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THOMAS CRAWFORD

Scottish Popular Ballads and Lyrics of
the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth
Centuries:
Some Preliminary Conclusions

ANY discussion of Scottish lyrical poetry in the 18th and early 19th centuries must be based on three types of source-material: (a) manuscripts; (b) printed broadsides, chapbooks and slips; (c) printed song-books, with or without music. For the sake of convenience, I have restricted myself to sources which were written or printed in Scotland, and chosen 1786 as the terminal date for printed material, and 1825 for MSS. This limitation has the disadvantage of excluding Thomson's *Orpheus Caledonius* of [?1726] and 1733, and Ritson's *Scottish* [sic] *Songs* of 1794, simply because they were printed in England. Nevertheless, the general conclusions which emerge from an examination of the primary sources are not affected by the omission of these and similar works.

The most important of the existing manuscripts¹ are:

- (1) Elizabeth Cochrane's Song Book [ca. 1730]. Harvard College Library, MS Eng. 512.
- (2) Agnes Thorburn Creighton: A Collection of Old Songs [1818]. Ewart Public Library, Dumfries.
- (3) David Herd's MSS [1766]: British Museum Add. MSS 22311-2. One folio of these MSS is in the Edinburgh University Library, La. II. 358. 2.
- (4) Robert Jamieson's Brown MS [1783]. Edinburgh University Library, La. III. 473.
- (5) William Motherwell's MSS [ca. 1825]. 6vo. All in Glasgow University Library, except for one ballad notebook in the possession of Sir John Stirling Maxwell.

¹ Listed by William Montgomerie, "Bibliography of the Scottish Ballad Manuscripts 1830-1825," unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Edinburgh, 1954); and in part by Francis James Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (Repr. New York, 1957), V, pp. 397-399.

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- (6) A Miscellaneous Collection of MSS in the National Library of Scotland, MS 893, bound in one volume.
- (7) The Miscellanies of Sir Walter Scott in the National Library of Scotland, and other MSS of Scott in the N.L.S. and at Abbotsford.
- (8) "The Collection of an old lady's complete set of ballads" [Sir Walter Scott's Title, 1805-7 and 1818]: at present in Broughton House, Kirkcudbright.
- (9) Thomas Mansfield's Manuscript [1770-80]: lost for much of this century, at present in Broughton House, Kirkcudbright.
- (10) Thomas Percy's Papers (MSS sent from Scotland to Bishop Percy after 1765) Harvard College Library.
- (11) Thomas Wilkie's MS Notebooks [1813-15]. National Library of Scotland, MSS 121-3; 877.
- (12) William Tytler's Brown MS [1783]. Aldourie Castle.

Nos. 4 and 12, the Jamieson Brown MS and the Tytler Brown MS, record part of the repertoire of a particular singer, Mrs. Brown of Falkland.

These twelve MSS have authority primarily for the history of individual songs. With the possible exception of David Herd's MSS, they do not add significantly to our knowledge of the *types* of song current in Scotland during this period; and even in this solitary instance, of the 370 items in Herd's MSS, only seven remain unprinted either

- (1) By Herd himself, in *Scottish Songs* [1st. edn. 1769, 2nd edn. 1776],
- (2) by Francis James Child, in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols., 1882-98.
- or (3) by Hans Hecht, *Songs from David Herd's Manuscripts*, Edinburgh 1904.²

Although the Mansfield MS is of great importance for those investigating the sources of Burns's songs in that it preserves a number of otherwise unknown versions of songs later touched up or transformed by Burns, it contains few songs of which we have no other record; and most of the remaining eleven MSS are of value mainly to the student of the Child Ballads. It would appear, then, that MS material is not of primary concern to those whose main interest is in Scottish sung lyrics of the 18th century,

² See William Montgomerie, "Some Notes on the Herd Manuscripts," *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions* (1948-55), III (1957).

and whose purpose is to formulate general "literary-historical" conclusions about Scottish song during its golden age. The grounds on which this conclusion is based can best be exhibited in relation to a single typical MS, Mrs. Creighton's Collection of 1818. At first sight, the MS appears to have the authenticity of a direct transcript of a folk-singer's words: the title page states that it is "written from the memory of Mrs. Creighton by her daughter, Agnes Thorburn Creighton, January 31st MDCCCXVIII," and this suggests that the words were taken down from Mrs. Creighton's recitation or singing. But the MS is obviously a fair copy, behind which there must lie a rough draft of some kind. The rough draft may have been in A.T.C.'s hand, the transcript of material orally transmitted by her mother; or it may even have been in her mother's hand, for that is surely one possible interpretation of "written from the memory of Mrs. Creighton"—Mrs. Creighton's memory prompted her own rough copy. In either case, there was nothing to prevent A.T.C. from collating the final draft with printed texts, where these were available, and indeed there is some evidence which suggests that this happened, at any rate with certain pieces. Mrs. Creighton's collection contains Scott's *Young Lochinvar*, Burns's *The Soldier's Farewell*, a parody of the ballad *William and Margaret*, and *Alcanzor and Zaida: a Moorish Tale* of 104 lines, all of which must at some stage have had printed texts behind them: at the very least, they must have been originally *learnt* from print.

At the same time, many of the other texts exhibit variations from other versions of the songs concerned, which can best be explained by their having passed through Mrs. Creighton's memory, as the title-page claims. It seems probable that she knew by heart all or most of the 106 pieces in the MS; that she had learnt many, perhaps most, of them from a printed source, often a broadside or chapbook; and that some, but by no means all, of the songs and poems may have been collated with a printed source before the MS was copied into its present form. The Creighton MS has thus some of the attributes of a commonplace book; it is valuable primarily as an indication of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century taste; and the probability that the proximate sources of many pieces appear to have been song-books, chapbooks and broadsides, seems to lessen the authority of this MS and elevate that of the printed sources themselves. Now what I have just said about the Creighton MS is equally true of much, but not all, of the *song*

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material in the other MSS, although it does not apply to the traditional ballads (Child Ballads) in such MSS as the two Brown MSS or the Thomas Wilkie MSS, and others like them, which formed the basis of the great printed ballad collections of the nineteenth century, including Child's own.

It follows, then, that we shall be wise to devote our main attention to printed sources. Of these, the most interesting, and the most difficult to cover with any approach to completeness, are the white-letter broadsides, chapbooks containing ballads and songs, and the song sheets, the latter being sometimes "slips" or galley "pulls" containing one or more songs. It seems evident that broadsides and chapbooks printed by the popular printers of Aldermary Churchyard, London, and such northern English centres at Newcastle-on-Tyne and York, were widely circulated by itinerant pedlars and ballad-singers. It is often impossible to state when or where a broadside or chapbook was printed because of the lack of a date or printer's name, and the inclusion of specifically Scottish songs is by no means an infallible guide, since these were often printed in London chapbooks or sheets, presumably for sale in both Scotland and London. Furthermore, since Scottish popular printers included a fair proportion of English songs in their productions, and since Irish collections printed both Scots and English songs, one is led to conclude that the popular song market was at this time an all-British one. As the eighteenth century advanced, broadsides and chapbooks printed in Scotland itself became increasingly common. Many song chapbooks were issued by the printers J. & M. Robertson of Glasgow between 1780 and 1810,³ and other printers in Paisley, Falkirk, Stirling, Dumfries, Edinburgh and elsewhere exploited the popular market at about the same time. Material originating in English black-letter broadsides of the seventeenth century was reprinted in Scottish chapbooks of the early nineteenth century, such as those printed by T. Johnston of Falkirk and M. Randall of Stirling (c. 1815). For example, one Randall chap includes *The Maid's Complaint for Jockey* (l.1. "Love did first my thoughts employ"), a pseudo-Scots song of the type published in London by Thomas Duffey in the late seventeenth century; in another, *The Frigate Well-Mann'd* (l.1. "In blows a fresh and pleasant gale"), a woman is compared to a frigate in a way that

³ See W. Walker, *Peter Buchan and Other Papers on Scottish and English Ballads and Songs* (Aberdeen, 1915), pp.272 ff.

was standard in Durfey's time. These correspondences could be multiplied, and they help to document the close connection between Scottish song and the English broadside tradition.

There may well be, as is often claimed, a specific "broadside" or "stall" type of song; but its existence did not preclude the appearance of other kinds of song in the printed material sold at stalls and carried into the countryside by travelling packmen. This is well illustrated by a collection of 42 white-letter broadsheets in the British Museum,⁴ which can be proved to have been printed at Aberdeen, and which bear the dates 1775 or 1776. They contain a fairly high proportion of comic songs, including some of the "Merry Muses" type; many Scottish songs, some of which have a specific Aberdeen reference, and quite a large number of English ones. One broadsheet prints the English *Blind Beggar's Daughter of Bethnal Green* (l.1. "It was a blind beggar had long lost his sight"), together with the Scottish *Bonny Highland Lad* (l.1. "Down by you shady grove"). Two more of these Aberdeen broadsides were reprints of well-known English productions, *The Berkshire Lady's Garland: Or Bachelors of Ev'ry Station* and *The Bristol Garland: Or The Merchant's Daughter of Bristol*. Of the few Child Ballads in this Aberdeen series, one is *Barbara Allen*, widely distributed throughout the British Isles and America; another is the English *Chevy Chase*. Finally, and even more typically, *The Roving Maids of Aberdeen's Garland*, dated 30 Jan. 1776, contains as its third song the English *Golden Grove* (l.1. "A wealthy young squire of Tamworth we hear").

Now Aberdeenshire has for centuries been one of the main centres of balladry and popular song in the British Isles. A surprisingly large number of Child's "A" texts (his main or favoured texts) turn out to be Aberdeenshire ones, and at the present day the North East is richer than any other part of Scotland in the remains of the old popular song. Of some 10,000 variants of Lowland Scottish songs recorded by the School of Scottish Studies since 1945, several thousand are from the Aberdeen area alone. Many songs in the repertoire of present-day Aberdeen folk-singers are of English or Irish origin, and there seems to be a fairly common impression that such borrowing took place mainly during the nineteenth century. The existence of these late eighteenth century broadsides, however, documents

⁴ 1546 m.7, *Ballads*.

the popularity of English material in this area as early as 1775, and one may well suspect that songs and ballads from the English broadsides entered oral tradition in Aberdeenshire at least a hundred years before this. It is perhaps significant that the first song book ever printed in Scotland, Forbes' *Cantus* of 1662,⁵ was an Aberdeen production. It is a learned, not a popular song-book; and with perhaps one or two exceptions, all its songs are English. Thus, in all probability, the song culture of Aberdeenshire was not simply all-Scottish, but an all-British, at quite an early date.

Broadsides and chapbooks, then, are sometimes the closest we can get to popular tradition, and often have at least as much authority as manuscripts. They sometimes contained songs which their printers acquired from oral tradition; while, conversely, townfolk and country people might learn songs from printed copies, only to transmit them to others by oral communication, thus initiating the "folk process," in the course of which some stanzas would disappear, and others perhaps be modified beyond all recognition.

The last primary sources to be considered are the printed song books. Collections of words without music far outnumber those which print the music, and most of the former are 12mo, 16mo, or 18mo volumes ranging from about 100 pp. to 400 pp. in length, with an elaborate title-page (often engraved) and an index of first lines. Even when known, authors' names are often suppressed; where possible, the titles of well-known tunes to which the songs can be sung are mentioned; and sometimes the song books will give the name of a well-known professional singer into whose repertoire the song has passed, such as "Mrs. Catley" or "Signor Tenducci." Song books with music were often of folio or quarto size, and finely engraved. The *Perth Musical Miscellany* of 1786, 12mo, 347 pp., was the first pocket-book with music to be printed in Scotland, so far as I am aware. The best bibliography of Scottish song books is that in J. C. Dick, *The Songs of Robert Burns: now first printed with the melodies for which they were written*, London 1901, but is far from complete. Some sixty-five song books, with or without music, are known to have been published in Scotland before 1786. They contain between them approximately 2,500 separate songs. A first line index is in course of preparation, which will

⁵ The only known copy is in the Huntington Library. There is a photostat copy in the National Library of Scotland.

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classify them according to *genre* and linguistic category, but until this is completed it is impossible to say more than that (a) songs written by Englishmen appear to outnumber those of Scottish origin; (b) a large number of songs composed in Scotland are linguistically indistinguishable from English songs on the printed page; (c) the pieces in the song books are broadly speaking the same *sort* of songs as those in the chapbooks, slips, broadsides or manuscript collections. The song books appear to print a larger number of Art songs than do other source-groups.

The pieces in the song books, chapbooks, broadsides and manuscripts fall into four generally recognized types or *genres*, which we may designate (1) Traditional ("Child") Ballads (2) Folk Songs (3) Broadside Ballads (4) Art Songs. Although it is natural to associate each of these types with its own class of source material, the correspondences are at best merely approximate. Manuscripts may contain laboriously copied broadsides; art songs circulated in chapbooks cheek by jowl with examples of gross popular drollery; "folk songs" and traditional ballads were printed in the song books. Nevertheless, when every allowance has been made for the difficulty of classifying individual songs, it is possible to formulate certain general characteristics of matter and style which apply to each of these four types.

There is surely no need to quote a traditional ballad in full: all that is necessary is to mention three titles, *Lord Randal*, *Sir Patrick Spens*, *The Wife of Usher's Well*. A lyrical folk-song is a song like this one from the Thomas Wilkie MS:⁶

Where will bonny Ann lie
 Where will bonny Ann lie
 Where will bonny Ann lie
 I' the cauld nights o' winter.

Where but in the hen bauks
 Where but in the hen bauks
 Where but in the hen bauks
 Amang the rotten timmer oh.

There shall bonny Ann lie
 There shall bonny Ann lie
 There shall bonny Ann lie
 Till the warm nights o' simmer.

MS 122, National Library of Scotland: *Old Scots Songs etc. Collected mostly in Roxburghshire, Berwickshire, and Selkirkshire*: by Thomas Wilkie (ca. 1814), p. [i].

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Wha d'ye think will cuddle her
 Wha d'ye think will cuddle her
 Wha d'ye think will cuddle her
 A' the cauld nights o' winter o

Wha but Patie o' the glen
 Wha but Patie o' the glen
 Wha but Patie o' the glen
 Will cuddle bonny Annie O'!

Or else it's a song like this one, from the Mansfield MS.—the source of Burns's "Comin' Thro' the Rye":⁷

Jennys a' wet, poor Body
 Coming frae the Kye
 Jennys a' wet, poor Body
 Coming frae the Kye
 She draggled a' her petticoat
 She draggled a' her petticoat
 She draggled a' her petticoat
 And Jennys never dry.

Typical of the Stall Ballad is a whole class of ballads purporting to be the last words of a criminal, such as *The Last Words of James Mackpherson, Murderer*⁸ (the source of Burns's "MacPherson's Farewell")—a broadside preserved in the Roseberry Collection in the National Library of Scotland, and apparently printed in the early eighteenth century; or such a comic ballad as *An Excellent new Ballad, intituled, The Four Drunken Wives that live at Belsiehill, to the tune of the Four Drunken Maidens at the Nether-bow*. Edinburgh, 1710.⁹ And typical, too, of the broadside and chapbook type is a well-known series of political ballads, Jacobite and anti-Jacobite, on events from 1689 to 1741, such as *Killiecrankie* (l.1. "Clavers and his Highlandmen")¹⁰ or *Tranent Muir* (l.1. "The Chevalier being void of fear").¹¹ The author of the last song is known, and we may prefer to classify it as a popular art song, even although it

⁷ Frank Miller, *The Mansfield Manuscript: An old Edinburgh Collection of Songs and Ballads* (Dumfries, 1935), p.19; MS, p.36.

⁸ In *Broadsides and Ballads*, National Library of Scotland, Ry III. a. 20(29).

⁹ In *Old Scotch Ballads etc.* 1679-1730, National Library of Scotland Rv. III. a. 10(82).

¹⁰ Herd, *Scots Songs* (Edinburgh, 1776), I, p.10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 109 (by Adam Skirving).

was repeatedly printed as a broadside. There are also two quite separate types of song which might well be termed Stall Songs—(1) fairly lengthy expansions of a lyrical theme, sometimes written for a political purpose, such as some of the early broadsides of *Auld Lang Syne*,¹² and (2) comic songs of a brash plebian type, like *Crooked Shoulder*,¹³ the source of Burns's *Willie Wastle*, where the balladist is being funny at the expense of a deformed wife. It was a persistent habit of chapbook and broadside printers to issue lengthy, padded versions of well-known lyrics. *The Birks of Abergeldy, A New Song, to its Own Proper Tune*¹⁴ expands a brief folk-song, occupying two stanzas in Herd's *Scottish Songs* 1776,¹⁵ to five stanzas and prints a "Second Part" of seven stanzas "to the same tune," while an undated [? 1785] chapbook in the National Library of Scotland¹⁶ swells out *The Flowers of the Forest* to ballad proportions: it takes fourteen stanzas of hack writing before we reach Jean Elliot's l.1. "I have heard a liltin' at our ewes milking." When Burns's songs were issued in chapbooks in the early nineteenth century, they were often expanded in a similar way. An undated chapbook entitled *Three Excellent New Songs*,¹⁷ Printed at Edinburgh by J. Morren. gives Burns's *The Soldier's Return* (l.1. "When wild war's deadly blast was blown"), followed by a doggerel *Answer to the Soldier's Return*, quite in the tradition of the English broadside printers of the seventeenth century.

For Art-Song, one need go no further than Robert Crawford's *The Bush Aboon Traquair*, in Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany*,¹⁸ it was reprinted time and time again in the course of the century. The last stanza is sufficient to convey the flavour of the whole:

Ye rural pow'rs who hear my strains,
Why thus should Peggie grieve me?
Oh! make her partner in my pains;
Then let her smiles relieve me.

¹² e.g. the versions (l.1. "O Caledon, O Caledon") in National Library of Scotland, MS 2960, fol.33 and Ry. III. a. 10(71).

¹³ In *The Nightingale* (Edinburgh, 1776), p.36.

¹⁴ In *Old Scottish Ballads, etc., 1679-1730*, National Library of Scotland, Ry. III. a. 10(57).

¹⁵ II. p.221.

¹⁶ Ry. III. c. 16(9).

¹⁷ In Glasgow University Library.

¹⁸ 2 vols. (Repr. Glasgow, 1871, from 14th Ed.), I, p.2 (l.1. "Hear me, ye nymphs, and ev'ry swain").

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If not, my love will turn despair:
 My passion no more tender;
 I'll leave the bush aboon Traquair
 To lonely wilds I'll wander.

Yet much Scottish art-song was in a folk or even a broadside tradition: one has only to think of the works of those remarkable eighteenth century women, Lady Grisell Baillie (author of *Werena my heart licht I wad dee*), Jean Adam (herself a wandering hawker and author of *There's nae luck aboot the hoose*), Lady Anne Barnard, whose *Auld Robin Gray* is in two parts, just like a broadside, and Baroness Nairne (author of *The Land o' the Leal, Caller Herrin', The Laird o' Cockpen*, and the most popular set of *Charlie is my Darling*—l.1. "'Twas on a Monday morning").¹⁹ The productions of these women are generally more finished, more "artistic," and sometimes more sentimental than folk-song proper; while those of Allan Ramsay, Crawford, and their school often unite European conceptions of pastoral with a rather clammy sensuality, lip-service to "Virtue," and a preoccupation with the comedies of love and marriage.

In his *Schottische Volkslyrik in James Johnson's The Scots Musical Museum*, Berlin 1920. E. Schwebsch attempts to draw distinctions of form and treatment between these four genres in a more precise and rigid manner than the evidence perhaps warrants. He states that the lyrical folk-song is generally shorter than a ballad, and that it does not tell a story, though in actual practice it often possesses a narrative content, ever so lightly sketched in. It is often the expression of a *persona*, as in the overheard laments of young girls; or a dialogue with narrative background, as in many songs of the "night visit" type; or the development by means of incremental repetition of a situation and sentiments indicated in the first stanza. In Schwebsch's view, when folk song deals with nature at all, it does so in broad, powerful images which are at once stereotyped and unrealistic. With much, perhaps most, of this we can all agree. Schwebsch thinks that the folk song does not employ a conscious rhetorical art, or rather that, because the stanza-sequence is often so uncertain, it is impossible to say whether it does or not: for him, the folk-song has "laws of its own," determined by its generic character, not by any individual purpose. At this juncture,

¹⁹ See S. Tytler and J. L. Watson, *The Songstresses of Scotland*, 2 vols. (London, 1871).

however, Schwebsch betrays more than a trace of that irrationality, that folk-song *mystique* which has bedevilled discussion of the topic from Herder and Carl Engel to the present day. According to Schwebsch, folk song and the traditional ballad are distinguished from art song by their lack of individuation as well as the existence of many variants actually sung among the people. The street or broadside ballad is distinguished by its presentation of characters from all walks of life, these being seen mostly from the point of view of household servants; and it generally exhibits a greater realism. Street and broadside ballads often arrange events in chronological order and employ a longer line than common metre; they are often tedious, pedantic, moralising, erotic, obscene, and comical; they love what he calls "cock and bull stories," and are sometimes decked out with "rags of erudition." The "pure lyric," lacking even the faintest shadow of narrative or dramatic content, is almost certain to have an "art song" behind it; a long lyric generally indicates a broadside origin; and the folk-song is usually serious in tone, often tragic, with a pronounced tendency towards sentimentality, though not towards crude insipidities and obscenities. Above all, it is seldom humorous: comic song, for Schwebsch, is almost always either art or street song.²⁰

As I have said, the insufficiencies of Schwebsch's approach are due to his uncritical adherence to a romantic, primitivist concept of folk-song. Even Gavin Greig, the greatest of all twentieth century song collectors in Scotland, did not succeed in escaping from it. Here is how Greig defined Folk-Song in 1909: "It may be taken to mean, briefly, that body of minstrelsy which circulates among the common people and has originated among them . . . It is of the very essence of folk-song that its origin cannot be traced." Greig, like so many of his German predecessors, was a "communalist": he said that "it" [i.e. folk-song] . . . "is communal in origin, evolution and character."²¹ Greig drew a firm distinction between folk-song and book-song; to him, none of Burns's songs were folk-songs, but, on the contrary, all were book-songs; similarly, the lyrics of Hogg, Tannahill, Ramsay, Baroness Nairne and the other women writers I have mentioned were book-songs.

²⁰ pp. 208-218.

²¹ In *Folk-Song of the North-East. Articles contributed to the "Buchan Observer" from December, 1907, to September, 1909*, (Peterhead, 1909) I, p.1; IX, p.2.

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It should be pointed out, however, that it is possible to adopt another sort of classification of the songs in the song-books, a classification according to content, of the sort employed by Angellier in his *Robert Burns: la vie, les oeuvres*, Paris 1893, and further developed in my own *Burns: a Study of the Poems and Songs*, Edinburgh 1960.²² Such a classification cuts completely across the divisions of "art," "folk," and "stall" song. Furthermore, when the tunes to which the songs are set are considered, it is seen that from Ramsay onwards poets wrote "art" songs for traditional tunes; and so, too, did the writers of broadsides. It is surely quite impossible to isolate a given melody and say: "this is a typical broadside tune," or, alternatively, "this is a typical folk (as opposed to broadside) tune." But it is possible to say that *See the Conquering Hero Comes* and *Rule Britannia*, both reprinted frequently in the song books, and songs with melodies by Dr. Arne or J. C. Bach, are quite different from songs that can be traced back — via, perhaps, the *Orpheus Caledonius* — to early eighteenth century musical MSS, such as the Agnes Hume MS (1704), the Margaret Sinkler MS (? 1698-1710), and Mrs. Anne Crookshank's MS (slightly later than the Sinkler MS), all in the National Library of Scotland.²³

The distinction that is of the greatest value in the study of Scottish song literature before and immediately after Burns's time is the distinction between popular and artificial. By artificial song I mean a particularly insipid variety, often sung by professional singers at the public gardens of Ranelagh and Vauxhall, and at their northern counterparts in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Such *artificial* songs were a peculiar sub-class of art song, by no means identical with the whole of art song; they were associated with a particular social group, the "polite," and above all with the women of that group; and their idea content was often that of the mid-eighteenth century cult of sentiment. One Scotswoman who enjoyed and herself wrote this kind of artificial song was Burns's "Clarinda"—Mrs. Agnes McLehose: her relations with Burns were nothing more nor less than an attempt to *live* according to the cult of sentiment.

All the other songs in the song-books may be subsumed under the single category of "popular song." By "popular song" I mean a generic term which will cover (1) composed songs by

²² pp. 281 ff.

²³ MSS 5.2.17 and Glen 143(1). The Crookshank and Sinkler MSS are bound together.

popular writers of certain conventional types, sung to Scots or popular English tunes; (2) slip or chapbook songs, generally shorter than broadside ballads and often printed under such titles as *Three Excellent New Songs*, *Seven Excellent New Songs*, etc.; (3) "broadside" or "stall" ballads — *i.e.* songs with a considerable narrative content, generally fairly long, and often showing signs of sheer padding; (4) folk songs, as defined below; (5) traditional ballads of the type collected by Child. The dividing line between (4) and (5) is exceedingly difficult to draw, but it nevertheless exists: the Child ballad seems to have originated either in feudal society or in the frontier clan society of the Scottish borders, and to have become part of the traditional culture of post-Reformation agricultural communities, transmitted from one part of the country to another by such wanderers as tinkers and cattle-drovers. Lyrical folk-song, in contrast, does not necessarily embody, even in a romanticised form, the values of pre-capitalist society, and indeed—as the work of Alan Lomax and A. L. Lloyd has shown—lyrical folk-song is still being composed at the present day. Broadside ballads and stall songs, unlike the Child ballads, are in the first instance popular art-forms of the towns, and above all of capital cities; in some ways they look back to the jest books of the sixteenth century and the attitudes of the medieval fabliaux, in others they anticipate the sensationalism and scandalmongering of the modern popular press.²⁴ Although it is necessary to distinguish between these five types of song for certain critical and literary-historical purposes, it is also necessary to realise that, taken together, they formed a single eighteenth-century popular lyrical culture. Furthermore the dividing line between this popular culture and "official" literature is in Scotland peculiarly difficult to draw. From the early eighteenth century until Scott's time, imaginative literature in Scotland was on the whole more popular in character and inspiration than that of England. Watson and Allan Ramsay published broadsides for sale in the streets; Burns, whose poems were early printed in chapbook form, based his work on every kind of popular tradition, including the broadside tradition; all Walter Scott's creative work was in a sense an extension of his early ballad-collecting, and he too did not disdain to take hints from chapbooks and broadsides; Hogg's tales — especially his most popular one, *The Long Pack* — were sold by hawkers at

²⁴ See V. de S. la Pinto, "The Street Ballad in English Poetry," *Politics and Letters*, Nos. 2 and 3 (Winter-Spring, 1947-48) 34-46.

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the cottage-door. This, of course, was probably the result of the more homogeneous nature of Scottish society, and of the democratic system of village education, under which the laird's son and the peasant's son often sat at the feet of the same dominie.

The most important general conclusion—and I would stress that it is at best an extremely tentative one — to emerge from this preliminary survey concerns the necessity for a new approach to folk-song, which would replace the old dichotomies between folk-song and broadside, folk-song and *composed* popular song, by the realization that folk-song is from one point of view simply a species of a wider genus of popular song. Most definitions of folk-song speak of a song current among "the people." I suggest replacing the vague term "people" ("das Volk") by a *series* of terms emphasizing the possibility of different societies and social groups producing different types of song. An improved definition of folk-song might run something like this: "A folk-song is a song current among the members of some national, tribal, regional, urban, village, occupational or other community or group, transmitted orally from one generation to another, and subject to the laws that govern oral transmission — namely the co-existence for long periods of a fixed norm with spontaneously occurring variations." This recognizes that the folk process—the process of oral transmission — is the result of the interplay of two tendencies: a tendency to preserve, and a tendency to alter, to innovate, to "ad lib." Now the definition I have just given is a definition of what may be called "pure" folk-song, and is therefore, a definition of something that does not exist at the present day, and perhaps did not exist in the eighteenth century either. As soon as a sizeable minority of the "lower orders" is able to read and write, the possibility arises of singers noting down their words as an aid to memory, and this immediately interferes with the folk process by fossilizing some songs in the singer's repertoire and by encouraging him to improve others in the very act of writing them down. Once these improvements are committed to paper they acquire all the authority of the written word, and are less liable to spontaneous variation in future. From the sixteenth century onwards in England, and from the late seventeenth century in Scotland, printed broadsides and chapbooks, originating in the towns, were circulating in the villages and influencing local folk-song in a way that Shakespeare documented once and for all in a well-known scene (IV, iii) between Mopsa and Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*. The next

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step was that the folk-singer became a popular poet, the self-conscious composer of an art song on a traditional theme, employing conventional phrases and even whole stanzas learnt from other sources, but nevertheless still an art song—or, if you like, still a popular song. The folk-singer is metamorphosed into an artist in folk-song, or an artist who uses folk-song; he becomes an Allan Ramsay, a Skinner, or, if he happens to be at the same time a genius, a Robert Burns.

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