A COMPARISON OF SOME EUROPEAN BALLADS

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This thesis contains some Polish, Slovak, Serbian, and Finnish ballads, collected in America and rendered into English for the first time by the author. There are also some translations of the Finnish ballads from the Kanteletar of Elias Lonnrot. A brief summary of the theories of poetic origins is given, some additional corroborative evidence in behalf of the communal theory of ballad origin included, and a reasonable comprehensive theory suggested. Similarities and differences in form and material among European ballads are analysed. A description of the later history of the ballad concludes the discussion.

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PREFACE

The tendency of my investigations of the ballad as found today in various European countries has been to support the communal theory of poetic origins. When I began my research, I had an open mind, and was aware of merit in both schools of thought on this subject. Study and translation, as well as inquiry and reasoning,have led me in the direction of the communalists, although I do not maintain that no ballad was composed or changed by an individual artist. That would be fanatical.

My first real interest in the ballad was aroused when, as a teacher in a high school in a mill-town in Pennsylvania, I had an incredibly heterogeneous crowd of students, from nearly every corner of the world. As I taught a survey course in English Literature, I was baffled at the difficulties besetting me when I reached the English and Scottish popular ballad. How could I make these children of the Ukraine, of Greece, of Silesia, of Croatia, understand their significance? I called upon them to bring me any folk-songs of their own which they could gather. The result was amazing. Not only they, but their work-bowed parents, climbed the hill to give me their songs. In despair at understanding it all, I took lessons in Serbian and in Ukrainian, so that with the student's help, I could translate them. Parallels in narrative and in form and phrase confronted me in many. It was absorbing.

The following year, when I taught in a town where ninety percent of the people were Finns, I continued my collecting. Then I discovered the Kanteletar, that monumental collection

of Lonnrot's which is dwarfed only by the Kalevala, and I concentrated on the challenge of hitherto untranslated Finnish popular poetry.

The possibilities of surmise, the opportunities for adducing corroborative material, are endless in this field, and are far beyond the scope of this work adequately to present. But I desire to show what I can of custom and usage in regard to folk-songs in these lands, and their bearing on the history of poetry. Above all, I have laboured to translate as best I have been able, examples of popular poetry in Finnish, Serbian, Russian, Ukrainian, Croatian, Polish and Italian. The difficulties of rhyme have been, in most cases, insuperable, especially so in Finnish and in Russian. But it is unfortunate that up to now there have been no renditions into English of these poems. I have tried to remedy that lack.

The collecting of these ballads has led me into strange places. As I have said, there was a great response to my request for folk-songs of other lands. Students from other classes, on hearing of my interest, brought me songs and fragments. Other teachers cooperated by collecting some from their pupils. *Father Smiljanic, priest of the Serbian church in Aliquippa, the mill-town of which I have spoken, was kind enough not only to look for more ballads for me, but to tutor me in Serbian in my insufficient spare time and to assist me when I found difficulties in translation. Many of the parents of my students walked up the hill to give me with their own hands manuscripts written in crabbed Polish. Others sent word

that if I could come to see them, they would be glad to give me some material. So I would drive up on Plan Eleven, a high hill where most of the foreign population was concentrated, to listen to a Croatian woman sing me a song, her arms up to the elbow in a wash-tub. I went to Sunday gatherings in foreign homes where black-browed Serbs discussed metaphysics over Turkish coffee, and remembered affectionately the songs of their forbears. In search of a Polish ballad of which I had heard, I went to the back door (it is de rigueur in Aliquippa, except on state occasions, to use the back door) of a Polish home, and dragged the ballad from the reluctant lips of the bare-footed housewife. Many of the people from whom I got my folk-songs were shy and suspicious at first, but when they saw what I wanted, and that I was really interested, they were touched and grateful at my interest in their countries and literature. After that there was no more difficulty. Some of these men and women from whom the ballads were secured were unable to read or write, so that their children wrote them from memory or from dictation.

Most foreign homes that have a Victrola, and most of them did then, had a large collection of records of their songs. The stores which sell records in a foreign community sell a great many of these. They are made abroad, and are sung by the untrained voices of the natives of the country, accompanied by the traditional instruments. I went to harvest dances and danced the polka or the kolo with bearded Slavs, in order to further my search. I have spent many a Sunday in Russian and

Serbian churches, and many a long afternoon in the Polish Falcon's Hall or the Serbian Society Golub. And later, the next year, when I was teaching in Ashtabula Harbour, Ohio, where the population is at least ninety percent Finnish, I visited Midsummer-night celebrations, and again canvassed among my pupils and their parents for all I could learn of Finnish ballads, customs, and folk-lore. All this has made me realize how great the field is, how untouched much of the material is, and will be for some time. I am appalled when I think how little I know, and how much there is to find out. It is very presumptuous in me to attempt to interpret the primitive poetry of all these countries, when I have barely scratched the surface of the language alone.

The consulates of Poland, Finland and the Yugoslav Royal Legation have been of inestimable assistance to me, in securing books and pamphlets, in introducing me to helpful people, and in getting me access to entertainments and celebrations which have increased my knowledge.

It must not be thought that I am linguist enough to have learned in so short a time conversational Finnish, Russian, Polish, Serbian, etc. My task would have been much easier and no doubt better accomplished had this been the case. But the diversity of my material and the shortness of the time that I have been engaged in this research has precluded anything of the kind. As I have said above, I took Serbian lessons for about six months from Reverend Father Smiljanic. I pored over a primer, and strove to learn the general rules of con-

struction, accent, and pronunciation. If one can get the "feel" of a language, that is half the battle. With dictionary and grammar rules I sat down to puzzle out the meanings. When I came to a word that I was unable to find in my lexicon, or a construction or idiom that baffled me, I called on Rev. Smiljanic, or the nearest Serb I could find. My pupils were of great assistance. From an exiled Ukrainian, Mr. Miroslav Adamcho, I had some lessons in Ukrainian. His teaching was of particular value because he had come from a town in Serbia by the name of Krstur. This town had been founded by a band of Ukrainians who had left their homes about two hundred and fifty years ago to settle in Serbia. They founded the town of Krstur, where they lived to themselves, having very little to do with their neighbors. The Ukrainian spoken there is, of course, much more like that used long ago in Ukrainia than like the modern dialect, and therefore of more value to me. I took lessons in Russian as well, from Mme. Leonid Andreieff, here in Montreal. It must be apparent that none of these languages could have been thoroughly learned. In every case my method of translation has been the same. It has been extremely difficult. I recall one Finnish ballad, the Velisurmajaa, the twenty stanzas of which required a month to render into rough and literal English.

The question then arises of what to do about making the ballad into an English verse form. I found that if I attempted to reproduce the poem in our typical ballad meter

the result was not only trite and jingly, but also lacking in the flavour of the original. On the other hand, it is out of the question to try to make the English version fit the foreign meter and rhyme scheme. As translators have so often found before, our language is poverty stricken with regard to rhymes, in comparison with other languages. In Finnish especially, where there are fifteen case endings, three verb moods, and an enormous number of other inflectional suffixes, this was impossible. Therefore I thought it best not to attempt any rhyme in most cases, and have only tried to give the poems in rhythmic unrhymed lines. I have kept as close to the literal meanings as possible, allowing myself very little freedom. Where it was necessary I have sacrificed rhythm and form to meaning.

As for written sources of my ballads, I can refer the student to no manuscripts or collections from which I have derived any poems, except in the case of the Finnish, where I have used several of the ballads from the Kanteletar of Elias Lonnrot. This is not to say that there are no such collections. There have been various Bishop Percys in other countries. There is in Italian the monumental book of Negri. In Serbian, the work of Karadzic is outstanding. W. R. S. Ralston mentions the great collection of Ruibnikoff in Russian. Lonnrot travelled all over Finland, as Ruibnikoff did in Russia, going into the most out of the way places and searching out the last strongholds of the popular ballad, writing them down from the lips of old men and women who

remembered that in their youth everyone sang thus. The national epic of Finland, the Kalevala, was collected piecemeal in this way. Lonnrot put it together, joining all the tales of Wainamoinen and Ilmaroinen to make the magnificent poem hailed with such enthusiasm by Oscar Wilde, and imitated in meter so well by Longfellow in Hiawatha. The Kalevala poems are the oldest. The language is so different from modern Finnish that these ballads and the Kalevala itself are taught as an advanced course in the Finnish universities as Chaucer is in ours. (It can be imagined what the difficulty is to the unlearned translator!) There are several good translations from the Serbian especially those of James Wiles. (See Bibliography). I know of no other translations from the Polish or Italian or Ukrainian, however. There are quite a large number of recent books giving Russian heroic poems in English. The translations used here are mine unless a note is given naming the translator.

There has been much more done in the correlating of English and Scottish popular ballads with those of Germany, Sweden and Denmark than has been done with those of the Slavic countries of central Europe or of Finland. The latter has been a forgotten country from the literary point of view. The Kalevala and the Seven Brothers of Kivi are the only books ever found in libraries from that language. Kittredge often refers to parallels in other folk ballads, but there seem to have been no translations. I cannot hope to fill this great gap in ballad literature; but I can add somewhat to the avail-

able material. It is to be hoped that some day someone will see that the field of comparative ballads will receive the justice it deserves.

INTRODUCTION

The popular ballad is a form of narrative poetry closely allied to the epic. The English and Scottish ballads have very definite characteristics of form, material, and treatment. It is usual for a ballad to be in four line stanzas of alternate iambic tetrameter and trimeter, the longer line coming first and third. The rhyme may be of the first and third lines or of the second and fourth, or of both. There are infinite variations of form, however. More often then not there is a refrain, which may form the alternate lines, or may be a mere addition. There are some few ballads which have two line stanzas. As for rhyme, it is common to find the greatest liberties taken with words, the early poets having felt no compunction about making a word rhyme with itself, or substituting a similar sound for a rhyme. In places, when the words will not fit the meter, it is necessary to change the emphasis of syllables in a word, or to utter some words quickly and without any emphasis at all, if one is to keep the meter. In speaking of the form of the ballad, it is well to remember the great freedom with which it was used, the large number of variations, and the fact that the ballad was meant to be sung, not read. Differences in meter are not noticeable when the verses are sung.

The material of a true ballad is invariably narrative all the way through. The objective point of view is perfectly maintained throughout, never lapsing into the lyrical or personal. There is little or no comment on the feelings or sentiments of the characters.in the song, nor as a rule are motives analysed for the deeds which are celebrated in the story. Sentiment, and all other types of the subjective attitude toward life, are absent. There is no philosophy of any kind expressed, and no religious feeling in the usually accepted sense. Humour and cynicism are alike absent. It was a serious world in those days, and people took it seriously. There is much pathos, but it is of events rather than of feeling. Few of the heroes of the ballads come to a happy ending. Lord Thomas and Fair Annet were figures in a double tragedy. Love Gregor, Little Musgrave, Johnnie Armstrong, almost every ballad hero but Hind Horn and Young Bicham, come to a violent end. It says in Chevy Chase

A woefull hunting there did once
In Chevy Chase befall.

Truely, everything that happens in the ballads is "woefull".

The ballads are full of interesting old superstitions, as well. There is much emphasis on dreams, as in the case of Love Gregor, Robin Hood, and the Douglas, who had a vision of "beyond the Isle of Skye". In the Wife of Usher's Well, as well as in many others, the crowing of the cocks is a sign for spirits to return to their graves. The sailor in Sir Patrick Spens believes in the sign of the "new moone in

the auld moone's arm". There are also superstitions having to do with mystic numbers, especially three. The maid freed from the gallows asks rescue from three people; there are three sisters in Babylon, three requests from Hind Horn. Less frequently nine and six are used, as in the case of the Lass of Loch Royal and The Dowy Houms of Yarrow. Seven occurs very often. Seven laverocks and seven diamonds are the tokens in Hind Horn. The Daemon Lover was away seven years. Thomas the Rhymer was seven years in elfland. Again, ballads often use the number four-and-twenty. Four-and-twenty little boys play with Sir Hugh; "four-and-twenty gay gude knichts" accompany Fair Annet, and so forth.

Ballads abound in stock phrases and situtations. Horses are "with siller shod before", and there is always red gold shining from everything. All heroines, and even Robin Hood's men, have milk-white skins, golden hair. The same words and phrases are used over and over again; sometimes whole stanzas are borrowed and used, fitting perfectly well in their new place. We see many times the mother who is bid to "make the bed broad and wide", the ship that sails a "league but barely ane", the lover "tirling at the pin", the boys "playing at the ba'". There are many alliterative phrases, such as "busk and bowne", "cheek and chin", "trusty and trewe". Of these ephithets the ballad singers and listeners never tired.

The widespread interest in the ballad began in the eighteenth century and became even stronger in the nineteenth.

The publishing of Percy's Reliques of English Poetry became an important influence in the Romantic Revival. Simplicity, directness, the old ballad swing, are discernable in much of the narrative poetry of the time, and are often traceable to the influence of the newly revived ballads. In other countries, scholars were not idle. Grundtvig in Denmark was making his famous collection. Bürger's Lenore was widely read and admired in England. Lonnröt and Topelius in Finland, Negri in Italy, Ruibnikoff and Daniloff in Russia, Karadzic in Serbia, were going about from village to village collecting hundreds of songs and tales, just as Grimm had done. Finally Child made his monumental collection of the English and Scottish ballads. Since that time, two theories about the origin of poetry in general and the ballad in particular have grown up among scholars.

The foremost exponents of the individual authorship theory are Professors Courthope and Pound. Courthope states that the ballads were composed by the minstrels[1], and that a long process of oral transmission has caused a decided degeneration in them. As an indication of this, he points out that the Death of Byrhtnoth in the Battle of

1. Courthope, History of English Poetry, Vol.I, chapter XI, pp. 445-446.

Maldon was a great heroic chant, expressing a fine form of tribal patriotism. His opinion is that Otterburne and the Hunting of the Cheviot are entirely different in atmosphere, even mere jingles, compared to the more ancient and nobler work. He says, in reference to the making of ballads[1], "The tales on which (the ballad) is founded are rarely, if ever, the legacy of long oral tradition--they can be traced through an incessant course of transmutations, combinations, and corruptions, to a literary source". Thomas Rhymer, for example, he claims was borrowed by a minstrel from the medieval tale Ogier le Danois[2]; Child Waters and Fair Annet from Patient Griselda. More, he declares that the ballad is usually a precis of a romance. Mary Hamilton, in fact, was borrowed and shortened from the Russian!

Miss Pound concurs in many of these theories. She says in the preface to her book that her purpose[3] is to urge that scholars give up, or at least seriously qualify, their assumptions that there was communal authorship and ownership of primitive poetry; that there was not a primitive individual artist; that the ballad is the earliest and most universal poetic form; that narrative songs originated in the dance; that ballads emerged from the

1. Ibid. p. 454.
2. Ibid. pp. 458-460.
3. Louise Pound, Poetic Origins and the Ballad. p.VII.

illiterate; that there are special powers of folk improvisation; and that the making of traditional ballads is a "closed account". She says[1], "There is no sufficient proof that narrative lyrics were ever, at any time, by any people, made and sung at the dance." It is Miss Pound's belief that many dance songs and ballads were aristocratic in origin[2], and for the high-born. In support of her theory she quotes from various authorities on tribal customs among the American Indians and the Polynesians, Andamanese, and so forth. Her theory of the origin of poetry is that, in the savage state, primitive individual artists composed short, simple lyrical expressions, such as some of the Chippewa songs she quotes[3]. She suggests that the ballad itself, at a much later date, grew from an ecclesiastical source[4], as did English drama; and that later, also like the drama, it became secular and was the product of the minstrel or other composers. This theory is in a measure born out by the fact that the religious ballads are the earliest we possess. Since this literary, or at least artistic origin, she thinks, oral tradition has vulgarized and degenerated them.[5]

1. Ibid. p. 46.
2. Ibid. p. 96.
3. Ibid. p. 21.
4. Ibid. p.166.
5. Ibid. p.116.

The authorities on American Indian lore from whom she quotes in support of her theory have observed, almost without exception, that the Indian, who is, of course, a logical subject for observation in the study of early poetry, regarded his songs as part of his property as much as his wigwam or his bow and arrow[1]. Many of the songs were composed in a trance state when the author was alone, and were thereafter his property, and descended to his heirs. A man could sell his song, but no one was allowed to use it without permission. Not only that, but few of the songs were narrative. They are short, fragmentary, subjective, bearing no resemblance whatever to the ballad as we know it from the medieval community.

Miss Pound also points out that where we have modern survivals of songs used in dancing, they are unlike the ballads[2]. A few examples of some old ballads used in the dance show a great weakening in the narrative. Like the dance songs proper, they are almost nonsense. The refrain has attained a position of great importance, and the action and feeling have been wholly or partially lost. According to her, when the ballad is adapted for the dance, it quickly loses its ballad characteristics. In other words, the nearer the literary source, the better and purer the ballad.

1. Ibid. p. 15.
2. Ibid. p. 50.

In speaking of western ballads of the present day as originated among the cow-boys of the last generation, she shows that almost all of them can be traced to a literary source[1]. Not only are these incomparably worse art then is shown in the real medieval ballad, they were certainly not the product of the dance nor of the "choral throng" of Gummere and Child. One needs only to compare The Old Chisholm Trail[2] with any good ballad from the earlier time, to see a vast difference in beauty, directness, and in general skill.

In discussing the true ballad, Miss Pound shows that they were devised for the aristocracy[3], citing the fact that they do not treat of the daily lives or usual existence or interests of a peasant folk, but rather of happenings among the nobility, of adventures in the supernatural, of travel and battle and tragedy on a different plane from that on which the folk as a whole lived. In response to the argument that the lower classes are always interested more in the doings of the upper classes then they are in their own rather monotonous existences, and that it is the servant hall which reads avidly all it can find of romances about duchesses and kings, she replies that these are stories written for the inferior classes, not by them.

1. Ibid. p. 218.
2. Ibid. p. 222.
3. Ibid. pp. 96, 105.

Then, if the minstrels composed the ballads, they were certainly for the amusement of those who could afford the services of a bard. This was out of the question with peasants.

In trying to explain the great similarity of subject matter everywhere found among ballads in many countries, it is advanced by some[1] that the themes were carried by migratory groups, and made a part of the tradition of the adoped country. This, however, does not account for all existing parallels, where there has been little migration or trade, sometimes no contact at all except in isolated instances, as in Finland.

Again, there are those who say that there has been wholesale borrowing of ideas.[2] It is certain that many of the incidents in the ballads are standardized in almost all languages. But the particular methods used are more often than not vastly different. The theme is the same, but the treatment is different. There are many cases in which this is certainly the explanation of a very close similarity in both subject and treatment.

There is always the fact, however, that the interests of the folk themselves are parallel everywhere. One has to consider the expression of a spontaneous emotion under similar circumstances by different peoples. This has undoubtedly often been the case, as Andrew Lang has pointed out.[3] One cannot rule out the case of a highly probable coincid-

1. Gaston Paris, La Poésie du Moyen Age.
2. Bedier, Les Fabliaux: études de littérature populaire et d'histoire littéraire du moyen âge; also Les Légendes Epiques.
3. Andrew Lang, Chamber's Encyclopedia of English Literature, article on the ballad.

ence, especially when the subjects are found so universally.

Every ballad has to be treated on its own merits, One cannot make a generalization that will include the whole body of ballads all over Europe and the rest of the known world. Even in the same ballad there may be elements of borrowing, of spread of ideas by migration, and of similar circumstances inspiring the same reaction on the mass mind. In considering the spread of themes of the ballad by migration, it would be well to consider how much the ballad carried along becomes part of the tradition of the adopted country. In Pennsylvania and Ohio, where most of the writer's investigations were carried on, it was plain that there was no tendency to adopt the foreign songs among the native stock, nor was this tendency very striking among foreign groups other than those who had brought the songs. There was little adoption, if any. It was certainly not wholesale.

The theory of poetic origins, and hence of ballad origins, which has been the most consistently held among scholars is the communal theory of authorship. Its principal exponents have been Child, Gummere, Grimm, Kittredge, and the latter's eminent pupil, MacMillan. It is hardly possible to mention all those who have espoused this theory, so numerous they are. With some variations it has been adopted by all the leading students of the ballad since Percy. The communalists hold that from the beginning, songs have been created by a "singing, dancing throng", and that, with the development of the savage into the semi-barbarous medieval peasant, through many cent-

uries, the quality of the poems composed reached that of the popular ballad. As more people became better educated, and a homogeneous illiteracy disappeared, the emergence of the individual from the throng, a phenomenon which had been occurring for many generations, became more and more common. He retreated to and was lost in the horde less and less frequently, until at last he remained as the early artist, the man with a gift for poetry which he exploited for pleasure or for profit. Then began the rise of lyric poetry, and the days of the communally composed song were numbered. Improvisation has been present until recent times in the sections of the Old World far removed from civilisation, where the populace is still fairly homogeneous, and men rely upon their memories instead of books.

The communalists believe that far from composing songs in the solitude of the woods or in a trance, early poetry was improvised in the throng. Any student of origins will bear out the statement that among primitive peoples occasions for celebration are almost invariably accompanied by song and dance. As the tribe gathers for sowing or harvest, wedding, funeral, or victory, the universal impulse is to dance and sing. There was at first a mere noise-making, a chanting of meaningless ejaculations and sounds. With a slow development, there were a few words injected into the song, and the sounds which were meaningless were used as a refrain. A man who had an idea would sing a few expressions of his own, to drop unobtrusively again into the crowd. Another would do likewise.

Each member of the group would attempt to contribute something to the song, in celebration of his own prowess in the chase or in war, or in singing of the deeds of someone else. The song when finished might be forgotten. But if it were recognised as an especially good one, it would be retained at least partially in the memories of the participants. Upon the next occasion of a similar nature, it would be used again, with any variations that suggested themselves. Gradually such a song would pass into tradition. Incidents would be added with time and with the participation of many singers, it would be likely to become quite long, and more polished , until a creditable piece of work would result. Now that the song is finished, whose property is it, or who is the author? He is indistinguishable from the rest of his fellows. The song is the property of the folk who made it.[1]

Ralston says of the Russian peasant in outlying districts, in discussing the Khorovod (choral dance) commonly in use at the Posidyelka (social gathering), "Whence were derived these circling dances to the sound of song, or at what period they gained their hold upon the Slavonic peoples, neither history nor tradition can say....the songs which belong to them have been for the most part carefully handed down from parent to child from some remote period of time, of which he has but a vague idea....who composed these songs no one can say, and even what date ought to be assigned to them cannot well be determined."

1. Ralston, Songs of the Russian People, pp.2-5.

It is likely that narrative songs came first in the slow evolution of song. Savages are notoriously inarticulate as to their emotions. They are suspicious of revealing their feelings about anything. Primitive people are far more interested in actual deeds than they are in philosophy or lyricism. Theirs is a hard life in which the things that happen to them are of the utmost importance. They deal with bare facts as a matter of course. When disaster or triumph is the lot of one of them, it is natural to consider the occurrence in the light of possible personal experience. The others put themselves in his place, and recount his fate in song. It is a vicarious experience, very close to reality for them. There is much mass thinking and crowd action, little individual initiative. They seldom act as persons, often as a tribe,

Professor Gummere pictures a throng gathered to celebrate some important happening in a primitive community. There is a large fire, perhaps, around which the women, if they are not participating, are seated in a ring. The men, in an irregular circle, begin to chant a chorus, swaying rhythmically to their own cadenced words. They shuffle their feet, sway and dance. One man raises his voice above the volume of the chant to shout a few words. The refrain goes on as one after another contributes his bit. Here is the original choral song, accompanied by the dance. It is natural that some few would gradually be recognised as better at this singing than others, and more of the improvisation would fall upon them as time went on, but it would be a long time before their words were ascribed to them

as individuals. Wordsworth sounds like Wordsworth, Shakespeare like Shakespeare, but the ballads have no mark whatever of the individual author in them: they sound like ballads, and that is all that one can say for the authorship of them. It is foolish to look for a literary source at a time when the majority of mankind were illiterate. Even the minstrels could not read; no one could but a few priests.

The communalists regard the dialogue and the riddle ballad as very early. They are not really complete narratives, but belong to an earlier period. It is generally recognised that the epic grew from the ballad, and is a collection of ballads around one figure or subject. The Robin Hood ballads are a case in point. They illustrate the transition stage between the ordinary ballad and the epic. It is a fact that the Kalevala is nothing more or less than a collection of ballads. Lonnrot went about the country gathering the old folk-songs, and finding that a great many of them belonged to a cycle, combined them into what has become known as the Finnish national epic, and an exceptionally fine piece of work it was. Wainamoinen, the central figure, is a very old hero, whose origin is lost in the mists of antiquity.

In refutation of some of the points of those who uphold the individualistic authorship theory, it may be said with regard to the American Indian that all testimony does not seem to agree. For example, Dr. MacMillan in his investigations among the Algonquins, Black Feet, and others, found almost classical examples of the "choral throng". A close parallel

to the King Arthur story as it has come down to us in English tradition was found by him among the Algonquins in Maine, a long narrative poem close to the epic in feeling. Here is a place where one would be hard put to it to explain the matter by migration or by borrowing.

As to the statement that narrative songs are never used or composed during the dance, one has to look not farther than Central Europe to see that in isolated communities this is still practised. The songs thus used will be found quoted later in this discussion.

The cow-boys of the early days of the West can hardly be fairly compared to the savage or to the medieval peasant. In the first place, they have behind them a literate memory. The tradition of cheap sentimental songs such as were and still are turned out wholesale would logically interfere with a growth of truly beautiful ballads of the Sir Patrick Spens type. Their heritage was far inferior to that of the people of the soil who were indigenous to their communities, and had a long tribal memory of nothing but folk songs, either of the lighter sort or of the heroic type. They had long ago pulled up roots, and substituted a different sort of song.

The sensible view of the origin of poetry and the ballad will take all the various findings into consideration, not completely discarding any. It cannot be denied that minstrels and bards exerted a vast influence on the popular ballad as it has come down to us. They had their hands, certainly, in the making of them. Nor will anyone but a fanatic deny that there

must have been from very early times the primitive artist, possessed of the divine fire that will express itself in any kind of society. It is also questionable that the unequivocal statement about the invariable composition of poetry in the dance is true without qualification. This would exclude the lullabies and songs of labour. That they were not originated in the dance does not, however, keep them from being communal. The group was still more important than the individual. There are doubtless primitive artists who look upon their songs as a part of their property, to be inherited and regarded as theirs. This is certainly not invariably the case. It is suggestive also that the savages now studied for the origins of poetry are savages who have not progressed. They have remained in the Stone Age. Can there be any doubt that they are of a different clay from the white savage of the Cro-Magnon time, who grew up to civilization? There is some intrinsic difference here.

Lastly, it must be admitted that ballad-making in the broader sense is by no means a closed account. The student of origins has only to watch the loading of a boat in any Southern port in the United States, or attend a prayer-meeting in a negro church, or search out a quilting bee in the farthest rural sections of the Province of Quebec, to find that that is not a true statement. Although the custom is almost dead, there are still some vestiges of the chanty to be found among less modern fishing and sailing communities. The decline of the sailing ship and its man-power has doomed the chanty to

obsolescence, but anyone who has ever had to do with sailors, or lived some years ago in a port, can with no difficulty remember the days when the yards were raised with Whiskey Johnny,[1] and the capstan was "walked round" to the strains of Shenandoah,[2] Santy Anna,[3] or Rio Grande.[4] Not long ago, when the stokers aboard a steamer in New York went on strike, they marched off the ship and over the wharves to the singing of It's Time for Us to Leave Her.[5]

The ballad is at once a national and an international possession. In the ballad one finds the fundamental expression of nationality. The more a country is oppressed, the more its inhabitants persist in the love of its folk-lore, because in it are kept alive the deeds of the heroes of old, as well as the religion and customs, even the language, of the mother-land. It is a living history, not a literary one. In Finland, when that country was a Grand Duchy of Russia, the oppression was unbelievable. The Russian conquerors, as had the Swedes before, attempted to change the very tongue of the Finns. Russian was taught in the schools, Russian was the language of the law and of business. It can be imagined with what tenacity the obstinate Finlanders preserved their folk-songs, when it is realized that they were preserved in more numbers and perfection in Karelia, the portion of Finland adjacent to Russia, than in any other

1. Joanna Colcord, Roll and Go: Songs of American Sailormen, p. 6.
2. Ibid. p. 33.
3. Ibid. p. 34.
4. Ibid. p. 35.
5. Ibid. p. 38.

section. Here Lonnrot, the Bishop Percy of his country, found most of the ballads which he incorporated into the Kalevala and collected for the Kanteletar.

The stubborn memory of an autonomous past was preserved in Serbia in the same way. Petrovich says,[1] "That a distinct Serbian nation has survived the dark days of Turkish rule is due to the national songs of Serbia." Mugge[2] also declares, "....the national songs, more than anything else, ensured the continuance of the Serbian language when Turkish was the official language of the government and administration". He speaks of the retentive memory of the natives of unlettered countries, a memory which enables them sometimes to recite fifty or one hundred long poems.[3] Each narrator leaves on the ballad another expression of his personality, until in the end the song is a composite picture of the folk mind. During the World War, Serbian soldiers about their camp fires sang of Marko Kraljevich, or Lazar, and his doughty deeds,[4] just as long ago the Scots may have sung of Douglas and Percy.

The ballad survives, among the almost illiterate, even the strain of pulling up roots and emigrating. Most of the Serbian and Polish, and some of the Finnish songs presented and translated in this thesis were secured in America, from children in the second generation of immigrants. The ballads were brought along into the new world as a part of their

1. Petrovich, Hero Tales and Legends of the Serbians.
2. Mugge, Serbian Folk-Songs, Fairy Tales and Proverbs, p. 1.
3. Ibid. p. 20.
4. Ibid. p. 27.

precious possessions which would enable them to create there a semblance of the native land. This certainly demonstrates the power of oral tradition, which, contrary to the opinion of Miss Pound, this writer believes cannot be over-rated. Jakob Grimm gives as one of the reasons for the continued existence of popular poetry the tenacity of habits and customs, the intolerance of change, and the obstinacy with which the sons and daughters of the soil cling to their language and religion.

It is only an apparent paradox that the ballad is at once the most national and the most international of poetic forms. As a part of folk literature, they are an international and universal expression, a mass reaction, much alike in form and material. Could anything be more national and local than Chevy Chase or any of the Kossovo cycle? In the narrow sense, they may be the property of Serb, Pole, Scot, or Croat, but in the broad sense they are a possession of the human race, expressing the universal longings, interests, experiences, creative genius of mankind.

CHAPTER I

The Ballad of Domestic Tragedy

a n d

of the Returning Ghost

"I love a ballad but even too well; if it be doleful matter, merrily set down, or a very pleasant thing indeed, and sung lamentably."

Shakespeare

Similarity of subject matter is one indication of communal origin that may be regarded as very significant, to my mind. It is logical to suppose that folk interests are frequently the same, but it is stretching the imagination too far to suppose that in widely separated countries there existed numerous minstrels or other artistic individuals who composed poems and songs on almost identical subjects, or with characteristic stock phrases of ballads known in other countries with which they had no point of contact. Individuals differ widely, but the horde, the mass, is to a large extent homogeneous.

While the example of Sweet William's Ghost is an extreme instance, I introduce it here to show how very like two early poems from entirely different peoples can be. It is not often that one finds such similarity as this. There may be likenesses of mood, or even of phrases, but not usually to such an extent as this. It must be borne in mind that the second ballad is from Finland. This country has had until recently nothing whatever to do with England or Scotland. There was no trade deserving of mention between Britain and Finland during the Middle Ages or even up to modern times. Finland has been semi-barbaric for centuries. She has been conquered and oppressed ever since she first appeared in history. First Sweden and then Russia ruled her with a rod of iron. Since the war she has created for herself one of the best universities in Europe, the Oxford of Scandinavia, the University of Helsingfors.

She has learned rapidly from us, and is now one of the most efficient democracies in the world.

But this development is of recent years. I do not imply that there was no learning in Finland before the War. Ten percent of the population of Finland is Swedish. The Swedes were not only for generations the political rulers of the country, but they dominated the intellectual life. The Finnish language was considered a savage tongue, unfit for polite use. The Swedes jealously saw to it that they retained their leadership. There was no higher education in Finnish. It will amaze the reader to know that there is not even yet an authoritative dictionary in the Finnish language. The reason is that they are still making Finnish words! Now that they have attained a university in which the lectures are in Finnish, they wish to make all the words formerly Swedish into Finnish words. This should make it sufficiently clear that there was a sharp division between the proud Swede and the downtrodden but obstinate Finn. There was little social intercourse between the races.

Beside the barriers to literary and social influence that I have already pointed out, there was also the high barrier of language. The Finnish language, which belongs to the Finno-Ugrian ethnological group, is one of the most difficult tongues in the world to learn. It is not to be easily "picked up", because it has no family resemblance either to the Romance languages or to the Germanic group. Its only relatives are Magyar, Lithuanian, Latvian, Esthonian,

and a few obscure dialects found in Northern Russia. It is foolish to suppose that a stray English trader, touching at the coast of Finland to trade for furs with the half wild natives, picked up enough of the language, and they enough of his, that forthwith the Finns were able to adapt a favorite English ballad into their own tongue, with music. Their language has fifteen case endings for each word. There are four moods for the verbs, and a negative conjugation. Not only that, but Finnish music is based on a different system from ours. (cf. Sibelius, Finlandia, where there are five beats to the measure). It seems most unlikely that any exterior influence could have so well reproduced the story.

I quote first Sweet William's Ghost. The text is that printed by Child (11, 230) from Herd's MSS.

Sweet William's Ghost

There came a ghost to Margret's door,
With many a grievous groan,
And ay he tirled at the pin,
But answer made she none.

"Is that my father Philip,
Or is't my brother John?
Or is't my true-love, Willy,
From Scotland new come home?"

"'Tis not thy father Philip,
Nor yet thy brother John;
But 't is thy true-love, Willy
From Scotland new come home.

"O sweet Margret, O dear Margret,
I pray thee speak to me;
Give me my faith and troth, Margret,
As I gave it to thee."

"Thy faith and troth thou's never get,
Nor yet will I thee lend,
Till that thou come within my bower,
And kiss my cheek and chin."

"If I shoud come within thy bower,
I am no earthly man;
And shoud I kiss thy rosy lips,
Thy days will not be lang.

"O sweet Margret, O dear Margret,
I pray thee speak to me;
Give me my faith and troth, Margret,
As I gave it to thee."

"Thy faith and troth thou's never get,
Nor yet will I thee lend,
Till you take me to yon kirk,
And wed me with a ring."

"My bones are buried in yon kirk-yard,
Afar beyond the sea,
And it is but my spirit, Margret,
That's now speaking to thee."

She stretched out her lilly-white hand,
And, for to do her best,

"Hae, there's your faith and troth, Willy,
God send your soul good rest."

Now she has kilted her robes of green
A piece below her knee,
And a' the live-lang winter night
The dead corp followed she.

"Is there any room at your head, Willy?
Or any room at your feet?
Or any room at your side, Willy,
Wherein that I may creep?"

"There's no room at my head, Margret,
There's no room at my feet;
There's no room at my side, Margret,
My coffin's made so meet."

Then up and crew the red, red cock,
And up then crew the gray:
"Tis time, tis time, my dear Margret,
That you were going away."

No more the ghost to Margret said,
But, with a grievous groan,
Evanished in a cloud of mist,
And left her all alone.

"O stay, my only true-love, stay,"
The constant Margret cry'd;
Wan grew her cheeks, she closd her een,
Stretched her soft limbs, and dy'd.

Here now is the Finnish version of the same ballad. There are some differences, of course, but the resemblance is amazing. The translation is literal, and I give the title in both languages.

The Ghost at Marian's Door

(Yks' Haamu Seiso Marjaanan Ovella)

There stood a ghost at Marian's door,
And it softly knocked.
Marian did not awaken
Till it moved the key.

"Is it my father who is knocking,
Or is it my brother John,[1]
Or is it my lover William[2]
Who from far now has returned?"

"No, it is not your father knocking,
Nor is it your brother John,
But it is your lover William
Who from far now has returned."

Now Marian has opened her door,
To welcome her lover in.
Then to her bed she bid him,
To rest his weariness.

"From my work I am not weary,
Nor from my journey long,

1. Juhanni
2. Velhelmi

But the vow I made so long ago
Has since been broken by me."

"The promise which you have vowed to me
Never will I return,
Until you rest beside me
And listen to what I say."

"Oh! Sweetheart, I cannot kiss you,
For only a ghost am I.
I kiss with lips that are very cold,
Which death has given to me."

When the cock crowed and the clock struck
And the day began to dawn,
Then soon the sighing ghost
Had vanished with the darkness.

This is, of course, a striking parallel. There are many other similarities to be noted among European ballads. In Jugoslavia and in Roumania the Haiduks[1] were the counterparts of the English Robin Hood. When the Turks occupied those countries, there were some indomitable souls who refused to accept the invader's rule. They took refuge in the mountains and from there carried on a sporadic guerilla warfare with their conquerors, harrying them at every poss-

1. "The Haiduks were not infrequently the true Robin Hoods of the Southern Slavs; dwelling in the mountains, they avenged the oppressed and the poor, never giving peace to the Turk." - The Mountain Wreath (Gorski Vijenac) of P. P. Nyegosh, rendered into English by James W. Wiles. George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1930, p. 133.

ible turn. The most famous Haiduk was George Petrovich Karageorge, who in 1804 began an insurrection which culminated in the battle of Mishar, where nine thousand Serbs defeated thirty thousand of the best troops of the Sultan to gain Serbian freedom. But there were many of these Haiduks, celebrated in song and story for their chivalry, championing the poor and oppressed.

There are also the poems making the cycle of Marko Kralyevitch, Marko the King's son. Marko is the national hero of Serbia. His deeds are told over and over in the national songs. J.W. Wiles [1], in his preface to The Mountain Wreath (Gorski Vijenac), says of him, "Gathering about him a band of free lances, he spent his life in martial enterprise and constant adventure; Marko may be said, indeed, to be the Hereward the Wake of the Southern Slav schoolboy, while popular custom has a care that his memory shall be ever kept green. His valorous deeds, magnified and transformed by oral transmission among the people, have earned him the name of the Cid of Serbia."

Ballads about Marko tell of how, at the earnest request of his mother, he left off fighting to plough. But he ploughed the caravan roads of the Turks, and when he got into a fight with some Turkish merchants, he killed them with his plough, and bringing their gold to his mother, said, "There, dear Mother, see what I ploughed for thee today!" Wiles says [2], "Most legends connect Marko with the castle of Prilep in Western Macedonia. Prilep is the place

1. Ibid p. 36.
2. Ibid p. 36.

of his birth, and how often is one assured that he has never died, but simply sleeps under the blue mountains that dominate the little town of Prilep. You will be told that his drastic sword is embedded somewhere in the rocky sides of Marko's vault, and that his good horse, Sharatz, bites away patiently above. Thus, little by little, as Sharatz nibbles, will the stone be worn away, and the sword-blade one day be laid bare. One day, too, Marko will reappear mounted on Sharatz, sword in hand, to gather his people around his standard and lead them gloriously against the Turks."

Are there not many familiar elements about this story? Is one not irresistibly reminded of the fabled return of King Arthur? Is not the sword buried in the rock also familiar? There seems to be more and more evidence that all this folk-lore springs from the same source, the people. No one will claim that any of these ballads have not been sung and ornamented by minstrels, but the minds that molded them in their origins and have continued to add to and change them by the power of oral tradition, never to be underestimated, are the minds of the folk. As for the claims of some of those who oppose the communal theory of origin of poetry in the singing, dancing throng, they would have difficulty in explaining away the second scene in the second act of the Gorski Vijenac of Petar Petrovic Njegos. This is the foremost national poem-drama of Serbia; the author is recognized by all Serbs to rank with our Milton. It is a fine and

sombrely beautiful poem, the subject matter of which is drawn from Serbian history and folk-lore of the fourteenth century. The author, Bishop Nyegos, was a scholar of the best sort.

The second act, On Lovtchen's Summit, has as its second scene an assembly at Cetinje on the eighth of September, on the occasion of the Festival of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. While the chiefs go aside to discuss affairs, the people dance the kolo.[1] In a footnote Wiles, the translator, explains the dance. "The root meaning of the word Kolo is a wheel or circle, and it is the word used all over the Southern Slav lands for the national dance in which both men and women join, taking hold of hands; the number of dancers increasing and the circle extending as the dance proceeds. Even in the remotest hamlets the dancing of the kolo is the best-loved form of recreation. Groups of village children, between seven and fourteen years of age, boys and girls together hand in hand, may be seen dancing the kolo with complete abandon and lack of self-consciousness, singing their own songs and emphasizing time and rhythm. The annual Court Ball is always opened with the kolo, the dance being led by the King and Queen." With this in mind, now notice to what sort of verse the author, who of course knew well the customs and songs of his own country, has the peasants dance. According to Miss Pound, they should have some song in which the refrain predominated and in which all else was little more than statement or even a sort of rhythmic

1. Ibid. p. 79.

nonsense. She claims that no one could ever dance to the sustained narrative, or to the serious sort of verse that the ballad so often is. But I quote here from the Gorski Vijenac[1]:

"The people, as they dance the kolo, sing:

Our God hath poured his wrath upon the Serbs,
For deadly sins withdrawn His favour from us:
Our Rulers trampled underfoot all law
With bloody hatred fought each other down....
Yet Milos fell, most marvellous of knights,
A victim fell unto the world's great Scourge...etc."

This does not sound like "Skip to my Lou, my darling", yet both were used for dancing. Why the opponents of the communal theory insist that dance songs and narrative songs should not both come from the same source is not at all clear. Nyegos would certainly never have had his peasants dance to a song far removed in tone from those that their custom dictates as usual.

Other parallels include those which treat of domestic strife. The wicked stepmother and the mother-in-law, for instance,are well known in folk-lore. Let us take, for instance, the Serbian ballad of Yovan-Beg. I give it here in its entirety, and will follow it with others from the Polish and from the Croatian.

Yovan-Beg[2]

Yovan-Beg was a noble bold,

1. Ibid. pp. 79, 80, 81, ff.
2. Serbian Songs and Poems: Chords of the Yugoslav Harp, translated by J. W. Wiles, M.A., George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1918, p. 28.

And his wife the gentle Mara;
But Yovan's mother spake thus ill:
"Yovan, listen! thy wife Mara,
She doth ever thwart my will;
She who calls herself my daughter
Gives no heed to aught I say,
If 'Yea' my word, then hers is 'Nay'".
To his mother answered Yovan:
"To the meadow I'll take Mara;
There we'll gather roses fair,
Roses that she plucketh gaily,
From that fragrant hillside there."
Together he and Mara wandered,
Till near a rose a snake outpeered,
And his cunning head upreared;
"Say, poisonous snake," wife Mara cried,
"Sure thou art she that doth me chide!"
These words she spake in Yovan's hearing,
When he his Mara swiftly nearing,
From his girdle snatched his dagger,
Eyed her, then in one mad stagger
Plunged it deep in her true heart.
Then said Mara to her Yovan:
"Thy dagger take not from this heart
Till my sweet children I have seen."
So Yovan left his dagger there,
And fainting Mara moved towards home,
On the road spoke to a pine-tree:

"O pine-tree green, in God's great Name,
Be a sister unto me!
When my children play beneath thee,
Guard them, thou, in place of me!"
On the way she saw a willow:
"O willow-tree, in God's great Name,
Be a sister unto me!
When my children play beneath thee,
I would that they might girdled be
With thy green fronds, O willow-tree!"
And when she reached her own white house,
Her children all ran out to meet her,
And Mara caressed them with tears:
"O my children, my sweet sunbeams,
When I am gone, in after years,
When calls step-mother, running come,
Get earlier up, more quickly dress,
Thereby to keep all ill from home."
These words, they pierced the heart of Yovan;
He drew his blade from that fond breast;
Forth came her heart with his own dagger;
Thus noble Mara gave her soul.

This beautiful ballad has a touch of Patient Griselda about it. Notice also the tendency to repetitions in threes, in her three speeches before her death.

Here is a Styrian ballad of the domestic tragedy type. It has all the horror and interest in morbid details that

characterize early narrative poetry. Even in translation the vigour of the Slavic Muse is felt, as well as the marked vein of melancholy which almost always imparts a touch of the lyric to Serbian or other Slavic poetry.

Veryanko's Vengeance[1]

"Son of mine, what shall befall us?
What bringeth Time for me, for thee?
Too young, my boy, art thou to marry,
And I too old a bride to be."
"Nay, mother mine, thy heart is young,
For sure some good man waiteth thee,
Take whom thou wilt--excepting one,
Roshlin, my hateful enemy;
My father killed he and my brother,
And scarce came short of killing me."
But his mother would not listen:
Veryanko's greatest enemy,
The wicked Roshlin, married she.
To sleep the twain lay down at night,
Veryanko watching warily.
Under the window crouched the youth,
And heard them talk thus lovingly:
"Our fortune, darling, as our heart,
Undivided must it be;
Now, there is one who has his part
When for us only must it be;
Far deep within the forest glade

1. Ibid p. 36.

A crystal spring thou mayest find,
There behind the beech-tree hide,
And when he comes then slay thou him,
Sickness I shall feign tomorrow,
And shall unto Veryanko say:
"Son, alas! shall I recover
Unless sweet water I may drink
That welleth from the crystal spring,
By the beech-tree in the glade."
Ever my son he doth obey;
He'll set him out the woodland way."
Bearing in his heart these words,
Forth Veryanko quietly crept;
The morrow's sun had risen long,
But not his mother from her couch,
So unto her Veryanko said:
"Mother, the sun now standeth high,
It is not at all like thee
Idly to let bright hours go by."
"Oh, son of mine, sore sick am I,
'Tis certain I shall ne'er recover
Unless sweet water thou canst bring
Back from the forest's cooling spring."
So water-cruse Veryanko took,
Likewise a sharp knife in his girdle;
He slung a gun, too, from his shoulder.
Her son, he ever had obeyed,
Delaying not, he'd find the glade.

"My son, my son! why arms hast thou?
No lurking beast may meet thee now,
And long since fled the Turk, I trow."
"Ah, mother mine, as birds have wings,
And like as fishes want not fins,
So, a hero lacks not arms."
Then went Veryanko to the spring;
Met there the man awaiting him,
His warm veins opened with his blade,
And with redblood his cruse full made,
Then homeward sped to his sick mother:
"Of thy son's blood ye twain would sup,
But it is Roshlin's in this cup!"

The horrible and rather offensive detail in this ballad reminds one irresistibly of the other version of the Twa Sisters, called The Miller and the King's Daughter.[1] It has lost all claim to good taste, however, as the above Styrian ballad has not. I give here a few of the worst stanzas from the English one, to show how bad the ballad could become in its gorey mood, when poetic restraint was lost:

What did he doe with her brest-bone?
He made him a violl to play therupon.

What did he doe with her fingers so small?
He made him peggs to his violl withall.

What did he doe with her nose-ridge?

1. Child, I, 126.

Unto his violl he made him a bridge.

What did he doe with her veynes so blew?
He made him strings to his violl thereto.

That is quite enough of such grotesque treatment. The description has become too anatomical for our tastes. It is an exaggeration of an ever present tendency to the horrible in ballads, which appeared in later versions.

By way of contrast is presented here another ballad of domestic strife, but now with a humourous treatment. There is more humour found, as a rule, in the Southern Slav poems, than in those of any other district in Europe that has come into my research. This is from Carinthia.

1

Trouble with the Husband

I married last year,
This year I repent.
Bad husband have I,
With temper like nettle:
My lot I resent.

The frost kills the nettle,
But this husband of mine,
He thinks the frost fine:
By the stove all day long
He does nothing but sit,
And says that the frost
He minds not one bit!

1. Serbian Songs and Poems, Wiles, p. 59.

[1]
In Celovetz 'tis market-day,
'Tis market-day tomorrow;
I will take my husband there,
And will either there him change,
Or else will sell him at the fair.
Not too cheap I'll let him go,
Because he was so hard to get;
Rather than too cheaply sell him,
Back home again I'll take the man,
And love him---howsomuch I can!

Strictly speaking this is not a ballad. But it is certainly not entirely lyrical. It is rather a folk song with some narrative touches about it. The feeling is somewhat the same as in the English ballad, Get Up and Bar the Door.

Here is a ballad of domestic tragedy, from the Polish this time, showing the cruel stepmother theme:

[2]
The Orphan (Zasto Stance)

The sun was going past the chimney,
While in the hills came a child walking,
And he was going home,
And he was going home.

Here comes he, and at the door knocks,
While his stepmother stops him with blows.
"You bad child, where have you been?
You bad child, where have you been?"

1. The capital of Carinthia; known also as Klagenfurth.
2. Obtained from Agnes Kulcik, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania.

"I had been at my mother's grave
To show her my wounds.
Hide me, Father,
Hide me, Father."

"Second wife, don't hit my children,
Your soul is hungry for Hell.
Don't do them harm,
Don't do them harm."

This ballad has the typical ballad refrain, different, however, in each stanza. Here is a more lyrical ballad from the Croatian, also on the orphan theme. Notice that it is in dialogue form, thus showing that it is in an earlier evolutional form than the complete narrative. Repetition of the incremental sort is also noticeable. This poem, or rather song, is also current in the Slavish.

The Orphans[1]

I am an orphan,
I don't have anyone.
I don't have a Father,
I don't have a Mother,
I am an orphan.
(Boy speaks)
My uncle is deaf,
My Father is dead,
My Mother married into a far-off land,
O Sweetheart, don't you cry,
For you love a man with a dark skin.

1. Obtained from Mary Tonkovich, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania.

In Magyar, also, the orphan ballad is to be found. There is a religious touch about it that is lacking in the other examples given, and a different solution found for the orphan, who seems to be older than his fellows in the Croatian and Polish versions.

[1]
The Orphan

Upon the earth, beneath the sky,
There is no orphan such as I.
No sire or mother loves for me,
Or thinks on my extremity.

All other flowers bloom today,
Mine only droops and fades away;
But let it wither if it will,
Should God in favour guard me still!

Oh, Varda town's a pleasant place
In which to dwell with joy and grace:
While others its delights possess,
I only know its bitterness.

Walk, God of heaven, at my side!
Be thou to me a constant guide,
So may I find a faithful spouse
To share till death a pleasant house.

The sad story, so well known in the English and Scottish popular ballads, where the bride is murdered or dies, as in The Cruel Brother, has its relatives in other languages. Take

1. The Magyar Muse by Watson Kirkconnell, Jas. R. Osgood, McIlvaine and Co., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

this one from the Finnish, for example:

The Sweetheart's Death (Morsiamen Kuolo)[1]

Last night we sat on a bench;
Of sorrow we knew nothing.
Va ralla ra, va ralla ralla ra.
Of sorrow we knew nothing.

Then received the young man a message
That his sweetheart was ill. - Ref.

Went he then to his chamber,
Dressed he then in his best clothes.

Went he then to the stable;
There was his white mare.

Took he his golden saddle
That had silver buckles.

Saddled he the white mare,
Fastened he the silver buckles.

Began he then to ride;
Rode he seven leagues,

On a fine summer night
When many sweetly slept.

1. Kanteletar, collected by Elias Lonnrat. A publication of the Suomalaisen Kirjallisunden Seura, Helsingfors, 1925. Number 3, p. VIII. There is an older version in the traditional Finnish verse form. The incidents are the same, but the form is that used in the Kalenala.

Came he to a green grove,
Heard the birds singing.

"Why do you birds sing
So sadly now?"

"Because we birds sorrowfully
Here now must sing.

Ill is the young man's sweetheart;
Soon now she may die."

When he rode farther on
Heard he bells ringing.

He asked the bellman,
"For whom do you ring the bells?"

"Dead is the young man's sweetheart,
For her I ring the bells."

When he rode farther,
He saw them digging a grave.

Asked he the grave-digger,
"For whom dig you the grave?"

"Dead is the young man's sweetheart,
For her I dig the grave."

When he rode farther,
Came he to his father-in-law's garden.

He saw a body being prepared,
Lying on the boards.

Cheeks before rose-red
Were now white as linen.

He looked at the pale face
And at the white cheeks too.

They were before rose-red,
Now white as linen.

Then began he to weep,
Wept seven days and nights.

Seven days and nights wept he,
Died he on the eighth.

The dead then was buried
Beside his dead sweetheart.

There rest they side by side,
Some day to awake in heaven.

This is certainly a typical ballad. It has all the traditional characteristics of incremental repetition, question and answer, bare tragedy, incongruity of detail, and objectivity. In the following Italian ballad the difference from The Sweetheart's Death is one of length and of a more lyrical feeling. This, I think, is traceable to a racial difference. The Italian is notoriously more openly emotional than the Scandinavian,

and of all Scandinavians the Finn is the most reticent. Note, nevertheless, that the marks of the ballad, found again and again no matter in what tongue or country, are here.

The Soldier![1] (Cera un Giovanni di Diecesette Anni.)

There was a young man of seventeen years, who went for a soldier.
In three days he received a message.
"Sir Captain, will you permit me to go home?"
"I will permit you to go if you will come back."
"I will come along with the other soldiers."

When he reached the first castle, he heard the bell ring.
"It is the bell for my sweetheart; they are going to take her."
When he reached the second castle, he saw her coming,
With a cross in company. They were going to bury her.
"Speak, speak! mouth of gold and fountain of love!"
"Don't you see that she is dead and cannot speak?"
"I wish my father, my mother, my friends and relatives were dead;
I wish my sweetheart were living. I would be contented.
But to my home I will not go. A soldier, a volunteer I will be."

These ballads, from so widely dissimilar countries as Finland and Italy, show the same characteristics, it seems to me. It is most unlikely that they are other than communal in origin. The mark of the individual artist is not noticeable in them in any particular.

Another class of ballad that is strikingly duplicated in

1. Obtained from Theresa Calabria, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania.

various countries is that dealing with the murder of a brother or father, as the case may be. Let me quote the English Edward, with some foreign parallels.

Edward[1]

"Why dois your brand sae drip wi bluid,
Edward, Edward,
Why dois your brand sae drip wi bluid,
And why sae sad gang yee O?"
"O I hae killed my hauke sae guid,
Mither, Mither,
O I hae killed my hauke sae guid,
And I had nae mair bot hee O."

"Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
Edward, Edward,
Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,
My deir son I tell thee O."
"O I hae killed my reid-roan steid,
Mither, Mither,
O I hae killed my reid-roan steid
That erst was sae fair and frie O."

"Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Edward, Edward,
Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,
Sum other dule ye drie O."
"O I hae killed my fadir deir,

1. Child, I, p. 169.

Mither, Mither,

O I hae killed my fadir deir,

Alas, and wae is mee O."

"And whatten penance wul ye drie for that,

Edward, Edward?

And whatten penance wul ye drie for that ?

My deir son, now tell me O."

"Ile set my feet in yonder boat,

Mither, Mither,

Ile set my feet in yonder boat,

And Ile fare over the sea O."

"And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha,

Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha,

That were sae fair to see O?"

"Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,

Mither, Mither,

Ile let thame stand till they doun fa,

For here nevir mair maun I bee O."

"And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,

Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,

Whan ye gang ovir the sea O?"

"The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,

Mither, Mither,

The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,
For thame nevir mair wul I see O".

"And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir,
Edward, Edward?
And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir?
My deir son, now tell me O".
"The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
Mither, Mither,
The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
Sic counseils ye gave to me O".

Edward furnishes an unusually good example of the ballad at its best. Here are simple repetition with incremental differences that slowly advance the narrative; here is dialogue, a feature of early balladry from epic times; and here is the refrain, with its implication that the song was once used in the dance. Now let me give the Finnish Brother-murder.

Brother-murder.[1] (Velisurmaaja)

"Whence come you, whence come you,
My gay lad?"

"From the sea shore, from the sea shore,
My dearest mother."

"What did you do there,
My gay lad?"

1. Kanteletar, number 4, p.X.

"Watered my horse,

My dearest mother."

"How came the mud then on your back?" Ref.

"It was the horse whisked with his tail." Ref.

"How came the blood then on your boot?"

"The horse trampled on it."

"How came the blood then on your sword?"

"I stabbed my brother till he died."

"Why didst thou thy brother stab,

My unhappy boy?" (Ref. remains in changed form throughout.)

"Why did he make my sweetheart laugh,

My dearest mother?"

"Where is now your way to go?"

"I go to far countries."

"Where will you leave your father?"[1]

"He may mend a stranger's nets."[2]

"Where will you leave your mother?"

"She may spin a stranger's wool."[2]

"Where will you leave your young woman?"

"She may look on strange men."[2]

1. The Finnish word means "Throw", in the sense of throw away or abandon.

2. This series of five idioms all means the same. They are different ways of saying, "Let them beg."

"Where will you leave your young son?"
"He may go to a strange school."[2]

"Where will you leave your young daughter?"
"She may herd a stranger's cows."[2]

"When will you turn home again?"
"When the raven will be white."

"When will the raven be white?"
"When a goose is black."

"When will a goose be black?"
"When a stone can float."

"When will a stone float?"
"When a feather sinks."

"When will a feather sink?"
"When it is day at midnight."

"When will it be day at midnight?"[1]
"When the moon is shining."

"When will the moon be shining?"
"When the stars in heaven dance."

"When will the stars in heaven dance?"
"When we will all come to judgment."

The above ballad shows signs of later corruption, certainly, and is so cited in the first part of the Kanteletar. There are

1. This ballad is obviously not from Northern Finland where there is a midnight sun.

introductions of later material, for example in the mention of the school. But the fundamental aspects of the medieval ballad are present. I give now a translation of a Serbian piece, in which a sister is the murderer. The form is quite different, but the theme is the same.

The Fratricide.[1]

Between two mountains sank the sun-
Between two maids the enamour'd one.
He gave his kiss to one alone;
The other maid grew jealous then:
"Most faithless thou of faithless men!"
She said- and he replied- "Fair maid!
I fain would kiss thy cheeks of red,
But thou hast got a bicke ring brother,
Who loves to quarrel with another,
And I no quarrel seek, my love!"

She hied her to the darksome grove-
Silent- she turn'd o'er many a rock,
And look'd 'neath many a broken stock;
Probed weeds and briars, till she found
A poisonous serpent on the ground.
She smote it with her golden ring,
Tore from its mouth the venomy fang;
Its poisonous juice her hands did wring

1. An Anthology of Jugoslav Poetry, edited by Dr. B. Stevenson Stanoyevich, published by Richard G. Badger, The Gorham Press, Boston, 1920, p. 38, translated by Sir John Bowring.

Into a wine cup- and she sprang
On swiftest feet to Raduli-

Her own, her only brother he-
Her hands the fatal cup supplied-
He drank the poison- and he died.

Then sped she to the youth- "A kiss-
At least one kiss of love for this-
For this- for thee- I dress'd the cup
With poison- and he drank it up-
The brother that thou lov'st not- he
I poisoned for a kiss from thee"-

Away! away! thou murd'rous maid!
Avaunt! avaunt! - the lover said:
"What fame - what courage could confide
In thee - a heartless fratricide."

Surely these parallels, some of them never before translated into English, have a large significance for the student of the ballad. If, in places and among peoples as widely separated in every way as the Serbian, the Finnish, the Italian and the Polish, ballads having all the qualities of the medieval English and Scottish variety are found, there is some indication that they were originally made by the folk, whose simple interests are everywhere the same, rather than by any conscious artist. Not only that, but the fact that these ballads exist in this way seems effectually to defeat Courthope[1] in his hypothesis of a

1. History of English Poetry, pp. 445-6, and 454.

literary origin, with subsequent degeneration. To this day much of the population of these countries is illiterate, and in former times no one but a few churchmen could read or write at all. It is perfectly evident that the ballads are a part of a vast folk inheritance.

CHAPTER II

The Lament or Coronach

The Work-Song

The War-Ballad

a n d

The Dialogue

"I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet."

Sir Philip Sidney

In most primitive societies the lament or keen is a commonplace at all funerals. Originally composed in an impromptu fashion by friends and relatives of the dead, these mourning songs finally became a professional matter. People who were noted as especially good at it were called upon for other funerals, and the practise grew. Wiles says of the Serbs, whose customs he knows so well, "Loud lamentations, by women rather than men, are an ancient custom among the Serbs. These dirges are again and again extemporized with spontaneous poetic feeling. Girls let down their hair and lament in the orchards and precincts of the house." The keening customs at the Irish wakes are well known to everyone. It is still commonly practised in Finland, to hire old women who have become well known as mourners and acquired some reputation, to attend the services for the dead and add their more accustomed and skillful voices to the heartfelt but perhaps less artistic cries of the family.

Among the coronachs which have descended to us in the English and Scottish ballads are two that are particularly well-known. They are Bonnie George Campbell[1] and The Bonny Earl of Murray[2], both mourning songs of fine and delicate feeling and exceptional merit. I will quote both of them, and then give several Slavic ones, to show how close they are in matter and in sentiment, although quite unlike in form.

1. The text is that of Child (IV, 43) from Smith's Scottish Minstrel.
2. Child (III, 447) from Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany, 1750.

The Bonny Earl of Murray

Ye Highlands, and ye Lawlands,
Oh where have you been?
They have slain the Earl of Murray,
And they layd him on the green.

"Now wae be to thee, Huntly!
And wherefore did you sae?
I bade you bring him wi you,
But forbade you him to slay."

He was a braw gallant,
And he rid at the ring;
And the bonny Earl of Murray,
Oh he might have been a king!

He was a braw gallant,
And he played at the ba';
And the bonny Earl of Murray
Was the flower amang them a'.

He was a braw gallant,
And he played at the glove;
And the bonny Earl of Murray,
Oh he was the Queen's love!

Oh lang will his lady
Look o'er the castle down,
E'er she see the Earl of Murray
Come sounding thro the town!

Bonnie George Campbell

Hie upon Hielands, and laigh upon Tay,
Bonnie George Campbell rode out on a day.

He saddled, he bridled, and gallant rode he,
And hame came his guid horse, but never cam he.

Out cam his mother dear, greeting fu sair,
And out cam his bonnie bryde, riving her hair.

"The meadow lies green, the corn is unshorn,
But bonnie George Campbell will never return."

Saddled and bridled and booted rode he,
A plume in his helmet, aasword at his knee.

But toom cam his saddle, all bloody to see,
Oh, hame cam his guid horse, but never cam he!

Upon examination it will be seen that many of the usual characteristics of the ballad are here, with some differences. There is incremental repetition in both, carried out with great effect in every stanza. In spite of the fact that these are ballads of mourning, the impersonal and objective tone prevails still. They tell the story of someone else's grief, but only the bare skeleton of a narrative is there. In this they are different from others of the ballads, where the story of a sequence of events is more important. The story is in both cases implied more than stated. As for the lack of subjectivity, it may be explained

satisfactorily by the long oral tradition. The tone of personal woe, the subjective and lyrical-narrative touch, becomes out of place in time. Those who contributed their words of regret to the occasion have long been forgotten, and many of their words with them, but the outline of the story, and the account of the grief aroused by the occurrence is preserved. Adelaide Witham[1] says of The Bonny Earl of Murray, "the ballad.....is peculiarly interesting for the complete detachment of the narrative from the situation, and for the intensity of the choral grief." She speaks in almost the same words of Bonnie George Campbell[2]: "It is a genuine bit of choral grief with a wonderfully strong singing quality, and the lament of the 'bonnie bryde' in stanza four is close to the 'articulate cry' of the poet in the more modern lyric of grief."

Far more lyrical and subjective are the Serbian coronachs I have found. They are not so old, and have not suffered the great changing effect of oral tradition. Some of them are obviously the work of one artist, while others show signs of having been adapted a number of times, so as to become the property of the folk. Few of them seem to be choral. Milivoy Stanoyevich[3] says, "There are lamentations (tuzbalice) which are mostly provincial, from Montenegro and Dalmatia. They are also accompanied by refrains, expressing sorrow after the death of some loved one, and extolling the virtues of the

1. Witham, Popular Ballads, p. 165.
2. Ibid. p. 168.
3. Stanoyevich, An Anthology of Jugoslav Poetry, p. 9.

deceased, or the great misfortune felt by those left behind." The refrains seem to point to some communal form of expression, but the emotion is more prominent and more subjective than in the English ballads. A Sister's Lament is an example of a mourning song with a simple refrain.

A Sister's Lament

Sister was I of kingly brothers three,
But now my kings are gone from me,
Woe, woe, woe!

Better kingdoms they are asking,
Better work than this world's tasking,
And God will grant it, where they go,
Better service He'll bestow,
But for me, alas! Oh! woe!

So kingly brothers ne'er were known,
Now my heart breaketh here alone.
This world for me too dark is now,
And I too dark for it, I trow!
Woe, woe, woe!

A more detached and impersonal point of view is maintained in the following ballad. Also the story of a sister's grief for a brother, it casts some light on the interesting mourning customs of a people still in a semi-savage state.

Greatest Grief for a Brother[1]

O'er Neven woods the sun went down,

1. Ibid. p. 130, translation by Wiles.

The sun went down behind the forest,
As came the heroes off the sea.
The young wife counted anxiously,
The wife of George the Hospodar,
Counted the warriors, found them all,
Save her three treasures who were missing.
She could not find her Hospodar
Nor the best man at their wedding,
And the third treasure was not there;
This treasure was her dearest brother.
For her brave lord she cuts her tresses,
For her best man she wounds her cheeks,
And for her brother puts out both her eyes.
She cuts her hair, it grows again;
She wounds her cheeks, the wounds do heal;
But none can heal those hurt blind eyes,
Nor yet her heart for her lost brother.

Unlike the Child ballads of lament, these do not praise the virtues of the fallen, nor describe how he was killed, But the former example bears the mark of a communal refrain, and the latter shows all the signs of being ancient. With the passage of time it has become objective in feeling, but barbaric uses in time of mourning are described. Both of these coronachs are as communal as the two English ones.

In many ballads which are not properly coronachs there are references to grief. There are several stock phrases used, as well as stereotyped ideas. For example, the lovers

are buried near each other, and, as in Lord Thomas and Fair Annet[1],

Lord Thomas was buried without kirkwa,
Fair Annet within the quiere,
And o the tane thair grew a birk,
The other a bonny briere.

And ay they grew, and ay they threw,
As they wad faine be neare;
And by this ye may ken right weil
They were twa luvers deare.

Here is the same idea in a Yugoslav ballad, even more beautifully expressed than in the English one. There is a delicacy of suggestion about it that is not as rough as in the above part of Lord Thomas and Fair Annet. This is the last part of the ballad Love before and after Death[2]:

They buried them in graves apart,
But still went out each heart to heart,
Hands they clasped all through earth's mould.
And as the years on swift wing sped,
A fir-tree green grew o'er his head,
And over hers a red rose-bush;
Not long, and round the green fir-tree,
These roses twined in ruddy showers-
Like to red silk that ties a bunch of flowers.

Another idea which frequently recurs in folk-lore is

1. See also The Douglas Tragedy, Fair Janet, etc.
2. Wiles, Serbian Songs and Poems, p. 48.

that too much mourning after death causes the loved one who is dead unrest, or even pain. Sometimes, as in Sweet William's Ghost, the dead returns for a promise he had given in life and was unable to fulfill. The Serbian elegy on the death of a young man named Konda says,[1]

"Doth the earth, sweet son, lie heavy on thee?
Heavy are the planks of maple round thee?"
From his grave the voice of Konda answers:
"Lightly presses the green earth upon me,
Lightly press the planks of maple round me,
Heavy is the virgins' malediction;
When they sigh, their sighs reach God's high presence;
When they curse, the world begins to tremble;
When they weep, even God is touched with pity."

The same idea may be found in the English ballad of the Unquiet Grave.

Fully as interesting as the ballad of domestic tragedy or the coronach is the work-song. As I have pointed out in the introduction, it is found everywhere, and is a very early development. This sort of ballad is communal also, but did not come from a choral throng. It seems to have no connection with dancing, except as all poetry is conceived to have originated that way. The work-song is one of the early off-shoots of poetry and song, as the lyric is a late one. The work-song which is intended to be sung while the singers are at work is

1. Stanoyevich, An Anthology of Jugoslav Poetry, p. 58, translated by Sir John Bowring.

communal in that it was produced by all those who sang it in chorus, sometimes with a leader or fore-singer, sometimes without. The same processes which made, changed, and molded the other kinds of ballads were influential in these too. Oral tradition has its part, as always. In many cases, as Gummere points out in describing English harvest songs, the songs are connected with some customs whose origin and meaning have long since passed into obscurity. The peasant still goes through the old motions, but the pagan era in which they began is too far distant for him to know the significance. Following is a Yugoslav harvest song based on a custom of great antiquity:

Harvest Song[1]

Take hold of your reeds, youths and maidens! and see
Who the kissers and kissed of the reapers shall be.
Take hold of your reeds, till the secret be told,
If the old shall kiss young, and the young shall kiss old.
Take hold of your reeds, youths and maidens! and see
What fortune and chance to the drawers decree:
And if any refuse, may God smite them--may they
Be cursed by Paraskeva, the saint of today!
Now loosen your hands--now loosen, and see
Who the kissers and kissed of the reapers shall be.

Sir John Bowring explains[2] that "this song is sung at the close of the harvest, when all the reapers are gathered together.

1. Ibid. p. 25, translation of Sir John Bowring.
2. Ibid. p.158, translation of Sir John Bowring.

Half as many reeds as the number of persons present are so bound that no one can distinguish the two ends which belong to the same reed. Each man takes one end of the reeds on one side, each of the women takes one end at the other. The withes that bind the reeds are severed, and the couples that hold the same reed kiss each other." The incremental repetition is a very prominent feature of this folk-song, as it is in the ballads. These work-songs are not properly ballads at all, but they are so closely related in their origins and in the practices connected with their use, that they should be considered together. Here is another Serbian harvest song, sung at the end of the festival as the reapers go home. It is a sort of salute to the giver of the festival:[1]

Lord and master! let us homewards haste:
Far, far distant are our dwellings--far across the waste.
Some have aged mothers threat'ning--"Ne'r allow another:"
Some male-children in the cradle, crying for their mother;
Some impatient lovers chiding;--dearer they than brother.

Many of the Slavic songs of all sorts use as a refrain the word "Koledo". It is a survival of pagan times, when Ledo was worshipped, the ancient Slav divinity who presided over fields and fertility. It will be noted that, with the incongruity so often found in folk-songs, in the following song to be sung in the field at harvest time, the lines are a prayer to God, while the refrain is the old address to Ledo.

1. Ibid. p. 27, translation of Sir John Bowring.

Prayer in the Field[1]

We pray unto the Heavenly Lord,
Koledo, Koledo!
Dew to send upon our fields,
Koledo!
To give grain to wheat and maize,
Koledo, Koledo!
To give fruits in all the glades,
Koledo!
To give colours to the flowers,
Koledo, Koledo!
To give health to sheep and cattle,
Koledo!
And pardon, joy and song to all,
Koledo, Koledo!

Another interesting survival from pagan times in South Slav folk-lore is the custom of the Dodola. When the season has been exceptionally dry, and rain is badly needed, a handsome young girl from the village is dressed entirely in grasses and flowers, and surrounded by dancing maidens, sometimes youths too, progresses slowly through the village and the outlying fields singing a song as a prayer for rain, in which the chorus is "Dodola! Dodola!" Dodola was the ancient goddess whose especial province rain was.

Gummere gives several examples of the harvest work-song from English lore, one of the best of which, from Wiltshire,

1. Ibid. p. 121, translation of Wiles.

is here given:[1]

Our oats they are howed and our barley's reaped,
Our hay is mowed and our hovels heaped,
Harvest Home! Harvest Home!
We'll merrily roar out Harvest Home!
Harvest Home! Harvest Home!

Of the many types of work-songs, which are associated with every kind of labour that can be done in company with several people, such as grinding grain, knitting, swinging the flail at harvest, sowing, rowing, hoisting, pulling, and many others, I will here speak of only one more example, spinning. Of the many instances of communal song composed or used while spinning which are to be found in English, it is sufficient to point out The Greenside Wakes Song[2], where the refrain is,

Tread the wheel, tread the wheel, dan, don, dell O.

There is also the version of the Cruel Brother from Forfar-shire[3], in which the two lines at the end of the stanza are an indication of labour:

Sing Annet, and Marret, and fair Maisrie,
An' the dew hangs i' the wood, gay ladie.

But such examples are many and familiar. Helene Vacar-esco[4], in collecting her Roumanian songs and ballads from the

1. Gummere, The Beginning of Poetry, p.295.
2. Bell, Ancient Poems, Ballads and Songs, London, 1852, pp. 187 ff.
3. Child, I, p. 147.
4. Helene Vacaresco, and Carmen Sylva, The Bard of the Dimbovitza, p. V.

peasants, is said to have been "forced to affect a desire to learn spinning, that she might join the girls at their spinning parties, and so overhear their songs more easily; she hid in the tall maize to hear the reapers crooning them.....most of them are improvisations. They usually begin and end with a refrain, which seems to have been suggested to the singer by something in his surroundings....For the spinning-songs, the girls all stand in a circle, spinning; the best spinner and singer being in the middle. She begins to improvise a song, and at any moment she chooses, throws her spindle, holding it by a long thread, to another girl, who has to go on spinning while the first girl pulls out the flax--a proceeding requiring great dexterity--and at the same time, has to continue the improvisation which has been begun". This is good evidence of the universal power of improvisation among people of a more primitive and homogeneous time. It may be said that this points to individual authorship; but where there is refrain, improvisation by turns, and a tribal oral tradition, one can safely say that the songs, when finished, are a common property, whose author cannot be distinguished from the rest of his fellows who have added their part to the song. Often there is a refrain, as in:[1]

What didst thou, mother, when thou wert a maiden?
I was young.-
Didst thou, like me, hark to the moon's soft footfalls
Across the sky?

1. Ibid. p. 105.

Thy father cometh home, leave the door open.
Down to the fountain didst thou go, and there,
Thy wooden pitcher filled, didst thou yet linger
Another hour, with the full pitcher by thee?
I was young.-
And did thy tears make glad thy countenance?
And did thy sleep bring gladness to the night?
And did thy dreams bring gladness to thy sleep?
And didst thou smile, even by graves, despite
Thy pity for the dead?
Thy father cometh home, leave the door open. etc.

To get back once more to the true narrative ballad, it would not do to omit to mention of the war ballad. The border ballad, as the English and Scottish variety of war ballad is called, has always been one of the best remembered and best loved of all ballads. In any language they are stirring and vigorous. The ring of marching feet and the fervour of battle are in them, as well as the sorrow of defeat and the grief of the bereaved. Many of the brave deeds of national heroes have been preserved in the folk mind in this way. From the Battle of Maldon to Otterburne and Chevy Chase they are a priceless part of our heritage. It will not be necessary to quote from these, I think. They are too well known to need it. But in Serbian there is a whole cycle of songs, belonging to the class of men's songs, or heroic ballads, clustering about the battle of Kossovo. The reader who would appreciate these must

first know some of the circumstances surrounding this epic defeat, which is till celebrated by all Southern Slavs.

In the fourteenth century the Turks were making inroads deeper and deeper into Europe. They met with little or no resistence among the disunited small tribal nations of the Balkans until they came to Serbia. Tsar Lazar, who had his capital at Krushevato, gathered a tremendous host to give battle to the Turks, to make one last stand for Christianity. They met, these two great hosts, at Kossovo. Due to the treachery of Vuk Brankovich, who deserted to the Turks with a large section of the army under his command, there was a crushing defeat for the Serbs. The flower of their aristocracy was slain or driven into hiding as Haiduks. Great numbers of the common people were slaughtered mercilessly. But worst of all, there ensued five centuries of Turkish domination. They were hard masters, and took every possible step to kill all national spirit and to substitute Mohammedanism for Christianity. They were successful in this in some parts, especially in Montenegro, where today is one of the strictest Moslem centres in the world. Previous to the battle, which was in 1389, there had been a long period of unification and growth in Serbia. A passionate devotion to national ideals and a great hope for a large and glorious empire had arisen. But Kossovo was the grave of Yugoslav freedom and hope. As the national anthem says,[1]

> Through five hundred years of durance
> We have knelt before Thy face.

1. Translation by Elizabeth Christie.

From that time Serbia was hopelessly oppressed and wretched, until George Karageorge liberated her in 1804.

The heroes of Kossovo have become a sort of race of demi-gods to Slavs. Their heroism has never ceased to be exalted. Of the many ballads celebrating the struggle of 1389, one of the most beautiful is Tsaritsa Militsa. She was the noble wife of Tsar Lazar. The ballad tells of her receiving the news of the battle:[1]

Tsaritsa Militsa and Vladimir, the Voyvoda.

Militsa the Tsaritsa went walking up and down
Below the walls of Krushevato and the ramp of the town;
And also Vukosava and Mara, her two daughters dear,
When Vladeta the Voyvoda on a charger brown drew near.
Sweated the steed had been indeed, and the white foam stained
his side.
"God aid thee, Marshall of the King," Queen Militsa she cried,
"Why sweats the stallion? Why his steaming side?
Hast thou not come from Kossovo this day?
Sawest thou not my lord and thine?"
And Vladeta did say,
"God aid me, Tsaritsa, I come from Kossovo,
I saw not the Tsar, but his white steed
The Turks drove to and fro along the line,
Up and down by Kossovo, and I fear the Tsar is slain."
When Queen Militsa heard this, down her cheeks the tears did rain,
And anew she asked the Voyvoda:"What tidings of the Tsar?

1. Contributed by George Zatezalo, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania.

Sawest thou Yug's nine children, at Kossovo that are?
And the tenth, Yug Bogdan, their father?" And Vlada replied,
"I rode by level Kossovo, and saw them in the tide,

Yug and his nine children at Kossovo have I seen,
Their arms were red to the shoulders, and red were their sabres keen,
Weary were their arms at Kossovo, with cutting the Moslems down."
Yet again unto the Voyvoda Militsa's words resound,
"Sawest thou Milosh and Brankovich, my daughters' lords that are?"
Vladeta answered, "At Kossovo, in the centre of the war.

There saw I Milosh Obilich, that leaned on his broken spear,
He is dead now, for the Moslems pressed him very near.
Vuk Brankovich I saw not, never may my sun him see:
That same betrayed Tsar Lazar, the lord of thee and me."

This is only one of the many ballads relating the story of the famous defeat. It is on a different plane from the next ballad, Young Captain. This song, very popular among Serbians, is in the dialogue form. The end is surprising, to say the least. It means, of course, that the war had gone on so long that the young wife could be deceived in the appearance of her husband. The tune to which it is sung is lilting, yet dignified, as becomes a war ballad.

Young Captain[1]

"Young Captain, whence do you come?"

"I come from the Balkans, from a bloody battle."

1. Contributed by George Vujnovich, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania.

"Young Captain, whom did you see there?
Saw you my husband Jovan?"

"Young widow, I saw your husband.
He was cut down in the fight."

"Young widow, weep no more.
I am here instead, from the bloody battle."

"Young Captain, he was my dear husband.
No one can take my Jovan's place."

"Young widow, I am your Jovan.
I am your husband, now a captain."

It is claimed by some of the foremost communalists that the dialogue ballad is a very old form, in close chronological proximity to the choral group, where often the dancers ask questions and reply, telling a story in that way. The dance song as still used by modern children illustrates what is meant, as in the well-known game, Here Comes the Duke A-riding. The use of question and answer in a Roumanian ballad meant to be sung during the dancing of the Hora, the national dance, is very interesting:

The Hora[1]

The maidens:

He turned his head away,
That he might not see my hut;
My apple-trees were all in bloom,

1. Vacaresco and Sylva, The Bard of the Dimbovitza, Series II, p. 30.

The dogs were sleeping when he passed.
He turned his head away.

The lads:

And do ye know which way he went,
Or the likeness that he bore?
What shape his glistening daggers were,
The fashion of his mantle's hem,
The colour of his steed?

The cobzar:

He was a Heiduck, yet he passed
So swiftly by, we ne'er shall know
What skill he showeth in the dance,
Or what shape his daggers wore.
He drank from out the river clear,
And cast no glance upon the maidens. etc.

This is a more complicated dialogue form than that in Young Captain. There is another use of the dialogue which is very common in folk poetry: that is, a series of statements to which the replies are in direct opposition. The two following songs illustrate this:

Curse and Blessing[1]

To the river ran the mother,
To her Mary by the water,
Dreaming there, the pretty daughter:
"Have you washed the linen, Mary?"

1. Wiles, Serbian Songs and Poems, p. 47.

"Why, mother dear, not yet begun;
A naughty youth did come my way,
And muddy made the silvery water."

"I'll curse him then; I'll curse him, daughter!
Cold be his heart as ice is cold."
"As cold as the sun o'er the cornfields, mother!"
"May his face be black before all men!"
"As black as the snow on the mountains, mother!"
"May he be hanged! Dost hear, my daughter?"
"But hanged upon my neck, dear mother!"
"From grievous wounds he then shall suffer!"
"Let my own teeth, then, cause them, mother!"
"May the wild torrent take him, daughter!"
"And bring him home to me, my mother!"

It is a common thing in folk poetry to have a conversation between a youth and a maiden in which the girl says, "I will become a bird" and the youth says "I will become a hawk and catch you", etc. This is found in tales as well, especially fairy-tales. One example will suffice, to show what the whole genre is like.

His Anyway[1]

"Tell me, fair maid, wilt thou be mine?"
"Nay, foolish youth, begone!
Nought can come of this;
Nay, I would rather be a tankard

1. Ibid. p. 45.

In the little inn down there!"
"And if thou wert a tankard,
Then I should be the wine!"
"Oh, pray think no more of this:
I'd rather be a cup!"
"And if thou wert a cup
I would be the coffee in it-
Or I would drink the coffee up!"
"Prithee, speak no more of this;
I'd rather be a bird
Whose songs were never heard."
"Oh, if thou wert a bird,
I'd build for thee the nest,
Where thou shouldst come and rest!"
"Please, silly youth, have done with this;
Indeed I'd rather be a fish,
Where the nets do splash and swish."
"And if thou wert a fish,
Then I would be the net,
And still should get my wish,
Either here, either there,
I am with thee, soul by soul,
Thou art mine, by God's control."

Improvisation in this form by the dialogue appears to be naturally very near to the origins of poetry. A high degree of skill is necessary to keep up improvisation for an extended

period; but it is comparatively easy to compose extemporaneously a few lines at a time. In this way many could take part in composition, whereas the longer and more complicated forms would give opportunity only to a more restricted number of people who would be able to do their parts well. If Caedmon had had to contribute only a few verses to the songs going the round of the table, he would doubtless not have had to retire from embarrassment. Anglo-Saxon society was comparatively highly developed then.

CHAPTER III

The Later History of the Ballad

"I knew a very wise man that believed
that...if a man were permitted to make
all the ballads, he need not care who
should make the laws of a nation."

Andrew Fletcher

The origin of the traditional ballad is lost in the mists of time. The oldest ballad that may be safely dated is Judas, which goes back to the thirteenth century. Not so much later than that, however, the minstrel emerges as a factor, and begins to polish and use the traditional songs as a livelihood. The individual artist comes out of the throng, and his work begins to give an aristocratic tinge to the homely folk-songs. Many of these have a professional sound, and as Professor Child says, "They do not go to the spinning wheel at all." After the minstrel came the broadside, ballads sold in the streets and hawked at fairs, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many of these are to be found in Pepys' collection. Shakespeare has depicted a typical ballad-monger in Autocyclus in the Winter's Tale. Hotspur says of these men,

I had rather be a kitten and cry mew
Than one of these same meter ballad-mongers.

Some of the broadsides were collections of the old and well-known songs, but others were composed by those who sold them, and while certainly inferior, have preserved for us some pearls borrowed from the genuine article. Some broadsides were collected and made into books called garlands and chap-books. At the same time, the newspapers and journals, which were then just beginning their careers, had almost every current occasion celebrated in a ballad. These ballads are as poor and as hastily composed as are those with which we are familiar today. Everyone has heard the ballad efforts

made upon the sinking of the Vestris, the death of Floyd Collins, the catastrophe of the Shenandoah, and many others. They are very poor.

As a result of this much meddling with the material of ballads by these professional ballad-mongers, as well as the differences to be observed in the ballads in various sections, there have come down to us many versions. The monumental work of Child has sifted these out for us. What is obviously manufactured is at once eliminated. Every possible version, no matter how mutilated, is given. References to tradional ballads in other tongues are compared. By this exhaustive investigation and comparison, the true ballad nearly always emerges and can be discerned.

The majority of the ballads preserved to us are from the Percy manuscript. When Bishop Percy, the famous antiquarian, was visiting in Shropshire, he came upon this manuscript, which was being used to light fires. This he used as a nucleus, and the indefatigable Percy, moved with a great enthusiasm, from then on gathered all the ballads he could find. Unfortunately, he had not the true critic's attitude toward his "finds", and he altered them, edited them, and in general attempted to eliminate their crudities. It was not until 1867 that Bishop Percy's heirs consented to the publication of the original manuscript.

The revival of interest in the ballad coincided with the rise of the Romantic movement, and did much to colour some of its most pronounced characteristics. One of the first

to utilize the form and spirit of the ballad was Robert Burns. Having been brought up on old Scotch tunes and folk-songs, when he went to compose his poetry, he naturally turned to them for inspiration. A fragment of an old tune or a line from an old ballad often was the inspiration for a poem. During the eighteenth century, interest and regard for the ballad had lapsed among literary men. Only Addison had had a good word to say for it. Now with the advent of the great vogue for simplicity, as shown by the popularity of Burns, a vigorous search for ballads began, and a deep interest in them in the reading public arose.

When Scott, with his deep love of all that pertained to Border tradition, collected the ballads for his Border Minstrelsy and Scottish Songs, almost every ballad we now know had been found. There were many others who assisted. "Ramsay, Herd, Ritson, Jamieson, Mrs. Brown of Falkland, whose memory was a storehouse of old songs, Sharpe, Motherwell, Kinloch, Buchan, and Aytoun, are all names to be remembered with gratitude by those who love ballads."

Not only did Scott set himself to the assiduous collecting of ballads, but he also used them as materials in his own works. Much of the Lay of the Last Minstrel has the ballad ring, and the same is true in less degree of Marmion and the Lady of the Lake. The same vigour and simplicity are present, along with the great vitality inherited from the traditions on which they are grounded.

There are many other writers in the same and later per-

iods who went to the ballad for inspiration either in form or in material, or both. Among these William Edmonstoune Aytoun is prominent. While his expression is more sophisticated and polished, the kinship of some of his work with the ballads is very clearly manifest. Montrose and Killiecrankie are excellent examples. Aytoun was a good poet as well as an indefatigable collector.

Coleridge's Ancient Mariner is, of course, the best imitation of the ballad that we have in the language. He reproduced the genuine spirit of the past, and captured the feeling of the ballad almost perfectly. The moralising lines near the end spoil this to some extent, but most of the poem is full of the genuine atmosphere of the ballad. His indebtedness is obvious. The quotation of one stanza will serve to show the similarities of metre and treatment:

> The sun now rose upon the right:
> Out of the sea came he,
> Still hid in mist, and on the left
> Went down into the sea.

How widespread was the interest in the medieval ballad may also be seen by the strange phenomenon of the literary hoaxes attempted by Chatterton and MacPherson. The former pretended to have found in an antique coffer some manuscripts of old ballads. They were composed with considerable genius, and for a while imposed upon even the best critics. The Ossianic poems produced by MacPherson were supposed to be translations of ancient Celtic poems of the ballad sort. They

were based upon fragments, as a matter of fact, and were so like the Celtic poems then incompletely known that even Horace Walpole was taken in, and very enthusiastic about them. Gray became suspicious, however, when, in response to a letter that he wrote to MacPherson, he received a peculiarly furtive and unscholarly reply. Gray was too much of a scholar in these matters to be deceived for long. The very fact that such impositions were attempted shows that at this time a peculiar value was put upon the revival of ancient poetry.

Gray's own interest in such things is demonstrated in his poem The Bard, in which he treats of the last of the famous Welsh bards who for so long a time hindered the successful conquest of Wales, by keeping the people in a constant turmoil with the old national songs. Gray also delved as deeply as he could into the old Norse mythology and folk-lore, and made some studies among the Eddas and sagas.

Macaulay, too, used the ballads as an inspiration in his Lays of Ancient Rome. A glance at his meter will show the ballad influence there. It is also noteworthy that the Lays are entirely narrative. There is no emphasis on the subjective in any way, and the philosophy, if any, is implied, never spoken. The metrical swing is prominent in Horatius:

> But hark! The cry is Astor,
> And lo, the ranks divide,
> And the great lord of Luna
> Comes with his stately stride.
> Upon his ample shoulders

Clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand he shakes the brand
That none but he can wield.

During this time, due to the influence of Coleridge and others, there was a great flood of interest in the Romantic Revival in Germany. Burger's Lenore was everywhere read and admired. It had many imitations, and was itself an imitation of an old ballad. Scott's The Wild Huntsman was inspired by this. He belonged to a literary society, one which took literature seriously and really attempted to study it. Their interests were not only in English poetry and prose, but in continental tendencies as well. Mrs. Taylor, one of the members of this society, read Lenore and, much impressed by its simple beauty, made a translation and read it at a meeting. Scott, who had been away at the time, heard about it, and read it. He was struck with the poem's similarity of spirit and form to those he had been collecting in his own country, and decided to imitate it. The Wild Huntsman is the result. Everyone who read Lenore was enthusiastic.

Everywhere in Europe the preoccupation with medieval popular literature was evident. In Russia, Pushkin used the folk-lore, old fairy tales, and bylini on which he had been brought up and which he had collected, as a basis for the fairy tale poems which first demonstrated his genius. Grimm also began his investigations. It was at this time and a little later that Topelius and Lonnrot gathered the stories

of Wainamoinen and Ilmarainen which they incorporated into the great Finnish national epic, the Kalevala. For this poem Oscar Wilde has the highest praise, comparing it favorably with the Iliad and the Odyssey. Vuk Karadzic in Serbia collected the Srpske Narodne Pjesme in many volumes, a work which has since been a constant source of modern adaptations and compositions. Most of the ballads have to do with the battle of Kossovo. "Jugoslav literature possesses an entire bibliography of Kossovo dramas and novels, written by Serbs from Bosnia (Sima Milutinovic), the Banat (St.Popovic), Dalmatia (Matija Ban, Ivo Vojnovic), Backa (Milos Cvetic), and the kingdom of Serbia (Milovan Vidakovic). The Croat Tresi-Pavicic sings the whole epic of Kossovo as fervently as the Serb Nikola Gjoric. The Croat Armin Pavic and the Serb Stojan Novakovic are equally engaged in selections of these same Kossovo songs for the Jugoslav masses. The Slavonian J. Novic and the Serbian Sreta Stojkovic, following the example of the national poetry, write songs upon the battle of Kossovo. Davorin Jenko, the Slovene, prepared as his discours de reception for the Royal Serbian Academy two compositions, both on Kossovo themes (Kossovo and The Maiden of Kossovo), his finest musical work. The Dalmatian Ivan Mestrovic designed the Temple of Kossovo, a masterpiece of sculpture and architecture--"the epic of Kossovo in stone." Not only this, but the Gorski Vijenac (Mountain Wreath) of Nyegosh, the finest dramatic poem among the South Slavs, was based upon the heroic ballads of this cycle. It seems that certainly the ballad influence had

spread everywhere and has been the source of much that is fine in modern influence. The ballad was certainly not merely a dead curiosity of the Middle Ages.

Other examples of the use of ballad material in English literature should not ignore Keat's famous poem, La Belle Dame Sans Merci. He successfully mastered the feeling and treatment of the ballad in this gem of a poem. There is also the Sister Helen of Rossetti, which, though a little more morbid in feeling than the genuine ballad, is yet evidently influenced by it.

In later English literature Masefield and Noyes are good examples of the far-reaching influence of the ballad. The Salt-water Poems and Ballads of the former are instinct with the atmosphere of the true songs of the sea. Many of them are akin to the chanties, one of the species of communal work-songs. For instance there is A Valediction:

We're bound for the blue water where the great winds blow,
It's time to get the tacks aboard, time for us to go;
The crowd's at the capstan and the tune's in the shout,
"A long pull, a strong pull, and warp the hooker out."

Noyes capitalized the ballad spirit and metre as well as the use of the refrain, in The Highwayman, a poem justly noted for its metrical facility.

Kipling, too, is a disciple of the ballad. There is the real lilt and swing in the Barrack Room Ballads, such as Danny Deever and The Ballad of Fisher's Boarding House. Much of his popularity is due to the never-dying taste that readers have for the ballad metre and for the short narrative poem that is

vigorous and wastes little time on the abstract.

Of the same school is Robert W. Service, although he is not in the same class as a poet that Kipling is. But he too writes rhymes with the ballad swing, devoted to narrative. The themes and verse are not handled with as much skill, but his writings have been attended with a great deal of public interest, especially The Shooting of Dan McGrew.

In late years there has been an impetus to collect ballads that are either indigenous to the United States, or are preserved there. It is not long since Cox made his fine collection of the English ballads as they are preserved in the South, especially in the mountains of Kentucky and Virginia. He found some entirely new versions of many old songs, such as Bonny Barbara Allen. It is a source of great interest to see how far the ballads have been able to preserve their original stories and phraseology in a new land to which they were brought two hundred years ago. There is surprisingly little difference in the American and English versions, although naturally there are a good many changes of the minor sort. Here again the power of oral tradition is vindicated. The mountaineers have been until recently entirely illiterate.

Carl Sandburg in The American Songbag and Lomax in Cowboy Ballads have made a genuine contribution. The former anthology contains all sorts of American folk-songs, both original and derivative, narrative and lyric. There are songs of the cow-boys, like Bury Me Out on the Prairie and The Old Chisolm Trail, railroad songs like Casey Jones, river songs

like Steamboat Bill, and those of indeterminate classification like Willie the Weeper. There are also many stevedore songs and spirituals from the South, such as I've Been Wukkin' on the Railroad and Swing Low, Sweet Chariot. Joanna Colcord, in her book Roll and Go; Songs of American Sailormen, has made a good collection of sailor's chanties common to this country in the days of the sailing ships. She has in every case tried to trace the origin of the chanty to its proper source, and has in many cases been extraordinarily successful.

Spirituals, although they are not properly ballads, are still one of the few remaining examples of communally improvised song that are still alive, and deserve a few words here. The American negro, with his beautiful voice and his gift of easy improvisation, has added a large and valuable body of poetry and song to American literature. Here indeed the music and the words are inseparable, and in most instances, these elements are in their turn inseparable from dancing, or at least a rhythmic movement of some kind. The singers sway and move their feet in time, rolling their eyes and sometimes swinging their arms.

It is not only in the South and West that anonymous communal songs have been kept alive and composed. In the days when lumbering was a great industry, the woods resounded with the songs of the lumberjack at work or at rest. Many of his songs have been written and preserved, but more have been lost forever. Then again, there is still a mine of folk-lore and balladry in French Canada. It seems somewhat astonishing to

find medieval French ballads on this continent, but many interesting collections have been made. In some of the rural districts, improvisation was still going on until recently. Dr. MacMillan related that it was his good fortune to overhear some ballad improvisation in the old classical manner at a quilting bee in a remote part of the province some years ago. It has been observed that there are some extraordinary variations in the ballads as they are in Quebec, as compared with the same songs as found in France. This is explained by pointing out that when the nuns came over with the earliest settlers, these intrepid women, wishing to preserve the French language and traditions as much as possible, hit upon the idea of getting around the lack of books by teaching the children born in New France the traditional ballads of France. But thinking that there were some needless crudities in them, the nuns deleted certain stanzas and changed certain phrases that offended their sense of good taste and propriety. This has made a profound difference in the texts of some of the songs. It is an interesting fact, however, that some of the ballads gathered in the New World are able to supply lost stanzas in the defective versions found at home.

From all this later history of the ballad, it is obvious that this fine old poetic form is not by any means dead. In the narrow sense, if not dead, it is certainly moribund. But in a wider sense, it lives on in the hearts of a great many people and as a literary influence in many poetical works.

Those who have brought ballads with them from other countries preserve them in memory with sentimental tenacity, and there are still a few places where ballads are yet made. These days, however, it is usually a fact that the popular sentimental songs of the time and of past generations, are used as a nucleus in the making of inferior ballads. The pristine vitality and genuine folk feeling of the ballad of the class of Chevy Chase is gone forever. One has only to compare with it some of the cowboy ballads, or, even worse, with some of those songs for popular consumption based on calamities of the Vestris sort, to feel that the ballad is not what it has been.

But the true old ballad will always be dear to those who like its trumpet sound, who love its swing, even its crudities, its atmosphere of other and less artificial times, when high adventure waited around the corner, and the supernatural was not far away.

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