

A Mother's Song - Dramaturgy Packet

BALLAD SINGING TRADITION

What is a ballad?

- A song that tells a story (or a story told in song)
- A short narrative poem, adapted for singing, that is simple in plot and metrical structure, and is divided into stanzas
- Characterized by complete impersonality so far as the author of singer is concerned



Who writes ballads?

- A ballad has no author: the teller of the story for the time being is as much the author as the unknown person who first put it into shape
- Ballads are never written in first person and there are no comments or reflections by the narrator (the dialogue is confined to its simplest and inevitable elements)

Elements of Folk/Popular Ballads

- Narrative folksongs belonged to all people, at a time when there were no formal divisions of literate and illiterate and the intellectual interests of all were identical
- This oral literature began to vanish as people became literate (with societal sophistication, these traditional tales were lost)
- A popular ballad doesn't have a specific date of composition, as the mere act of composition (which is quite as likely to be oral as written) is not the conclusion of the matter, but rather the beginning.
 - A ballad is passed from being the property of the author to being to possession of "the folk"
- As a ballad gets passed from singer to singer, it changing (creates a sense of collective composition)

"A genuinely popular ballad can have no fixed and final form, no sole authentic version. There are texts, but there is no text."

Structural Elements of Ballads

- Refrain: a phrase, line, or group of lines repeated at intervals throughout a poem, generally at the end of the stanza
- Commonplaces: recurrent passages, varying from a line to several stanzas in length
- Simple repetition/incremental repetition: when each stanza repeats the substance of the preceding, but with some variation which advances the story

“The Four Marys” Scottish Ballad

- This ballad tells a story about Mary Hamilton, a lady-in-waiting at the Scottish court of Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary Hamilton had an affair with the Queen’s second husband, Lord Darnley, and was sent to the gallows for drowning her illegitimate child.
- The “four Marys” in the song: Mary Seaton, Mary Beaton, Mary Carmichael, and Mary Hamilton
- The song has also been connected to the execution of Mary Hamilton, a maid of honor



to Empress Catherine, in Russia on March 14, 1719. She was hung for the murder of her child (though some think that this ballad existed prior to this event in Russia).

Presentation Style of Ballads

- Traditional ballads were performed “**presenter**” style: a choral leader, or presenter, would sing a line of text and the congregation would sing a response (this was very effective, especially for those who were illiterate or could not read music)

SCOTS-IRISH MIGRATION TO APPALACHIA

The Great Migration

- Began in the early 17th century when Britain's King James I encouraged his Scottish people to migrate across the Irish Sea to Ireland.
- James, who was Presbyterian, wished to convert and control his Irish Catholic subjects by planting loyal Scottish Protestants in Ireland.
- Additionally, Scotland was experiencing economic hardships and James promised a better life in Ireland.
- Lowland Scots settled in the Ulster region of Ireland where they became known as Ulster Scots.



Life in Coleraine, Ulster:

- The native Irish who were dispossessed from their lands violently resisted the Scottish newcomers and this conflict contributed to the mid-century Civil War.
- The Scottish Presbyterians were experiencing religious persecution by the Episcopalian Church of Ireland.
- There was a depression in the linen trade, an area in the economy that provided income to so many of them.
- There was also a steep increase in land rents driven by an explosion in the population.



Presbyterian Crossing from Ulster to Massachusetts (1718)

- Following the Williamite war in Ireland, Ulster's Presbyterians expected their loyalty to King William to be rewarded by the government. However, instead, they were excluded from full access to political and civil power as a result of the Penal Laws that were passed by the Anglican-dominated Irish Parliament. For instance, the Test Act required those wishing to hold public office to produce evidence that they had taken communion in the Church of Ireland. Furthermore, marriages conducted by Presbyterian ministers were not considered valid and children born of such marriages were regarded as illegitimate.
- In the 1680s, trade between American and Irish ports had expanded, driven by the importation of American flaxseed, which was so crucial to the Ulster linen industry.
- As ships unloaded their cargoes in Ulster ports, they brought with them glowing reports of The New World.



- In early 1718, men who were dissatisfied with the situation in Ireland signed an elaborate petition and addressed it to Samuel Shute, the Governor of Massachusetts. The Massachusetts authorities were eager to have new settlers, especially ones already used to the farming and frontier life.
- Community leaders, such as James McGregor, the minister of Aghadowey, organized the departure of one hundred and twenty families in several ships from Derry and Belfast to travel to Boston.
- Once the Boston authorities realized the full implications of what was happening, they weren't very pleased with the influx of Presbyterians, as no area of land had been officially set aside for these settlers.

~ McGregor's Farewell Sermon ~

to avoid oppression and cruel bondage,
to shun persecution and designed ruin,
to withdraw from the communion of
idolators and to have an opportunity of
worshipping God according to the
dictates of conscience and the rules of
His inspired Word.

- In spite of what the 1718 migrants had hoped, they were not able to stay together in a community, but were obliged to move separately to various locations.
- By the 1780s, Scots-Irish were pushed into the western Appalachian Mountain region of the Carolinas and Tennessee.

Helpful sources:

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CHILDBIRTH THROUGH THE TIMES

General English History of Childbirth

- Men believed that a woman's purpose in life was to get pregnant and have babies.
- When Queen Elizabeth I was born in 1533, giving birth was considered such a dangerous practice that women were encouraged to write their wills (women were often afraid of giving birth because they were scared that they would die).
- Men weren't allowed in the delivery room.
- Rather than doctors being in charge, midwives were the experts on childbearing, rubbing ointment on their patients' swollen bellies to speed up delivery.
- At the birth, herbal remedies and a drink called "caudle" were commonly taken to dull the pain.
- In the 15th century, lots of girls were married off between the ages of 15 and 19 and the average number of children born to one mother was 5-7.
- Upper class mothers hired women to feed their babies so that the mothers didn't have to breastfeed and thus could soon be pregnant again.
- Caesarean sections were not a common occurrence and were only performed if the mother had died, in hopes of saving the unborn child.



Religion and Childbirth

- Complex religious relationship with the pain of labour: it was seen as a part of Eve's penance.
- Eve's original sin meant that all women were to suffer great pain and many turned to religion to provide them with the support and relief they greatly desired when in childbirth.
- Many women called up St Margaret, the patron saint of pregnant women and childbirth. St Margaret was eaten by a dragon but was spat out again due to the crucifix she had been holding. Therefore, it was hoped that babies would be delivered as easily as St Margaret had come out of the dragon.
- Most of the medieval texts written about what happened during childbirth were by men, many of whom were clergy and members of the church. However, these men had taken a vow of celibacy and thus could neither have sex nor enter the birthing chamber (since men weren't allowed in). Such men spread the belief that the female sexual organs were male organs turned inwards. Women were deemed subordinate to men as their sexual organs had not grown outside of the body and so were not fully formed or developed. In essence, they were inferior versions of men.

Midwifery in Scotland

- Prior to Scotland's union with England in 1707, forming the Kingdom of Great Britain, records of Scottish midwives circle mostly around their association with witchcraft and the unfortunate execution of many female healers during the region's habitual witch hunts of the 16th century.
- By the 18th century, male academics began to attempt to codify the practice of midwifery.

Abortions in Scotland

- In Christian ethics, infanticide was regarded in the same way as the murder of adults, and this view was reflected in British law.
- Not only was infanticide punishable by death, but a law passed in England in 1623 and in Scotland in 1690 made some alleged infanticides the only offences in which the burden of proof was on the defendant rather than on the Crown. If a woman secretly bore an illegitimate child which was later found dead, it was the woman's responsibility to prove her innocence, rather than the Crown's to prove her guilt. (guilty until proven innocent)

Infanticide in 18th Century Ireland

- Early Irish law permitted a husband to divorce a wife who induced an abortion or who killed their child.
- Irish law followed England's example, and the Irish parliament in 1707 declared that a person found guilty of infanticide faced the death sentence.
- Also, it was deemed a capital offence for a woman to conceal the death of an **'illegitimate'** child unless there was at least one witness to testify that the child was still-born.
- The majority of infanticide victims were the offspring of single mothers who were determined to avoid the stigma of immorality and the burden of raising a child the law deemed **"illegitimate"** by getting rid of the product of their sexual activity.

Societal Forces Behind Infanticide → Prevailing Code of Sexual Morality

- Female virtue was prized by all levels of the 18th century Irish social pyramid.
- A woman's place in society was largely defined by that of her husband. Therefore, a woman excluded from the marriage market because of doubts about her reputation not only ruined her chances of concluding an advantageous marriage, but also weakened her position and that of her family in society.
- Once under suspicion for having committed an indiscretion, it was extremely difficult for a woman to salvage her reputation.
- Children deemed as **"illegitimate"** were the visible testaments of failure to adhere to the socio-sexual norm.

- Expectant single mothers were routinely turned out of their lodgings onto the streets.
- Children deemed “**illegitimate**” were not just discriminated against legally, but victimised and abused by their families as well as by society at large. This was largely due to the strong emphasis placed on blood lineage.

Helpful sources:

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<https://medium.com/midwifery-around-the-world/an-abridged-history-of-midwifery-in-scotland-7b5340c82ad5>

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SAME-SEX COUPLE FERTILITY OPTIONS

- Couples decide which partner will carry the pregnancy.
- **Sperm donation:** can be a known sperm donor or an unknown sperm donor from a national certified sperm bank
- **Intrauterine insemination (IUI):** also known as artificial insemination, IUI is a medical procedure that is used to treat some cases of infertility. Specially washed and concentrated semen gets placed directly into the uterus through a small catheter that passes through the cervix. This should happen around the time a woman is ovulating and can significantly increase the chances of conception
- **In vitro fertilization (IVF):** a complex series of procedures that can be used in same sex couples who will require assistance in starting their family.
 - Option 1: one partner undergoes the IVF procedure using donor sperm
 - Option 2: one partner provides the egg and the other partner carries the pregnancy. This requires one partner to undergo an egg retrieval procedure and once the egg is inseminated with the donor sperm and the embryos mature, they will be transferred into the other partner's uterus.



Helpful sources:

<https://www.aspirefertility.com/fertility-treatment/gay-parenting>