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## **The Murdered Sweetheart: Child of Print and Panic?**

[Proceedings Version]

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### **Introducing the Project<sup>1</sup>**

The broadside balladry which emerged towards the end of the sixteenth century with the irruption of printing into popular culture has some claim to be the first of England's mass media. Dominating the field of discursive entertainment and news-reporting until the emergence of the tabloid press, broadside ballads were issued in their scores or hundreds each year, many with print-runs in the thousands; some, especially towards the end of the period, in the hundreds of thousands or even (allegedly) millions.<sup>2</sup> And among broadside balladry's multifarious genres and sub-genres, the ballads on the "murdered sweetheart" provide ideal material for exploring many aspects of this early-modern medium in England and its relationship to other communicative arts, including the replication of narrative across different media systems, and the emergence of new forms of story-telling at moments of media in transition.

Narrating the tragic story of the attractive young woman who is led astray then brutally murdered by her seducer when she becomes pregnant and demands marriage,<sup>3</sup> these songs stand at the intersection of the perennial media themes of crime and sex, qualifying simultaneously as a particularly tragic sub-form of the criminal-brought-to-justice narrative (often presented as the perpetrator's "Last Goodnight" – his confession and valediction on the eve of his execution),<sup>4</sup> and as an extreme transformation of the common broken-courtship

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Professor David Thorburn for his encouragement of my venturing with this material into a distinguished media studies environment, and to both him and Professor William Oricchio, moderator of the plenary session in which I appeared, for their kind reception; questions and comments from other delegates have also contributed significantly to this post-forum version of the paper.

<sup>2</sup> Standard accounts include H.E. Rollins, "The Blackletter Broadside Ballad", *PMLA*. 34 (1919), 258-339; Leslie Shepard, *The Broadside Ballad. A Study in Origins and Meaning* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962); Natasha Würzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad, 1550 - 1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> As this implies, I do not include in the murdered sweetheart genre ballads in which the killing is motivated by sexual jealousy.

<sup>4</sup> On crime and execution literature in general see J.A. Sharpe. "Last Dying Speeches: Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England", *Past and Present*, 107 (1985), 144-67.

scenario: here the seduced girl is not merely (as in many popular songs) repudiated, but killed; here one of the lovers is not merely (as in many other popular songs) destroyed by an external factor (a rival; an irate father or brother; war and shipwreck), but by the love-partner.<sup>5</sup>

New broadside ballads adhering to the murdered sweetheart scenario were produced in England in the period ca 1650 – 1850, and for them as for broadside balladry in general the same pattern of emphatically market-oriented production and (within the restraints of ambient technology) mass distribution obtained throughout: composition by hack writers (mainly in London) at the behest of commercial printers; bulk production of texts on single sheets (broadsides – which sometimes had room for more than one song), sold at a discount to a variety of ballad-sellers who peddled them on street stalls, hawked them around the city and suburbs (the "running patterers"), or carried them to fairs and festivals in the provinces. In this multimedia popular artform sales of the text would be encouraged by the singing of a few lines from the song concerned (the title often specifying the recommended tune): ballads were both sold to be sung and sung to be sold. And the ballad sheets would be made more attractive by woodcuts illustrating the events narrated.

There is little reason to doubt that most of the murdered sweetheart ballads were indeed composed precisely for publication as broadsides, and in the case of those appearing close on the heels of specific, real events this is a virtual certainty, which means in turn that when a given song is also recorded from oral, folk tradition – typically in one of the bursts of folksong collecting in England around 1900 -1920 or 1960 -1980 – we can be certain that the oral versions derive from the printed, if probably via intermediate reprints. The changes discerned in juxtaposing the one with the other – particularly if several oral derivatives display the same deviations or types of deviation – can be claimed as symptomatic of this modulation from one medium to another, and the approach can claim to be a uniquely reliable means of determining the impact of oral transmission on textual material, not least when repeated experiments (studies of different ballads) produce the same results. It is not exclusively applicable to murdered sweetheart songs,<sup>6</sup> but because these mainly originate as

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<sup>5</sup> For the theme of love, sex and marriage in traditional song see Jean R. Freedman, "With Child: Illegitimate Pregnancy in Scottish Traditional Ballads", *Folklore Forum*, 24 (1991), 3-18; Vic Gammon, "Song, Sex and Society in England, 1600 – 1850", *Folk Music Journal*, 4.3 (1982), 208-245; Roger deV. Renwick, *English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning* (London: Batsford, 1980), ch. 2, "The Semiotics of Sexual Liaisons".

<sup>6</sup> I have applied this approach to other genres of broadside balladry in the following studies: "The Ballad of Tradition: In Pursuit of a Vernacular Aesthetic", in *Ballads into Books: The Legacies of Francis James Child*, ed. Tom Cheesman & Sigrid Rieuwerts (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 111-23; "Textual to Oral: The Impact of Transmission on Narrative Word-Art", in *Oral History of the Middle Ages: The Spoken Word in Context*,

news ballads, and since the evident staying-power of the narratives was conducive to their survival in tradition, they loom fairly large among the instances for which this approach is feasible.<sup>7</sup>

Since many of the murdered sweetheart ballads in turn are based on real events, there are instances where we are fortunate in being able to juxtapose the broadside narrative with accounts of those same events in other discursive media: typically judicial records and newspaper accounts. This provides another, strikingly reliable, means of appreciating how a given narrative is handled in different media, or even, since the broadside ballads were often based on the newspaper accounts,<sup>8</sup> how a given narrative modulates in the transition from one printed medium to another. This is clarified as much as confused by the circumstance that in some instances a journalistic prose account and a news ballad on the same case were published in sequence by the same printer, or even on a single sheet which juxtaposed a prose account for those comfortable with sustained reading and a ballad which could be read to, and learned and sung by, an even broader audience.<sup>9</sup> Despite such proximity these two media – journalistic prose and news ballad – retained their respective narrative modes, effectively enhancing the qualification of this material for bringing out precisely how material modulates between media.

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Medium Ævum Quotidianum Sonderband 12, CEU Medievalia Vol. 3, ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Michael Richter (Krems and Budapest: Medium Ævum Quotidianum and Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, 2001), pp. 19-38.

<sup>7</sup> About one third of the English murdered sweetheart ballads are available as both broadsides and derivative folksongs.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851, 2nd edn. 4 vols. 1861-62; repr. London: Frank Cass, 1967), vol. I, *The London Street-Folk*, pp. 220, 225, 281, 283.

<sup>9</sup> Within the genre discussed here the balance has shifted decisively in favour of prose in a broadsheet from the first half of the nineteenth century by the printer James Catnach recounting a classic murdered sweetheart case: "The whole particulars of a most Cruel Murder, Committed by Charles Young, a Grazier, upon the body of his Sweetheart Mary Anne Walmsley. Shewing, how under pretence of Marriage, the Villain Seduced her, and how she became Pregnant by him; after which he gave her a deleterious drug, which threw her into a deep sleep, when the Monster stabbed her to the heart with a knife, and threw her Body into a Lake, which was wonderfully discovered by a Shepherd's dog", repr. in *English Popular Literature 1819 – 1851*, ed. Louis James (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 248: here the story is narrated exclusively in prose, supplemented by a verse caption to an illustration of the dog finding the corpse, and some "Melancholy Verses" in which the spirit of the girl warns other maidens against following her example. Some cases of sweetheart murder seem to have prompted only prose accounts; for example "A full, true and particular account of a cruel, barbarous and inhuman murder committed on the body of Margaret Rankin" (1792), "A full and particular Account of a most horrid Murder, committed on the Body of [a] young woman, at Ballinlick" (1799), "An account of a bloody and barbarous murder which was committed on the body of Jannet Stewart" ca 1803), and "Fatal Love! Or an

### **The Murdered Sweetheart Ballads: Review of Tradition**

The number of English songs in the sub-genre (about 25) is substantial enough to be significant, but finite enough to be manageable, and with increasing ease of access to collections and catalogues it is probable that the corpus subjected to study in what follows encompasses, if not all the ballads in the genre published, at least virtually all of those which have survived (plus a representative sample of reprintings).<sup>10</sup> The same cannot of course be said of the singing of the ballads, but with regard to performances actually recorded the project has consulted many of the major collections in Britain and Scotland, directly or via indexes and databases. Within this substantial but finite compass the material is also complex enough to be interesting and to challenge premature generalisation. Some ballads are dominated by the narrative of the events, others by the moral reflections of narrator or the villain. It may be feasible or even necessary to speak of major subdivisions within the genre. While most ballads claim to recount an actual case (and many demonstrably did), others do not (and probably didn't). Some different ballads are about the same case, while others, purporting to recount different cases, are essentially the same song with different names for the protagonists.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to chronology of composition the Murdered Sweetheart ballads of English tradition seem to fall into two groups of unequal size, whose respective members also have other external features in common.<sup>12</sup> There is a smaller, early group from ca 1650 - 1750, some of them printed in the distinctive black letter of the period, characterized by considerable length (ca 25 - 50 "ballad" stanzas), and by a predilection for "Downfall [of a person]" and "Tragedy [of a place]" titles. In very approximate order of composition they are: "The Reward of Murder" (fragment only survives), "The Downfall of William Grismond", "The Downfall of Thomas Caress", "The Bloody Miller", "The Berkshire Tragedy", "The Dorsetshire Tragedy", "The Oxfordshire Tragedy", "The Gosport Tragedy", and "The Bristol

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account of that Cruel and Inhuman Murder which was committed on the body of Mary Johnston" – all accessible on the website of the National Library of Scotland, <http://www.nls.uk/broadsides>.

<sup>10</sup> Thus no further examples can be found in the Register of the Company of Stationers into which – at least in theory – all printed materials had to be entered, as made available in H.E. Rollins, "An Analytical Index to the Ballad Entries in the Registers of the Company of Stationers", *SP*, 21 (1924), 1-324.

<sup>11</sup> It is such complexities which must excuse the limitation of this study to broadside ballads recounting events purporting to have happened in England, and to their oral derivatives in England and Scotland; ballads on events in Ireland and Scotland are excluded. The project similarly excludes the murdered sweetheart ballads of North America, both the twenty or so new ballads on "native" American murders, and the persistence in American folk tradition of several ballads originating in England (and Ireland and Scotland).

<sup>12</sup> For the texts of the broadsides listed here and quoted in the essay, see the Bibliographical Appendix, below.

Tragedy". Some claim links, more or less plausible, to specific murder cases. "The Reward of Murder" advertises itself as concerning

"the Execution of Richard Smith, for murthinge Mary Davis widdow, to whom hee made a promise of Marriage after he had gotten her with Childe: she was found drown'd in a Pond neare More Fields, the 27. of November last, and the said Richard Smith, executed this present Saterdag, being the 12. of December, 1640, for the same fact";

"The Downfall of William Grismond" likewise "A Lamentable Murder by him committed at Lainterdine in the County of Hereford, the 22 of March, 1650". "The Bloody Miller" (in a succinct summary of the genre's paradigmatic features) claims to be

"a true and just Account of one Francis Cooper of Hocstow near Shrewsbury, who was a Millers Servant, and kept company with one Anne Nicols for the space of two years, who then proved to be with Child by him, and being urged by her Father to marry her he most wickedly and barbarously murdered her"

without specifying a date, but H.E. Rollins has suggested that the murder is referred to in a contemporary diary as occurring in 1684.<sup>13</sup> Both "The Downfall of Thomas Caress: Or, The fatal fruits of disloyal Love" and "The Berkshire Tragedy; Or, The Wittam Miller. With an Account of his Murdering his Sweetheart " are supplied with extensive and convincing detail about places and institutions,<sup>14</sup> while David C. Fowler has with scholarly panache identified in British naval records the ship and crew-members mentioned in "The Gosport Tragedy".<sup>15</sup> The "Dorsetshire", "Oxfordshire" and "Bristol" Tragedies, in contrast are in a less circumstantial, altogether more literary manner, and are nlikely to deal with real events: It may be no coincidence than rather than the usual village or small-town folks their protagonists are of a distinctly more bourgeois or even knightly class, the ubiquitous knife accordingly replaced by a sword as weapon of choice in a couple of instances.

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<sup>13</sup> H.E. Rollins, ed., *The Pepys Ballads*, vol. III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1930), p. 118.

<sup>14</sup> In his notes to a version of the latter's oral derivative, "The Wexford Girl" (on which see more below), William Doerflinger, ed., *Shantymen and Shantyboys: Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman* (New York: Mcmillan, 1951), p. 357, states that the original related the death of a young woman at Reading, 1774, but without documentation. As the ballad makes a significant reference to a daily newspaper which ceased publication in 1735 this is unlikely; most studies assign the ballad to the early decades of the eighteenth century.

<sup>15</sup> D.C. Fowler, "The Gosport Tragedy: Story of a Ballad", *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 43 (1979), 157-96.

Some of these have woodcuts illustrating the narrative, with a natural tendency to focus on its more dramatic, violent moments, the murder and the hanging. A particularly gory example is the composite, serial picture accompanying "The Bloody Miller", which shows the murderer attacking a kneeling girl with a hammer or chopper, then standing over her mutilated body with a knife, and finally hanging from a gallows. This picture is particularly valuable in signally failing to correspond to the account of the murder in the text it accompanies: the woodcut must have been reused from an earlier murdered sweetheart ballad of which, for the time being, it is our only evidence. The same may be true of the woodcut accompanying one of the several early printings of "The Berkshire Tragedy", and which depicts a man with a knife standing over a recumbent woman with blood gushing from a long, vertical wound in her abdomen: in the text she is killed by blows with a stick.<sup>16</sup>

After their first appearance several of these early ballads were subsequently reprinted, some of them frequently, fairly deep into the eighteenth century, and not uncommonly by other printers in other cities. Three of them have in addition further histories in tradition. "The Berkshire Tragedy" appeared in a much abbreviated revision in conformity with, and as part of, the second, nineteenth-century phase of broadside ballad production, mostly under the title "The Cruel Miller", but almost as often as "The Bloody Miller", prompting the occasional cataloguer or commentator to confuse it with the totally unconnected seventeenth-century broadside with this title mentioned above.<sup>17</sup> "The Gosport Tragedy" similarly reappeared in print in the nineteenth century considerably shortened and simplified, mainly as "Polly's Love", or "The Cruel Ship Carpenter". Both of these songs have also been recovered from recent folk tradition in England and in Scotland (where the "Miller" has become a "Butcher's Boy"). Scottish tradition also preserves oral derivatives of "William Grismond" (as "William Guiseman" or "Willie Graham"), which does not seem to have been printed in a shortened broadside version in the interim.

After an apparent (and unexplained) hiatus of fifty years or so, new murdered sweetheart ballads begin to appear in England in the early decades of the nineteenth century in the smaller format (ca 15-25 stanzas) favoured at the time. A maturing of the market may be

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<sup>16</sup> "The Wittham-Miller, Being an Account of his Murdering his Sweetheart, &c. or the Berkshire Tragedy", Printed and Sold by D Wrightson 86 Snow Hill Birmingham. n.d. [18th century], Sheffield, University of Sheffield Library, Charles Harding Firth Collection, E14(1).

<sup>17</sup> A.L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (London: Panther, 1969), p. 236, exaggerates in claiming that this ballad was "recomposed time and again" on broadsides in the period 1780 – 1850; the numerous printings of the short version are virtually identical, despite the variations in the title.

reflected in the appearance of separate ballads – clearly from competing printers – on the same events (alongside the already established practice of one printer reproducing another's songs). Thus the murder of Jael Denny by Thomas Drory at Doddinghurst in Essex provoked both the "Copy of verses on Drory and Jael Denny" and the "Confession of Thos. Drory", while a ballad-hawker interviewed for Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* could recite verses from a further production distinct from both of these.<sup>18</sup> Similarly "Suitable Reflections; or the Sorrowful Lamentation of Samuel Fallows, for the Murder of Betty Shawcross, his Sweetheart, who was sentenced to be executed on Monday, April 14th. 1823" competed with "A New Song, on Samuel Fellows [sic], who was executed for the murder of his sweetheart", while the murder of Maria Marten at the Red Barn in Polstead, Suffolk, in 1827, sensationally brought to light by her stepmother's dream a year later, prompted at least five different ballads: "A Copy of Verses, on the Execution of Wm. Corder, for the Murder of Maria Marten, in the Red Barn, Polstead"; "The Murder of Maria Marten"; "The Suffolk Tragedy, or the Red Barn Murder"; "The Red Barn Tragedy"; "William Corder". There must have been at least one more, since while all these continue the story to the trial in August 1828, it was reported that ballads on the case were already being sold at a fair in the neighbourhood a month earlier.<sup>19</sup>

Conversely, what is essentially the same ballad was issued as variously applying to the murder of three different girls: "Horrid and Barbarous Murder Committed upon the Body of Mary Thomson, By her sweet-heart David Brown, a farm-servant near Carlisle", "The Murder of Betsy Smith", and "A mournful and affecting Copy of Verses on the death of Ann Williams, Who was barbarously and cruelly murdered by her sweetheart, W. Jones, near Wirksworth, in Derbyshire, July, 1823". The tally of nineteenth-century ballads is completed by "An Interesting Copy Of Verses composed on the Shocking Murder, Committed by William Jennings, on the bodies of Lucy Millington and her infant child, near Belper, Derbyshire, on Friday, the 26th of December, 1828", "Verses on Daniel Good, Who was executed this morning May '42, for the Murder of Jane Jones", and "The Cruel Gamekeeper".<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, p. 228.

<sup>19</sup> Donald McCormick, *The Red Barn Mystery: Some New Evidence on an Old Murder* (London: John Long, 1967), pp. 17-18. Leslie Shepard, in *John Pitts: Ballad Printer of Seven Dials, 1765 – 1844* (London: Private Libraries Association, 1969), p. 61, mentions a broadside entitled "Trial of William Corder for the Murder of Maria Marten at Polstead in Suffolk", which I have not encountered elsewhere; it may have contained only a prose account, or may be identical with the "Copy of Verses" already listed (which was published by John Pitts).

<sup>20</sup> The London printer James Catnach also advertised in his 1832 catalogue a ballad entitled "The Murder by David Gaskell on his sweetheart", of which I have not been able to locate a copy. *A Catalogue of Songs and*

Of these nineteenth-century ballads, "Mary Thomson", "The Cruel Gamekeeper", and two ballads on the Maria Marten case, "The Suffolk Tragedy", and "The Murder of Maria Marten", have subsequently been recovered from English oral tradition, the last-mentioned achieving a particularly widespread diffusion.<sup>21</sup> As will have been evident from their full titles, most of these later ballads claim to be based on specific events, and in some instances this can be confirmed by external sources. "Maria Marten" stands out in having prompted massive and sustained media interest which has documented both the case itself and public fascination with it: a fully-fledged media-studies treatment would also need to encompass crowd behaviour at the trial and execution, tourism to the notorious Red Barn where the body was found, the preservation of parts of the murderer's body as museum exhibits (only recently accorded decent burial), commemorative pottery figures, popular books, a melodrama, and several feature films.<sup>22</sup> And it will be recalled that two of the songs on the case persisted in oral tradition, making it possible to undertake compete longitudinal studies of these narratives from journalistic accounts, through news ballads, to folksongs.<sup>23</sup>

This material is sufficiently substantial to determine what is typical, or even paradigmatic, of the "Murdered Sweetheart" ballad as it comes from the presses of the broadside printers.<sup>24</sup> Not surprisingly, the conventional "come all you", "listen", "take warning" *incipit* (in 18 of the 24 ballads) and valediction (16 ballads) of broadside crime ballads are very much in evidence. The central narrative invariably begins by introducing the lover, the sweetheart, and their affair, and only two fail to specify her pregnancy; in thirteen cases she explicitly demands the seducer marry her. An almost definitive motif of the murder scene (21 ballads) is

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*Song Books Printed and Published by James Catnach 1832*, ed. Steve Roud & Paul Smith (West Stockwith: January Books, 1985), p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> If not as far as Tristan da Cunha as some have claimed: The "Maria Martini" indeed collected there is actually a version of "The Berkshire Tragedy" in its "Wexford Girl" sub-tradition. See Peter A. Munch, "Traditional Songs of Tristan da Cunha", *Journal of American Folklore*, 74 (1961), 216-29, at p. 221.

<sup>22</sup> This "Red Barn industry" is extensively documented on the website of the Bury St Edmunds local council at <http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/visit>.

<sup>23</sup> For reasons of space the present essay excludes the detailed comparative analyses of "The Suffolk Tragedy", its prose narrative source, and a derivative oral performance, which featured in the version of this paper posted on the MiT4 website.

<sup>24</sup> I have omitted from consideration here three narratives conforming to the murdered sweetheart scenario but with an uncertain relationship to broadside balladry and folk tradition: "The False Knight's Tragedy [sic] recited by a shoemaker", recorded by the eighteenth-century folk musician John Clare, which looks like a rather conscious adaptation of the traditional ballad "Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight" (Child 4; in which the lady usually survives the wooer's attempt on her life) – see George Deacon, *John Clare and the Folk Tradition* (London: Sinclair Browne, 1983), pp. 172-175; the gothic narrative poem, "Lucy", published in Thomas Gillet's *The Midland Minstrel*, 1822 – see below n. 77; the ballad-pastiche "Story of a Criminal: Martin Faber" (related to the preceding), described in J.W. Ebsworth, ed. *The Roxburghe Ballads*, 8 vols. (1895-1901; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1966), vol. VIII, p. 69.

his luring her away to a lonely spot; less so but striking her plea for mercy (10 ballads), usually on her knees. The most common murder-weapon is a knife (9 ballads). The crime section tends to end with the disposal of the body (12 ballads), matched in the subsequent sequence by its discovery (12).

The aftermath of the crime sees the genre divide into two recognizable subtypes: by far the majority (20 ballads) move into a judicial sequel in which the murderer is arrested, tried, and condemned to death by hanging, while in the remainder (4 ballads) he is destroyed by less institutional forces such as pangs of remorse or her vengeful spirit. It is these latter which strictly-speaking qualify as "murdered sweetheart" ballads, as in the others the role of protagonist is effectively usurped by the "murderous lover", whose trial and reflections on his fate dominate the second half of the narrative.

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## **The Individual Songs**

### ***Composition (from news report to broadside ballad)***

The broadside ballads themselves were inevitably based, not on first hand knowledge of incidents, or even on attendance at the trial, but on discourses in the public domain on those incidents, which effectively means prose accounts in regular newspapers or occasional news pamphlets. But although a given broadside ballad is the product of an individual – if rarely named – hack writer, composition will be subject to many contextual restraints. As part of its marketing strategy the material will be packaged to assure potential buyers of a juicy and violent narrative (while assuring the authorities that the ultimate aim is edifying), and in accordance with the performance mode the words made to fit the length, metre and rhyme of the standard ballad stanza: not surprisingly, the rhyme-pair “wife” and “life” makes a regular appearance (occasionally accompanied by “knife”). That the song is to be performed rather than (like the prose account) read silently, may explain its discernible preference for dialogue over indirect speech. Above all, the material will be selected or adjusted to conform to the existing generic paradigm. The conventions of the murdered sweetheart ballad were established early, and were clearly successful in their media environment: a broadside composer, who made a living by writing what it was known would do well, had little reason

to challenge them to suit the idiosyncracies of a particular incident.<sup>25</sup> So for example while the historical Maria Marten, at least as unanimously reported by the newspapers, had given birth an illegitimate child to her lover some months previously, “The Suffolk Tragedy” both makes her pregnant at the time of her murder, and stages a paradigmatic “marry me” scene:

*ATROCIOUS MURDER  
OF A YOUNG WOMAN IN SUFFOLK.  
SINGULAR DISCOVERY OF THE BODY  
FROM A DREAM.* Printed J. Catnach, 1828<sup>26</sup>

... Maria Marten,  
a fine young woman, aged twenty-five,  
the daughter of a mole-catcher in the above village,  
formed an imprudent connection, two or three years ago,  
with a young man, named William Corder,  
the son of an opulent farmer in the neighbourhood,

by whom she had a child.

*THE SUFFOLK TRAGEDY  
OR THE RED BARN MURDER*  
printed Thomas Ford, Chesterfield

3. In the County of Suffolk  
'twas in Polstead Town,  
Maria Marten lived there  
by many she was known,
4. Her beauty caused many young men  
to court her as we find,  
At length upon a farmer's son  
this damsel fix'd her mind.
5. As they walked out one evening clear,  
she unto him did say  
William, my dear, **my time draws near**  
let's fix our wedding day,
6. **You know I am with child by you,**  
then bitterly she cried  
Dry up your tears, my dear, says he  
you soon shall be my bride.

In this the murdered sweetheart ballads were of course merely part of the general picture in the popular reporting of murder cases:

Printed accounts ... were highly stylised, and despite titular protestations that they were "true", "exact" or "faithful", it was only really important that they remained faithful to the genre of the murder pamphlet.<sup>27</sup>

Nor should the reports in the more established newspapers be confused with what actually happened: the broadside ballad is merely one phase of the mediation of events through various media, each of which had its selecting and transforming processes. This was equally

<sup>25</sup> For another (femicidal) example of a narrative paradigm predominating over "facts" see Sandra McNeill, "Woman Killer as Tragic Hero", in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, ed. Jill Radford & Diana E.H. Russell (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), pp. 178-183.

<sup>26</sup> Repr. Charles Hindley, *The Life and Times of James Catnach* (London: Reeves & Turner, 1878; repr. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968), pp. 180-182. This account (much reprinted at the time) shares with “The Suffolk Tragedy” a rare mistake on the date of the murder, and so may be its direct source.

true of the court proceedings or even jury's verdict itself, for whom as Malcolm Gaskill puts it, "demonstration of the truth took second place to exposition of a certain version of the truth". What we find in the archives is also fiction, but, Gaskill reminds us, quoting from Natalie Davies' highly pertinent *Fiction in the Archives*: "the artifice of fiction did not necessarily lend falsity to an account; it might well bring verisimilitude or a moral truth".<sup>28</sup>

A useful illustration of the discrepancies between the broadside and journalistic "fictions" is provided by the nineteenth-century broadsheet on the "Horrid and Barbarous Murder Committed upon the Body of Mary Thomson, By her sweet-heart David Brown, ...", which provides both a prose account and a song on the case. Particularly striking is the matter of the letter which, according to the prose narrative, David Brown wrote to Mary Thomson, asking her to meet him at a lonely spot to discuss their marriage: in the event of course he killed her and threw her body into a lake. The prose narrative quotes the letter verbatim and in full, presumably since from a crime-reporter's perspective the letter is a vital piece of evidence whose survival, despite the lover's urging her to "destroy this note", is precisely what identifies him as the murderer: "he sent her the following letter, which, happily for the ends of justice, was found upon her person after she was murdered". The song, with its different agenda, makes no mention of such a letter from the lover in connection with the crime or its investigation, but instead has the sweetheart write a letter to *him*:

5.    Some days ago this damsel fair  
       Did write to him with speed,  
       such tenderness she did express  
       Would make a heart to bleed.
  
6.    She said, my dearest David,  
       I am with child by thee,  
       Therefore, my dear pray let me know,  
       When you will marry me.

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<sup>27</sup> Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 214; see also James Fulcher, "Murder Reports: Formulaic Narrative and Cultural Context", *Journal of Popular Culture*, 18 (1984-85), 31-42;

<sup>28</sup> Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England*, p. 240.

Of this, conversely, the prose account knows nothing. The letter may be in the song because in the murdered sweetheart ballad tradition the pregnant girl's demand for marriage is paradigmatic, while the lover's writing to make an assignation is not (he will rather come "to her father's house" and ask her out). The discrepancy is eminently discernible (and emphasised by the typography), the different letters in the prose account and song respectively occurring within inches of each other on one face of a single sheet of printed paper. Purchasers of the broadside must simply have accepted that the ballad and the prose narrative work to diverse protocols.

There is a similar disconcerting discrepancy between the song "The Murder of Maria Marten", and the prose "Confession of William Corder" printed on the same sheet. In the latter, as made to the prison Governor on the eve of the execution, Corder confesses he shot Maria Marten in the course of a heated argument, and then:

Having determined to bury the body in the barn (about two hours after she was dead) I went and borrowed a spade of Mrs Stow, ... and began to dig a hole, but the spade being a bad one, and the earth firm and hard, I was obliged to go home for a pickaxe and a better spade, with which I dug the hole, and then buried the body.

But of course in murdered sweetheart *ballads*, the murderous lover has determined on slaying the sweetheart *before* enticing her away to a lonely place, so in "The Murder of Maria Marten" (again within inches of the above), Corder accordingly digs the grave before she comes:

5. If you will meet me at the Red-barn,  
as sure as I have life,  
I will take you to Ipswich town,  
and there make you my wife;
  
6. I then went home and fetched my gun,  
my pickaxe and my spade,  
I went into the Red-barn,  
and there I dug her grave.

7. With heart so light, she thought no harm,  
to meet him she did go ...

In addition to generic factors, these discrepancies must also have some connection to the formal mode of the respective narratives: the prose account is not merely based on, but includes (in the case of David Brown's letter), or even constitutes (in the case of Corder's confession) a formal document.<sup>29</sup> the ballad constitutes a new, independent narrative, subject only to generic, not documentary, constraints. The two media also tend to have distinct perspectives on the events and their protagonists. Journalistic accounts, in the manner of news, tend to tell the story, as it unfolds, from the perspective of those trying to find out what happened, what we might (with a certain anachronism) term the detective's story: the finding of the body, the identification and arrest of the culprit, the trial and condemnation. The broadside ballad, usually written in connection with this last phase, and often with a view to sale to the crowds attending the public execution, tells rather the story of the murderous seducer which emerges out of the investigations, from his perspective, and sometimes purportedly in his voice.

### ***Transmission (From Broadside to Folksong)***

Once written and printed, the broadside is sold, performed, and in many cases memorized and sung from memory, to become a folksong, and thus far I have undertaken analyses juxtaposing with the broadside originals of "William Grismond", "The Berkshire Tragedy", and "The Murder of Maria Marten", respectively, all their locatable oral derivatives in English and Scottish folk tradition.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly in view of the memorial pressures and performance pressures involved, the predominant process discernible is subtraction, but the losses are not arbitrary: the text sheds material which is not compatible with, or not essential for, performance in a traditional context – which in England and Scotland tends to be by the single, unaccompanied voice under auspices which are non-professional (the performer may have some reputation as a singer in his or her community, but is not committed full time to

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<sup>29</sup> Corder's confession was not the invention of this newsheet; it also appeared, with elaborate authentication, in *The Sunday Times* of 17 August 1828.

<sup>30</sup> See, respectively, "Ballad Singers and Ballad Style: The Case of the Murdered Sweethearts", in *The Entertainer in Medieval and Traditional Culture: A Symposium*, ed. Flemming G. Andersen *et al.* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997), pp. 101-131; "'Worn by the Friction of Time': Oral Tradition and the Generation of the Balladic Narrative Mode", in *Contexts of Pre-Novel Narrative. The European Tradition*, ed. Roy Eriksen (Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 341-72; "'The Murder of Maria Marten': The Birth of a Ballad?" [with Flemming G. Andersen], in *Narrative Folksong: New Directions. Essays in Appreciation of W. Edson Richmond*, ed. Carol L. Edwards & Kathleen E.B. Manley (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), pp.132-78.

cultivating skills of memory and performance), and social (the audience may show polite attention as a song starts, but is not automatically quiet and attentive throughout). The "come all ye" packaging designed to attract a crowd and facilitate sale by the broadside hawkers is particularly vulnerable, as is the explicit moralizing at beginning and end which may be the broadside trade's defence against the accusation of peddling salacious and corrupting material. Any other narrative commentary, circumstantial setting of the scene, and descriptive passages are also likely to be lost in transmission.

In accordance with what might be termed a "vernacular" aesthetic, the resulting sung narrative focuses on the core scenes which are essential for the narrative structure and which present the most dramatic confrontations between the protagonists. I have likened these effects of tradition to processes which bring out the basic, essential structures of physical material: the weathering of a landscape which leaves only the hardest of the rocks; the wearing of cloth which reveals its warp and woof structure -- a celebrated traditional musician of the nineteenth century very perceptively referred to folksongs as "threadbare" (which is not at all the same as worn out)<sup>31</sup>. Reduced to their bare but resilient minimum, the songs in tradition come close to achieving the *Zielform* – the goal, or destined form – which Swiss folklorist Max Lüthi posited for the analogous case of spoken folk narrative.<sup>32</sup>

As a part of this process the subtractions produce a narrative whose links between significant, structural actions or important verbal exchanges are more evident, and the connections can be reinforced at the textual level by the generation of repetitions, often by a process of "internal contamination", in which the original formulation at one of the linked points (say two journies, or a question and answer) is replaced or influenced by the formulation at the other point. At the same time formulations specific to the particular song are supplemented or replaced by a phraseology, including "commonplaces" or "formulas", common to the traditional folksong idiom as a whole: events which happened merely "on" a certain day in the broadside will now happen "all on ..."; the sweetheart is not merely "led" to an ominously lonely spot, but taken "by the lily-white hand".

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<sup>31</sup> John Clare, "The Village Minstrel", cited and discussed in Deacon, *John Clare and the Folk Tradition*, p. 54.

<sup>32</sup> Max Lüthi, "Urform und Zielform in Sage und Märchen", *Fabula*, 9 (1967), 41-54, particularly pp. 48-49; for a summary of the thesis in English see Max Lüthi, "Aspects of the *Märchen* and the Legend", in *Folklore Genres*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), pp. 17-33, at pp. 26-28.

The material that survives accordingly loses the circumstantial detail appropriate to what was essentially a journalistic narrative, including the names of less essential people and places, the song in the process severing its connection with a specific event, and acquiring a more general relevance. The more gory details of the murder scene, the purple "weltering in her gore" passages which broadside writers often indulged in, tend to be lost, but stark, simple acts of violence, like the "Berkshire Tragedy" villain's dragging the sweetheart's body by the hair and throwing it into a river, or (in the "Suffolk Tragedy") the body of Maria Marten "tied in a sack", show considerable resilience in tradition.

The most striking and ultimately perhaps most significant tendency of the subtraction process is the invariable reduction and sometimes complete loss of the trial scene: arrest and (pending) execution may be mentioned, but the trial itself generally goes. This is perhaps related to the modulation in medium, and involves a second re-focussing of the narrative in terms of protagonist. As news ballads, as we saw, the broadsides are reporting the arrest and trial of the murderous lover, within whose story that of the seduction and slaying of the sweetheart is embedded. It is as if tradition, more interested in the personal confrontation than its institutional aftermath (and more interested in the girl than the man?), in stripping away non-essential material, also strips away the story of the lover (his trial and execution) to leave bare the story of a dramatic and tragic personal relationship: while most of the original broadsides are technically "murderous lover" ballads (and the murderer figures in their titles much more often than the victim), most of the oral derivatives are better qualified as "murdered sweetheart" (-proper) ballads.

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### **The Genre**

Having examined the insights achievable by the study of individual songs, we may turn to the opportunities which the murdered sweetheart ballads as a group offer for identifying and understanding the internal processes and the external factors operative in the emergence and development of a given narrative genre: this one in particular, appearing it seems quite suddenly, in a quite specific medium, is both early enough to avoid the complexities of modern popular culture, and late enough – in contrast, say, to the Arthurian legends or the Outlaw Ballads – to be well documented in itself, and to develop in and out of a relatively well-documented culture and society: the England of Samuel Pepys, Nell Gwynn and Isaac

Newton. This paper will offer exploratory excursions into four factors potentially operative in the emergence of the murdered sweetheart ballad: media factors (the "print" of my title), social factors, ideological factors (the "panic" of my title), and intertextual factors (which have loomed steadily larger as work on this paper has progressed).

### ***1. Media Factors: Child of Print?***

The murdered sweetheart ballad clearly has a close connection with the broadside as a medium for news and entertainment: all the songs identified as belonging to the genre first saw the light of day in this format. It is a "child of print", rather like the early English novel, and with similar family connections to popular sensational-but-edifying journalism. Both genres responded to the emergence, among those with just enough surplus resources to afford the occasional purchase of printed material, of interest in the lives of people like themselves. The broadside, one of the great success stories of the early-modern media, had a voracious appetite for new, marketable material, effectively defined as sensational events or situations which readers could feel, with a frisson of horror and fascination, could have happened to themselves or people they knew, and in their social environment. "Shocking murders" always went down well it seems, especially if seasoned with sentiment or spiced with sex, and the murder of a pregnant sweetheart comes as close as anything to meeting this market ideal.

But the narrative type itself is not to be exclusively identified with the broadside medium. Before the end of the nineteenth century, as Anne Cohen's inspiring study of "Pearl Bryan" clearly demonstrates (for North America; but there is no reason to think things were different in Britain), the "work" of re-shaping the facts, as they emerged from the courtroom, into conformity with the established paradigm, was largely taken over by the regular press, leaving the song-writers less to do in that regard.<sup>33</sup> By the time the broadside's period of media dominance came to an end, its role had been taken over by another medium (under whose auspices the murdered sweetheart scenario doubtless lived on for many years).<sup>34</sup> Conversely, the broadside had been a significant feature in popular culture for getting on for half a century before the earliest of the murdered sweetheart ballads appeared in this medium, and later some songs passed with alacrity from print to oral culture where they persisted independently of the broadside, and indeed outlived it by a century or so, in versions differing significantly,

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<sup>33</sup> Anne B. Cohen, *Poor Pearl, Poor Girl! The Murdered-Girl Stereotype in Ballad and Newspaper* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981).

<sup>34</sup> Encountered recently, for example, in an episode of "C.S.I. Miami".

as we have seen, from the originals. All of which may suggest the operation in the genre's emergence of other factors supplementary to the availability of a new medium

***Social Factors: Espousals and Marriage Legislation***

The way many of the songs purport to relate real events prompts exploring at least briefly an otherwise naive notion of the relationship between society and narrative: to what degree does the genre in general and its emergence in particular respond to the material realities of social history? Before confronting the central issues, it may be appropriate to glance at a technical feature which suggests that the relationship was less than straightforward: the matter of espousals, or exactly what was meant by a marriage in the seventeenth century. Prior to the passage in 1753 of the legislation known as "Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act", what is now loosely referred to as the "common law marriage" was legally valid. This "espousal" involved a startlingly simple procedure – reciprocal declarations in the present tense in which each took the other as spouse – which did not require documentary record or even the presence of witnesses. An alternative even closer to the ballad scenario was the mutual exchange of declarations in the future tense (betrothal) which amounted to a commitment subject only to certain conditions (e.g. financial arrangements) being met, followed in due course by a present-tense vow: but such provisional espousal became absolute on physical consummation of the relationship. Marriages established by either of these procedures were illicit in the view of the church (and could complicate inheritance questions), but fully legal by common law, and could not be dissolved.<sup>35</sup>

The implication is of course, that several of the sweethearts in the early group of ballads may technically have been married to their lovers, especially in cases where the lover-narrator reports that prior to seduction "I promised I would marry her" or the like. An incident reported in Somerset in 1653 comes very close to the opening of a murdered sweetheart ballad (as well as providing a chilling glimpse into the claustrophobic world of early-modern village society). Eavesdropping on a man and a woman walking alone in a field, two villagers:

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<sup>35</sup> For procedures see for example James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 615-616; L.E. Pearson, *Elizabethans at Home* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), pp. 312-334; Martin Ingram, "Spousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c. 1350 – c. 1640", in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R.B. Outhwaite (London: Europa, 1981), pp. 35-58, esp. pp. 37-39; Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570 – 1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 196-99.

heard the said John desire of the said Hannah to lie with her. To which she replied that she should not, for fear she would be with child, then the said John told her that he would marry her the next morning, whereupon the said Hannah granted the said John to have the carnal knowledge of her body ...

Our righteous voyeurs interrupt and reprimand the couple:

to which the said John replied that *the said Hannah was his wife by promise* and that he did intend to marry her the next morning by eight of the clock.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that “the said Hannah” was in a liminal condition: “both already married and yet not entirely married”, to quote a recent study of late-medieval “private” marriage, which goes on to cite the assurance given to the authorities by another (evidently uninterrupted) seducer that “Katherine, standing here before you, is my wife before God and man, and as soon as she gives birth, I will marry her”.<sup>37</sup>

But interesting as it is as a window on early-modern *mores*, there is no point in pursuing the topic further: in none of the murdered sweetheart ballads does the pregnant girl allege the couple are already legally (or even liminally) married, as opposed to begging the lover to marry her, or at least to discuss “the wedding day”. There is nothing to suggest that any change in the legal status of marriage at the time triggered the genre, and conversely the 1753 legislation which restricted legally valid procedure to the familiar church wedding following the triple announcement, or “banns”, in social reality a major disruption in the lives of many ordinary people, passed quite unnoticed in the ballads.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Social Factors: Violence and Threats of Violence***

Turning to the central, decisive act in the ballads, we may ask whether the murder of pregnant girls by their seducers was a real problem, or at least a potential problem, and perhaps a *new* problem, in the mid seventeenth century. In his detailed survey of sexual mores in the West

<sup>36</sup> G.R. Quaipe, “The Consenting Spinster in a Peasant Society: Aspects of Premarital Sex in ‘Puritan’ Somerset 1645 – 1660”, *Journal of Social History*, 11 (1977), 228-244, at p. 235 [emphasis supplied].

<sup>37</sup> Shannon McSheffrey, “Place, Space, and Situation: Public and Private in the Making of Marriage in Late-Medieval London”, *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 960-990, at pp. 966-67.

<sup>38</sup> For the impact of the legislation on attitudes and practice see Belinda Meteyard, “Illegitimacy and Marriage in Eighteenth Century England”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 10 (1979/80), 479-89.

Country, G.R. Quaipe notes that murder of a pregnant girl "was not unheard of",<sup>39</sup> and had its cruel logic: "The most direct method of concealment for the male was to get rid of the irrefutable evidence that bastardy was in process of occurring – the pregnant mother or the foetus".<sup>40</sup> Seventeenth-century journalistic sources occasionally report incidents other than those in the songs.<sup>41</sup> But if, as Quaipe also indicates, the judicial records are not suitable even for determining the prevalence of sweetheart-murder in the seventeenth century,<sup>42</sup> we are clearly not in a position to determine if it had increased in relation to earlier periods. J.S. Cockburn, a distinguished authority on the records of assize courts (where murder cases were tried), is adamant and explicit: "Early legal records ... conceal the identity of most lovers" (that is, their status as lovers) among those indicted for murder, and anyway, in the early modern period "an indictment ... for homicide was the product of a screening process which owed as much to chance as it did to the measured application of legal and community standards".<sup>43</sup>

Much better documented (if still not sufficiently to determine chronological trends) are the *threats* of violence, or more strictly the *alleged* threats of violence, which pregnant girls invoked to explain their reluctance to name the father of their expected child to the parish authorities. According to Quaipe local court records in the south west of England contain evidence of "hundreds" of girls thus intimidated by their lovers; in some cases it was specifically a death-threat, and in others a violent assault had already been attempted.<sup>44</sup> But even when the seducer was more cooperative, the "murdered sweetheart" scenario could be in the minds of the people involved: one pregnant girl declined her lover's suggestion of going

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<sup>39</sup> G.R. Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Elicit Sex in Early Seventeenth Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 100 (only one case, from 1609, is referred to by way of illustration).

<sup>40</sup> Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches*, p. 117.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. "A full and true Relation of the Examination and Confession of William Barwick and Edward Mangall, of two Horrid Murders", London, 1690, repr. in the 1721 edn. of John Aubrey's *Miscellanies*, and thence (corrected from the originals) in John Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, ed. John Buchanan-Brown (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1972), pp. 60-66. As reported, however, both incidents deviate slightly from the ballad scenario: Barwick had already married his pregnant sweetheart when he killed her; Mangall's sweetheart had already given birth when she was killed. The composite account of criminal cases, the *Newgate Calendar*, includes the execution in 1700 of George Caddell for the murder of a Miss Price at the end of a classic murdered sweetheart scenario encompassing seduction, pregnancy, importunity for marriage, luring away to a lonely place on pretext of discussing wedding plans, murder by cutting throat with a knife, etc. See The Newgate Calendar, <http://www.exclassics.com/newgate/ng84.htm>. Later murdered-sweetheart cases in the *Newgate Calendar* which did not apparently give rise to songs are the executions of John Clarke in 1796 for the murder of Elizabeth Mann (... ng393), and of James Greenacre in 1837 for the murder of Hannah Brown (... ng622).

<sup>42</sup> Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives*, p. 117

<sup>43</sup> J.S. Cockburn, "Patterns of Violence in English Society: Homicide in Kent 1560 – 1985", *Past and Present*, 130 (Feb. 1991), 70-106, at pp. 95 and 93, respectively. See also Cockburn's "The Nature and Incidence of Crime in England, 1559 – 1625", *Crime in England 1550 – 1800*, ed. Cockburn (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 49-71, at p. 57.

<sup>44</sup> Quaipe, p. 110.

away with him to have the child in the privacy of another town because she suspected "some mischief was intended her", while another did go away but was obliged to return to disprove the charge that her seducer had indeed done away with her.<sup>45</sup>

Further pursuit of this topic is discouraged by the surprising indifference of the ballads (both early and late) to the central question prompted by the murdered sweetheart scenario – why does the lover kill the pregnant girl? Three instances only offer an explanation ("The Berkshire Tragedy"; "Confession of Drury"; "The Oxfordshire Tragedy"), and in each case it is diabolical instigation, hardly susceptible to sociological analysis. Juxtaposition with social realities is similarly blocked by the failure of any consistent pattern to emerge with regard to the contributory motivation of repudiating the girl: On a couple of occasions ("The Bloody Miller" and "William Grismond") the lover has the opportunity of an alternative match he or his parents prefer; on a couple of other occasions he is simply reluctant to give up his freedom ("The Cruel Gamekeeper"; Samuel Fallows"). As it happens in this lack of consistency our ballad protagonists actually resemble the real young men pursued through the ecclesiastical courts by young women, pregnant or otherwise, who claimed they had promised marriage: fraudulent intentions in pursuit of gratification, altered circumstances, a preferred alternative, and simple changes of heart all figure in the evidence.<sup>46</sup> But there is no indication that any of this is new in the period.

### ***Social Factors: The Disrupted Nuptial Strategy***

Rather than trying to correlate the plots, characters and motivations in the ballads with contemporary social realities, we should perhaps ask why the murdered sweetheart scenario evidently met a receptive response among the seventeenth-century ballad-buying public. Few of them will have encountered such extremes of behaviour, but it is equally evident that the stories will have had particular reverberations in early-modern English society: The fate of the couple in the ballads is at the end of one of the several paths leading from the crossroads at which many young people will have stood in the process of what social history, rather prosaically, calls "couple-formation", particularly those, to continue in the idiom, whose "nuptial strategy" was "disrupted".

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<sup>45</sup> Quaipe, p. 99.

<sup>46</sup> Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England*, p. 199.

Thanks to the sixteenth-century introduction of compulsory registration for all baptisms, marriages and funerals in English parishes, the large-scale survival of the records concerned, and the intense efforts of social historians studying population trends, anecdotal evidence on sexual relationships can be backed by hard facts indicating, for a variety of communities and over a long period, the proportion of children born out of wedlock, and of brides who were pregnant at the altar.<sup>47</sup> The figures in both cases were high, and evidently related: at the beginning and the end of the seventeenth century (having dipped sharply in the meantime) as many as a quarter of brides were pregnant, and thereafter the figure continued to rise. Illegitimate births displayed a similar pattern, suggesting (especially when correlated with trends in marriage ages) that a significant proportion were due to "disrupted" courtships: born that is to couples who had anticipated marrying before the birth of the child, and in their own minds "guilty" of at most pre-nuptial intercourse, rather than indiscriminate fornication. Like 50% of the girls in our ballads, 60% of the pregnant spinsters dealt with by the Somerset magistrates in the 1640's and 1650's claimed they submitted to their lover's sexual advances only on an agreement to marry.<sup>48</sup> The opening stages of the murdered sweetheart scenario will have felt entirely relevant in a society in which lower-class girls both selected their husbands more or less independently of family control, and engaged almost as a matter of course in pre-nuptial sexual activity with the intended spouse.

These freedoms will have involved acknowledged risks, and the murdered sweetheart ballads act out one of the scenarios they could lead to. But in so doing they part company with social reality, even in its more tragic alternatives: for if the murder of the pregnant sweetheart by her seducer was statistically insignificant in English society, infanticide (almost invariably perpetrated by the abandoned mother) was "one of the most characteristic offences of the early modern period".<sup>49</sup> Conversely, if for reasons which would require another paper (perhaps it was too common to be "news") infanticide does not loom large in English broadside balladry. (Traditional balladry has a few striking instances such as "The Cruel Mother", "The Maid and the Palmer" and "Mary Hamilton".<sup>50</sup>)

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<sup>47</sup> Unless otherwise stated the rest of the section is based on Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, 3rd edn. (London: Methuen, 1983), ch. 7, "Personal Discipline and Social Survival".

<sup>48</sup> G.F. Quaipe, "The Consenting Spinster in a Peasant Society", p. 232.

<sup>49</sup> J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 135. See also Keith Wrightson, "Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England", *London Population Studies*, 15 (1975), 10-22.

The prevalence of pre-nuptial pregnancy in England is undoubtedly related to the reception of the genre, but had it been a causal factor in the genre's emergence we should rather have expected the latter to occur either in the nineteenth century, when there was a massive increase in illegitimacy rates,<sup>51</sup> or in the late eighteenth, when because of demographic and economic trends, there was a major crisis in courtship disruption, with couples who had planned to marry failing to establish the economic independence to make this viable (but begetting a child in the meantime). But the late eighteenth century actually seems to show a pause in the production of new murdered sweetheart ballads, and indeed the genre emerged at a time when both illegitimacy and pre-nuptial pregnancy rates were actually (if temporarily) falling.<sup>52</sup>

***Ideological attitudes: child of panic?***<sup>53</sup>

The broadsides are cautionary accounts of young men who murder young women who have allowed themselves to be seduced, and one of the surprises of the systematic survey of the entire corpus that lies behind this study is the demonstration of just how much this genre of broadside ballad is about and for *men*: while the songs divide pretty evenly in terms of whether lover or sweetheart technically qualifies as protagonist by being mentioned first, in most cases by the end the sweetheart is largely forgotten, and of the 15 ballads which conclude with a valedictory warning, in no less than 14 it is young men who are urged to avoid such a sorry fate, while only one warns young maidens not to be gullible. The balance at the beginning is less overwhelming but equally emphatic: alongside five ballads warning young people in general, seven ballads warn young men, only one warns young women.

It is equally or more surprising, that what "young men" are warned against in the early cluster of ballads is not violence, but sex; for example:

43. Young men, take warning by my fall: / all filthy lust defy!

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<sup>50</sup> This last is however one of the most frequently recorded ballads; for an informed contextual discussion see Deborah A. Symonds, *Weep not for me: Women, Ballads, and Infanticide in Early Modern Scotland* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997).

<sup>51</sup> For the stresses imposed on couple formation in the nineteenth century see David Levine, "Industrialization and the Proletarian Family in England", *Past and Present*, 107 (1985), 168-203.

<sup>52</sup> Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*, p. 161, fig. 2.

<sup>53</sup> For an analogous exploration of popular narratives on killing within marriages in relation to seventeenth century ideologies, see Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550 – 1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), ch. III, "Revolutions, Petty Tyranny, and the Murderous Husband". It may be relevant for discussion here that Dolan finds (p. 89) a distinct mid-seventeenth century shift from a preponderance of popular narratives on the murderous wife to one on the murderous husband.

By giving way to wickedness, / alas! this day I die ("Berkshire Tragedy")

Strikingly, the point is not that one should resist the urge to kill the girl one has made pregnant, but resist the temptation to commit the sin that may make her pregnant, and of course that temptation can come only from the girl herself (the ballad sweethearts are invariably and explicitly good looking). The ballads are "about" the dangers to young men in a culture where young women are both socially accessible and potentially amenable to seduction, at least on a plausible promise of marriage. From this, early-modern masculine, perspective, the root of the tragedy is not so much the lover's murderous aggression, or even his pursuit of gratification, but the girl's acquiescence. Or even – heavens defend us – *her* gratification: according to prevalent medical notions pregnancy could be achieved only if *both* participants achieved orgasm. Symptomatically, at this period a man could not be found guilty of rape for a sexual aggression which resulted in pregnancy, since this was contingent upon a female climax which in turn documented consent.<sup>54</sup> The murdered sweetheart was thus doubly to blame: in consenting too soon; in enjoying it too much.

It may not therefore be a coincidence that the seventeenth century, probably in the aftermath of social, economic and cultural changes, was subject to an obsessive anxiety about female sexuality and the place of women in society which a social historian has labelled "a crisis in gender relations", manifested by the presentment of scolds in local courts, the witch-prosecutions, charivaries against domineering wives, and the popularity of the Amazon figure in drama.<sup>55</sup> The sexual aspect of the crisis might better be understood in terms of the "moral panic" concept which has usefully been applied to more recent public anxieties prompted for example by youth cultures and child abuse.<sup>56</sup> The hysterical zero-tolerance legislation of 1650 instigating the death penalty for both adultery and fornication, while by all accounts irrelevant with regards to enforcement,<sup>57</sup> is a striking symptom – moral panics having official intervention as their ultimate, institutional manifestation. It is also pertinent that the actual punishment for producing a bastard (public whipping and a year in a house of correction) was

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<sup>54</sup> Colin Burrow, ed., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 67, citing Henry Finch's *Law, or a Discourse thereof in Four Books* of 1627.

<sup>55</sup> David E. Underdown, "The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England", in *Crisis and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 116-136, quotation from p. 122.

<sup>56</sup> The classic study is Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (New York: St Martin's, 1972), now reissued in a 3rd, "thirtieth anniversary" edition (London: Routledge, 2002). For more recent instances see Jeffrey Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993); Chas Critcher, *Moral Panics and the Media* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> Quaipe, *Wanton Wenches*, p. 41.

invariably applied only to the girl: the father was more likely and merely sentenced to contribute financially to the upkeep of the child.<sup>58</sup>

The notion that women might have independent sexual desires is of course a recurrent male nightmare, but in the seventeenth century it interacted with the stresses resulting from inherently contradictory trends: on the one hand, the steady reduction in the independent social and economic status of married women, and on the other the growing freedom of unmarried women among the middling and lower classes, as young people of both sexes increasingly spent the many years between sexual maturity and marriage (in their mid-twenties) "in service", working or even living away from home, both looking for a partner and saving up to establish a new household.<sup>59</sup> If the detachment, mental or physical, of the nubile young woman from the parental household, and the economic, social and personal independence inherent in this, was a recent development in the early-modern period, in the context say of the drastic weakening of the manorial system, or an emergent proto-industrialism which facilitated the accumulation of individual wealth, then the anxieties (as much as or more than the actual social situations) prompted by this liminal phase in the female life-cycle might well have contributed to the evidently significant resonances which ensured the market viability of the murdered sweetheart ballad. The notion is strengthened rather than undermined by the near-contemporary emergence of another equally-well defined genre of broadside balladry (with a similarly intriguing relationship to social reality) – the stories of "warrior-women": girls who successfully passed themselves off as men to join the army or navy in pursuit of a lover.<sup>60</sup> These stories of Amazon girls may be not so much the antithesis of our murdered sweetheart ballads as an alternative response to the same gender-anxieties. The murdered sweetheart ballads seem to have been part of the way a culture, accustomed for centuries to cruel lady who said no, came to terms with the pretty girl who said yes.

### ***Intertextual Factors***

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<sup>58</sup> W.J. King, "Punishment for Bastardy in Early Seventeenth-Century England", *Albion*, 10 (1978), 130-151; J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Seventeenth-Century England: A County Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> For the background see Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580 – 1680* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), ch. 3, "Family Formation", esp. pp. 84 (independence of poorer classes from parental interference), 85-86 (saving up "in service").

<sup>60</sup> Diane Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry 1650 – 1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Pauline Greenhill, "Neither a man nor a maid: Sexualities and Gendered Meanings in Cross-Dressing Ballads". *Journal of American Folklore*. 108 (1995), 300-338.

But even if the emergence of cheap print, a thirst for news, troubles with couple-formation and anxieties about gender relations in early-modern society were significant factors in the emergence of the murdered sweetheart ballad, they did not create it out of whole cloth.

Whatever the role of social processes in generic development, autonomous factors within the matrix of popular discourses will also have played a role.<sup>61</sup> New historicism has taught us that texts shape, as much as reflect, mentality and ideology, and furthermore, as the authors of a feminist study of sex-murder properly note, texts are all we have:

The discourse by which sex-killing is made intelligible to us, whether it comes from the killer, a psychiatrist or *The Sun*, is not parasitic on some higher truth: it is the heart of the matter and the rest is silence.<sup>62</sup>

Just as the individual song was not a documentary reproduction of a specific incident, so the murdered sweetheart ballads as a group were not simply textual reflections of new social problems or concerns: they had to find a place within both narrative media in general and popular song in particular. At the generic level, they will have replaced, or absorbed, or been absorbed into existing narrative forms, or at least have redeployed materials and conventions from neighbouring forms within the narrative matrix.

It is here that the relationship between the two sub-genres identified previously becomes of considerable significance. Which is more basic to the tradition: the murderous lover, brought to justice for murdering his sweetheart, or the murdered sweetheart, whose slayer is punished by procedures which effectively, by some means or other, avenge her?<sup>63</sup> This does seem the proper way to pose the question: among the English broadsides there are no simple “murdered

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<sup>61</sup> For another narrative paradigm in popular tradition persisting in partial independence of changing historical realities see Ray Cashman, "The Heroic Outlaw in Irish Folklore and Popular Literature", *Folklore*, 111 (2000), 191-215, esp. pp. 205ff., "A Primacy of Form".

<sup>62</sup> Deberah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer, *The Lust to Kill: A Feminist Investigation of Sexual Murder* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p. xii. See also the discussion of the "encoded formula" of femicide in their contribution, "Cultural difference and the lust to kill", to *Sex and Violence: Issues in Representation and Experience*, ed. Penelope Harvey and Peter Gow (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 156-171, at p. 162.

<sup>63</sup> The following discussion is heavily indebted to, or may be seen as effectively confirming (with some adjustments), three significant American studies of the murdered sweetheart ballads: Eleanor R. Long-Wilgus, *Naomi Wise: Creation, Re-Creation, and Continuity in an American Ballad Tradition* (Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill Press, 2003); Anne B. Cohen, *Poor Pearl, Poor Girl! The Murdered-Girl Stereotype in Ballad and Newspaper* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981); D.K. Wilgus, "A Tension of Essences in Murdered-Sweetheart Ballads", in *The Ballad Image*, ed. J. Porter (Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore & Mythology, University of California, Los Angeles, 1983), pp. 241-56. The first two are disadvantaged by not having the original form of the songs concerned as a point of departure for discussion; the picture in all three is confused by the conglomeration of English and

girl” stories comprising only a seduction balanced by a murder, and which could be converted into a “murderous lover” narrative by adding a judicial sequel. In all cases there is an aftermath involving some kind of retribution (of which the judicial sequence is one option), which thus balances the seduction, with the murder as the fulcrum on each side of which they are positioned.<sup>64</sup>

Among the several factors suggesting that the personal, rather than the judicial, aftermath is the essential (and probably original) form, the simplest is that the broadsides of this “murdered sweetheart” sub-genre are all in the earlier group, in which they consequently loom fairly large. At the edge of the cluster, and indeed of the genre as a whole, is "Thomas Caress", in which at the conclusion of an otherwise paradigmatic narrative, as he seeks to murder her, the girl's cries attract the attention of passers by, causing the lover to desist, return home, and commit suicide (sts. 13-14). At the opposite extreme of this very literal (and rather fortuitous) intervention is the retribution in "The Gosport Tragedy", in which the spirit of the dead girl returns to torment the lover:

22. O perjur'd villain, awake now and hear,  
The voice of your love, that lov'd you so dear;  
This ship out of Portsmouth never shall go,  
Till I am revenged for this overthrow.

23. She afterwards vanished with shrieks and cries,  
Flashes of lightning did dart from her eyes; ...

As the haunting persists he begs her forgiveness (on his knees, in a neat reversal of the girl's formulaic plea for mercy), confesses to the crime, then "raving distracted he dy'd in the night ...". Between these extremes is the "bleeding ghost" of "The Dorsetshire Tragedy", whose threats of vengeance drive the murderer to "cut the thread of life" using "that very knife" (st. 13) with which he killed her, giving another balance to the murder-scene (which also deploys the life – knife rhyme). Finally "The Bristol Tragedy" places the revenge in a Christian

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American material, and by versions from broadsides, folk tradition and more popular (commercial) culture.

<sup>64</sup> In a wide-ranging discussion David Atkinson integrates the murdered sweetheart ballads into a complex of "murder will out" narratives extending between the domains of sin - judgement and crime – punishment, to which the murdered sweetheart and murderous lover forms can be said, respectively,

context, the murderer pursued by "God's vengeance", dying distracted, and his body "carried where no one does know" in a bolt of lightning (st. 34).

Furthermore the English broadsides confirm D.K. Wilgus's assertion that even in those ballads which do have a judicial aftermath the murdered sweetheart in some way or another manages to intervene in the process, directly, via supernatural powers, or acting on the mind of the murderer – what he calls a "tension" of the narrative's basic "essence".<sup>65</sup> Among the early ballads the feature is particularly strong in "The Berkshire Tragedy", where the night following the murder, the lover reports:

22. ... I lay trembling all the night,  
       for I could take no rest,  
 And perfect flames of hell did flash  
       within my guilty breast.

He is right to be concerned, for the hellfires herald two decisive posthumous personal interventions by the sweetheart in the technically judicial retribution: her blood noticed by a witness on the murderer's hands and clothes, and the portentous way her body, having been disposed of in the river, makes a well-timed and strategically well-placed re-appearance:

29. The very day before the Assize,  
       her body it was found,  
 Floating before her Father's door,  
       at Henley-Ferry Town.

In "The Oxfordshire Tragedy", more poetically, in accordance with the dying Rosanna's wish an eternally-flowering damask rose grows over her grave, which duly attracts attention by immediately growing a new bloom if plucked. The body is discovered and the perpetrator identified when the murderer, in ill-judged fascination, himself plucks the rose:

46. The leaves faded from off the bush,  
       the rose within his hand did die:

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to belong; see David Atkinson, *The English Traditional ballad: Theory, Method and Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), ch. 6, "Magical corpses and the discovery of murder".

<sup>65</sup> Wilgus, "A Tension of Essences in Murdered-Sweetheart Ballads".

He said, It is Rosanna's blood!  
 which springs up from her fair body.

The procedure is less direct in "William Grismond", where the presence of a murderer prevents the ship on which he had intended to escape from sailing, and the sailors divine the reason (st. 14). The sweetheart also participates in the downfall of the lover in many of the later ballads (all with judicial aftermaths): If, Proppian style, the murdered sweetheart ballads were to have a "retributor" tale-role, the dead sweetheart herself would fill it in nearly half of them, whether or not she had to share the role with a judge.<sup>66</sup>

The role of the girl or the supernatural agencies acting on her behalf will of course loom larger when, as noted earlier, the judicial aftermath is reduced or subtracted in folk tradition: the result is not necessarily a simple "murdered girl" narrative with no retribution (although this does happen, for example in the case the "The Suffolk Tragedy"). The (re-)emergence of personal retribution is particularly striking in "The Berkshire Tragedy", whose original as we have just seen combines a vision of hell-fires with a trial; with the latter reduced the vision effectively takes over its role as the cause of his death:

9. No rest, no peace all that long night  
 I did in torment lie  
 For the murdering of my own true love  
 And for it I must die.<sup>67</sup>

Similarly in moving more directly from the foiled escape of the murderer to the final occurrence of the refrain, "And for my offence I maun die", oral versions of "William Grismond" assign more significance to supernatural agency than to the arrest and judicial process which (augmented by the intervention of his parents) occupy many stanzas in the original.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For supernatural interventions revealing the crime and identifying the perpetrator in the general context of popular murder narratives see Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England*, pp. 215-219; they are also of course familiar motifs in folktales and legends, and appear in standard indexes such as S. Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1955), and E.W. Baugham, *Type and Motif Index of the Folk-Tales of England and North America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966).

<sup>67</sup> Collected by Cecil Sharp, September 1903, pr. *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*, ed. Maud Karpeles, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), No. 65A.

<sup>68</sup> There is an analogous development in "The Gosport Tragedy", which already belongs to that sub-genre in which the retribution is due to the intervention of the sweetheart; but while in the original broadside the lover

These considerations lend credence to the view that despite the orientation towards "young men" of the broadside packaging and the ostensible focus on the young man and his sorry fate "upon the gallows tree", the core of these ballads is the story of a girl who was seduced then murdered when she asked the seducer to marry her, her death prompting retribution on the perpetrator by means in which she plays a significant role, and of which judicial process is only one transformation, however much it eventually predominated. The latter naturally looms large in the particular context of broadside news-balladry, but the core role of the girl may be discerned in residual features (Wilgus's "tensions"), which return to prominence as the ballad is subjected to the processes of oral tradition, like a cultivated flower reverting to type: we again recall that the *Zielform* of a narrative weathered or worn down in transmission is precisely the hard core, less visible in the sub-literary original composition.

The notion that there may once have been a tradition of murdered sweetheart(-proper) narratives independent of and antecedent to the "murderous lover" broadsides is reinforced by the way the basic scenario (with or without the trial) seems to be in place in even the earliest instances, rather than gradually crystallizing over a period, and effectively confirmed by the occurrence of songs deploying this scenario which (once it is appreciated the criminal-brought-to-justice sequence is not definitive) can indeed be encountered in English and Scottish traditional balladry: a small but significant corpus of sex-tragedy ballads in which a man kills a woman he has seduced, and in consequence, in due course, suffers retribution. Differences from the murdered sweetheart broadsides stem largely from the context of the tragedy, the "ballad world" of a highly strung, honour-based, semi-feudalism, in which the events and motivations are altogether more intense than the sad and sordid crimes, however sensational, of small-town Restoration England.

"Young Andrew" (Child 48) is found only in the celebrated Percy Manuscript of ca 1650, and therefore contemporary with the earliest of the murdered sweetheart ballads. After a night of love with Andrew, an unnamed earl's daughter asks him to live up to his promise (which we have not heard) and marry her. He agrees to take her to church (Maria Marten and others were likewise lured away thinking they were on their way to their wedding) if she first fetches all

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merely dies in distraction after her spirit appears, in tradition (aided, admittedly, by an intermediate broadside), she kills him herself: "She rent him & she tored him she tored him in three / Because he had murdered her baby and she" (st. 10). Collected by Cecil Sharp from the singing of William Tucker, 15 January, 1907; London, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Sharp MSS. 1171.

the gold from her father's house, which she duly does (adding the jewels for good measure), whereupon he leads her "by the lily white hand" to a lonely spot, of which this may be our earliest example.<sup>69</sup> There he forces her to take off all her clothes (ballad-style, item by item), then offers her the choice of dying by his sword or returning naked to her father's castle. She chooses the latter, but cannot escape the role of murdered sweetheart for her father repudiates her, and she dies of grief on his doorstep. Escaping through the forest the villain is attacked by a wolf (extinct in Britain since the sixteenth century), killed and devoured: the text of the ballad is defective at the end, but implies his fate may somehow have been the work the girl's "seven brothers", and so indirectly of the girl herself: the retribution is at least personal rather than judicial.

Traditional balladry also encompasses – one is tempted to say predictably -- two instances of the murdered sweetheart scenario (Child 51 "Lizie Wan"; Child 52 "The King's Daughter Lady Jean"), where the lover-killer and pregnant girl are brother and sister, adding a further dimension to both the sexual perspective and the tragedy. (A further, Scottish, example is offered as part of a different discussion below). In a European perspective the existence of the murdered sweetheart motif well before the advent of the broadsides is also strongly suggested by a chillingly stark drawing by the Italian artist Luca Signorelli (ca 1441 – 1523), now in the British Museum, and accurately if prosaically catalogued as "A Male Nude Stabbing a Female Nude". It depicts a kneeling woman, arms lifted, in a mixture of defence and supplication, towards by a man, right arm raised to strike, looming over her.<sup>70</sup>

The thesis just offered would make for an interesting gender-pattern in the developmental history of the ballad genre: as we saw earlier the process of *detextualization* from the broadsides to their oral derivatives was essentially an *emasculat*ion, as the male element, the murderous lover's story, was removed to lay bare that of the murdered sweetheart; now it looks as if the earlier *textualization* of the traditional, feudal ballads which produced the broadsides was a process of what we would then have to call "*masculat*ion", the adding of the male element to overshadow the female (analogous to what happened to fairytales when they made the transition from oral tradition to print). This pattern is entirely in keeping with

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<sup>69</sup> The motif may have classical roots in the rape and mutilation of Philomel by Tereus who had taken her to "the dark depths of an ancient forest" in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, trans. Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin, 1955), p. 148; but cf. also *Genesis* 4.8: "Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go into the open country'. While they were there, Cain attacked his brother Abel and murdered him".

<sup>70</sup> Reproduced in Winslow Ames, *Italian Drawings from the 15th to the 19th Century* (Boston: Little, Brown & Conpmay, 1963), p. 39, Pl. 7.

contextual features: the female domination of oral tradition; the male domination of literacy and print in the early modern period.

Focus on the girl suggests that further insights into the intertextual resources contributing to the murdered sweetheart ballad may be discerned by exploring their relationship to discourses of femicide. Properly defined not merely as the killing of women, but as the killing of women because they are women, femicide has a notorious and inglorious history in the modern media and literature, and the murdered sweetheart ballads merit (if that is the term) acknowledgement as part of its pre-history.<sup>71</sup> They qualify as femicidal not merely through the murder being prompted by the ultimate manifestation of the female, pregnancy, but also through the deliberate cruelty, psychological and physical, with which the murder is carried out, and even more so of course by the relish with which it is narrated. In a few cases the girl is execrated before she is killed; in a couple of others the lover goes so far as to have intercourse with her one last time immediately before killing her: this exploits the endemic poignancy of the way the lonely spot chosen for the murder is implicitly identical with the venue for the amorous trysts that led to the pregnancy (in "William Grismond" it is explicitly the classic "broom field" of folksong of seduction). In virtually all cases the murderer first declares his intentions, or strikes a preliminary blow, or the girl sees a grave ready dug, so the victim confronts the horror of what is to happen, this often triggering the kneeling plea for mercy.

Unlike the single shot or the clean thrust (or the hanging) which despatches most male ballad victims, the killing itself is invariably elaborate and protracted, the conventional stabbing with knife or sword replaced or supplemented by strangling, blows to the head with a weapon, tool or stick, or cutting the throat; the "Bloody Miller", anticipating a particularly nasty urban legend, slits the victims "mouth", not throat, from ear to ear. There is a good deal of emphasis on the resulting "crimson" or "purple" "blood" or "gore" on the murderer or the victim, and the femicidal aspect is reinforced by specific references to features characteristic or definitive of a female body: dragging by the (implicitly long) hair; blood flowing onto a "white bosom".

In some instances, the crime may qualify as an extreme form of femicide, *Lustmord*, the murdering of a woman not merely because she is a woman, but because it gives the murderer

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<sup>71</sup> For a definition of the field and an assembly of major contributions (which nonetheless ignores the ballads), see *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing*, ed. Jill Radford & Diana E.H. Russell (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992).

pleasure or satisfaction. A characteristic symptom is the post-mortem mutilation of the body that we find in whatever ballad was originally illustrated by the woodcut now inaccurately illustrating "The Bloody Miller", together with "Anne Williams" and "Betsy Smith"; "Daniel Good"; "The Cruel Gamekeeper". But *Lustmord* is not so much a judicial term for a crime as a critical term for an aesthetic,<sup>72</sup> and will be applied here to the niche within popular culture defined by narratives producing the mutilated female body, which different cultures at different times fill with different material: the murderers in our ballads may not qualify as sex-killers in the modern sense of "men who murder their objects of desire", "motivated by sadistic sexual impulses",<sup>73</sup> but the discursive topos they achieve ("the ripped breasts and genitals, the wombs cut out")<sup>74</sup> is essentially the same. It is evident that over two hundred years or more the broadside ballads contributed to catering for this cultural "need", in part in the form of the murdered sweetheart ballads, which join a miscellany of ballads deploying the motif at a given period. The ballad on Daniel Good figures prominently in a perceptive and challenging study by Ellen L. O'Brien, "'The Most Beautiful Murder': The Transgressive Aesthetics of Murder in Victorian Street Ballads", which explores how such ballads create "a shocking tableau of murder victims, transformed into art objects by the inexplicable artistry of an impassioned murderer" (p. 18), and suggests (p. 23) that this "transformation of what was considered vulgar brutality into a culturally embedded art form" was potentially subversive.<sup>75</sup>

It is from this perspective we may suspect that the murdered sweetheart genre is somehow related to the "Bluebeard" cycle of wondertales, which, despite the traditional title, emphatically focus on the girl and her story. Apart from the shared emphasis on sadistic femicide in the context of couple formation, the links to the "classic" Bluebeard narrative, of the serial killer who murders his wives if – or rather when – they succumb to temptation and look into the forbidden chamber housing the mutilated corpses of their predecessors – are admittedly distant.<sup>76</sup> However the Bluebeard cluster also encompasses another tale, "The

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<sup>72</sup> The classic study, relevant beyond its immediate field, is Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); there is a further connection with the murdered sweetheart ballads in that in narratives of *Lustmord*, as Tatar notes (p. 18), "the victim disappears as we concentrate on the agent of murder, on his identity, his method, ...".

<sup>73</sup> Cameron and Frazer, *The Lust to Kill*, pp. 167 and 18; according to Cameron and Frazer the discourses of the sex killer emerge in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (p. 22), but they are alert to the broadside crime ballad as a significant antecedent (p. 37-38).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>75</sup> Ellen L. O'Brien, "'The Most Beautiful Murder': The Transgressive Aesthetics of Murder in Victorian Street Ballads", *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2000), 15-37, at pp. 18; 23.

<sup>76</sup> This "Bluebeard" is Type 312 in the Aarne-Thompson *Index*; for present purposes it also suffers from the drawback of first appearing in Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* of 1697; for a modern English translation see *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Maria Tatar (New York: Norton, 1999), pp. 144-48.

Robber Bridegroom", which is more realistic (and technically classified as a novelle rather than a wondertale), and whose villain, while also exercising his femicidal cannibalism indiscriminately, is manifestly grooming the young heroine as a potential victim. His plan, thwarted by her unannounced visit (during which she sees another girl killed, dismembered and cooked), was evidently to lure her to his remote residence on pretence of courtship. The generally familiar form of the tale derives from the German version of the Brothers Grimm,<sup>77</sup> but the specifically English form, "Mr Fox", has the unusual qualification of being documented before 1600, thanks to an unequivocal quotation of a key line in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.<sup>78</sup> In both cases the girl escapes and denounces the villain. Closest to the murdered sweetheart scenario is a yet more realistic and quite widespread English variant, effectively on the borderline of the local legend, in which rather than visiting his home, the girl agrees to meet her wooer at a lonely spot, but arriving early is disconcerted to find (as did some ballad sweethearts) an open grave newly dug. She resourcefully climbs up a nearby tree, and in one way or another finds out he intended to murder and bury her there. The sequel varies, but technically qualifying as a murdered sweetheart narrative is a version known as "The Oxford Student", in which a student is having an affair with a local brewer's daughter. When she pesters him to marry her, he tells her to meet him in the city orchard near Divinity walk. She arrives early, climbs a tree, and watches him dig the grave, then waits till dawn: the next day when she confronts and denounces him, he stabs her to death on the spot.<sup>79</sup>

The Bluebeard cycle however lacks the pregnancy element which is clearly at the narrative core of the murdered sweetheart ballads, and which suggests a more direct connection in a different direction. In a small but potentially significant cluster of the broadsides the pregnancy motif combines with the *Lustmord* aspect into a uniquely horrific scenario, as the

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<sup>77</sup> Aarne Thomson Type 955; modern English translation in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Tatar, pp. 151-54.

<sup>78</sup> *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 1997), *Much Ado About Nothing*, I.i.175-6; for a text see *Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Tatar, pp. 154-56

<sup>79</sup> Katherine M. Briggs, ed., *Dictionary of British Folk-Tales*, Part B, *Folk Legends*, Vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 103; for other versions (inconveniently dispersed in the *Dictionary*) and discussion see K.M. Briggs, "Historical Traditions in English Folk-Tales", *Folklore*, 75 (1964), 225-242, at pp.235-40. There is an apparently fortuitous overlap in the location of the murder and the grave with a rather gothic narrative poem, apparently inspired by a local legend, and published in Thomas Gillet's *The Midland Minstrel* in 1822 (having previously appeared anonymously in *The Oxford Herald* in 1821), in which an Oxford student is clandestinely married to the daughter of a college servant; regretting the match on becoming acquainted with a lady of his own class, he meets the girl in Divinity Walk, kills her and buries her; the crime is not detected, however, until his deathbed confession. See H.W. Donner, ed., *The Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), pp. 707-711 (notes to Thomas Lovell Beddoes' dramatization of the poem, *The Bride's Tragedy*, 1822, perhaps the closest the murdered sweetheart scenario ever came to canonical literature).

mutilation of the corpse is elaborated to include interference with the foetus.<sup>80</sup> At the edge of the group, technically, is "Shocking Murder", in which the murderer cuts the throat of the baby to which the girl gives birth as she dies, while in "Drory and Denny" although the perpetrator confesses to killing the unborn child as well as the girl, it is not elaborated on as a separate act. The full horror occurs in "Daniel Good", in which after a sustained and violent attack on the corpse the villain rips open the abdomen and removes the by now certainly lifeless foetus, while in "The Cruel Gamekeeper" after a similar mutilation of the body the baby itself, after the body is hidden, crawls into the arms of the dead mother – and presumably dies.

These ballads all belonging to the later group, it would have been a relief to dismiss the motif in a few unspecific sentences as an aberration of the nineteenth-century popular culture which made a cult hero of Jack the Ripper, but this option is pre-empted by a detail of the woodcut re-used to illustrate the "Bloody Miller". The corpse which lies on its back before the knife-wielding assailant has been cut open to reveal what are clearly the backbone and heart, but the foetus has equally clearly been removed. And the earlier, lost ballad thus documented must be among the two or three earliest of the whole genre. The long abdominal wound in the woodcut accompanying an early printing of "The Berkshire Tragedy" may point in the same direction.

Like the murdered sweetheart scenario itself, this kind of atrocity did occasionally happen in reality (as it has recently in Oklahoma): in 1589 two labourers in Kent were accused of attacking a woman, stabbing her and slitting open her stomach, from which they took an unborn child (whose fate is not specified).<sup>81</sup> Indeed the motif is disconcertingly common in a

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This Oxford narrative, however, alone of those discussed under the "Bluebeard" heading, is more the lover's story than the sweetheart's.

<sup>80</sup> It is this factor which blocks the otherwise link between the murdered sweetheart ballads and the femicidal narratives *par excellence* of pre-modern culture, the martyrdom legends of female saints. The element of pornographic sadism is indeed a powerful feature of the latter, but with victims almost by definition virginal there can have been no question of pregnancy, and at least in all the classic cases, mutilation was aimed at the upper body. See Nerida Newbigin, "Agata, Apollonia and other Martyred Virgins: Did Florentines Really See these Plays Performed?", *European Medieval Drama*, 1 (1997), 77-100; Kirsten Wolf, "The Severed Breast: A Topos in the Legends of Female Virgin Martyr Saints", *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 112 (1997), 97-112. This proviso does not apply to Protestant martyrs burnt at the stake under Queen Mary, who included a pregnant woman in a horrific incident from 1556 made much of by Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*; see Steven Mullaney, "Reforming Resistance: Class, Gender, and Legitimacy in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*", in *Print, Manuscript, & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, ed. A.F. Marotti & M.D. Bristol (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), pp. 235-51, at pp. 235-7.

<sup>81</sup> Cockburn, "The Nature and Incidence of Crime in England, 1559 – 1625", *Crime in England*, p. 56; Cockburn goes on to note that brutality against women was sometimes a means "to terminate extra-marital pregnancies". The Oklahoma reference is to a 2005 case in which a pregnant woman was murdered and her baby removed –

variety of discourses, from avant-garde art and modern thriller novels, to war atrocity rumours and African folktales.<sup>82</sup> While not frequent in the murdered sweetheart ballads, its role is nonetheless organic and brings out a part of their essence. Taking as it does the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque "open" body to its horrific extreme, the motif also takes to an extreme a symbolism inherent in and central to a genre in which murder is triggered explicitly by the pregnancy of the victim. In all the murdered sweetheart ballads killing the pregnant girl by definition encompasses the foetus as well; in some in girl reminds the murderer of this in her plea for mercy; in a few, honest as much as nasty, this supplementary killing is simply made explicit.

It may be significant that the motif also makes a striking appearance in one of those traditional murdered sweetheart ballads independent of, and probably antecedent to, the broadsides. "Jellon Grame" (Child 90),<sup>83</sup> is first encountered in the version printed by Sir Walter Scott in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3) as recorded from Scottish tradition at the end of the eighteenth century, but has all the structural and stylistic characteristics of a classic Scottish folk ballad, suggesting it had been in oral tradition for some time. A certain antiquity is also suggested by the distinctly feudal ambience of a story which is otherwise very close to the (pre-journalistic) murdered sweetheart scenario. Thus rather than calling at "her father's house" himself (or writing a letter), Jellon, the lover-villain, sends a servant to tell his pregnant sweetheart to meet him in the forest. This already implies the standard scenario of relationship, pregnancy, demand for marriage, and assignation in an ominously remote spot, and the parallels intensify, for although, unlike her broadside sisters, she leaves a classic ballad ladies' "bower" and makes the journey on horseback, like Maria

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alive – from the corpse: effectively pre-natal baby-snatching. This essay was written in ignorance of the 2002-4 case of Scott Peterson, condemned after a lengthy investigation and trial for the murder of his pregnant wife, Laci, followed by the American media (unlike the European) with excessive attention. A striking feature was the separate discoveries of the bodies of the woman and the foetus in a California lake. Forensic evidence suggested that separation was post-mortem, and as a result of natural processes, but the defence made a good deal of play with a possible ritual murder and mutilation which included removal of the foetus (I have consulted the internet files of the *San Francisco Chronicle*). It is this foetal interference motif alone which relates the case to the present essay; it qualifies otherwise as a domestic crime: a man getting rid of his wife to facilitate a relationship with a younger mistress.

<sup>82</sup> E.g. Gunther Von Hagen's art exhibition, "Body Worlds", comprising mummified bodies, many with abdominal openings to reveal internal organs, including a woman with a well-developed foetus. The motif also occurs in the background of a modern thriller novel, Michael Gruber's *Tropic of Night*, and atrocity rumours concerning eviscerated pregnant women have been associated with most recent conflicts, including the Lebanon, Algeria, Rwanda and Kosovo (web search; my use of the term "rumour" does not imply a comment on their veracity). For its occurrence in African traditional narrative see Rudiger Schott, "La femme enceinte eventrée: variabilité et contexte socioculturel d'un type de conte ouest-africain", in *D'un Conte ... à l'autre: la variabilité dans la littérature orale*, ed. Veronika Gorog-Karady (Paris: CNRS, 1990), pp. 327-40.

<sup>83</sup> *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 10 vols., ed. Francis James Child, (1892-8; repr. in 5 vols. New York: Dover Books, 1965).

Marten and one or two other murdered sweethearts (and the girl in "Mr. Fox") she arrives at the rendezvous in the forest to find the lover standing by a newly-dug open grave. There follows the sweetheart-murder scene in which he declares his intent to kill and bury her; she kneels and begs in vain for mercy, invoking their unborn child, but unlike most lovers in the broadsides he is specific about the motivation: he fears that if her pregnancy is discovered her father "Would hang me on the morn" (again a reflection of a wilder social environment). He then removes the foetus from the corpse, but rather than killing it or leaving to its fate, takes the child home and brings him up as his nephew. Years later, when the child has grown to manhood, Jellon Grame rashly reveals to him the circumstances of his birth, and his son at once kills him: a striking genealogical manifestation of the girl contributing to the retribution.

With this motif and its association with traditional balladry we come unexpectedly within striking distance of medieval legends and narrative songs which, however outlandish, may supply antecedents, if not sources, of our murdered sweetheart ballads, and shed a good deal of light on the process of generic evolution. The modern mass media cult of the werewolf is tame by the standards of earlier folk tradition, innocent as the former seems to be of the knowledge that the unborn foetus was a favoured delicacy of the beast – who was also, of course, a man. A chapbook published in London in 1590, translating a German original, offered readers *A true Discourse, Declaring the damnable life and death of one Stubbe Peeter, a most wicked Sorcerer, who in the likeness of a Wolf committed many murders, ... killing and devouring Men, Women, and Children.*<sup>84</sup> Given to both ravishing and devouring women he encountered unprotected, his atrocities included attacking:

two goodly young women big with child, tearing the children out of their wombs, in most bloody and savage sort, and after ate their hearts panting hot and raw, which he accounted dainty morsels and best agreeing to his appetite.

It is not stated that the foetuses were of his own begetting, which would give us a pattern analogous to the ballads, but on another occasion he was said to have devoured one of his own (grown up) children.

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<sup>84</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.shanmonster.com/witch/werewolf/weredoc.html>.

According to Scandinavian legends, similarly, "werewolves ... were a threat to pregnant women, whose unborn babies they would try to rip out",<sup>85</sup> and the belief is at the heart of a couple of characteristically robust early-modern Danish ballads. In one, recorded in a celebrated seventeenth-century manuscript, the Karen Brahe Folio, a young woman lives under the shadow of a prophecy, made when she was a child, that she would be killed by a "wild wolf". Encountering one such (evidently a werewolf, with the power of speech) on her way, significantly, to her wedding, it agrees to let her have eight sons unmolested, but will find her out when she is expecting the ninth. Their exchange intriguingly anticipates the knife/life rhyme-pair of the English murdered sweetheart ballads (the Danish words being very similar):

My dear wolf, don't bite me:

I will give you my silver-handled knife [*knyff*]

I'm not interested in your silver-handled knife:

I'd rather take your young life [*ditt unge lyff*] (sts. 18-19).

She seems to have been spared on this occasion precisely because she is not expecting a child, but in due course, her ninth pregnancy well advanced, she unadvisedly travels through the forest unescorted. Her husband, alerted to the danger, sets off in pursuit, only to encounter the wolf, *med barnet i munden* ("with the child in its mouth"), and bits and pieces of his wife's body and clothes.<sup>86</sup>

In another ballad (recorded in both an early manuscript and later tradition), the climactic scene with the wolf loping off with the foetus in its jaws is the same, but the situation leading up to it is closer to the murdered sweetheart ballads: the girl is attacked at a lonely spot on her way to meet a lover with whom she is not yet married, but by whom she has manifestly been made pregnant. (And as he seems to have won her by a wager the relationship evidently qualifies as surreptitious and irregular.) Here too the killer is a werewolf, with the power of speech, who as a character is distinct from the lover: had it been the lover transformed, we would effectively have a murdered sweetheart ballad in a wondertale environment: a very

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<sup>85</sup> Jacqueline Simpson, *Scandinavian Folktales* (London: Penguin, 1938), p. 127. There may ultimately be a link to the vision in Book of Revelations, ch. XII (here in the Authorized Version, vv. 1-4) of: "a woman clothed with the sun ... being great with child ... travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And... a great red dragon, ... stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born".

<sup>86</sup> *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, 12 vols., ed. Svend Grundtvig, Axel Olrik, Hakon Grüner-Nielsen, *et al.* (Copenhagen: Universitets-Jubilæets Danske Samfund, 1853-1976), 54A, "Varulven".

adult *Red Riding Hood* (with which all the ballads discussed here also share what is evidently a traditional *topos* of the girl in the forest). Nonetheless the lover has some responsibility for the tragedy, since he has both made the girl pregnant and then insists she come to him through the forest, despite her fear "the grey wolves will bite me", effectively her way of telling him she is with child. It may also be significant that the werewolf intercepts her in the rose-grove (*Rosenlund*), the traditional venue for amorous encounters, so that (as in some English ballads) the location of the seduction and the murder are the same. His subsequent suicide by falling on his sword may reflect guilt as much as sorrow: had she not been pregnant by him the werewolf would not have touched her. More speculatively, lover and werewolf are projections, respectively seductive and destructive, of the same figure.<sup>87</sup>

### **Stories within Stories: Lover, Sweetheart and Child**

While these werewolf ballads are clearly not first and foremost about the child, the latter's inclusion as an independent protagonist – like the more emphatic case of "Jellon Graeme" – is a further symptom of a highly significant feature of the murdered sweetheart narrative, the way it comprises several stories encompassed within each other, and this is clearly a factor both in the replication across media of the individual narrative, and the response of the genre as a whole to the emergence of new media (and perhaps the loss of old). For those narratives deriving from specific cases in the era of printed journalism, although achieving textual status within the judicial institutions involved (and subject to the discursive protocols that apply there), their initial appearance in the public domain is as news reports, in prose, of the unfolding revelations: the discovery of the body, the apprehension of the malefactor, the judicial process. Narration is from the perspective of the investigators, and effectively backwards, a given report starting with the latest event (say the discovery of the body) from which perspective earlier events (the murder; the seduction) are established. Modulation into crime ballad usually shifts the focus to the murderous lover himself, and while the narration may be framed by its most recent stage (the murderer on the eve of execution) it provides in chronological order the story of his seduction and murder of the girl, his attempts to escape or conceal the felony, his arrest and trial, and his anguish and repentance as he (and sometimes his family) await his doom. Oral tradition, in turn, among its several effects, removes much of his story to reveal more clearly that of the murdered sweetheart, her misplaced love leading to seduction and death, the aftermath of which is seen more as a personal retribution visited by

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<sup>87</sup> *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, 54B & 54C: as my discussion indicates, I do not agree with the editors that these are variants of the same ballad.

her on her slayer than the institutional retribution of the judicial system. With regard to genre, the thesis that its emergence is somehow related to “print and panic” – to the emergence of the broadside as a new news medium, geared to reporting domestic crises and tragedies at a time when there was a “moral panic” about gender relations in general and the emergence of unsupervised couple formation in particular – it is evident that to the extent this has been proven, it has been proven only with regard to the “murderous lover” mode of the story. The true “murdered sweetheart” ballad may have had an independent and anterior tradition, which the broadsides appropriated and enfolded: a tradition which also faced up to the ultimate brutality at the the core of the narrative, that the stories of lover and sweetheart encompassed the story, from pre-nuptial conception to pre-natal destruction, of their child.

### **Bibliographical Appendix**

The murdered sweetheart broadsides discussed in this study have been summarized or quoted from the texts specified below, the sources of other versions of the songs having been identified in footnotes. Facsimiles of ballads held by the Bodleian Library, Oxford, have been accessed via the Bodleian's Allegro Catalogue at <http://bodley24.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>; those from the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, from the Library's website feature, "The Word on the Street", at <http://www.nls.uk/broadsides>.

#### ***Early Group***

##### # "The Reward of Murder"

Manchester. Central Library, Language & Literature Library, Special Collections,  
Broadside Ballads, Blackletter Ballads (2 vols.), BR Q f821.04 B49, Vol. 2, item 20b.

##### # "The Downfall of William Grismond".

Glasgow. University of Glasgow Library. Euing Collection, No. 61.

*The Euing Collection*. Ed. J. Holloway. Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1971, No. 61.

##### # "The Downfall of Thomas Caress".

Oxford. Bodleian Library. Douce Ballads 1(67b).

##### # "The Bloody Miller".

Cambridge. Magdalene College. Pepys Collection, II, 156.

*The Pepys Ballads*. Facs. Ed. W.G. Day. Cambridge: Brewer, 1987, II, 156.

##### # "The Berkshire Tragedy"

London, British Library. Roxburghe Collection. III, 802.

*Roxburghe Ballads*. Ed. J.W. Ebsworth. 8 vols. (1895-1901; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1966), vol. VIII, pp. 629-31.

# "The Dorsetshire Tragedy"

Cambridge. Magdalene College. Pepys Collection, V, 303.

*The Pepys Ballads*. Facs. Ed. W.G. Day. Cambridge: Brewer, 1987, V, 303.

# "The Oxfordshire Tragedy"

London. British Library. Roxburghe Collection, III, 750.

*The Roxburghe Ballads*. Ed. E.J.W. Ebsworth. 8 vols. (1895-1901; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1966), vol. VIII, pp. 68-69 & 175-76.

# "The Gosport Tragedy"

London. British Library. Roxburghe Collection, III.II.510-511.

*The Roxburghe Ballads*. Ed. J.W. Ebsworth. 8 vols. (1895-1901; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1966), vol. VIII, pp. 143-44 & 173-74.

# "The Bristol Tragedy".

Sheffield. Sheffield University Library. Charles Harding Firth Collection, E16.

***Early Group Shortened Versions***

# "The Cruel Miller" [from "Berkshire Tragedy"]

Cambridge, Mass. Harvard College Library, VII, 45.

G.M. Laws. *American Balladry from British Broad-sides*. Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957, pp. 111-12.

"Polly's Love; or, the Cruel Ship Carpenter". [from "Gosport Tragedy"]

London. Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Broadwood Ballad Sheet Collection, p. 133.

***Later Group***

# "Copy of verses on Drory and Jael Denny"

Oxford. Bodleian Library. Firth b.25(332)

# "Confession of Thos. Drory"

Oxford. Bodleian Library. Harding B 14(206).

# "Suitable Reflections; or the Sorrowful Lamentation of Samuel Fallows"

Oxford. Bodleian Library. Harding B 14(210)

- # "A New Song, on Samuel Fellows"  
Oxford. Bodleian Library 2806 c.17(488r)
- # "A Copy of Verses, on the Execution of Wm. Corder "  
Oxford. Bodleian Library. Johnson Ballads 2416
- # "The Murder of Maria Marten"  
Charles Hindley. *The Life and Times of James Catnach*. London: Reeves & Turner, 1878; repr. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968, p. 187.
- # "The Suffolk Tragedy, or the Red Barn Murder"  
Derby. Derby City Libraries: Local Studies Library. Thomas Ford's Ballads. Accession no. 60374, # 121.<sup>88</sup>
- # "The Red Barn Tragedy"  
Oxford. Bodleian Library. 2806 c.13(96)
- # "William Corder"  
Oxford. Bodleian Library. 2806 c.17(471)
- # "Horrid and Barbarous Murder Committed upon the Body of Mary Thomson "  
Edinburgh. National Library of Scotland. shelfmark F.3.a.13(92)
- # "The Murder of Betsy Smith"  
Edinburgh. National Library of Scotland. shelfmark L.C.Fol.73(126).
- # "A mournful and affecting Copy of Verses on the death of Ann Williams".  
Hindley, Charles. *The Life and Times of James Catnach (Late of Seven Dials), Ballad Monger*. London: Reeves and Turner, 1878; repr. Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1968, p. 141 (facs.).
- # "Shocking Murder, Committed by William Jennings"  
Manchester. Central Library. Language and Literature Library Special Collections. Broadside Ballads. Br Q f398.8.B1, p. 88.
- # "Verses on Daniel Good"  
Hindley, Charles. *Curiosities of Street Literature*. London: Reeves and Turner, 1871, p. 195 (facs.)
- # "The Cruel Gamekeeper"

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<sup>88</sup> I am grateful to Librarian Paul Hudson of the Derby City Local Studies Library for his good offices in identifying this ballad and making the text available.

London. Vaughan Williams Memorial Library. Broadwood Ballad Sheet Collection, p. 57.