Mad women, mad world: the depiction of madness in Renaissance drama. Those crazy Scots: madness and transformation in the ballad tradition of Scotland

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Mad Women, Mad World:
the Depiction of Madness in Renaissance Drama

Those Crazy Scots:
Madness and Transformation
in the Ballad Tradition of Scotland

by

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Mad Women, Mad World:
the Depiction of Madness in Renaissance Drama

An examination of madness in Renaissance England as reflected in historical accounts and in the period's drama. Women were second-class citizens who often were victims of repression. Dramatic representations of women show them either falling into states of depression or rising above their situations and surviving in chaotic worlds.
The treatment of "abnormal" or "different" persons has troubled societies for centuries. Individuals following variant codes of living suffer the effects of labels and are inevitably classified as lesser and even troublesome members of communities. The practice of psychology arose from the need for treating individuals who break established societal codes and practices and who consequently threaten the structure of society. Progress in the field of psychology altered definitions of abnormality. Where persons were once shunned or locked away because of the threat they posed to societal or political structures, today they may not be involuntarily detained unless proven a threat to either their own person or to others. A definition of madness evolved during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the examination of the insane during those years is largely responsible for the humane treatment of troubled individuals today.
In contemplating how to deal with deviant persons, Plato (429-347 B.C.) made provisions for the care of mental cases:

If anyone is insane, let him not be seen openly in the city, but let the relatives of such a person watch over him in the best manner they know of; and if they are negligent, let them pay a fine. (Carson 33)

Plato's solution of sheltering the individual from the public, or perhaps of sheltering the public from the insane, was carried into the sixteenth century. "King James instructed the court to ensure that lunatics 'be freely committed to their best and nearest friends, that can receive no benefit by their death..." (MacDonald 5).

At times, however, wealthy eccentrics were falsely accused of insanity by others in the hope they might be awarded guardianship. With the erection of private institutions to house the mentally ill, the insane were gradually taken from families and guardians who could not provide specialized treatment and placed in treatment facilities. In these asylums, patients could be studied and experimental treatments could be tried.

In 1547, the first hospital in England devoted to the care of the insane was established. Remarkably, most accounts of this hospital are found in the fiction of the
period, but the accuracy of these portraits is dubious. Carson explains the evolution of the monastery of St. Mary of Bethlehem at London into a mental hospital under the orders of King Henry VIII. The hospital's name soon became contracted to "Bedlam," and was soon known for the opprobrious conditions and practices that prevailed. (41) The impact of this institution was immense. Here, unmanageable persons could be detained, and observation for research purposes evolved from this contained and controlled environment. Thus, a more advanced understanding of mental illness resulted from the establishment of this and other hospitals. Following the erection of Bethlehem Hospital, public and private institutions sprang up throughout England and continental Europe during the seventeenth century. These hospitals, according to Carson, were "not much better than concentration camps" (41).

Bethlehem Hospital had a great impact upon English literature of both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

Bedlamites swarmed through the imaginations of Jacobean playwrights and pamphleteers, but the famous asylum was in truth a tiny hovel housing fewer than thirty patients. Bethlem Hospital was the only institution of its kind, and its
inmates languished there for years, living in squalid conditions without adequate medical treatment. Private institutions to house the insane did not begin to proliferate until the last half of the seventeenth century, municipal asylums to rival Bedlam were not founded in major cities for another century, and county lunatic hospitals were not established until after 1808. (MacDonald 4)

From the period's representation of madness in its literature, the uninformed reader would believe Bethlehem Hospital to be a large establishment, though its corruptions are rather accurately portrayed in the writings. Dramatists exulted in sensationalizing Bethlehem Hospital and asylums in general. Likewise, the period's drama includes many characters whose mental stability is dubious.

A discussion of the treatment of the insane and remedies used upon them during the age will prove most useful in assessing the representations of madness in Renaissance dramas. Reports of private institutions showed just as much corruption as reported in Bethlehem Hospital:

Private madhouses were profitable business propositions in the free market
economy....The worst were riddled with abuses; patients were mistreated, and sane people were sometimes shut up in them just to keep them out of the way. (MacDonald 42-43)

Mental illness, at this time, was viewed as a result of possession by demons of some sort; no consideration was given to sociocultural factors or physiological chemistry. Accordingly, treatments often consisted of measures to rid the body of these evil spirits; purging, sweating, vomiting and blood-letting were believed to restore balance to the body's regular constitution. (Porter 15) More detailed accounts of early therapeutic techniques prove as sensational as the fiction of the times:

The patients were ordinarily shackled to the walls of their...unlighted cells by iron collars which held them flat against the wall and permitted little movement. Ofttimes there were also iron hoops around the waists of the patients and both their hands and feet were chained. Although these chains usually permitted enough movement that the patients could feed themselves out of bowls, they often kept them from being able to lie down at
night... The cells were furnished only with straw and were never swept or cleaned; the patient remained in the midst of all the accumulated ordure. (Porter 41-42)

Carson relates a fascinating account of a lycanthropic patient of 1541 who believed himself possessed by a wolf and imitated the behavior of a wolf. This patient "told his captors... that he was really a wolf but that his skin was smooth on the surface because all the hairs were on the inside... To cure him of his delusions, his extremities were amputated, following which he died, still unconvinced" (Carson 36). Portraits of insanity and of insane asylums in the literature of Renaissance England generally reflect the inhumane and fantastical treatment of actual illnesses and expose the corruptions and ineffectiveness of institutionalized treatment.

Unfortunately, females who suffered from mental problems were treated radically differently and far less sensitively than men. "The typical accused witch was not a mentally ill person but an impoverished woman with a sharp tongue and a bad temper" (Carson 39). A woman speaking out in this patriarchal society often found herself shunned by the community and locked away in an asylum where she could do no further damage to the structure of the community. She may even have been
killed. In 1584, Reginald Scot, a prominent sixteenth-century writer on witchcraft and demonology wrote:

> These women are but diseased wretches suffering from melancholy, and their words, actions, reasoning, and gestures show that sickness has affected their brains and impaired their powers of judgment. You must know that the effects of sickness on men, and still more on women, are almost unbelievable.... (Carson 40)

That women suffered different illnesses than men was an accepted idea during these centuries. Consequently, the medical treatment of males and females differed.

Even before the sixteenth century, women were regarded by the medical profession as different from men. Hippocrates (460-377 B.C) believed hysteria "was restricted to women and was caused by the wandering of the uterus to various parts of the body..." (Carson 31).

The records of Dr. Richard Napier, as reported by Michael MacDonald, indicate a higher frequency of female mental illnesses than male mental illnesses. MacDonald offers several salient reasons for this imbalance, suggesting that Napier's practice was perhaps located in an area with a high female population, or perhaps that the attitude of Dr. Napier attracted female patients, and
finally and perhaps most poignant, that the women in the area suffered more from physical disease. Doctors of the period who grappled with the mental illnesses of both men and women were first and foremost medical doctors, and patients generally sought their services because of physical symptoms. "'[F]emale troubles' were incorporated into psychological diagnoses, as with the common ailment 'Suffocation of the Mother,' with its bizarre symptoms, strange perceptions and grand delusions blamed on the uterus' becoming detached from the womb and wandering upwards toward the passionate heart" (MacDonald 39).

Rather than adopting the prevalent Renaissance explanation concerning the female's physical inferiority and frailty, modern writers on the plight of women during the period focus on the subordination of women to men as a major causal factor of female mental illness during the Renaissance. Women frequently blamed their psychological distress on marital troubles, and considering how women were forced to relinquish what little liberty they had upon marriage, this explanation is persuasive. According to MacDonald:

Gerrard Winstanley said: 'If it be rightly searched into, the inward bondages of the mind, as covetousness, pride, hypocrisy, envy, sorrow, fears,
desperation and madness, are all occasioned by the outward bondage that one sort of people lay upon another. Napier and his troubled patients also believed that oppression made people miserable and even mad, but the bondage they found most troubling subordinated daughters to parents, wives to husbands, rather than peasants to lords. (40)

Indeed, the restraints placed upon individuals in a seemingly-free society contribute to feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. Once a person feels undervalued or lesser than those around him or her, those above-mentioned feelings of hopelessness and desperation evolve. The oppression of women during the Renaissance in England must have contributed to female mental illness. Some women grew distressed with their status in communities, or they ignored their pre-ordained social roles and threatened the hierarchies of their societies. The literature of the period commonly depicts women in chaotic societies where some inhabitants have been driven to madness. The pressures of the patriarchy added to women's stress. Women might either sink to depression and perhaps suicide because of their treatment, or they might find the strength to endure and combat it, resisting madness when other characters succumbed to it.
William Shakespeare is notable for his creation of unforgettable characters whose actions resemble certain behavior we now associate with officially recognized clinical patterns--characters such as Lady Macbeth (obsessive-compulsive behavior), King Lear (paranoia), Iago (antisocial personality), Ophelia (depression/ melancholy), and Othello (obsessive, paranoid jealousy). Shakespeare's gifts for observation and insight into the human personality are nowhere displayed with greater clarity than in his depiction of mental disorder.

(Carson 6)

But Shakespeare was not the only dramatist to reflect the contemporary situation of the human psyche and its frailty; John Webster, John Ford, Thomas Middleton and William Rowley did so as well. Each writer incorporated portraits of general madness in characters who act contrary to established and acceptable practices. Insanity in relation to their female characters is commonly depicted in one of two ways: women either resort to a state of complete madness, falling prey to the confusion around them, or they resist madness when surrounded by chaos. I will examine three plays of the
period which reflect insanity in the midst of a chaotic world.

I. The Changeling

Middleton and Rowley wrote The Changeling probably in 1622, when it was first performed under the protection of Princess Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia. The play shows a woman confined among madmen when her husband fears she will cuckold him if allowed outside the walls of his in-house asylum. Despite this chaotic environment, the woman manages to retain her sanity as well as her ethics. The play's main plot details the reaction of another woman to her father's choice of a husband for her. She loses her grasp of reality and pursues a deviant course of action to break from the chains of the patriarchy. While the men residing in the doctor's hospital/home are clearly insane, the women characters' insanity is debatable in this drama. Given the earlier discussion of Renaissance insanity, the most telling indication of madness comes from an individual's threatening the established codes of behavior in a society. Beatrice Joanna's behavior in The Changeling without a doubt threatens the social structure with which she is surrounded, and her behavior likewise threatens the lives of those individuals surrounding her.
The Changeling presents a clear case of male dominance and the effects of the oppression of women. Beatrice Joanna's father, Vermandero, has chosen a husband for the young girl, a practice common in Renaissance tradition. Beatrice, however, is unhappy with her father's choice of Alonzo de Piracquo after seeing Alsemero and decides she would rather wed Alsemero. The only way Beatrice sees to subvert the patriarchal model is to have her intended murdered, and so she hires her father's servant De Flores to carry out this request. Beatrice's initial belief that she is autonomous in this society of men leads to her demise. She has somehow acquired enough money to become an active member of the economy, and her purchase is murder. Piracquo's murder is the first of two with which Beatrice is associated. Beatrice's father, having to pick a new beau for his daughter following Piracquo's mysterious disappearance chooses Alsemero. Beatrice's next conniving occurs with respect to her bridal bed. Because she is not a virgin, the marriage is dissolvable should Alsemero learn he has received impure merchandise. Her next subversive act comes with the hiring of her waiting-woman, Diaphanta, to stand in for her at the bridal bed. Diaphanta agrees, but after having served her purpose, she must be disposed of lest she expose Beatrice's secret of impurity. Beatrice has her accomplice De Flores set
fire to Diaphanta's chamber, and the servant woman is burned to death. Now Beatrice is party to two acts of willful and premeditated murder, but both she and De Flores die before being convicted of any crime.

Contrasting to Beatrice and her actions is Isabella, the young wife of Dr. Alibius, who is shut away in the madhouse by her husband to keep her from cuckolding the old man. Continually tempted by men who are interested in her (and these men, ironically, are sane men who manage to infiltrate the world of the asylum) and who are quite forward with her, Isabella manages to remain faithful to her untrusting husband. Isabella, like Beatrice, is a woman trapped in a man's world, and she must either endure or rebel against the forces of the men who rule her:

Isabella: Why, sirrah? Whence have you
commission
To fetter the doors against me? If you
Keep me in a cage, pray whistle to me,
Let me be doing something.

....................................................

Lothio: 'Tis for my master's pleasure,
lest being taken in another
man's corn, you might be pounded in
another place.

....................................................
He says you have company enough in the house, if you please to be sociable, of all sorts of people.

Isabella: Of all sorts? Why, here's none but fools and madmen. (III.iii,1-14)

Isabella is caged up in this madhouse, at the mercy of the male members of her world. In contrast to Beatrice, Isabella is aware that she is subject to the men in her life, and she does not attempt to escape the boundaries of the patriarchy. Isabella, unlike the higher class Beatrice, does not suffer from the belief that she is autonomous in her society. Surrounded with sexual temptations from Lollio and Antonio and Franciscus, counterfeit fools or changelings, Isabella remains constant and faithful to her husband. She is surrounded by corruption and insanity, yet the woman maintains her composure as well as her dignity. Contrastingly, Beatrice is surrounded by the "normal" Renaissance society wherein a father chooses his daughter's husband, an eligible young man whom Beatrice had liked well enough before she met Alsemero, but she cannot function within the set scripts of this community. Beatrice loses her ability to function in this environment, and the perspective that she has gone mad is not entirely inappropriate given the drama's circumstances.
George Walton Williams views Beatrice as insane. He writes:

The Elizabethans believed in a psychology which held that an ugly, deformed, or misshapen body betokened an ugly soul....Beatrice's beauty, one would expect, would then represent a beautiful soul; it does not. Like Isabella's disguise, it is a feigning; it conceals her real nature, one that is close to the ugliness of De Flores....the disguise of Beatrice is hypocrisy, and from it nothing can come but harm. (xix)

The situation that arises from Beatrice's hypocrisy is one of madness. The entire structure of the community is placed at risk when this woman actively participates in commerce by buying murder and subverting tradition by choosing not to marry the mate specified for her. Unfortunately for Beatrice, men often demand different kinds of currency from women, and she is unable to pay De Flores with her money. She consequently becomes a slave to the man, and her position in that relationship is even more humiliating than Isabella's. Indeed, the society is turned into chaos, the standard rules of commerce and of male superiority are threatened, and the very lives of those around Beatrice are at risk, as no one can be
assured of his or her own safety. Williams continues:

Beatrice, thinking herself clearheaded, a woman of 'art' (II,ii,46), has produced the madness from which she cannot escape....Beatrice's madness destroys her world of sanity. Isabella's world is one of madness; she is surrounded by a cacophonous and disordered society...(xxiii)

Isabella's final scene demonstrates her gracious generosity. Rather than chastising Alibius for his distrust of her, Isabella remarks:

Your change is still behind,
But deserve best your transformation;
You are a jealous coxcomb, keep schools of folly,
And teach your scholars how to break your own head. (V.iii,210-213)

Alibius promises to do better in the relationship, and the couple appears restored to a harmonious existence.

Beatrice, on the other hand, is unable to escape the consequences of her actions. "For Beatrice and De Flores there is no escape from madness; they are left in hell" (Williams xxiv). Both women in this drama suffer the hardship of living in a male-dominated society where they have little or no control over their lives. Beatrice
strikes out violently against the factors that control her life: at Piracquo, who is to be her husband, and at Diaphanta, the personification of Beatrice's lost virtue. The society of men has dictated that the value of a woman lies in her virginity upon marriage, and because Beatrice has already rebelled against this tradition, she must take precautions to prevent her exposure.

The strains placed upon female existence by the male members of society are poignantly presented in this drama. Two strikingly different methods of coping by the women are offered by the playwrights. Not only is The Changeling an interesting and entertaining drama, it offers a representation of the society of England during the seventeenth century and two consequences of female oppression during the period. Middleton and Rowley's accurate and chilling portrait of restrained and captive women is still pertinent to the examination of human behavior and to the effects of male dominance as well.

II. The Duchess of Malfi

A second drama of the period continues the discussion of insanity and the treatment of women in Renaissance drama. John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi again details the results of male dominance and the oppression of women. This drama, produced both in public and private theatres between 1612 and 1614, pre-dates Middleton and Rowley's.
Webster draws from an actual event and contributes his own elements of horror and psychological torment.

The Duchess is surrounded by a world of domineering men who attempt to decide the course of her life. A widow at the play's commencement, the Duchess has decided she will marry Antonio, a steward of her household. Unfortunately, this decision is not the Duchess' to make; her elder brother, Ferdinand, has assumed a paternal role over the woman, and he forbids the marriage:

observe the Duchess,

To note all the particulars of her hâvour:

What suitors do solicit her for marriage
And whom she best affects: she's a young widow,

I would not have her marry again.

(I,ii.173-77)

The woman, however, defies the societal codes and pledges herself to Antonio in a secret ceremony. Her troubles escalate when the Duchess has three children, seemingly out of wedlock. Even when she tells Ferdinand of the exchange of vows between her and Antonio, the Duke refuses to allow a legal and public wedding, and Antonio, the children and their mother are banished from the land. In his brief spell of remorse and grief following the Duchess' murder, the audience learns of Ferdinand's motives:
For let me but examine well the cause;
What was the meanness of her match to me?
Only I must confess, I had a hope,
Had she continu'd widow, to have gain'd
An infinite mass of treasure by her death:
And that was the main cause; her marriage,
That drew a stream of gall quite through my heart. (IV,ii,275-281)

The Duchess is freed from her brother's constraints when
she is murdered, and Ferdinand only realizes the effects
of his cruelty and dominance following his sister's tragic
demise.

Insanity enters this drama at several points. The
most blatant portrait of madness comes with the Duchess'
imprisonment in Act IV. Ferdinand decides:

'cause she'll needs be mad, I am resolv'd
To remove forth the common hospital
All the mad folk, and place them near her
lodging. (IV,i.124-26)

This is but one of Ferdinand's many attempts to control
his sister and advance his own cause in the process; he
hopes that forced association with mad folk will make her
mad. The Duchess, nonetheless, remains constant and
remarkably composed in the face of this torture, welcoming
the severe cases of insanity to temper her own situation;
Indeed I thank him: nothing but noise, and folly
Can keep me in my right wits, whereas reason
And silence make me stark mad. Sit down,
Discourse to me some dismal tragedy.
Cariola: O 'twill increase your melancholy.
Duchess: Thou art deceiv'd;
To hear of greater grief would lessen mine. (IV,ii.5-10)

The Duchess is remarkable in her ability to resist falling into a state of madness like those who surround her. She is similar to Isabella in The Changeling with her noble strength and perseverance in the face of chaos and hardship.

The Duke in The Duchess of Malfi is one of the most grippingly insane characters in Renaissance drama. Most frightening is Ferdinand's manipulation of and power over the members of his dukedom. Not only is the Duke cruel in denying his sister's marriage, he is malicious in confining her and setting the madmen upon her and finally in ordering her murder. In Act V, Ferdinand is even less rational, growing paranoid of his shadow, which he notices following him around. The Duke throws himself upon his shadow in an attempt to "throttle" it, and Malatesta, the
only witness to this madness, attempts to reason with the
distracted man. Malateste aids in the presentation of the
Duke's madness, representing a normative sanity by which
to measure Ferdinand's madness in this scene. The Duke's
position as a public figure makes his fall even more
dishheartening. His is not a private and internal world of
hell and torture; his fragility has carried over into the
land he rules, creating a world of corruption and unrest.

In her introduction to *The Duchess of Malfi*,
Elizabeth M. Brennan focuses on the effects of society's
madness upon the Duchess. "The evil with which the
Duchess is supposed to be possessed is a projection of the
evil in the minds of her brothers. Thus, when Ferdinand
accuses her, both to her face and in her absence, of lust
and wantonness, his words reveal the state of his own
mind" (xiii). The scene wherein the Duchess meets her
death is, according to Brennan, the final indication of
her sanity and endurance. She dies kneeling, in a pose of
Christian humility, and she is unafraid of the torture she
knows will follow;

Who would be afraid on't?
Knowing to meet such excellent company
In th'other world. (IV,ii.207-8)

In this same scene, as the Duchess stands before her
executioners, she entreats Cariola to see that her
children are cared for--the final act of a devoted and
loving mother. She has not parted from her wits; the Duchess is still functioning as the caretaker of her kin and calmly accepts the death sentence issued by the members of the more powerful sex.

Her sanity and self-possession are emphasized by the demise of the men surrounding the Duchess. Like Ferdinand, the Cardinal appears to lose his grip on reality in his final death scene. He is affected by his conscience and declares,

When I look into the fish-ponds in my garden,
Methinks I see a thing armed with a rake,
That seems to strike at me. (V,v.5-7)

From this point, the Cardinal grows paranoid that he will be murdered, and he then attempts to buy off Bosola when he says he has come to kill the Cardinal. His loss of reason, exemplified by his ranting during his own death scene, coupled with Ferdinand's paranoia serves to emphasize the Duchess' strength of character. Despite the tortures imposed upon her, she manages to maintain her dignity and inner peace.

The Duchess continually refers to herself and is imaged by the other characters as a caged bird. She tells Cariola;

The robin red-breast and the nightengale
Never live long in cages. (Iv,ii,12-13)
Indeed, like most females of the Renaissance, the Duchess is caged in a world where men cause events to occur. Having once married for "duty," she boldly breaks code with her second covert "marriage" to Antonio and with the births of their children. Female defiance of males during this period, however, resulted in harsh consequences. The Duchess acted independently for a while, but then she was forced to submit, physically if not mentally, to the male powers. Initially, the Duchess believed she could successfully subvert the patriarchy, not unlike Beatrice in Middleton's and Rowley's work. The Duchess, though, was unable to escape being trapped in the male world. Despite her imprisonment, her final triumph was great: the Duchess managed to resist falling into the madness with which she was surrounded and to which her brother deliberately attempted to force her.

III. 'Tis Pity She's a Whore

John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore presents another example of a female character who resists madness when surrounded by an external world of chaos. Interestingly, the male characters with whom she is associated lose their grasp on reality and fall into irrational and insane behaviors. Ford's play is believed to have been first staged in 1633, eleven years after the first
performance of The Changeling. Ronald Huebert offers a valuable description of the work:

The rabble of lunatics in The Duchess of Malfi and the chorus of imbeciles in The Changeling tell us a great deal about the corrupt and arbitrary world in which the Duchess and Beatrice must struggle in vain for stability. Madness is an external force in these mannerist plays—a horrifying disturbance in the environment, a threatening cacophony that relentlessly pursues the characters. In Ford's plays we seldom find madness externalized in this way; instead, we see spiritual anxiety from inside the suffering souls themselves. (68)

Indeed, the madness in this drama exists apart from the chaotic world in which the characters live, enabling each character to react differently to events. Like Isabella and the Duchess, Annabella possesses an internal strength that allows her to endure the hardships of her life, where Giovanni, Soranzo, and Hippolita fall into mental unrest when confronted with disturbing situations.

Like numerous Renaissance dramas, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore relies upon controversial subject matter for its plot. Derek Roper, in his introduction to the play,
credits Ford with creating the "first English play to take fulfilled incestuous love as its main theme" (xliii). (Middleton, in The Duchess of Malfi, hints at Ferdinand's incestuous passion for his sister, but it is never acted upon.) Giovanni and his sister, Annabella, attempt to hide their relationship, fully understanding the social ramifications of the affair. Thus, the young lovers willfully subvert the order of their society and bring about the disorder that befalls them and those around them. Like Isabella in The Changeling, Annabella is surrounded by a world of veritable chaos. Isabella's world was an enclosed and restrictive asylum housing the insane, whereas Annabella's world is comprised of a brother who makes sexual advances toward her and male characters who connive and work upon less powerful women. Vasques tricks Putana into revealing the siblings' relationship; and Hippolita, the physician's wife, is led astray by Soranzo, who has used her for sexual favors but then refuses to wed her when she believes she has been widowed. Like the Duchess, Annabella makes a conscious decision to pursue a love affair that is unacceptable to the males who control her life, a decision surely influenced by the fact that Giovanni appears to be the only desireable male in her corrupt world. Unlike Middleton and Rowley's Isabella, who is held captive in a chaotic world by her paranoid older husband, Annabella's
captivity occurs first within her own emotional world when she engages in the incestuous relationship with her brother. Later in the play, Annabella is literally held captive by the emotionally-distraught Soranzo when he sends her to her chamber to await his arrival. Soranzo dismisses his wife, and she has no choice but to wait for him in the chamber while Soranzo contemplates how to make her reveal the paternity of her child.

While in her chamber, Annabella meditates upon her actions and the consequences she must now face. She accepts her fate with remarkable composure, and she is resolved to leave the world on her own terms:

Pleasures farewell, and all ye thriftless minutes
Wherein false joys have spun a weary life;
To these my fortunes now I take my leave.

My conscience now stands up against my lust
With depositions characterized in guilt,
And tells me I am lost; now I confess...

(V,i,1-11)

Annabella does not appear overwrought with fear or anger regarding her impending death; she accepts death almost peacefully and attempts to set right her sinful behavior.
by confessing her actions and warning Giovanni of Soranzo's rage:

\[\text{let some good man}\]
\[\text{Pass this way, to whose trust I may commit}\]
\[\text{This paper double-lined with tears and blood:}\]
\[\text{Which being granted, here I sadly vow}\]
\[\text{Repentance, and a leaving of that life}\]
\[\text{I long have died in. (V,i,31-37)}\]

Annabella is aware that her choices and actions in love have not been socially acceptable. Having chosen the course of action that would fulfill her desires, she now must face the consequences of her behavior.

Giovanni's reaction to Annabella's acceptance of death demonstrates his own loss of reason. Maintaining that the love shared by his sister and himself is different from other incestuous relationships, Giovanni takes matters into his own hands and stabs his sister, killing both her and his unborn child. He does not stop with this act of violence, however. Giovanni further exhibits his loss of control when he re-enters the celebration, having hewn the heart out of his sister's body, and parades before the guests with the organ atop his weapon as a veritable trophy of his murder (Huebert 64). From this point, Giovanni's speech appears less
rational. He speaks of the murder in sexual terms, proclaiming:

I vow 'tis hers: this dagger's point
ploughed up
Her fruitful womb, and left to me the fame
Of a most glorious executioner.

(V,vi, 31-33)

What was once a sacred and beautifully meaningful act for the couple is in this passage perverted into a grotesquely violent image by the madman. Giovanni's subsequent confessions of his relationship with his sister cause his father's collapse and death in the same scene, and the madman barely pauses to acknowledge the man's death before killing Soranzo. He thrusts the sword into Soranzo, who dies. At this point, the Banditti enter and surround the madman, and Giovanni is killed.

The destruction of this society can be attributed to the young lovers' breaking established codes of order. Incest is unnatural; it defies all reason and decorum in society. For Giovanni and Annabella to willingly succumb to their lust and go against the rules of their world was a threat to the very foundation of that world. Destruction and anarchy are the only possible results of such behavior. Huebert offers further commentary on Ford's portraits of madness:
In Ford's...tragedies, resolution of mental conflict is possible only through death. Thus in 'Tis Pity Giovanni's overwhelming love for his sister and the distortion it brings to his whole personality must be resolved through the frightful sequence of incest, jealousy, murder, and suicide. (64)

Hippolita, too, though a minor character in this drama, is a victim of the chaotic world in which she lives. Like Annabella, Giovanni, and Soranzo, Hippolita's situation must be resolved by her destruction.

Unlike Annabella, Hippolita is unable to maintain her composure when confronted with the cruelties of the patriarchy. Having been defiled by the unscrupulous Soranzo, Hippolita confronts him from her fallen state:

Thy sensual rage of blood hath made my youth
A scorn to men and angels; and shall I
Be now a foil to thy unsated change?

And shall the conquest of my lawful bed,
My husband's death urged on by his disgrace,
My loss of womanhood, be ill-rewarded
With hatred and contempt? (II,ii,29-42)
By this adulterous relationship, similar to the incestuous relationship of the main plot, Hippolita has lost her standing in society. She has cuckolded her husband, and he has left her to believe he has perished at sea. Full of rage, Hippolita confronts her lover, and Soranzo dismisses the woman, "You are past all rules of sense" (II, ii, 61). Here, Hippolita's unrestrained, unreasonable tone provides Soranzo with the opportunity to cast her off as a distraught woman. Hippolita is not satisfied with this exchange, however, and she resolves to have her revenge on the man.

Hippolita's anger at having been used and wronged in her adulterous love affair consumes her. After confronting Soranzo, she begins to plot her course of action against him, joining forces with Vasques. Hippolita appears as a masquer at the wedding celebration of Soranzo and Annabella. When she unmaskes, much to the surprise of all attending the banquet, Hippolita speaks to Soranzo and Annabella with the façade of acceptance:

What Parma long rumoured of us both:
Let rash report run on; the breath that vents it
Will, like a bubble, break itself at last.
[To Ann.] But now to you, sweet creature; lend's your hand.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Here take, Soranzo, take this hand from me.

I'll once more join what by the holy Church
Is finished and allowed: have I done well? (IV,i,43-53)

Hippolita offers a toast to the couple, intending to poison Soranzo. Vasques, however, interferes with her plan, and Hippolita drinks from the poisoned cup and dies. Again, woman's efforts are destroyed by the male members of this society. Not only was Hippolita deceived by Soranzo with the initial relationship, but she was then duped by Soranzo's servingman as she attempted to avenge the wrongdoing.

The madness in this case evidences itself in Hippolita's relentless quest for revenge upon Soranzo. While Hippolita willingly submitted to the adulterous affair and cuckolded her husband, she was led to despair by Soranzo when he refused to marry her. The violated woman is of little value in the play's society and in Renaissance England as well. Hippolita has little choice but to attempt to right the wrongs done to her by the male members of her world. She is affected by the cruelties and injustices of her world after her initial defiance, and she loses all sense of reason when Soranzo shuns her. Unlike Annabella, Hippolita adopts an active...
role in the punishment of her misleader, but, perhaps
because she allies with a man in her attempt as did
Beatrice Joanna, her attempt to use power to her
advantage is destroyed.

Ford's presentation of madness and of the events
leading to characters' loss of reason provides a valuable
commentary on the disruption of established order. The
punishment for Giovanni's unnatural sexual behavior is
insanity, and death merely serves as a relief to his
inner torment. With the perversion of the sibling
relationship, disorder and confusion can be the only
outcome. Ford poignantly dramatizes the effects of the
couple's subversive relationship with a lesson to all
who view the play. Likewise, the irrationality of
Hippolita offers a lesson to viewers as well. Woman is
vulnerable. Not only does she have little power over her
status in society, she is unable to control the events
that befall her, and she is usually unable to rise above
her fallen state.

Portraits of insanity like those discussed are only
a small part of the representation of madness and its
effects in Renaissance literature. Thomas Dekker's The
Honest Whore Part I includes vignettes of madmen and the
play's final scenes take place in an insane asylum.
Countless plays examine the concept of "humor" characters
and detail the lives of individuals who possess extreme
personality traits. Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* includes the character of Morose, who cannot endure any noise whatsoever save the sound of his own voice. Shakespeare explored the manifestation of insanity in numerous plays. Ophelia, in *Hamlet*, falls prey to the insensitivities of the men controlling her life. *Julius Caesar*’s Portia succumbs to the strains of the patriarchy and commits suicide.

The dramatization of various psychological ailments during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries sometimes provides comic relief to weighty themes being presented on stage, but the majority of the accounts are frighteningly true. Weighing the historical accounts of the treatment of the insane against the literature of the Renaissance shows the realism of the writings. Madmen were turned into spectacles during the age and were treated as less than human and, given the treatment of women in the society at large, the treatment of psychologically ill women was often deplorable. Women were often locked away in asylums to keep them quiet and out of the way so that the males with whom they were associated could continue to function in their social scripts. Moreover, madness in women was consistently viewed as a weakness: the effect of a frail mind or proof of a woman's inferiority to the stronger men.
The literature of the period, however, presents a slightly skewed version of this perception of female insanity. Female insanity was not depicted uniformly by the playwrights of the age. Women were victimized, in the dramas, by a controlling society, and they reacted in different ways to the destructive forces of the patriarchal model. Women in the dramas were not physically or psychologically predisposed to a weak mind. They might succumb to the madness surrounding them, but often they found the strength of character to resist the chaotic worlds in which they existed.
Those Crazy Scots: Madness and Transformation in the Ballad Tradition of Scotland

An examination of insanity in the ballad poetry of Scotland. The ballad tradition commonly includes characters who change their physical bodies, transforming into beings who possess supernatural powers. Individuals who suffer extensive traumas in chaotic worlds often find themselves transformed into wandering lunatics as a means of coping with uncontrollable circumstances.
The cause of insanity is an issue that has evaded professionals for centuries. The long-present Nature-Nurture debate has served as an intriguing basis for discussion both among mental health professionals and the community at large. At best, we can identify the erratic behaviors associated with psychosis as attempts to regulate and control an environment, either internal or external, that is out of control. Oftentimes the onset of psychotic behavior is unexpected and unexplainable. Seemingly out of nowhere, the middle-aged businessman begins to display self-defeating behaviors. He leaves his wife; he neglects his appearance; he begins to drink heavily and fails to make his way home at night. The teenage girl begins to be hypervigilant about her own food consumption; she gorges herself and then induces vomiting; perhaps she stops eating altogether. The thirtysomething man grows suspicious of his environment as well as of his relatives and friends. He quits his job because he
believes the office equipment is watching him. He refuses to eat because he believes the food is poisoned. Televisions and radios deliver exclusive messages to him via the air waves. The precise causes of these behaviors cannot be identified. Why do certain individuals react in positive, adaptive ways to adverse situations and others fail to react in socially acceptable manners?

Another long-standing query is whether life imitates art or art, life. For the Scots working in a developing ballad tradition and for many early poets, the art they created was a reflection of the life they observed. The themes present within the ballads reflect the day-to-day concerns and activities of the Scots people. Madness, therefore, could not help but crop up in the tales of the country. The depiction of insanity in the ballads was reflective of real-life situations. A more-or-less logical situation would be presented and then concluded with the decompensation of a character: a transformation to a state of madness.

So as to thoroughly appreciate this theme in the ballad tradition of Scotland, an understanding of the place of the ballad in society is helpful. Hence, a summary of the evolution of the ballad and of the popular subjects and themes of the lore follows.

Traced back as far as the Middle Ages in Europe, the story songs known as ballads have provided the foundation
for modern poetry. When and where the tradition began is a long-standing mystery to scholars of the field. According to MacEdward Leach, it is "conventional for scholars to accept "Judas" as the earliest ballad on record in English. It is to be found in a manuscript of the thirteenth century." However, Leach continues:

If we accept 'Judas' as authentic narrative folk song, i.e., ballad, we still cannot say that its manuscript date represents the date of its composition or that it was the first ballad....

Leach highlights the first problem in working with the tradition of balladry in Scotland: no exact time frame can be identified with the works, nor can any authorship be granted where the works are concerned.

The foundation for scholars' conclusions regarding the content of popular ballads is more concrete than the clues leading to the dating of the poetry. The simple melody of the folk story songs embody the popular subjects of the folk cultures as well as the styles of communication popular in those cultures:

Ballads are of the stuff that was the general concern of people living in homogeneous, semi-isolated groups: the folk of the glens and of the rural parishes. Ballads were made of the
intellectual and emotional stock of lore of such people and were made because such people were interested in this stock of lore...ballads are local and realistic in their content.  

Unlike most contemporaneous poetry, the ballad often focuses on a single situation and not on a series of successive events, and "the action is always vivid and dramatic and often romantic as well. Often it is sensationalized into the melodramatic."  

As the tradition of balladry grew more widespread, characters evolved into archetypal figures, appearing in multiple ballads. Likewise, to promote this universal appreciation, the setting of the ballad was general and static, easily transferable to almost any region of the country in which the story was told. Themes of ballads were implied rather than explicitly stated so as to allow for cultural and social differences in the listeners.  

Leach finds the identification of popular ballad themes somewhat difficult, as much of the tradition has been lost in the process of transcribing the tales from their oral roots. Popular themes of the Scottish ballads include religion and romance:  

Through the Middle Ages, the great cycles of romance developed, each with hundreds of stories; but although ballads teem with
knights and kings and princes and ladies, few make use of romance story....The great body of Arthurian romance is represented by only three or four ballads...Many romances treat of lovers and many balads do, but nowhere in ballad do we find love stories...  

Indeed, the scarcity of religious and romantic themes in these works is attributed to the limited access to original, authentic ballads. The discussion of madness in ballads may also be limited by the difficulties in locating specific works and the problems in transcribing stories. In their discussions of ballads, neither Leach nor Buchan isolates madness as a specific theme in the tradition. Nonetheless, numerous ballads include incidents of insanity, and this discussion will examine the significance of madness in the poetry and its relevance to audience members.

The idea of superstition may also be identified in several of the ballads:

One of the largest groups of ballads is that embodying old oral tales, folk tales, old beliefs and superstitions. Some of the oldest ballads are to be found in this group. The belief in fairies was common among the folk through the eighteenth
century....Naturally such fairy lore found its way into ballad as did the lore of other supernatinal creatures like the etin, mermaid, Billie Blin, the laily worm.

The presence of supernatural elements in these fictions enabled their tellers to create situations entirely beyond the realm of human experience. While the characters of the ballads were realistic, the events befalling them often were not.

Ballads not only entertained audiences, they served to educate them as well. Ballads explained various social non-conformities to individuals and warned them of the dangers of subversive behaviors. Popular subjects such as those identified by Leach and Buchan were easily exaggerated and sensationalized to capture the attention and imaginations of individuals. Characters' frailties were magnified in these story songs, and the destruction of ostensibly innocent beings served to enlighten the people regarding proper behaviors.

Closely linked with the occurrence of the preternatural in the ballad, the idea of transformation is a popular facet of the works:

Belief in transformation was also a general part of folklore; consequently ballads tell of human beings transformed by wizards, witches, or cruel stepmothers into various
loathsome creatures to be restored by one who dares to kiss them or perform other unspelling deeds.9

Surely, the most convenient means by which one might escape undesirable circumstances is to metamorphoze into another body or being. Tam Lin is a prime example of the event of transformation in these poems; from his altered state, Janet can transform him back to his human form and thus Tam Lin can escape the seven-year sentence in the land of the fairies. The superhuman capabilities of ballad characters cut through the initial believability of the works. The surrounding elements of realism in the songs, the true-to-life persons and realistic settings, and the realistic thought processes of the characters contribute to the overall feelings of potentiality in the works. Indeed, anything becomes possible in the ballads of Scotland.

Madness, in the ballad, is another type of transformation. The frail or innocent character is unable to endure the events that befall him and inevitably runs mad through the glen or engages in behaviors typical of the insane. The transformation thus occurs from a state of innocence within the community to one of experience, and harsh reality forces the innocent into a world of solitude and isolation. Transformation generally takes
place in an attempt to remove oneself from or to rise above an unsatisfactory situation.

In "Tam Lin," the transformation occurs when Tam Lin resolves to escape from the land of the fairies. He informs Janet of his intended disguise among the other fairies so she may recognize him and aid him in his break out: he will become a newt, adder, bear; lion, red-hot iron, and burning bundle of sticks in his journey from the underworld. This journey can not be made in the form of a mortal, and the fairies create the alteration in his appearance. He is not mad; however, his identity is sacrificed in this competition for Tam Lin's freedom:

'And pleasant is the fairy land,

But, an eerie tale to tell,

Ay at the end of seven years

We pay a tiend to hell;

I am sae fair and fu o flesh,

I'm feared it be myself.10

In the ballads of madness, the transformation occurs within states of the mind. As with humans, psychotic behavior in ballad characters is the direct result of situations the individual feels are beyond his control. A product of those circumstances, the victim then loses all self control and rational thought.

"Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet" is an interesting example of the event of madness in the Scottish ballad.
Briefly told, the tale is one of competition between two brothers who each pursue the same lady. The first of the men pursues the lady in a traditional gentlemanly way, gaining the respect of her family. Chiel Wyet, on the other hand, engages in a less-respectable form of courtship:

Lord Ingram wood her Lady Maisery
Into her father's ha;
Chiel Wyet wood her Lady Maisery
Amang the sheets so sma.11

Because of his courteous approach, Lord Ingram wins the respect of Lady Maisery's father and is granted permission to wed the fair one. The event of the "happily ever after" is stunted, however, when Lord Ingram learns the truth regarding his bride:

When mass was sung, and bells was rung,
And all men bound for bed,
Then Lord Ingram and Lady Maisery
In one bed they were laid.

When they were laid into their bed--
It was baith soft and warm--
He laid his hand over her side,
Says, I think you are with bairn.
"I told you once, so did I twice
When ye came me to woo,
That Chiel Wyet, your only brother,
One night lay in my bower. 12

At this point, Chiel Wyet enters the bridal bower, enraged with having lost his future wife to his brother. In his fury, Chiel Wyet mortally wounds his brother, but before Ingram expires, he returns the blow. The lady is then the only living presence within the room, and the narrator comments:

There was no pity for that two lords,
Where they were lying slain;
But all was for her Lady Maisery,
In that bower she gaed brain.

There was no pity for that two lords,
When they were lying dead;
But all was for her Lady Maisery,
In that bower she went mad. 13

Thus altered by this harsh reality, she sees no other choice but to leave the scene of her wronging, and she flees for a life of poverty and begging.

Walter Cannon first discussed the occasion of the "fight or flight" response "involving the autonomic nervous system (and) termed the 'fight or flight'
pattern...either in fleeing danger or subduing an agressor. 

14 In other words, the threatened individual will either endure a situation and attempt to overcome those adversities associated with the events, or he will flee the scene and detach himself from all responsibility for and association with the happenings. This flight may include an internal detachment, today known perhaps as depression, schizophrenia, or catatonia. Lady Maisery chooses to leave the scene, unable to bear the events which had taken place or the life she would henceforth be destined to live. She has been transformed from a self-assertive innocent who entertains the courtship of various suitors and who dares to speak out against her father's choice of husband for her to a madwoman who wanders begging through the land.

Another ballad, entitled "Ebbé Skammelson," entertains a similar story line, though the exact incidents leading to psychological decompensation are contrary to those of the preceeding ballad. Here, Ebbé brings the "gentle Adelaide," his intended wife, to the house of his mother; she is to wait for his return from abroad where he will make his fortune. In Ebbé's absence, and with the help of his interfering mother, his brother, Peter, weds Adelaide. Ebbé dreams of the events and returns home. He threatens to kill his brother and finds Adelaide opposed to running away with him:
"And though your brother you should kill,  
You would not gain my love,  
For I should grieve myself to death,  
As on her bough the dove."

To hear her Ebbé Skammelson  
With anger fiercely frown'd,  
And muttering vengeance on them both  
Stamp'd wildly on the ground.  

In his agitation, Ebbé slays both Adelaide and Peter and continues on to wound his father and mother:  
But as young Peter Skammelson  
From banquet hall withdrew,  
His brother cleft his head in twain,  
And him so fouly slew.  

Great was the grief in bridal house,  
And great the hall's dismay,  
For dead were bride and bridegroom both,  
E'en on their wedding day.  

His father got a grievous wound,  
His mother miss'd a hand;  
And Ebbé Skammelson must forth  
A vagrant from the land.  

48
Ebbe's rage and inability to accept the events befalling him result in a veritable wedding-day massacre. Unlike the madwoman in the previous ballad, Ebbé attempts the fight response, but his resolute self-absorption brings about no better situation:

His brother, murderously slain,

And gentle bride lay dead,

And far and wide must Ebbé roam,

And beg his daily bread.17

Once an ambitious, hard-working family man, Ebbé, like the madwoman of "Lord Ingram and Chiel Wyet," is transformed into a wandering beggar. Like that fair maiden, his state is the result of a love affair gone wrong. Although his response to the circumstances varies from the previous, the final outcome remains the same. The jilted lover often turns his rage upon himself.

The madness of "Sweet Willie and Fair Maisry" is connected with a marriage ceremony, though the events are dissimilar to those of the last ballad. The covert love affair of Willie and Maisry is threatened by Maisry's father, who designates the marriage day of his daughter. Willie then arranges to have Maisry brought to the greenwood, where she gives birth to their son. Willie takes the child to his own mother and then returns to Maisry to bring her to her father's house, where she will
that day be wed to another. Maisry attempts to hide her sin, and with the help of the faithful Sweet Willie, her secret goes almost unnoticed. Maisry attempts to dance at her wedding—the true test of her innocence—and Willie offers to be her partner:

She hadna well gane thro' the reel,
Nor yet well on the green,
Till she fell down at Willie's feet
As cauld as ony stane.

Then Willie lifted up his foot,
And dang him down the stair;
And brake three ribs o' the bridegroom's side,
And a word he spake nae mair.

Na meen was made for that lady,
When she was lying dead;
But a' was for him, sweet Willie,
On the fields, for he ran mad.18

While Maisry maintains a stubborn façade of innocence, Willie remains loyal to his love. Yet, when the fair lady falls dead at his feet, the cruel world is more than he can stand. Willie lashes out at the innocent bridegroom and then falls silent. The character is metamorphosed
from a faithful lover to a silenced madman who runs through the fields. There is no reason for his staying at the bridal festivities, as they are only a reminder of his fallen state. This destruction of true love cuts to the heart of Willie, and he loses all hold on reality.

"Lady Isabel" shows a departure from the madness-and-marriage connection. In this ballad, Lady Isabel's stepmother accuses the young innocent of being her father's whore. Isabel attempts to diffuse the suspicions of her stepmother, and then flees to the church for some contemplation. In the church, Isabel asks the Virgin Mary for advice concerning the situation. Mary tells her to drink the wine to be offered by the woman:

Your bed is made in a better place
Than ever her's will be,
And ere ye're cauld into the room,
Ye will be there wi' me.19

So Isabel drinks of the poisoned wine, dies, and goes to heaven:

My bed is in the heavens high,
Amang the angels fine;
But yours is in the lowest hell,
To drie torment and pine.

Nae moan was made for Lady Isabel,
In bower where she lay dead;
But a' was for that ill woman,
In the fields mad she gaed.²⁰

Again, a conversion occurs where the self-promoting stepmother, once willing to do anything to advance her own cause, is ultimately a roving madwoman. According to the notes of F. J. Child, "everything militates against the young and the fair."²¹ Indeed, the youth dies, but the elder woman is subjected to an existence of inner chaos, knowing that she is destined for hell. This madness, unlike the others discussed, results from an excess of pride and ambition. The step-mother is unable to sway circumstances to her advantage, obliterates all opposition to her achieving her goals (the goal being the favor of her husband) and then adopts drastic measures to bring about the results she desires. While the step-mother can alter the situation on earth by obliterating her competition (i.e. her step-daughter), the events that occur in the life after death are beyond her control and against her favor.

"Willie and Lady Maisry" resumes the popular theme of the association between jilted lovers and madness. In this tale, Sweet Willie disrupts the slumber of Lady Maisry to enter her bedroom without the notice of her father. Maisry soon notices blood dripping from Willie's brand and questions him. The lover tells her that he had slain a wolf on his way to see her that
evening. Presently, Lady Maisry's father awakes and notices the situation of his property:

My gude house cock, my only son,
Heir ower my land sae free;
If ony ruffian hae him slain,
High hanged shall he be, my dear,
High hanged shall he be! 22

Maisry's father enters the room of his daughter to find her and Willie side by side, locked in an embrace and fast asleep:

Then he's drawn out a trusty brand,
And strok'd it o'er a stray;
And thro' and thro' sweet Willie's middle
He's gart cauld iron gae, my dear,
He's gart cauld iron gae. 23

Waking with this gruesome act, Maisry begins to weep and then learns of the actions of her lover the night before upon attempting to gain entrance to her dwelling place:

This night he's slain my gude bold watch,
Thirty stout men and twa;
Likewise he's slain your ae brother,
To me was worth them a' my dear,
To me was worth them a'. 24

Upon hearing this, Maisry embarks upon a strain of justifications for the behavior of her now-dead lover, postulating that her brother had contrived plots against
Willie in order to have him slain, and that the thirty-two guardsmen were at fault for attempting an attack upon Willie when they clearly outnumbered him. After this denial of Willie's guilt, Maisry's metamorphosis is complete:

Nae meen was made for this young knight;
In bower where he lay slain;
But a' was for sweet Maisry bright,
In fields where she ran brain, my dear,
In fields where she ran brain.25

She is no longer the innocent young lover who took pleasure in clandestine love relationships and who naively believed the ready story offered by her lover. The events that take place in her very arms serve to open the eyes of the youth and change her perception of the world. She finds remaining in the house of her father an unendurable task, and she thus flees the area a ranting lunatic.

The Scots were not immune from such behavioral absurdities. Through the tradition of balladry, we see the almost-common event of madness in the lives of the folk, and we see a sampling of the situations leading to this derangement. Dementia follows scenes that prove particularly traumatic for the affected character; often these scenes are of slain lovers. As with modern, true-to-life beings, these characters find themselves unable to endure the traumas, and they degenerate to a state of
insanity. The assertive character falls to the status of beggar, dependent upon society for his or her existence. The final picture of the madman is one of wild abandon and of a conversion and reduction in character.

Ballads were first created for the entertainment of groups of peoples and individuals through oral presentation. The fantastical situations of wedding massacres, mass murders, and murderous stepmothers would maintain the attention of nearly any audience. The key question, then, is for what purpose these madness ballads were created: whether to warn or instruct or perhaps even horrify the listeners. All these answers seem feasible. Through the representation of insanity in this sampling of ballads, we see the art of sensationalizing at its best. The action is vivid, quick paced, and exceeds the limits of probable occurrence. The thread running through all the aforementioned ballads, with perhaps the exception of "Lady Isabel," is that of the victim's innocence. Lady Maisery, because of her feminine frailty and subservience, has very little defense against the sexual encounter with Chiel Wyet, and she therefore must witness the killing of both her husband and her lover. Ebbé Skammelson is all but forced from his bridal house after his brother takes advantage of his absence and weds Ebbé's fiancé. Sweet Willie's only sin is in loving his Lady Maisry, and then attempting to protect her from the harshness of her
father. The third Maisry of our sequence had nothing to
do with Willie's criminal acts as she had no control over
his actions, and her sensitivity to the situation causes
her madness in the end of the poem.

The events of these ballads are not completely
contrived. One need only to peruse a modern-day newspaper
to learn of widespread massacres and human deception. The
balladiers of Scotland embraced these newsworthy
circumstances, bringing them to life in their art through
harsh and pathetic situations. Perhaps one senses an
overall warning in these works: a warning that much of
life and its situations is beyond our control and that the
individuals with whom we surround ourselves have the
capacity to do us unwieldy psychological and physical
harm. A final hope, then, answers the question posed
earlier in this discussion regarding the sequence in
representations of art and life. The hope is, at least in
the ballad tradition of Scotland, that art is imitating
and then sensationalizing the events of life and that
humans are somehow astute enough to find the self-control
to avoid such situations presented in the poems.
Notes


3 Leach 28.

4 Leach 11-12.

5 Leach 1.

6 For further information regarding the history of Scottish poetry, see Buchan, Peter, *Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland* vol. 1-2 (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1875).

7 Leach 11.

8 Leach 12.

9 Leach 12.


thorough compilation of ballad poems. All ballads included in this paper are printed in Child's extensive collection.

12Child.
13Child.


15Child.
16Child.
17Child.
18Child.
19Child.
20Child.
21Child n297.
22Child.
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24Child.
25Child.
WORKS CONSULTED

Mad Women, Mad World:

The Depiction of Madness in Renaissance Drama

WORKS CONSULTED

Those Crazy Scots: Madness and Transformation in the Ballad Tradition of Scotland


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