap ballads, with their raw sexuality and devil-may-care attitude present the type of abrasive departure from African-American politics of respectability in the late twentieth century, analogous to the cultural dissonance that the blues represented to the black middle classes in the early decades of the twentieth century.[14] In them, we see the rewriting of the notions of virtue and the codes of ethics in ways that are appealing to late twentieth-/early twenty-first-century youth cultures. Unlike the code of conduct held up by the civil rights movement and the well-crafted consonances of soul and R&B genres that accompanied it, the ballads of gangsta rap are irreverent and perhaps even perversely immoral. Martha Bayles speaks for more than a few when she describes rap as among the twentieth-century popular music genres that 'abuse the ear'; she admits to being 'disgusted' by the 'graphic accounts of rape, mutilation, serial murder, cannibalism, and necrophilia; or with the racial and ethnic hatemongering that has now spread from British punk into American rap and German neo-Nazi rock'.[15] In her book, *Hole in our Soul*, Bayles argues that these ideas have their degeneracy and immorality represented in the harshness of the musical sounds that accompanied them.

However, both of the ballads in question quite pointedly use the musical tropes of sentimental love of 1970s soul ballads, but only in an ironic stance in which the music and the lyrics are at odds with one another. Biggie's use of the Delphonics' celebrated classic 'Hey Love' as the musical context for his tragic-comic 'Playa Hater' is as deliberate as it is ironic.[16] He not only uses a sample of the music, but also reproduces the melody with his new rhymes. Unlike 'Hey Love', which uses polished, smooth harmonies and silky-smooth falsettos, however, in 'Playa Hater' Biggie sings the melody with a slightly out of tune and timbral roughness. So, he does away with the well-crafted vocals of the Delphonics' tale of unrequited love in order better to portray the rough street life of the bad boy going on a robbing spree. In its coarse vocal aesthetic, Biggie's rendition is closer to the classic

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[14] For more on the politics of respectability, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[15] Martha Bayles, *Hole in our Soul: The Loss of Beauty & Meaning in American Popular Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 4–5.

[16] The Delphonics, 'Hey Love' (Philly Groove Records, 1971); The Notorious B.I.G, 'Playa Hater', *Life after Death* (Bad Boy, 1997).

blues vocalizations than it is to those of the soul groups and earlier doo-wop groups that provide the harmonic/melodic backdrop. The mocking of soul music's musical values by the rapper's off-key singing is part of the message that this is no longer an artist representing the dignified politics of respectability.

By contrast, in the case of 'Miss U' the sung vocals are not done by Biggie, but rather by singers. The ironic vocal roughness and intonation are completely absent. This *is* a love ballad, telling tales of true admiration and fondness. But it is neither a sublime nor sublimated heterosexual love based upon romantic commitment. Rather, it is a homosocial love based on a patriarchal brotherhood and loyalty to the codes of the streets.

In these two ballads there is also love between the sexes as well as familial love between mother and son. In particular, Tupac's song 'Dear Mama' is the quintessential hip hop love letter from son to mother. Like 'Miss U', 'Dear Mama' is not only built upon the musical conventions of soul ballads but also makes direct reference to an iconic soul ballad, 'Sadie', by the Motown group the Spinners during the 1970s.[17]

In the rhymes of Tupac and Biggie, as in the toasts of earlier generations, the protagonists are either bad men or hustlers, living by their wits outside of respectability and often outside the law as well. It is relevant that both artists served time in a penitentiary. Christopher Wallace was part of the drug trade and was incarcerated before achieving fame as a rapper, lending verisimilitude to his tales of hustling, whereas Shakur went to prison after he was already a celebrity, trading in his dance and theatrical background for a near-hysterical 'thug life' persona.[18]

These influences give a context for the saltiness of the language used in gangsta rap. It does not, as some would have it, portend the end of civilization as we know it, or necessarily even a decline in propriety. Rather, it is a continuation of verbal traditions with a blues-

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[17] The Spinners, , 'Sadie', *New and Improved* (Atlantic, 1974).

[18] It bears mentioning that Shakur's persona, as his biographer Michael Eric Dyson points out, was fundamentally contradictory. He espoused the revolutionary ethos of the Black Panthers, of which his mother was a celebrated/notorious member, as well as the gangster codes of street life as equally important and relevant to his life, and tried to merge the two. 'Thug Life', the cry he made popular, is an acronym for 'The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everyone'. For a detailed discussion of these contradictory impulses, which fuel the ambivalence in 'Dear Mama', Michael Eric Dyson, *Holler if You Hear Me: Searching for Tupac Shakur* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2006).

like aesthetic and wit. In no small measure, gangsta rap is also a reincarnation of poetic traditions that were founded in urban contexts in which black men were under-employed, overly incarcerated, and widespread victims of social exclusion.

The Notorious B.I.G., 'Miss U'

One of Biggie Smalls's most compelling ballads, 'Miss U', has serial themes and deals with multiple topics, all held together with the idea of loss and the protagonist's mourning of his beloved.

> [*Introduction, spoken by the Notorious B.I.G.*]
> Yeah, dedicatin' this to my nigga, O.
> We miss you, nigga.
> Goin' out to all the young niggas that died in the struggle.
> Word up, shit is real in the field.
> You know, sparking blunts to all you niggaz.
> Word up.
>
> [*Sung refrain alternating lines between male and female voices*]
> Each and every day
> The daydreams of how we used to be.
> See your family
> And that baby's lookin' just like you.
> Why'd you go away?
> I've been missin' you lately.
> Tell me why you're gone and through.

As is Biggie's wont, the track begins with a non-musical prelude in which Biggie and a friend discuss their loss. Their friend, O, was in the hustling game with them, and although he foresaw that Biggie Smalls was about to become a celebrity as a rapper and would financially be able to take them out of the drug-slinging trade, he was suddenly killed, leaving them bereft. Just before the music begins, Biggie declares: 'I loved that nigga O, too; that was my mu'fucking heart.' The word 'heart' reverberates and then the music begins. People, even G's, still have relationships and families, and protect them with all their might, but it is in this space that hip hop makes its declaration of a sublime love – this space of homies in the struggle, not couples united in romantic love.

An obvious retort to this assertion might be Biggie's 'Me and My Bitch', a song in which the MC proclaims his undying love for his

partner.[19] But in addition to the implied disrespect of calling his partner 'bitch', the lyrics also present her as his accomplice and partner in crime and subtly present her behaviour through tropes of masculinity. She is someone who would never snitch and, most importantly, who died protecting the narrator. Even the manner of death, being gunned down by the police, is a prevalent fear and rising statistic for black males in the United States. While the introduction gives the 'hood' context, the musical refrain is nostalgic and sweet, a gesture to saner and calmer times.

[*Verse one: the Notorious B.I.G.*]
I remember sellin' three bricks of straight flour
Got my man a beat down to the third power
He didn't care, spent the money in a half hour
Got some fishscale, rained on competition like a shower
Got the coke cooked up, a crackhead Haven
In eighty-eight, when [Big Daddy] Kane ruled with 'Half Steppin''
A thirty-eight, a lot of mouth, was our only weapon
We was kings till the G's crept in
And now I'm missin him.

[*Chorus sung by male voices*]
Ooh, I'm missin' you.
Tell me why the road turns, why it turns.
Ooh, I'm missin' you.
Nah nah nah nah nah, oh tell me why why why why?

In verse one the stories of the narrator's friend are interlaced with the biography of the narrator and even the narrator's community. The coming-of-age narrative of these three actors takes place during the crack scourge of the nation's inner cities during the 1980s and 1990s. We learn that O and his friends are so desperate that they steal from gangsters to become drug dealers, only to be robbed in turn. They were not immune to the futile rat race, but were able for a while to become 'kings' in 'Do or Die Bed Sty'.[20] It is through his heart and determination, his ability to take the vicissitudes of life in style that O wins the narrator's admiration – the style that is reminiscent of Big Daddy Kane's lyricism during the same period. The musical tropes undergirding the rhymes are also consistent with the tender sentiments of mainstream love ballads. The music is sweet and slow,

[19] The Notorious B.I.G, 'Me & My Bitch', *Ready to Die* (Bad Boy, 1994).
[20] 'Do or Die Bed Sty' is a nickname for the notoriously dangerous Brooklyn neighbourhood, Bedford Stuyvesant.

seductive even. Unlike 'Playa Hater', 'Miss U' utilizes professional singers who sing the background vocals in tune, consistent with the aesthetic of soul ballads. This is a significant choice. 'Hey Love' is about romantic yearning, 'Miss U' is about mourning the loss of loved ones, while 'Playa Hater' is a fantasy of a bad boy on a robbing spree.

The tales of O are about neophytes to the game, chronicling the narrator's and his friends' entry to the world of slinging and the violent consequences of that entry. True to the historical content of ballads, there is a narrated tale with a decisive action, beginning in violence and ending with the ultimate violence. While in the introduction Biggie openly declares his love of his homie, in the verse itself his mourning for his friend is reflected through his friend's bereaved family, especially his daughter's resemblance to her father. While O's older brothers 'understand the game', his 'baby mama' is 'tripping' and 'blaming' him in such a way that he cannot look O's baby girl in the eye. That is, the expression of mourning for the (male) homie is expressed lyrically as the mourning of the female members of the family. The narrator cried, but when in the company of his male friends he talks calmly and smokes a ceremonial and commemorative blunt, a firm part of black popular culture ever since Sketch poured a ceremonial sip of wine for the dead in the influential movie, *Cooley High*.[21] So the tale is presented as between male and female, though the females are not quite interlocutors, but simulacra for O.

[*Verse two: the Notorious B.I.G.*]
We work all week, we dance, play the movies.
We rock flatops, our girls rocked doobies.
Made a killin', even though the thieves knew me.
Eventually,
You know they try to do me. Fuck it.
Fed up, my nigga want to take it down south.
Sick of cops comin', sick of throwin' jacks in his mouth.
Gave him half my paper; told him go that route.
Few months, he got his brain blown out.
Now I'm stressed.
His baby's mother, she trippin', blamin' me.
And his older brothers understand:
The game it be

[21] Michael Schultz's *Cooley High* (1975) was an influential film which functions both as the coming-of-age narrative of a young artist and a portrait of a 1970s ghetto, based upon life in the infamous Cabrini Green projects in Chicago. It was later refashioned, set in Los Angeles, for the hip hop generation as John Singleton's *Boyz in the Hood* (1991).

Kinda topsy turvy.
You win some, you lose some.
Damn, they lost a brother.
They mother lost a son.
Fuck, why my nigga couldn't stay in NY?
I'm a thug, but I swear for three days I cried
I look in the sky and ask God why.
Can't look his baby girl in the eye.
Damn, I miss you.

Still embroiled in the street life, the narrator paints a portrait of the cultural milieu in fashion, leisure, and work. The loss again is reflected through the bereaved family, but it also affects the narrator directly. He exhibits three of the tropes for the profundity of grief around the loss of someone truly loved: crying, existential angst, and prayer beseeching God's wisdom.

[*Chorus, male voices*]

[*Verse three: the Notorious B.I.G.*]
There was this girl around the way that make cats drool.
Her name's Drew, played fools out they money in pool.
People swore we was fuckin', but we was just cool.
She used to hang while I slang my drugs after school.
She'd watch my mom, help my moms with the groceries.
My little sister, the girl was kinda close to me.
A little closer than the average girl's supposed to be.
Far from a lover, my girl was jealous of her.
Then she started messin' with some major players.
Handled ki[lo]s, niggas called them the Bricklayers.
A dread kid, had a baby for that bitch, Taya.
Found out her baby's father cheatin'. Now Drew, she gotta slay her.
One night, across from the corner store
Taya ran around the block with a chrome four-four.
Squeezed all six shots in the passenger door.
The dude lived, what my baby had to die for?
I'm missin' her.

[*Chorus, male voices*]

The third verse is about a female friend of the narrator, with an androgynous name, Drew. The narrator makes sure we understand that she is not a romantic interest; she is 'far from a lover'. Yet she is close to him, 'closer than the average girl's supposed to be'. Drew is an enticing mixture of stereotypical female and male idealized traits.

On the one hand, she is beautiful; she 'makes cats drool'. On the other, she is also a veritable hustler, 'taking fools' money in pool', which is the ultimate street cred game, second only to basketball. Drew is an acceptable female love object with respect to the ballad. While in some ways she is conventionally feminine – beautiful, associated with 'moms' – his love for her is explicitly not romantic. Rather, the admiration that the narrator has for her is primarily because of her loyalty and fierceness in battle, as well as her adroit walking of the code of the streets, the same virtues celebrated in his late friend, O.

As Imani Perry states in *Prophets of the Hood:* 'When women actually do enter loving or collegial spaces within hip hop, that is women other than mothers and grandmothers, who are traditionally venerated in African American culture [. . .] it is as they enter the space of black male friendship, or becoming niggas'.[22] Thus Biggie can lament, 'what my baby have to die for', without forfeiting his gangsta status. He has taken measures to ensure that he will not be misunderstood as being a 'sucka', someone who is gullibly sentimental, someone vulnerable to or even blinded by her sexual charms. To have been in that state is the diametric opposite of the street code, which is literarily based upon the pimp's code. As Snoop Dog famously quipped in an early gangsta rap classic, 'we don't love them "ho"s'.[23]

The intimacy of the term 'my baby' is not cathected with the libidinal energy associated with heterosexual romance as in the R&B ballads that the music references, but rather the love and mourning of a fallen comrade. The decisive action taken in the ballad's narrative reveals a love that transcends death, which is the classic scenario for ballads dating back to the origins of the form, but within the social codes of a specific cultural community.

Tupac Shakur, 'Dear Mama' (*see Appendix*)

Tupac's classic begins with the voice of his mother, Afeni Shakur. She tells of her worries about having her son born while she was in prison.[24] But she was released just before his birth, and she was happy that it was a son. The music fades in and Tupac begins to rap.

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[22] Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*, p. 143.

[23] This is from a line from Dr Dre's 'Bitches Ain't Shit', from his debut game-changing album *The Chronic*. This attitude is the conventional one enacted by gangsta rap and this exact phrase, now somewhat iconic, was used by Mobb Deep and other artists.

[24] As a member of the Black Panthers Ms Shakur was arrested as a hero/villain, part of the 'Panther 21'.

The most sacrosanct love relationship in all of black working-class and vernacular culture is that between son and mother. And yet, in the blues tradition, and by extension in hip hop culture, too, it is riddled with ambivalence, perhaps best exemplified in the ghetto verbal contest, the dozens. The caveat in the title of this essay, taken from a classic blues trope, is echoed in Tupac Shakur's homage to his mother. Theirs was a troubled relationship that led to his being evicted from the homestead a year prior to his achieving majority, but Shakur's love for his mother is repeatedly acknowledged alongside his misgivings about her choices and actions. So while she is proclaimed to be 'a black queen', she is also described as a 'crack fiend'.

This ambivalence is a break from the rapper's determined effort to present himself as having a thug persona. The resultant vulnerability and honesty represent Tupac's artistry at its best. He is unusually candid in this work and shows not only his vulnerability, but also his contradictions. It would seem that the contradictory impulses of the revolutionary and the criminal that Michael Eric Dyson elucidates so thoroughly were a set of realities that Tupac came by honestly. They were evident in his mother even as his embryo was being gestated while she was in prison accused of bank robbery as a member of the 'Black Panther Six'.

It is this unflinching acknowledgement of these contradictions that endeared the artistry and persona of Tupac Shakur to the world. It is also the best example of him following the gangsta rap ballad tradition of making an ironic coupling of hip hop attitude and content with old-school R&B musical aesthetics, represented in the ballad in the secondary sense of a slow song about romantic love. His pageant to his mother is without the hagiographic description found in the Spinners' 'Sadie', the song that 'Dear Mama' uses as a musical and topical trope, and other soul tributes to mothers. The mother honoured in 'Sadie' is a saint, pure and simple. She is an uncompromisingly virtuous Christian woman filled with love. By contrast, Shakur's ode to Afeni Shakur makes reference to her struggles with crack addiction and other traumas in Tupac's childhood. Sadie is honoured as ur-mother of the ghetto, a woman who protects and nurtures her children, keeping them off the streets and instilling in them a conventional morality. In 'Dear Mama', Afeni does provide for her children, but is unable to protect them, and is ultimately unable even to protect herself from the vagaries of life 'in the hood'. As Cornel West would have it, taking 'neighbour' out of the term 'neighbourhood' inscribes what he sees as a rise in nihilism in one of the most widely recognized terms from hip hop culture.

Through Shakur and Wallace the male declarations of love for the women in their lives are complicated by non-conforming gender expectations. The girls who are rhetorically 'safe' to love in the context of the street codes of rap are transformed from being merely 'boos' – objects of romantic love – into (masculinized) homies, or comrades in the 'struggle'. In black working-class culture perhaps the most sacrosanct love relationship between male and female is the mother/son relationship, which is expressed in the soul ballads with great tenderness and appreciation, such as in the Intruders' 'I'll Always Love My Mama'. In Shakur's ballad, even maternal love is complicated and presented with considerable ambivalence.

Through this irony and ambivalence shines the optimistic and potentially transformative power of love. Both the Notorious B.I.G.'s 'Miss U' and Tupac Shakur's 'Dear Mama' are rare instances of hip hop's treatment of the theme in a manner that is free from tongue-in-cheek disavowals of deep sentiment, and represent a crack in the street tough armour worn as a mask not only by entertainers, but by many young people navigating their social terrain. There is also the hope that the patriarchal normativity that obtains in much of popular culture can be subverted on certain occasions. In these examples of the gangsta rap love ballad there is a notable lack of the characteristic misogyny and nihilism that unfortunately marks much of the genre, and perhaps a glimpse into what the humane potential of the art form can present. The historical form of the ballad has endured for centuries, though it has changed and developed both in form and content as historical developments make such changes necessary for the ballad to remain relevant to contemporaneous societies. The urban centres of the United States at the turn of the century are no exception to this historical process, with gangsta rap providing new aesthetic practices shaped by the philosophical stance as well as the socio-economic positions of the communities from which they come.

Appendix: Tupac Shakur, 'Dear Mama'

[*Verse one*]
You are appreciated
When I was young me and my mama had beef.
Seventeen years old kicked out on the streets.
Though back at the time I never thought I'd see her face,
Ain't a woman alive that could take my mama's place.
Suspended from school, and scared to go home,
I was a fool with the big boys, breaking all the rules.
I shed tears with my baby sister.

Over the years we was poorer than the other little kids.
And even though we had different daddy's, the same drama –
When things went wrong we'd blame mama.
I reminisce on the stress I caused.
Now ain't nobody tell us it was fair.
No love from my daddy cause the coward wasn't there.
He passed away and I didn't cry, cause my anger
Wouldn't let me feel for a stranger.
They say I'm wrong and I'm heartless, but all along
I was looking for a father he was gone.
I hung around with the thugs, and even though they sold drugs
They showed a young brother love.
I moved out and started really hanging;
I needed money of my own so I started slanging.
I ain't guilty cause, even though I sell rocks
It feels good putting money in your mailbox.
I love paying rent when the rent's due;
I hope ya got the diamond necklace that I sent to you.
'Cause when I was low you was there for me
And never left me alone because you cared for me.
And I could see you coming home after work late
You're in the kitchen trying to fix us a hot plate.
Ya just working with the scraps you was given.
And mama made miracles every Thanksgiving.
But now the road got rough, you're alone
You're trying to raise two bad kids on your own.
And there's no way I can pay you back,
But my plan is to show you that I understand
You are appreciated.

[*Chorus: lines alternating between male chorus singing background and Tupac rapping*]
Lady
Don't ya know we love ya? Sweet lady
And dear mama
Place no one above ya, sweet lady
You are appreciated
Don't ya know we love ya?

[*Verse two*]
Pour out some liquor and I reminisce, cause through the drama
I can always depend on my mama
And when it seems that I'm hopeless
You say the words that can get me back in focus.
When I was sick as a little kid
To keep me happy there's no limit to the things you did.
And all my childhood memories

Are full of all the sweet things you did for me.
And even though I act crazy
I gotta thank the Lord that you made me.
There are no words that can express how I feel;
You never kept a secret, always stayed real.
And I appreciate, how you raised me
And all the extra love that you gave me.
I wish I could take the pain away;
If you can make it through the night there's a brighter day.
Everything will be alright if ya hold on;
It's a struggle everyday, gotta roll on.
And there's no way I can pay you back
But my plan is to show you that I understand.
You are appreciated.

[*Chorus*]
Lady
Don't ya know we love ya, sweet lady?
And dear mama
Place no one above ya, sweet lady
You are appreciated
Don't ya know we love ya?
Sweet lady
And dear mama
Dear mama
Lady, lady, lady

[*'Sadie', excerpt*]

[*Spoken introduction*]
In a world like today
It's a rare occasion to be able
To see young mothers like the ones
That were around when I grew up
But they live on in memory
To quite a few of us
And this song is dedicated
To those who cherish that memory

[*Verse one*]
Early one Sunday morning
Breakfast was on the table
There was no time to eat
She said to me, 'boy, hurry to Sunday school'
Filled with a load of glory
We learned the Holy story
She'll always have her dreams
Despite the things this troubled world can bring

[*Chorus*]
Oh, Sadie
Don't you know we love you, sweet Sadie?
Place no one above you
Sweet Sadie, well, well, well (living in the past)
Sometimes it seems so funny
But no money will turn your life around

[*Verse two*]
Sweeter than cotton candy
Stronger than papa's old brandy
Always that needed smile
Once in a while, she would break down and cry
Sometimes she'd be so happy
Just being with us and daddy
Standing the worst of times
Breaking the binds with just a simple song
Oh (Sadie) Sadie, baby
(Don't you know we love you, sweet Sadie?) she'll love us all in a special way
Well, well, well (place no one above you) sweet Sadie
Living in the past
Oh, she's never sinnin'
In love she's always winnin', yeah
(Sadie, don't you know we love you, sweet Sadie?) my, my, my, I love you, mama
(Place no one above you, sweet Sadie) I just can't forget
How you gave me love, oh, Lord (living in the past)
If there's a heaven up above
I know she's teaching angels how to love
(Sadie, don't you know we love you, sweet Sadie?) it's a mean world without you
All the love you showed
(Place no one above you, sweet Sadie) oh, how could anyone ever doubt your lovely word?
(Living in the past)
Ain't it funny that in the end, it's not money
It's just the love you gave us all?

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