

COMPARING NEW WORLD TRADITIONS: APPALACHIAN BALLADRY AND THE
MEXICAN CORRIDO

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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Ballad traditions of Appalachia and Mexico may seem dissimilar at a first glance but the growing Mexican population in the region begs a closer comparison. This work compares Appalachian balladry and the Mexican *corrido* on the U.S. border in several ways. First, how both traditions developed in the New World from a shared European ballad tradition, how both regions have been described as cultural borderlands, and the historic and rapidly increasing presence of Mexicans in Appalachia. Second, how their lyrics of femicide seemingly reinforce patriarchal values but can be used by singers as means to discuss cultural values. Third, how the two traditions have been shaped by conflict to produce dialectic or oppositional themes and forms; border corridos being shaped by conflict between ethnic groups, and protest songs by Kentucky ballad singers being shaped by class conflict. These conflicts of gender, class, and ethnicity are more often than not inter-related. Finally, how these similarities and continuing in-migration might suggest the incorporation of the corrido into the region's musical practices. Through examination of ballad text,

summary of ballad scholarship, and interviews with North Carolina ballad singers Sheila Kay Adams and Rick Ward I argue that beyond the symbolic uses related to conflict and oppression proclaimed by scholars, ballad singing provides a safe and sometimes discrete way for singers to discuss and interpret cultural values or express personal emotions in ways that words cannot.

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Introduction

Across Southern Appalachia interesting and sometimes surprising events are occurring. The Veterans Memorial Park in Mt. Airy, North Carolina (home to the Mt. Airy Fiddlers Convention, a popular destination for old-time musicians) features “no smoking” signs in both English and Spanish, and was the site of a Latino Festival in 2007 that featured Mexican music and Latino foods. Johnson City, Tennessee (site of Columbia’s famous Johnson City sessions that produced influential recordings like Clarence “Tom” Ashley’s “The Coo Coo”) holds its own annual Latino festival. Travelling mariachi musicians are performing in Western North Carolina, Appalachian Virginia, West Virginia, and elsewhere. These events and their foods, music, and other folk practices might seem a stark contrast to the bluegrass, old-time music, cornbread, and white hillbillies that are often popularly associated with the Appalachian Mountains but reflect an increasingly true reality.

In the past few decades immigration to Southern Appalachia has dramatically impacted the demographic makeup of the region. As elsewhere in the Southeast, Latino immigrants are changing the cultural landscape of the Mountain South. These mostly Mexican immigrants are bringing their own language, foodways, religious, musical, and other cultural traditions to a region with already distinct cultural traditions, which may challenge conceptions of Appalachian culture. As musical and other traditions are being adapted, incorporated, disrupted, or preserved in this new landscape, the increasing presence of popular musical forms like the Mexican *corrido* (ballad) should be examined in an Appalachian context. In this vein, this work compares Appalachian balladry and the Mexican

corrido on the U.S. border in several ways. First, how both traditions developed in the New World from a shared European ballad tradition, how both regions have been described as cultural borderlands, and the historic and rapidly increasing presence of Mexicans in Appalachia. Both of these borderlands have arguably been the home to oppressed peoples who have developed oppositional perspectives reflected in ballads that express three types of conflict: gender, ethnic, and class conflict. Second, how their lyrics of femicide and apparent gender conflict seemingly reinforce patriarchal values but can be used by singers as a means to discuss cultural values or even a coded critique thereof. Third, how the two traditions have been shaped by conflict to produce dialectic or oppositional themes and forms: border corridos being shaped by conflict between ethnic groups (inter-ethnic conflict), and protest songs by Kentucky ballad singers being shaped by class conflict (intra-ethnic conflict). Just as the border corrido may be seen as a subset of the “Greater Mexican Corrido” throughout Mexico, among the Old and New World ballads traditions found through the Southern Appalachians in places like North Carolina and Kentucky, we may also call the coalfield protest song of Eastern Kentucky a subset of the larger ballad tradition. Finally, I summarize how these similarities and continuing in-migration might suggest the incorporation of the corrido into the region’s musical practices. My analysis relies on examination of ballad texts, synthesis of existing academic discussion, and original qualitative research to attempt to determine if practical performance by musicians corresponds to the symbolic uses proclaimed by scholars; do current practitioners of these traditions see folksong as containing

themes of collective or individual resistance, and negotiation or critique of unequal power structures?

The popular ballad has a long oral history in Europe and was alive and well in Spain and Great Britain and Ireland at the time of the European colonization of the Americas. The *romance*, or Spanish ballad, was brought to the Americas through Spanish conquest and settlement, and likewise the English-language ballad was brought to North America from the British Isles by the Scots-Irish and other English-speaking settlers. For generations these European ballads were preserved and adapted by the oral traditions of the two regions. Not only do the New World ballad traditions of Mexico and Appalachia draw from their respective Old World or European heritages, but the Spanish *romance* and British ballad traditions also overlap in corpus. In Spain one could find ballads of Lancelot alongside Castilian epics, and even some songs from Britain and Spain with parallel narratives or structures survived the voyage across the Atlantic. In Mexico as in Appalachia folksingers began to compose their own New World or “Native American” songs based on the old European forms, and reshaped the simple, un-embellished, narrative style of the ballad to explore the new subjects, lifestyles, and events that developed in the new continent. The corrido, like the *romance* and the Child ballad uses a third-person narration that advances mostly through dialogue, while the newer American ballad may use first-person narration as in “Banks of the Ohio”, “Little Sadie”, “Darling Cora”, etc.

Part of this shared heritage of Mexican and Appalachian balladry is the presence of ballad lyrics said to be consistent with patriarchal cultural values and the subordinate status

of women. Vivid depictions of violence and death are common and there is a tendency for violence in ballads to be directed towards women. Indeed, in both European Child ballads and American ballads, when women are depicted they frequently fall victim to murder by a lover. Likewise femicide and intimate violence is common in the *romance* and the *corrido*, wherein women are usually “cast” in supporting roles if they appear at all. To many fans and scholars these songs represent a patriarchal culture that implicitly teaches negative or disempowering messages to women. For others, they can be used as positive didactic tools or ways to positively reinterpret messages. However, both ballad traditions do contain songs of “warrior women” or *mujeres bravas* (“fierce women”) that invert this relationship. Nevertheless, while balladry may function as a means of reinforcing norms of the 19th and early 20th century patriarchy, according to the theory of Radner and Langer it also can serve as a coded means of critique of those same structures. In many instances women have been the tradition-bearers of ballad singing, and in some communities, woman singers have used these seemingly negative songs as forms of empowerment or resistance. In this discussion I draw heavily from interviews with Western North Carolina ballad singers Sheila Kay Adams and Rick Ward to show how they interpret the messages or lessons to be learned from ballads as didactic experiences or cautionary tales.

Among the “greater Mexican corrido” (corridos found throughout Mexico and other culturally Mexican areas), scholars have long distinguished the “border corrido” from the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Perhaps the most common of border corridos are those of inter-ethnic conflict, which criticize the poor and often unjust treatment of Mexicans and Mexican-

Americans by Anglo-Americans. In these corridos there is an overwhelming theme of defiance and resistance, usually an individual standing up for his own rights against unlawful or unjust treatment by American authority. Indeed, traditional scholarship has painted the social and political interactions between Anglo-Americans and Mexicans to be laden with conflict, which created a particular atmosphere that became extremely influential in the development of the border corrido tradition. Manuel Peña calls this the “dialectic of conflict”, or a clash of ideological, economic, class, and racial forces that served as a main creative influence in the various musical traditions of the Southwest. Scholars like Americo Parades have described corridos like “Gregorio Cortez” and “Joaquin Murrieta” as a form of symbolic and cultural resistance against violence or unlawful treatment. In these ballads, heroic figures defend the rights of themselves and their communities in opposition to mistreatment by Anglo-Americans.

Considering the majority white, English-speaking (though certainly not ethnically homogenous) population of Appalachia, its narrative songs of conflict are better viewed through the lens of *intra*-ethnic conflict, or conflict among members of the same ethnicity based on social or economic class differences. Nevertheless, the region has fostered its own dialectic of conflict: the frequent and often bloody strikes in these areas have led to the composition of many songs that take this hostile and dialectic view, in most cases viewing the union workers oppressed socially and economically by the coal companies. Kentucky singers like Florence Reece, “Aunt” Molly Jackson and Sarah Ogan Gunning utilized the unaccompanied ballad tradition to compose new songs about class conflict which likewise

have been labelled by scholars as forms of collective resistance. Songs like “Which Side Are You On”, most famously, use similar oppositional forms to critique perceived injustice. Unlike the corrido, however, they make a much more direct call to action. This call to arms can be seen though, in corridos composed by Mexican-Americans for pro-union purposes such as “*Que viva la nación*” (That the Nation May Live), which I propose as prophetic of the musical hybridity that may come to pass in Appalachia.

Method and Terminology

In summary, this research utilizes collected ballad texts as primary sources and secondary academic works to highlight similar narratives of resistance to what some see as exploitation by mainstream America, as well as other shared themes. This analysis is supplemented by semi-formal interviews with local Appalachian ballad singers. These two participants were recruited in person and by phone. After obtaining consent, subjects were asked to participate in a semi-structured personal interview. Interviews were given in person at a time and location of the participant’s choosing. For the purpose of clarification, I will now define some terms that I will use throughout this work.

I will use the term *The Southwest* to describe the states in the Southwestern United States that were formerly possessed by Mexico: Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. By *U.S.-Mexico borderland*, or simply *the borderland* or *the border*, I refer to the aforementioned states as well as those adjacent in northern Mexico: Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas.

For the sake of consistency with current scholarship I will use the term *Appalachia* in accordance with the 420 counties designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

The term *Hispanic* was coined by the federal government for census purposes and refers to individuals with “ancestral ties to the Spanish cultural diaspora”, including Spain. In contrast, the term *Latino* refers to individuals from any culture in Latin America, including non-Spanish –speaking countries like Brazil. At the expense of excluding individuals from Spain and Brazil, I will use the terms interchangeably to refer to any Spanish-speaking peoples of the Americas.

According to Banker (2000) the term *Anglo* is used by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to refer to white, mainstream Americans. I will use the term to refer to any native white, English-speaking persons in the United States.

*

Ultimately, this work focuses on three types of conflict: gender, ethnic, and class. Moreover, how these conflicts have generated oppositional structures in ballad traditions. These oppositional forms can be said to be a result of the second-class or subordinate status of three groups: Mexican-Americans in white, mainstream society; women in “traditional” gender roles; and the lower-class in a class-based society. Conflict has overwhelmingly framed the study of the border corrido and the protest songs of Central Appalachia, but no study has viewed both traditions under this same lens. Additionally, these North American ballad traditions influenced in part by European forms share social themes in their depictions of real-life tragedies, murders, and other historical events, as well as common motifs of brave

and murdered men and women, as well as “bad men” like bandits, smugglers, and other outlaws. Both regions have been defined as borderlands, which by definition are characterized by new hybrid social spaces and cultural practices. Scholars have even linked ballads of conflict on the U.S.-Mexico border to ballads of the English-Scottish border. Like the U.S.-Mexico border, Appalachia has a long history as a cultural borderland with global connections that has been home to multiple ethnic groups. Now it can be seen as a new borderland of modern globalization in terms of its profound demographic changes. Between 1980 and 2000 census data shows that the Hispanic population of Appalachia tripled to nearly 465,000. Between 2000 and 2010 this number doubled. Mexicans are the largest subgroup in Appalachia, comprising 55% of the Hispanic population. These migrants are bringing new cultures to communities with distinct cultural traditions, as well as adapting their own social practices like music and religion as they integrate into American society. Furthermore they are arriving in new areas of Appalachia that have not experienced significant immigration in the past, or counties that have experienced significant out-migration. Mexican music may soon enter into the conversation of what “Appalachian music” is. Conversely, folk music once thought by Cecil Sharp and other scholars to be a marker of Appalachia’s unique Anglo-Saxon heritage has been revealed to come from a variety of heterogeneous ethnic sources. Thus, Appalachian folksong should be examined in a broad national and international context. Scholarship on the incorporation of Southern/Appalachian music into Latino music forms, and comparisons between the

Appalachian ballad and the corrido has grown in recent years but it is still scarce. I hope to bridge this gap with a direct comparison in form, content, and interpretation.

Chapter 1

New World Traditions and the Mexican-Appalachian Connection

"I remember one story that Berzilla told me. She said that the men would not let the women bring flower seeds over here. Cuz they said they'll be flowers over there, we're not gonna load down with a lot of old flowers seeds. So they sowed 'em in the hems of their dresses. When they got over here they took the hems down and that's why you see sweet Williams and English ivy, because they kept it hemmed up in their dress hems. And that's kind of how they brought the songs over, only they were in their hearts".

-Sheila Kay Adams

The Ballad in North America

The popular ballad has a long oral history in Europe and was alive and well in Spain and the British Isles at the time of the European colonization of the Americas. The *romance*, or Spanish ballad, was brought to the Americas through Spanish conquest and settlement, and likewise the English-language ballad was brought to North America from the British Isles by the Scot-Irish, English, and other settlers. For generations these European ballads were preserved in the oral traditions of the two regions (Paredes 1958: 129). These European roots dominated most American ballad scholarship until the mid-twentieth century. Biased by the canon established with folklorist Francis Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, the first scholars of Appalachian music like Cecil Sharp were quick to recognize the old European songs preserved in oral tradition, but largely dismissed the non-“Child” American compositions, especially “bawdy” and religious songs (Ostendorf 2004: 194).

A ballad is most often defined as a narrative song, i.e. one that tells a story. A traditional ballad then, is one that has been learned and passed down through oral tradition or face-to-face imitation outside of the literary or commercial realm. Indeed, scholars often

agree on the three characteristics of oral/aural transmission, communal ownership or rootedness, and cultural longevity as the basic characteristics of traditional balladry and folksong in general. A similarly broad definition might include three types of folksong: “old songs or tunes in any culture (traditional), new ones written in the old style (tradition-like), and new ones written for, by , or about, and accessible to ordinary people, and not necessarily for commercial reasons” (Romalis 160). A practitioner of all three of these types, Kentucky singer Sarah Ogan Gunning says that she composed her own songs “because they were truth about my own life and other people’s at the time” (Ibid: 139). This accessibility often is manifested in its use of everyday rather than overly ornamented poetic language. This simplicity is reflected in the term *corrido*, which comes from the verb *correr* (to run, or to flow) which suggests a quick narrative run-down that flows without the burden of poetically embellished language. This simplicity in language also serves a mnemonic function as ballads, and other popular oral traditions, are said to be bound by a certain subjectivity that is often brief, economical, and delivered in nuggets for easy retention (Broyles-Gonzalez 2001: 203).

The simple structure and quotidian language of the ballad are essential to its widespread accessibility. Its use of simple format, everyday language, and familiar images, motifs, and phrases (often commonplace) speaks to its survival as an easily accessible popular medium. It is important to note that ballads have long existed as an oral tradition separate from writing and can serve as an important mode of communication and entertainment to groups that may be illiterate, without access to formal education, or

otherwise marginalized. This universal aspect has allowed the ballad to remain a cross-cultural medium that can be accessed regardless of social class or educational background. However, compared to the English language ballad, the corrido does have somewhat of a more formalized structure. Both most often use four-to-six line stanzas, but the corrido is almost always octosyllabic and uses assonant rhyme. While the English-language ballad is more irregular in its meter, it does use accentual verse: i.e. a fixed number of stresses per line regardless of the number of syllables. This “ballad meter” is often a line of four stresses followed by a line of three (Abrahams & Foss 1968: 62). Even when a song does have a fixed meter, Southern Appalachian singers often use “ornamentations” or alterations that mask any metrical rigidity (*Ibid*: 144). Two more of these formalizations present in nearly every corrido are an initial call that states the place, date, and name of the protagonist or other characters, and the *despedida* or farewell from the *corridista* [corrido composer or singer] (Herrera-Sobek 1993: xix). Some Euro-American folksongs do use introductory formulas such as “Come all ye” or “As I went out” but they are not as ubiquitous. Take for example, the first and last verses from this variant of the corrido of “Mariano Reséndez”:

*Entre las diez y las doce,
Miren lo que se anda hablando,
Éste es Mariano Reséndez
Pasando con su contrabando.*

*Ya con ésta me despido,
Cortando una flor de mayo,
Aquí se acaba cantando
Los versos de don Mariano.*

[Between ten and twelve o’clock, / look what people are saying, / this is Marian Reséndez smuggling his contraband goods. / Now with this I say farewell, / plucking a May flower, / this is the end of the singing of the stanzas about Don Mariano]

Not only do the New World ballad traditions of Mexico and Appalachia draw from their respective Old World or European heritages, but the Spanish *romance* and British ballad traditions also overlap in corpus. In Spain one could find ballads of Lancelot alongside those of the Cid (Iturriaga 1938: 30), and some of these parallel songs from Britain and Spain survived the voyage across the Atlantic. One such example of an identical story and structure can be found in the Appalachian “Four Nights Drunk” (“Our Goodman” Child 274) and the Spanish “*La Blanca Niña*” (“*La Esposa Infiel*”) [The White Girl, or the Unfaithful Wife]. Professor Child himself drew similarities between the two, and gave Spanish equivalents to many ballads in his collection. “Four Nights Drunk” known by various names and collected throughout the Southern Appalachians as well as the British Isles tells of a drunkard who comes home at night to see various out-of-place objects which leads him to believe he is being cheated on, to which his wife reassures him the objects are not of another lover but have been sent by some family member. Take for example this first stanza from Sheila Kay Adams:

“Come here my little wifey,
explain this thing to me,
Now why’s there a horse standing in the stable
where my horse ought to be?”

‘You blind fool, you drunk old fool,
now can’t you plainly see?
That’s only a milk-cow
your granny sent to me.’

Compare this with a stanza from *La esposa infiel*, collected in New Mexico: “*De quién es ese caballo / que en mi corral relinchó? / Tuyo, tuyó, vida mía / mi padre te lo*

mandó” [Who’s is this horse / that neighed in my corral? / ‘Yours, yours, my love / my father sent it to you’] (Espinosa 1953: 62). While in “Four Nights Drunk” the pattern continues to become increasingly explicit and ends in sexually explicit images with no clear climax, in “La esposa infiel” the pattern ends with the husband eventually killing his wife and her lover. Despite the plot differences, the identical theme and structure points to common forms, if not corpus, between English and Spanish ballad traditions.

While these two ballads may merely speak to a universal fear of infidelity that can be more easily explained by evolutionary psychology and independent invention than by interaction between two distinct traditions, commonalities in additional themes and corpus merits a closer consideration. As mentioned earlier, collections of *romances* include a “Briton Cycle” (*ciclo bretón*) that contains ballads centered around King Arthur and his knights, although this apparently had a “scarce influence” on the “national spirit” of Spain (Iturriaga 1938: 30). Paredes himself compared Spanish epic ballads of conflict between Christians and Muslims with Scottish border ballads. However, these types of songs are largely absent in the Appalachian and Mexican ballad corpus. Nevertheless, there is a wealth of songs in both traditions that speak to the same emotions of the human experience. In particular, the often sad and nostalgic expression of the immigrant experience. Indeed, the economic and social conditions of Mexico have prompted many to say goodbye to their families and seek better fortunes in the United States. Many *corridos* deal with the sense of homesickness that comes from the journey across the border. The ballad “*Paso del Norte*”

(The Northern Pass) recounts the lamentations of a *bracero*, or migrant worker, as he crosses the Juarez-El Paso line:

*Qué triste se encuentra el hombre
Cuando anda ausente
Cuando anda ausente
Allá lejos de su patria.*

*Piormente si se acuerda
De sus padres y su chata
¡Ay que destino!
Para sentarme a llorar*

[How sad a man becomes / When he is far away / When he is far away / From his own country. / It is worse when he remembers / His parents and his girl. / What a cruel destiny! / One could sit down and cry!] (Herrera-Sobek 1979: 110-111).

The experience of many of the early European immigrants in America tells the same story. Faced with overpopulation, poverty, or the threat of debtor's prison in Great Britain, many young men sailed to the ports of the New World in hope of a better life. The song "Pretty Saro" expresses the same lamentations of a man leaving his country, family, and lover. Common in North Carolina and elsewhere, it is one of the saddest Appalachian ballads. It is easy to feel the same sense of separation and loneliness in the farewell to family and loved ones, as well as similar lyrics:

When I first came to this country in eighteen and forty-nine,
I saw many fair lovers, but I never saw mine,
I viewed it all around me, and found myself alone,
And me a poor stranger and a long way from home.

Fare thee well to old mother, fare thee well to father too,
I'm going for to ramble this wide world all through,
And when I get weary I'll sit down and cry,
And think of my Saro, pretty Saro my bride. (Sharp 1932: 10)

In Mexico as in Appalachia the Old World ballads survived for generations in the oral tradition, but meanwhile folksingers began to compose their own New World or “Native American” songs (problematic as the term may be) based on the old European forms. Folksingers used the simple, un-embellished, narrative style of the ballad to explore the new subjects, lifestyles, and events that developed in the new continent. Folksongs both old and new were disseminated orally and in print through broadsides (*hoja suelta* in Spanish). In comparison to Old World ballads, in the English-speaking tradition New World songs are more likely to be found in broadsides and use first-person narration. Many songs that use the first-person contain little dialogue and are therefore categorized as “lyric songs”, which focus more on a personal or emotional experience rather than narrative action. However, folk singers usually refer to both ballads and lyric songs like “Pretty Saro” or “The Wagoner’s Lad” with the same term (e.g. “old love songs”), and some songs that do use the first-person are still highly narrative and action-oriented (e.g. “Little Sadie” or “Tom Dula”). The corrido narrator rarely speaks in first-person except for the *despedida*. New World ballads are often more sensationalized or topical like a newspaper article, and countless broadside and strictly oral ballads described real life events and disseminated information about them to the masses and areas without access to print news. As an oral form of mass communication (or form of communication available to the masses), ballads served an important *función noticiero* (news function) before the days of TV or radio and remembered local, national, and international events: “They are poetic compositions in which a story, usually tragic in nature, is told. These are events that stand out to the community, that impact them, and then it turns into an

event that has to be sung so that the rest of the community hears about it” (Palencia 2008). In the minds of corrido fans and musicians, this real-life basis is often a defining characteristic of the genre. According to one fan, “they’re real. All the corridos really happened and that’s why they write them” (Ibid). This tragic tendency is evident in the Appalachian tradition as well. Sheila Kay Adams says that most of the ballads in her repertoire are tragic in nature (Adams 2017), and Rick Ward says that most of his songs culminate in fighting or a chaotic end (Ward 2017). In their songs these end results are caused by love. Indeed in the Appalachian tradition ballads and lovesongs are synonymous. In fact, the word “ballad” was hardly used by singers themselves. “Lovesong” was used to distinguish ballads from sacred songs, although the word “ballet” was often used to refer to the written lyrics of ballads (Patterson 2000: 21). In addition to the most common love aspect, ballad themes are as varied as their composers; common ones include historic events, murders, accidents, or other tragic events. A large percentage of corridos, and a large part of most corrido collections, recount important figures and battles of the Mexican Revolution. There are dozens about Pancho Villa, and ones for every major battle like “*La toma de Zacatecas*” (The Taking of Zacatecas) and “*La toma de Matamoros*” (The Taking of Matamoros). In the Appalachian tradition some of the wars sung about are abstract or long-forgotten, but there are songs that reference the Revolutionary or Civil war like “Texas Rangers” or “Going Across the Mountain”: “I’m going across the mountain to join the boys in blue” (Warner 1984). Local tragedies are also common in both traditions, such as “*Maquina 501*” (Engine 501) which tells of a train that exploded near the town of Nacozari, Sonora, and “Engine 143” or “The

Wreck of the C&O” which describes a train struck by a landslide near Don, Virginia. Interestingly, in both songs the engineer’s mother urges him not to embark on his fatal journey. Violent events and murders are perhaps even more common. The “*Corrido de Arnulfo*” tells of the death of Arnulfo Gonzalez in the border state of Coahuila at the hands of local police after a shootout. The ballad of “Omie Wise”, often called North Carolina’s most widely disseminated folksong in and out of the state, recounts the murder of Naomi Wise of Randolph County by John Lewis. According to many contemporary corrido composers who are continuing the tradition, to invent or “make up” a story is disingenuous and unfaithful to the tradition: “We don’t invent anything. We sing what we hear on the news” (Palencia 2008). Current and past events are clearly important topics in the ballad tradition, and often are found side by side with the older European ballads in the repertoires of ballad-singers.

Mexicans in Appalachia

Like the people of Appalachia who complicate definition as one monolithic cultural or linguistic group, Latinos exist on a spectrum of indigenous American, European, and African influences (Galarza 2006: 194). The ever-increasing Latino population of the United States makes it one the largest Latino populations in the Americas. The Hispanic population nationwide has grown rapidly in the past few decades to 35.3 million in the year 2000. In 2010 these numbers had increased to 50.5 million and 16% of the total population, and are expected to increase to 30% by 2050 (Lugo 2013: 87). Therefore they comprise the largest ethnic minority group in the country (Barcus 2007: 299), Rodriguez-Olmeda 2006: 124). These populations have historically been located in the west, southwest, and large

metropolitan areas. Mexicans make up one of the largest migrant groups in the world, so it's no surprise that they make up the largest group of Latinos in the U.S. at 66% in 2000 (Lugo 2013: 71). In recent decades globalization has increased the demand for labor and economic growth in the Southeast has created new labor opportunities, especially in industries like carpet manufacturing and agricultural industries like orchards and poultry processing.

Change in regional economies shift labor demands which impact the demographic makeup of the labor force. Appalachia, a historically underdeveloped (under-industrialized) region that is experiencing minority migration, reflects broader national and international changes in labor and migration trends. Although it's only in the last several decades that their numbers have grown significantly, Hispanics have been present in central Appalachia since at least the early 20th century. A series of photographs from 1938 in the Library of Congress show a Mexican miner and his family in West Virginia. In 1920 there were 98 Mexicans reported in addition to 320 Hungarians, 233 Italians, 145 Yugoslavians, 100 Poles, 92 Russians, 69 Austrians, 70 Czechoslovakians, and other Europeans in Harlan County, Kentucky (Callahan 2009: 77).

Mexican folksong also references their presence in the Appalachian region. In the 1920s, the Bethlehem Steel Company of Pennsylvania hired Mexican and Texas-Mexicans (*Tejanos*) to work in their factories and mines in the counties around Bethlehem, some of them in Appalachian Pennsylvania (Rodriguez 2015: 76). The song “*Corrido Pensilvania*” or “*Corrido de Pensilvania*” (Ballad of Pennsylvania) describes this trip from Texas to Pennsylvania and gives a clue to Mexican workers in Central Appalachia:

*“El enganchista me dijo,
–No lleves a tu familia
para no pasar trabajos
en el estado de West Virginia–”.*

[The contractor said to me, / “Don’t take your family / so as not to pass up any jobs / in the state of West Virginia] (Ibid: 81).

Apparently, there were other opportunities for Mexican workers in West Virginia. Another variant mentions changing trains in Kentucky. Thus, this corrido evidences Mexicans’ passing through or even working in Central Appalachia, as well as working in northeastern Pennsylvania.

Religious music offers a few other connections between the two regions. In the 19th century American missionaries brought Protestantism to the U.S. Southwest and Mexico. As a result of these missionaries, Mexican-American worship is largely rooted in Anglo-American “frontier religion” which emphasizes rhetorical and emotionally charged preaching, energetic singing, and personal prayer. This same revival tradition that spread throughout the country at this time flourished especially as “plain-folk camp religion” in Appalachia (McCauley 1995: 54). Likewise Hispanic hymnody has a marked American influence. Some Pentecostal hymns come directly from the American South, and even Appalachia (Aponte 2004: 252). As a specific example, a piece of sheet-music for “We Shall Win Appalachia For Jesus” is attributed to Juan M. Isais (a Mexican missionary) and R.C. Savage (an American missionary), who both composed and translated hymns in Spanish and English. Although this hymn does not appear to be published or widely circulated, it helps to shine light on the inter-connectedness of English and Spanish Protestant hymnody in Latin America, Appalachia, and elsewhere in America.

Between 1980 and 2000 census data shows that the Hispanic Population of Appalachia tripled to nearly 465,000. Between 2000 and 2010 this number doubled. In 2015 the number grew to almost 1,200,000. Mexicans are the largest subgroup in Appalachia, comprising 55% of the Hispanic population. Since 1990 Appalachia's ethnic minority population increased beyond the nation's rate, but between 2011 and 2015 minorities made up a smaller percentage of the region's population than the rest of the country. The counties that experienced the most growth are those in peripheral areas near metropolitan centers like Atlanta and Charlotte, and have higher per capita income and economic viability than low-growth counties. High-growth counties are those designated as transitional by the Appalachian Regional Commission (Barcus 2007: 313). Many Appalachian counties are experiencing economic growth like other counties in the Southeast, but median income and poverty rates is still lower in many Appalachian counties. By 2000 the Southern subregion of Appalachia was home to the majority (73%) of Latinos in Appalachia at 339,000. The majority in Southern Appalachia were male, foreign-born, and had a less than high school education. In 2015 Hispanics made up 6.9% of the Appalachian population in North Carolina (Means 2015: 6).

These migrants are bringing new cultures to communities with distinct cultural traditions, as well as adapting their own social practices like music and religion (Barcus 2007: 299, Margolies 2012: 251). Places like Mt. Airy, NC and Galax, Virginia are communities known for their traditional music traditions and festivals that are now home to Latino festivals as well as *tiendas* (Mexican grocery stores) and *taquerias* (taco vendors).

Furthermore they are arriving in new areas of Appalachia that have not experienced significant immigration in the past. Many of these migrants are filling up the “loose” or abandoned spaces in places that have been abandoned or counties that have experienced significant out-migration (Carr and Kefalas 2012: 39, Margolies 2012: 255).

Borderlands

Just what is the difference between a border and a borderland or border culture? In literal terms, the borderlands of Northern Mexico and Southwestern U.S. are defined by the presence of an international border, a physical and political barrier that demarcates and separates the two countries. This border as we know it today is the result of three events in which the United States acquired territory formerly belonging to the republic of Mexico: the 1845 annexation of the Republic of Texas; the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo following the Mexican-American War which ceded the territories of what are now New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California, and which expanded the Texan border 100 miles south from the Nueces River to the Río Grande; and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 which ceded more land in Arizona and New Mexico. The border is often defined by its oppositional nature, or that it is set up “to distinguish *us* from *them*” (Anzaldúa 2007: 25). A popular contemporary corrido by the Grammy-winning Los Tigres del Norte expresses this sentiment: “*América nació libre, el hombre la dividió*” [America was born free, man divided it].

In contrast to the border which is an object that is permanent, dividing, and unchanging, the borderland is a space that is characterized as amorphous, fluid, and ever-

changing: “A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition” (Ibid: 25). Similarly, Noe distinguished a *border* from a *boundary* which in his terms is a “line between inclusion and exclusion”, a political construct that serves to enforce power differentials. By contrast, borders are “cultural phenomena found at the nexus of culture and identity” (597).

Appalachia has functioned at various times as a geographic and symbolic borderland as the American frontier and a space between regions and cultures. Cunningham has argued extensively for Appalachia as a border area populated primarily by oppressed peoples from other borderlands, thus a region with a marked border culture. In his terms, Appalachia is a “third region” that stood as an intermediate frontier and peripheral zone between a “‘civilized’ metropolitan core” and a “‘wild’ outside region” (1987: xxii). He maintains that this conflict has been constant in the ethnic history of Appalachians and their ancestors in the British Isles: e.g. Rome vs. the “savage” Celts, and England vs. the “wild” Highlanders and Irish. Just as the mountains were settled as a buffer zone against the “wild Indians”, the Southwest was settled by Spanish colonists to “pacify” remaining indigenous peoples and deter their encroachment (Paredes 1958). From the pre-Columbian days the Appalachian Mountains were a “transition zone” between East and West and North and South for indigenous peoples. The “Anglicized Celts” of the Scottish lowlands occupied a geographic and symbolic space between English and Celtic cultures, which was recreated in the Ulster Plantation where “the distinction became ideologized into an opposition of civilization and savagery; later, they had reproduced their ambiguous relation to this opposition on the

frontier of America (Cunningham 1996: 43)”. Vélez-Ibáñez similarly speaks to the periphery nature of the borderland: “populations and ideas have persistently moved from the peripheries of Mesoamerica to what is now called the U.S. Southwest. This direct or indirect south to north movement of human populations and their cultural inventions, since at least pre-European periods to the present, has been a dynamic process in which various groups have ‘bumped’ into one another” (Cunningham 1996: 6).

Referring to the U.S.-Mexico border, it has been said that “The border is a space in which cultures, ethnicities, and rhetorics ‘bump’ against each other …reforming and revising and revisioning themselves and each other -often reimagining in unexpected ways the nature of power” (Noe 2009: 597). How might Appalachia be considered a borderland or border culture if there is no international or otherwise geopolitical boundary? Anzaldúa states that the presence of such is dependent mostly on multiplicity: “the borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch” (2007:19). This “edging” of cultures or spaces resounds with Cunningham’s labeling of Appalachia as a place on the edge of two others: “Appalachia exists in a blank created by a double otherness—a doubly double otherness. For the region is not only an internal Other to the South as the South is the internal Other of America, but it is also the occupier of a simultaneous gap and overlap between North and South” (article: 45). Both Cunningham and Vélez-Ibáñez invoke each region as peripheral zones. Like the double-alterity of Appalachian culture that exists between North and South, the border culture of the Southwest has been

called a “third country” that exists between Mexico and the United States (Anzaldúa 2007: 25). In the beginnings of the coal industry in Central Appalachia, coal town served as an intermediary space between rural and urban life (Callahan 2009: 70). Furthermore, both regions have at times been said to be internal colonies within the United States exploited culturally, environmentally, or otherwise by outside agents (Banker 1996: 281). Helen Lewis has been the biggest advocate for the colonial model of Central Appalachia, in which the region’s poverty is caused by an exploitative industry that extracts natural resources for the benefit of outsiders (Lewis, Johnson, & Askins 1978). In the corrido of Rito Garcia, he refers to the United States as a foreign power and Mexico as his own country even though he is an American citizen, an attitude that was shared by many Mexican-Americans (Paredes 1976: 28). This experience of exploitation is said to encompass a history of colonial exploitation that extends far into the cultural past of many Appalachians (Cunningham 1987: xvi-xvii). Similarly, the history of Mexican-American experience is said to be born of exploitation, the very birth of mestizo identity being the colonial exploitation of the Spanish over indigenous peoples (Anzaldúa 2007: 27).

This otherness or distance from mainstream America often takes a temporal nature, a third zone between the past and present. In this regard, the *Hispano* culture (literally “Hispanic”, although this emic autonym greatly predates the English census term) of the mountains of New Mexico and its mainstream representations parallels those of Appalachia. In Appalachia, New Mexico, and the Greater Southwest, many inhabitants practiced semi-subsistence agriculture, livestock grazing, or a combination of both, and developed social

patterns centered around family, community and church (Banker 1996:279).

Demographically, both regions experienced early ages at marriage, large families, and a relatively short life expectancy (Banker 2000: 20). Rick Ward's wife was sixteen at marriage, and he remembers relatives who married as young as thirteen (Ward 2017). Distinct Old World traditions survived in both regions as well; just as Appalachians were crucial to the survival of the Child ballad in America, Hispanos continued to sing the unaccompanied romance into the 20th century. In the late 19th century, both areas saw an influx of industry, missionaries, and local color writers who interpreted their cultural practices as peculiar or signs of cultural backwardness or deficiency (Ibid: 280). While neither regions have never been home to a homogenous group, supposedly "premodern" subgroups in each culture became symbols for the two regions (Banker 2000: 22). It is these stereotypes of homogeneity and backwardness that have persisted in the popular mind, rather than the regions' multiplicity or heterogeneity:

"Like all borderlands, [Appalachia] fostered and sustained a complex and often fractious mixing of flora and fauna, cultures, goods, religions, and ideas in a long and fluid interchange that manifested in the development of hybrid social and political-economic spaces. Ironically, the sense of Appalachia as simultaneously a static and exotic region persisted in cultural terms until well into the current age while the sense of it as a vibrant, cross-cultural borderland has long since vanished into the history books" (Margolies 2012: 255).

In similar terms to Noe and Anzaldúa, Ritchie and Orr envision the story of Appalachian culture and music as a journey in which various ethnicities have constantly interacted or "bumped" against each other to create increasingly hybrid forms. They use the tapestry metaphor to describe the hybrid, multi-ethnic nature of Appalachian music. They describe Appalachian music as a tapestry made from indigenous American, European, and

African sources. These diverse threads of Scots-Irish, English, African-American, Cherokee, and other origins come together to make a unique pattern. Pull out a single thread and the pattern does not hold (2014: 3). This echoes metaphors of the Southwest as a region that is “a polyphonic and polycultural mosaic” (Vélez-Ibáñez 1996: 9). The polyphonic aspect is applicable to the multiple languages spoken along the border, and the multiple influences on music in both regions. The tapestry metaphor also evokes a sense of interconnectedness like the threads that are woven together. Sheila Kay Adams also invokes the tapestry metaphor to describe the deeply rooted singing tradition that connected her own community (Adams 2017).

Like Cunningham, Fiona Ritchie & Doug Orr trace the beginnings of Appalachians to Scotland, where they place three cross-cultural influences. First, the influence of Occitan troubadours in the 12th and 13th centuries who performed for noble and popular audiences in Scotland and throughout Europe. Second, cross-cultural influence in the two “cradles” of Scottish balladry: Arberdeenshire in the northeast with connections to other North Sea cultures, and the English border in the south with its ballads of border conflict. Third, how Ulster-Scots interacted with and adopted traditions, instruments, styles, etc. from other groups in colonial America along the Great Wagon Road in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Carolinas, and later in the Appalachian Mountains. Although the status of the dulcimer as a true folk instrument in Appalachia is debated, it is thought that the mountain dulcimer may have come from the German *scheitholt* played by Pennsylvania Dutch encountered on the Wagon Road. Africans and African-Americans likewise had a profound influence on the

musical practices of whites in Appalachia. The fiddle and the banjo, perhaps the two instruments most representative of Appalachia in the public mind, developed out of African-American traditions. Although the fiddle was brought to America by Europeans, Southern playing style was influenced by African-Americans. Throughout the South slaves provided fiddle music for dances and public events, and this more syncopated playing style was adopted by white musicians (Wells 2003). The banjo, coming from West Africa, similarly developed into its modern form out of interactions between blacks and whites. Banker argues that despite stereotypes of conservatism or backwardness, both Appalachians and Hispanics have shown a high degree of “selective acculturation” whereby they adapt their own practices in their interactions with other groups in ways that retain inherited traditions and deflect certain outside influences (Banker 2000: 17).

Indeed, by the time Scots-Irish settlers arrived in or crossed the Appalachian mountain range they would have interacted with and adopted customs from English, French, Germans, Swiss, Native Americans, Africans, and others (Satterwhite 2005: 321). By this time they would have been three or four generations removed from Scotland. Satterwhite maintains that the actual number of Scots-Irish was actually not as substantial (*Ibid*). Cunningham too argues that a “goodly proportion” of Appalachians are not of Scots-Irish origin but indigenous, German, Welsh, English, Highland Scottish, Black, and “later arrivals” (1987: xxviii). Regardless, the reality is that the Appalachian frontier was much more ethnically diverse with more cultural interaction than popular culture’s whitewashing of the region would have us believe.

Beyond the frontier period, this “bumping” of cultures and the interchange of cultural practices has continued into the modern era. In the 19th and 20th centuries with the rise of industry in the region, its ethnic makeup was changed again. More African-Americans came as railroad workers, and many Italians and Eastern Europeans worked in the coal mines of Central Appalachia. In railroad work crews, lumber camps, and coal mines, individuals from various ethnic groups interacted in work and socializing (Callahan 2009: 78). The widespread diffusion of songs like “John Henry” or “In the Pines” speaks to this inter-ethnic cross-pollinating of musical ideas. Musician Frank Proffitt from Watauga County and of “Tom Dooley” fame recalled learning from black musicians during his time on a WPA work crew (Long 1995: 205). Later with the rise of radio and the recording industry, outside influence on Appalachian musicians and their influence on others manifested on a scale heretofore unseen. The careers of the Carter Family and Doc Watson are particularly representative of this.

Like the scholars mentioned previously who have highlighted Appalachia’s global connections and borderland culture, Daniel Margolies stresses that this borderland status must be re-applied and reconsidered in the current context of immigration to the region: “as a result of the myriad effects of globalization, Appalachia has once again become a dynamic borderland in inclusive and complex ways” (2012: 255). Again, this borderland is dynamic and ever-changing. He focuses on changes to the visual and musical landscape of the region, but these incoming practices extend to all areas of folklife including foodways and religion. Once again, Appalachia is characterized by the same “edging” or “bumping” of cultures

present in borderlands that has long characterized its history. In this chapter my goals were to highlight some similarities between two ballad traditions that very rarely been directly compared, and to enter the discussion of Latinos in Appalachia which is also just beginning in the field. I have compared and contrasted these two ballad traditions in their European ancestry and development as New World traditions, both of which suggest a universal function of the ballad among rural North American communities. The small but historic presence of Mexicans in Appalachia continues the conversation of the region as a heterogeneous culture with global connections. I have also described both regions as dynamic borderlands, which is a useful framework from which to view their multi-ethnic histories and Appalachia's currently changing cultural landscape. I now turn to one of the longest shared themes between these two traditions: secondary depictions of women and conflict between lovers.

Chapter 2

“Among the Ladies All”: Gendered Violence in Appalachian and Mexican Balladry

“Oh are you blind Lord Thomas” she cried
“Or can you not very well see?
Oh can’t you see my own heart’s blood
Come a’twinkling down my knee?”

Such vivid depictions of violence and death are common in the traditional ballad. In Appalachian folksong instances of death and violence are as common as themes of love, and usually go hand-in-hand. Likewise, the action of the corrido often develops through violent episodes. Themes of violence in narrative forms are not surprising, especially when compared to the often violent stories presented in contemporary news and commercial media. What might be surprising though, is an apparent tendency for violence in ballads to be directed towards women in English and Spanish language ballads. Indeed, in both Child ballads of the British Isles and American ballads, when women are depicted they usually fall victim to murder by a lover. The women characters present in the corrido similarly often meet their demise at the hand of an angry man. To many fans and scholars these songs represent a patriarchal culture that teaches negative or disempowering messages to women. For others, they can be used as positive didactic tools. But how do ballad singers evaluate these themes? Why would women perform these songs if they were in fact negative? While balladry may function as a means of reinforcing norms of the patriarchy, it also can serve as a coded means of critique of those same structures. In many instances women have been the tradition-bearers of ballad singing, and in some, woman singers have used these seemingly negative songs as forms of empowerment. Less subtly, ballads have also been used to express

messages and feelings that speech cannot, whether positive or negative. While frameworks of oppression in a gendered context is necessary in examinations of our world views, in discussion of folk performance we must also rely on the frameworks of the folk. In this chapter I will summarize feminist discourse utilized by feminist scholars in the field of folklore, especially the concept of coding, and then contrast these ideas with those of folksingers in the context of certain song texts.

Folklore and Feminist Models

Folklore as a field of study has a long history of not always openly acknowledging women both as collectors and informants. Like its sister traditions of literature and anthropology which all were born out of a tradition of Romantic Nationalism in the 18th and 19th centuries, folklore studies from the start excluded women from concepts of “the folk” (Fox 1987: 563, Stoeltje 1988: 143). The history of the discipline has been largely patrilineal and does not always recognize the contributions of important women collectors like Elsie Clews Parsons, the “mother of all” folklorists and an early figure in the fields of anthropology and sociology, the president of the American Anthropological Association, and a prominent contributor and funder for the *Journal of American Folklore* (Babcock 1987: 395). Likewise, the work of women in the documentation of folklife in Appalachia is not always stressed. The groundbreaking fieldwork of Cecil Sharp regarding the British ballad in Southern Appalachia would not have been possible without the help of two women: Olive Dame Campbell, who alerted him to the presence of Old World ballads in the mountains and contributed some of her own fieldwork to his collection; and Maud Karpeles who

accompanied Sharp on his trips and recorded the lyrics while he recorded the melodies (Ritchie & Orr 2014: 192).

Until the mid-20th century folklore studies tended to limit women's expressive forms into a few pre-determined categories and often only sought women informants when male ones were unavailable (Farrer 1975: v). Even when collected, "female" forms were frequently seen as illegitimate equivalents of legitimate "male" forms (e.g. "tall-tales" vs. "exaggeration" or "gossip"). The concept of "genre" then, was in a sense a patriarchal construct. Eventually, folklorists realized that women did indeed have emically legitimate names and forms of their expressive culture (*Ibid*: xiv). But moving past these man-made definitions and the recognition of previously ignored or delegitimized form of cultural production was the first step in deconstructing the problematic history of folkloristics.

This recognition coincided with two major paradigm shifts in the field of folklore that began roughly in the 1970s: emphasis on individual context in transmission and performance, and the application of feminist theory. A 1987 meeting of the American Folklore Society and special issue of their journal devoted to women in folklore was representative of this shift. At that point, many women folklorists like Barbara Babcock had focused on individual performers rather than on ideas of genre or text. The greatest and simplest contribution of feminism to folklore studies was to remove the male bias and demand that the field recognize gender and study both men *and* women as subject and how they interact. This stems from the feminist epistemology that promoted alternative theories of knowing and women as "knowers" (Stoeltje 1988: 142). At its core feminist criticism sees all experience

fundamentally organized by gender and that fields of knowledge (and their methods and paradigms) have been dominated by the male perspective. As a result feminist scholarship must deconstruct such male paradigms and reintroduce female perspectives as legitimate knowledge (Babcock 1987: 391). However, the tendency for women folklorists to focus on individual performers and artists stemmed more from a desire highlight exceptional individuals and their particular contexts rather than to primarily deconstruct these male paradigms. Folklorists then should pay attention to the gender dynamics of the cultures that they. But folklorists must be careful, for the study of women's folklife under the impression of universal oppression and men's and women's folklore existing in separate spheres may reinforce such a dichotomy that allows for oppression in the first place (Saltzman 1987: 548). At the same time, some "inside" critics believe that such strong focuses on domination and oppressive structures are just as divisive and do little to mend inequality (Pula 1995: 210). Although Paredes himself did acknowledge hyper-masculinity in corrido motifs, he saw *machismo* as more of a Hollywood invention than a social science construct unique to Mexico that explains gender-based violence or a subordinate status of women (1971, 1976). Of course, these views have their own critiques as well.

Ultimately, from a "second-wave" or "gender feminist" perspective gender inequality is a product of patriarchal thought that is reflected in the symbolic forms of the world. Symbolic forms structure one's vision of the world and the roles and relationships within, often on a sub-conscious level. Such structures are said to dominate all intellectual, political, and social systems and are therefore reflected in expressive forms. Therefore, one may say

that folklore, and specifically folksong, can represent the patriarchal, misogynistic, or oppressive worldview of an unequal system. But this structured experience can be redirected by the manipulation of discourse that disrupts or challenges these same symbolic structures (Fox 1987: 564). Established forms within these systems can be used to express new messages or relations. Thus by working within the system one can exploit existing restrictions to alter the structures that they represent.

If traditional folksongs do indeed reinforce the subordinate status of women in the patriarchy, then how do women singers and audiences navigate and interpret these messages? More importantly, how can they challenge or subvert these ideas within systems said to be oppressive? One way to achieve this subversive potential is through the use of hidden or *coded* meaning in folk performance. Radner and Lanser define coding in folklore as covert expressions of subversive ideas through a set of signals that protect the creator or performer from expressing those ideas outright (1993: xii, 3). Feminist coding then, are those coded messages that are critical of women's subordination to men. Indeed, the patriarchal social structure "heavily sanctions" open criticism (Fine 1999: 127). This definition is based on the notion that a particular group of women in a culture will share common signifying practices and beliefs (i.e. a "women's culture") whose meanings would be lost to men of the same group. Therefore women can convey mutually understood messages to other women, even when in the presence of men. One element of coding is that it is deliberately ambiguous to both insiders and outsiders, and can be deliberate or unconscious (1993: 6). This ambiguity is essential to coding strategy as it functions as a form of protection due to risk that would be

present in an overt or explicit critique (Ibid: viii). Outside of folklore, James Scott argues that in the open interactions (or *public transcripts*) between subordinate and dominant groups, the performances of the subordinate will be shaped to appeal to, but not consent to, the expectations of those in power. Derivative of this is the *hidden transcript*, or “offstage” discourse among the subordinate beyond observation of power-holders (Scott 1990: 2-4). Sheila Kay Adams believes that this “offstage” behavior has a long history in gender relations:

“That’s been goin’ on since the beginning of time. Us women have to be very careful and allow men to think they’re in charge and runnin’ the show. But we all know who’s really in charge and who’s really running the show. That would be the women and they just kinda kept quiet and stayed out of men’s way and did what they wanted ‘em to” (Adams 2017).

For the discussion that follows, we may view coding as the hidden transcript presented in the guise of the public transcript. However, if implicit coding is intentionally ambiguous and vague, how does the listener or intended audience know that intentional coding is occurring? This ambiguity can also be counter-productive as it might reinforce the same ideology it’s meant to refute, but Radner and Lanser argue that subversive intention can be inferred by examining the conventions of aesthetic production in their communicative context or cultural circumstance, in other words performance-in-context (Radner 1993: 7). They identify six different strategies of feminist coding, with indirection being the most common. It is the one most applicable to ballad singing because it often uses impersonation (a sub-set of indirection in which the speaker or a character is substituted for another persona, e.g. the narrator in a ballad). The common third-person narrator and impersonality characteristic of traditional ballad narrative, and its potential for re-direction of meaning, is a natural outlet for this

strategy. This strategy complements the intentionally contradictory tone of public power relations, as “the public transcript, *where it is not positively misleading*, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation” [emphasis added] (Scott 1990: 2) Furthermore, ballads are conducive to coding and likely to be coded due to the limited freedom of women in their “traditional” domain of the home which is hedged by the presence of men and their obligation to serve them (Ibid: xi).

African-American traditions offer several examples of coding strategies and indirection. Enslaved Africans and African-Americans used certain songs to convey messages that were unknown to their masters (Adams 2017). Henry Louis Gates has studied how black vernacular tropes can serve as a form of indirection. He codified the concept of signifying (also spelled signifyin’ or signifiyin(g)), or how black speech and non-verbal expression can be used to mean something beyond its denotation or literal meaning whether as praise or critique, and often as a means of indirection (Hilgart 2002: 173). The Blues is seen as one of many cultural products of black signifying, which is a black strategy in the face of white hegemony (Titon 1994: 274), although racial protest is more likely to be found in other expressive forms. Blues lyrics were more concerned with overt amorous conflict between men and women, although it’s been argued that themes of lovers’ mistreatment might be an allegory for race relations or that the “Mister Charlie” character is code for a white boss or authority (Ibid: 188).

Regardless of intention, folkloric texts (whether women's or otherwise) convey different meanings to different audiences. Ballad texts are made up certain common motifs, images, and language which trigger assumptions and associations shared among a particular group, but the different conditions in which the "text comes forth" (i.e. female singer to an all-female audience vs. to a mixed-audience) produces different "contextual realities that can create a particular constellation of meanings" (Toelken & Wilgus 1986: 136). Folklorists agree that women share different stories, ideas, and beliefs among other women than when in mixed-company, public or private. Here patriarchal critiques can be expressed outright without need of coding. But despite the different roles and expectations of men and women in the public sphere, women can still express subversive ideas discretely through the formalized public roles to which they are restricted (e.g. singing) (Radner 1993: 155). While performance is a key aspect to the public transcript, the avenues for performance are can be limited by social rules regarding acceptability of public singing such as disapproval to excessive attention to or pride in one's talents (Sawin 2002: 49). Bessie Eldreth of Boone, NC, a singer with a wide repertoire of traditional and non-traditional music, limited herself to singing in church due to internalized definitions of women's performance or her husband's disapproval (*Ibid*: 54). After the death of her husband (who was apparently abusive), Eldreth did make public performances at folk festivals and the like. According to Paredes, women of the Lower Border similarly were not "supposed" to sing in public, but only at home (1976: xvii). It is in this performance role among mixed-company that feminist coding is employed. Moreover, these discrepancies between public and private messages are key to understanding

the extent of power structures, because the public and hidden transcripts are produced for different audiences under different power constraints (Scott 1990: 5). One story from Hattie Presnell illustrates the complicit and implicit nature of indirection as a coding strategy when used in mixed-company:

“‘Back when my sister was a-talkin’ to a boy, they wanted me to sing that ‘Pretty Polly’ because they thought this boy might not be right fer her, so if she would see and not talk to him.... But now hit would, some people, I mean hit would give ‘em a-somethin’ to look at, you know somethin’ or ‘nother like ‘at; and might cause a lot of ‘em to be careful about goin’ off with people’” (Burton 1978: 30).

Here we see the importance of context in performance of a tragic ballad. Presnell utilizes the song’s text to speak her mind and issue a warning in a way that she could not shout. In other words, she did not simply feign deference of their relationship but inverted that public transcript for her own purpose. Rick Ward (also a descendent of Hattie) has similarly used ballad singing as a coded means to discretely convey a message. He remembers singing “I Wish I Was Single Again” to past girlfriends to suggest his desire to end their relationship without saying it outright. Although in this case the ambiguous nature of coding failed and his messages were not correctly interpreted. He speculates that this failure to receive the message was due to his audience’s lack of the appropriate cultural register. Growing up in the 1960s and 70s, he feels that he was part of the last generation in the area to live a primarily agricultural lifestyle, a lifestyle complete with knowledge ballad singing, herbal lore, and other traditions that his peers lacked. Besides a cultural difference, the message may have been lost due to their different gendered understandings of the song, or they may have understood the message but wished to continue the relationship. In contrast, Hattie’s audience (her sister) shared the same cultural traditions and was presumably able to interpret

the code. Often the successful conveyance of a coded message requires a shared set of cultural knowledge or traditions.

Conformity and Critique in Ballad Singing

If folklore can serve as a tool for the critique of existing structures, what then is the established order and nature of social control that might be disrupted? An extreme response to this question is that “any discussion of social control must consider the control of women's bodies by men under a system of patriarchy” (Babcock 1987: 398). For Appalachian women this control of their bodies manifested in societal control of both productive and reproductive labor. Accounts of gendered differences in community and household life in patriarchal culture have long been framed by the public/private sphere dichotomy, with women being relegated primarily to private sphere (Beaver 1992; Hölz: 1992). In this model men are the representatives of the family in public, while women have most power in the private/domestic sphere although they are still ultimately subordinate to men as the head-of-household. While men and women shared in labor outside of the house, tasks inside the home involving childcare, food preparation, cleaning and the like most often fell upon women and their daughters. Massek emphasizes the inequality of this gendered labor division: “they lived subservient lives doing backbreaking work, bearing and raising babies, keeping house and garden, cooking meals and tending to the needs of their husbands” (2015: 285). She gives “The Wagoner’s Lad” as one example of this relationship openly critiqued in folksong: “Hard is the fortune of all womankind, / they’re always controlled and they’re always confined. / controlled by their parents until they are wives / then slaves to their husbands the

rest of their lives” (Ibid). This division of labor has not only been called subservient or exploitative, but a “superexploitation of women” who “juggled their time among agriculture, household chores, child-rearing, crafts, informal sector marketing, and sometimes wage labor” (Dunaway 2008: 169).

Dunaway has argued that although white elite families were able to subsist along separate spheres models, for the majority of lower class families there was no clear male public sphere essential to family survival and most of these families relied on women who engaged in extra-domestic or “men’s work” roles. (Ibid: 229). For those who were forced to step out of traditional gender roles their husbands were seen as emasculated for failing to provide sufficiently for their families (Ibid: 204). Likewise in the *serrano* culture of the Mexican borderlands, a man’s failure to provide for or protect his family was seen as an affront to his honor (Tatar 2010: 87). However, rural and lower class expressive forms like folksong usually better reflected the realities of women’s labor more than those of the upper class that reinforced their ideologies:

“The corridos portray women in a less stereotypical mode than do artistic forms emanating from the ruling classes, which have more at stake in reinforcing ideological concerns... *The campesinos* and poor urban dwellers have a realistic view of women’s roles in society, since they see them working and struggling. Women are not necessarily perceived as weaklings or unable to do “men’s work” because the reality contradicts the stereotype: Women work in the fields plowing, planting, hoeing, they rise at dawn to engage in all manner of farm chores” (Herrera-Sobek 1990: 14).

Even with complications to women existing solely in the domestic/private spheres, women did engage in work and socialized without the presence of men. Cottage industries like textile manufacturing required “early work socialization of girls” (Ibid: 169), so from a

young age they would have been spending time with older women. It is during these times that they “resisted widespread misogyny” through “the stories and songs women shared as they gathered to do women’s work such as quilting and putting up food for the winter. These songs said what couldn’t be said in the company of the oppressors” (Massey 2015: 286). Here Scott’s idea of hidden transcript easily applies, especially when considering that it includes “offstage” practices beyond speech (1990: 14), among which we may include folksong. Even if not explicitly critiquing their place in society, activities like quilting or singing provided an important social opportunity for women to talk about their families and lives, even in coal town life (Callahan 2009: 84). Whether or not “men’s” and “women’s” work was clearly divided, many women would have had ample time for the sharing of folklore in their time together which would provide opportunities for comments and judgements on their relationships, critical or otherwise. Even though both work and songs were shared among Appalachian women and men, women singers often learned texts and their meanings from other women. Rena Hicks of Beech Mountain learned songs from both her mother and father: “I guess Mama, now, told me more about it than he did; I know she did, what the meaning of it was and all” (Burton 1978: 14). Many of the men singers from Beech Mountain, like Roby Hicks and Lee Monroe Presnell, learned many songs from their mothers (Warner 1984). Bobby McMillon learned many songs from his great aunt Mae “Maw Maw” Phillips (Patterson 2000: 20). Thus while both men and women are important to folk transmission, the associated meanings, interpretations, and morals are in some cases more likely to be transmitted from a female perspective. However, in the Sodom Laurel

community many male singers like Cas Wallin preferred songs that were from a male character's perspective, and would sometimes change the words from a female first-person to a male one, although women singers tended to sing from both a man's and woman's point of view (Adams 2017). Nevertheless, Dellie Norton (known as Granny to Sheila Adams) believed that ballads carried moral messages for women that could help one to avoid the same mistakes made by the characters in the songs. The majority of these messages were "stay pure, don't get involved with no man that's married, and be careful with what you do when you're out and about" (*Ibid*).

Appalachian women's reproductive and productive labors are said to have been limited by the patriarchal cultural system into a strict set of ideal or acceptable behaviors. What of their expressive productions? Women's performative expression likewise is said by some scholars to mostly lie in songs whose messages conformed to similar cultural ideals of motherhood, sexual purity, marital fidelity, and class hierarchy. Corridos and ballads are often thought to serve a function in the socialization process about societal roles (Herrera-Sobek 1990: 75). Polly Stewart examined such "lessons" to be learned from Child Ballads with women characters, and how modern singers might use them for different lessons. By her analysis, only about 100 of the 305 Child ballads depict women. Furthermore, they are only ever present in a social or family relationship with men, which she compares to their historically subordinate position in society (Stewart 1993: 55). In the *romance* and corrido traditions, women also appear mostly in "supporting roles" solely as mothers, daughters, or wives (Herrera-Sobek 1990:1). In most of these, the women are said to be in an agonistic or

oppressive situation, which they sometimes escape. To categorize these outcomes, Stewart proposed a model based on cultural and personal success or failure. In her terms *cultural success* means achieving the expectations of a patriarchal society such as marriage, fidelity, or fulfillment of male-controlled decisions. These goals not being achieved results in cultural *failure*. *Personal success* means reaching some personal goal or avoiding harm, death, rape, etc. with personal *failure* being the opposite. Both cultural and personal success is rare for these women and is often met with failure in one or both categories. Achievement of personal success or the realization of individual autonomy for women is almost always at odds with the upholding of cultural goals. For the realization of idealized cultural goals rely on the exploitation of women's subordination to men in the patriarchal system: "this worthy goal, when it is met at all, is likely to be met at the price of extreme sexual and social oppression of women. ...a woman who takes control of the reproductive treasury by avoiding marriage or rape is acting against the cultural norm. The deck is stacked" (Ibid: 66). This "control" of female autonomy and reproductive "resources" echoes colonial systems in which local populations are subordinate and resources are exported for foreign use. Although others have disagreed with Stewart's categorizations for the success/failure outcomes of particular ballads, her model is still seen as a useful tool for the description of ballads (Wollstadt 2002: 297) as is her feminist frame.

In the same vein, Tatar has portrayed ballads as representing a patriarchal control of women's sexuality. Through his analysis he argues that changing portrayals of women in ballads represent changes in gender roles as a result of changes in larger, modern society

(Tatar 2015: 5). Daniel Cohen specifically relates this sexual violence with changing courtship practices and increases in pre-marital pregnancies during the 19th century (Cohen 1997: 277). Fitting with Stewart's dichotomy of personal/cultural success, Tater proposes two "polarities" in ballad traditions, the first being "the glorification of patriarchy and the normalization of violence which feminist scholars of music have referred to as misogyny or femicide" and the second being a "challenge to the patriarchy with the portrayal of women who are resourceful, but also violent, and willing to speak out" (Tatar 2015: 13). The first echoes Stewart's ideas about patriarchal cultural success, while the second echoes cultural failure in the rejection thereof. Among these two polarities he gives three outcomes: "1. A woman is murdered by her husband or by a lover. 2. A man is murdered by his wife or by a lover. 3. A woman defies the patriarchal norms and takes a lover of her choosing" (Ibid: 6). In contrast to Stewart's types, his categories do not rely entirely on the completion of goals and are more open to intent in addition to outcome. He gives "Mathey Groves" (Child 81, "Little Musgrave") as an example of this first type. In the song, Lord Daniel kills his wife after she takes a young man to bed. This murder is vividly depicted with a verse that shows up in other songs like "The Brown Girl": "He took her by the lily-white hand / He led her to the hall / He took out his sword and he chopped off her head / and he kicked it against the wall". The homicide of Lady Daniel surely speaks to type 1, but the fact that Lord Daniel's wife chooses Mathey Groves over her husband suggests type 3: "I wouldn't trade little Mathey Groves / For you and all your kin". Using Stewart's terms, this falls under both personal and cultural failure as the protagonists have died after transgressing both social

hierarchy and taboos of adultery. Other interpretations support the cultural success of Lord Daniel punishing his wife for infidelity. Rena Hicks believes that he was “not only in the right” but also “conducted himself honorably”, with his wife ultimately being the one at fault for inviting Mathey Groves to bed (Burton 1978: 9). To a modern audience her apparent condoning of the murder of Lady Daniel may be surprising, but given that she was born near the turn of the 20th century she could have likely had normalized “traditional” patriarchal values about monogamy and gender roles. In her mind, upholding the status quo outweighs any ethical questions that arise. Dellie Norton, of the same generation as Hicks, said that the moral of this song was to remain faithful to your husband lest bad things happen (e.g. death), although she did not explicitly support Lord Daniel’s violence (Adams 2017). Being two generations removed, Sheila Kay Adams offers an even different perspective. Her lesson was “when the horn blows, get up and go”, meaning that when Lord Daniel’s hunting party blew the horn to signal his return Little Mathey should have left promptly and they would have both lived. This moral does not place any blame on the protagonists. Here we might see a personal success for the Lady. She was after all the one who decided to seduce Mathey, and stayed with her decision until the end. Perhaps the husband is at fault for often being away on the hunt and not engaging his wife which prompted her to seek an adulterous relationship. In this way, I think her independence fits in more with Tatar’s type 1, and goes to show that these categories are not mutually exclusive.

Wollstadt gives “Lord Thomas and Fair Annet” (Child 73, aka “Fair Ellender” or “The Brown Girl”) as an example of women having to deal with the actions of a powerful

man. Lord Thomas, being involved with both the beautiful Ellender and the wealthy brown girl, asks his mother for advice to meet the cultural goal of marriage. Keeping with societal standards of success, she gives a class based answer: “The brown girl has both house and lands, / Fair Ellender she has none, / So my advice would be for thee / To bring the brown girl home”. He decides to marry the brown girl and invites Ellender to their wedding, and she asks her mother if she should go. Despite her mother’s cautions, she makes her own decision: “There may be hundreds of my friends, / Ten thousand more of my foes, / But if it’s the last thing I ever do, / Lord Thomas’ wedding I’ll go”. While she seems to have gained some personal success for exercising her own will, this soon ends in failure for all as she is murdered by the brown girl: “The brown girl had a little pen knife, / It was both keen and sharp, / Betwixt the long rib and the short / She pierced Fair Ellender’s heart”, who in turn is murdered by Thomas who then kills himself: “He placed the handle against the wall / And the point against his breast, / Said here is the story of three young lovers, / God take their souls to rest”. Wollstadt disagrees with Stewart’s characterization of its outcome as personal and cultural failure, believing that the reunion of their bodies in the grave to be somewhat of a personal success. While Fair Ellender does achieve a degree of personal success in following her own decisions, I agree with Stewart that this song ends in cultural and personal failure because Thomas has failed to marry and increase wealth at the cost of all three lives. Although Ellender’s independent actions for the cause of love suggest some personal success. Whatever the outcome, these two goals of marriage and independence are clearly present.

Stewart or Tatar might read “Lord Thomas and Fair Ellender” ultimately as an example of femicide or misogyny in which a powerful man exerts his own power over two helpless women in defense of his own economic interests and in compliance with patriarchal standards. Sheila Kay Adams disagrees with such a deep reading and gives a much simpler interpretation. In line with her philosophy of ballads containing morals for women, the lesson is clear: “Absolutely, she did not listen to her mother. She ignored her mother’s advice and of course wound up getting stabbed by the brown girl. That was the moral to that one that Granny told me. Always pay attention to what your mama has to say” (Adams 2016). In contrast, Rena Hicks saw the song to support individual agency despite societal or familial disapproval: “It would be a lesson for the one that loves the one, each other, [to] marry, and not allow none go betwixt it; nobody’s not to step in betwixt them, not even his daddy ‘n’ mother” (Burton 1978: 4). Here her ideas of “true love” as a basis for individual autonomy seem to be more important than individual action that breaks social norms, as in her interpretation of “Mathey Groves”. Obviously, ideology cannot be blanketed across songs and individuals.

The corrido tradition contains similar examples of male authorities punishing women for overstepping some social boundary or rule. One such example is “*El Corrido de Micaela*” (Ballad of Micaela) aka “*El 24 de Junio*” (June 24th), which presents the familiar love triangle that ends in tragedy. In this song the protagonist Micaela desires to attend a dance with her lover Juan, who does not wish to go. Not only does he not want to attend himself, he prohibits Micaela from attending or dancing with anyone else:

*“No quiero hacerte el desaire
pero algo presiento yo,
de que esta noche en el baile
se te amargue la función*

*Te lo diré por claro,
que le receleo a Simón,
Y no permito que bailes
Ni le hagas mucho jalón.*

*‘Adios, chatitio, ya vuelvo’
Le dijo para salir.
‘Me voy con unas amigas
ya que tú no quieres ir’.*

[I don't want to turn you down / But I have a premonition / That tonight at the dance / Your festivity will turn to bitterness. / I will tell you plainly I don't trust Simón, / And I don't want you to dance with him / Or lead him on. ‘Goodbye pug-nosed one, I'll be back’ / She said as she left. / ‘I am going with some friends / Since you don't want to go”].

It's not clear whether or not a relative or a lover, he is nevertheless in a position of authority over Micaela and explicitly disapproves of her attending the dance and socializing with Simón. Micaela expresses her own her disregard for his status by attending the dance and with her farewell taunt of “*chatito*”. While on this surface this may seem a mere playful tease, in a gendered context it is a coded slight at Jaun's authority as it is derived through masculinity: “cleverly masked inside the diminutive epithet “*chatito*”- supposedly a term of endearment- is the greatest of affronts to a male. The term *chato* – meaning a person with a flat, short nose- is usually applied to women. The roles here have been reversed; *encoded* in Micaela's “*chato*” is a taunting message” (Herrera-Sobek 1990: 62). These two affronts to personal manliness and authority culminate in the death of Micaela and Simón:

*“Alegres pasan las horas,
los doce marca el reloj,
cuando un tiro de pistola,*

dos cuerpos atravesó.

*Vuela, vuela palomita,
Para por ese panteón
donde ha de estar Micaela
con su querido Simón”.*

[The hours pass by happily / The clock strikes twelve / When a pistol shot / Pierced two bodies. / Fly, fly little dove / Pass by that cemetery / Where Micaela must be / With her lover Simón.]

Returning to the morals to be learned from such tragedies, Adams' explanation reveals a discrepancy between those who sing ballads and those who study them. Tatar describes American ballad singing as traditions in which “modern ideals of gender equality in sexual relations are inscribed into what are perceived as time-honored and traditional lyrics forms” (2015: 5), or how “traditional” values from the past are viewed with contemporary ideas. Sheila Adams warns against this kind of retroactive value judgements: “How I feel personally is that it doesn’t apply to nowadays. You cannot apply the same rules that we go by today to songs that were written two hundred years ago” (Adams 2016). Still, love songs remain popular among ballad singers despite their violence and misogyny. Like Adams, Rena Hicks was fond of ballads not because they are bloody or morbid but because they are “true” in the sense that while often being cruel, they reflect the truly cruel nature of the world (Burton 1978: 18). Her relative Rick Ward takes a similar stance that tragic ballads reflect the hard, tragic nature of life at the time: “there was so much tragedy around people. People lived in very, very hard times. You had all these wars and stuff goin’ on, and people fightin’. So they were just singin’ what was really happenin’ around ‘em, bringing out the

reality that was around ‘em” (Ward 2017). According to Sheila Adams, Dellie Norton believed that there was a song for every aspect of life:

“there was songs to labor a child with, there was songs for the birthing of a child, there was songs about the child growin’ up and becoming a grown person, and there was songs about hit a’ gettin’ married, there was songs about hit havin’ youngins’ of its own, and there was songs about dyin’ and how to put you into the other world. She said as far as I’m concerned there’s a song for everything” (Adams 2017).

Although we experience the same emotions and passions today as in the past, for Adams old love songs express these emotions in the context of their times and cannot be judged by ours. For American murder ballads like “Pretty Polly” or “Omie Wise” the ultimate motivation for the murders was an unwanted pregnancy: “The majority of women who are murdered in these murder ballads are pregnant. And that, back in the day was the only way that a man who was betrothed to somebody else or married could avoid it. You know, somebody gets pregnant and what are you going to do with them if you’re already married?” (Adams 2016). Laws, an eminent broadside scholar, describes this same motivation but downplays its importance: “these murders are usually unmotivated in the ballads, apparently because of taboos against the mention of pregnancy or illegitimacy” (Laws 1964: 22). He agrees with the cause these murders, but disagrees to that this violence goes as far to repress individual autonomy or distill conformity.

Radner’s definition of coding presupposes the possibility of danger for expressing messages in a non-coded or overt manner. Just what were the risks for openly critiquing or disobeying patriarchal norms? Both alternative family structures and women’s sexual autonomy were an affront or threat to the authority and economic, social, and legal privileges of men (Dunaway 2008: 130). In Appalachia, alternative families, or female-headed

households were legal and social “aberrations” in our patrilineal system and subject to public intervention and court action (Ibid: 196), but regulation or disapproval by social groups and churches was more common. Again, women and men bore the brunt of family stability differently: “while female heads of household were criminalized when they abandoned children, most neglectful fathers were invisible to courts and sheriffs” (Ibid: 205). Women whose work did not conform to gender norms were publically stigmatized as a deviant. Sexual behavior was similarly socially regulated, with the threat of church excommunication being a possibility. Again, “women bore the brunt of policing of sexual behavior while male partners never were charged in cases of adultery, fornication, or illegitimacy” (Ibid: 206). Separation from unfaithful or abusive husbands was difficult as filing for divorce on the grounds of “cruelty” required male witnesses of the alleged actions (Ibid: 208). In the story of Frankie Silver (who was convicted of murdering her husband and the first woman hanged in North Carolina), one theory is that she was in an abusive relationship and did not possess the legally or socially acceptable means for divorce (Patterson 2000). Women’s “virtue and purity” were likewise protected by law (Dunaway 2008: 230). In the notes to Clarence Ashley’s “Naomi Wise” Thomas Burton writes “like many other victims in murder ballads, Naomi was drowned by a man who ‘ruined’ her and who then did not want to marry her” (Burton, Manning, & Wolford 1967: 64). In other words he has soiled her “purity” and killed her rather than face any social or legal consequences. Naomi’s pleas for him to “Take pity on my infant and spare me my life” (Ibid) would have caused her hardship as county and state governments could forcibly remove children from unmarried mothers who were prosecuted

for fornication or bastardy, mothers who could not support their children economically, or for having absent fathers due to “death, abandonment, or illegitimate relations with the mother” (Dunaway 2008: 249-50). Even non-sexual relations could lead to rumors of impurity or promiscuity: “back then if a woman was even seen walking out with a man unchaperoned, it was hard times because they started to get reputations that they weren’t pure” (Adams 2017).

Cohen describes this 19th century restrictive “internalized ethic of sexual abstinence and self-control” as a reaction to the more “tacitly tolerated” prevalence of pre-marital sex in the 18th century (1997: 291). This shift was arguably a response to the supposed disruption of rural community moral standards by a rise in individualism in modern capitalism (Ibid: 285). Compared to women, men of the period had many more legal options for dealing with pre-marital pregnancy: marry, provide financial support while remaining unmarried, or refuse aid by denying paternity (Ibid: 287). Outside of the law, there was the possibility of abandonment or even murder or infanticide. Such immoral solutions would have been more likely if there was indeed a decline in religious and communal controls, especially when such relationships would entail unwanted social or economic prospects (Ibid: 294).

At the extreme end of the spectrum, it’s been said that “every nineteenth century Appalachian household was a microcosm of the structural inequalities of the capitalist world system” (Dunaway 2008: 195). Women were encouraged by middle and upper class culture to engage solely in reproductive labor in the domestic sphere. Lacking the economic privilege to do so, most Appalachian women were forced to engage in productive labors outside of cultural expectations of the ideal woman. Such extra-domestic activity was

labelled as sexually promiscuous and any deviance from hetero-patrilineal marriage patterns was subject to legal repercussions. While women were subject to both legal and social policing of reproductive labor, men were not held to the same degree of scrutiny. Thus, the few legal or public means of challenging these unequal systems and practices make a strong case for private and covertly public critiques of oppression through coded practice. With no socially acceptable means to deal with an illegitimate pregnancy, these men sought to hide their transgressions. In other words: “His motivations for committing the crime are generally linked to the idea that his victim’s sexuality threatens to compromise his reputation. Thus, the murdered-girl embodies the anti-example of prevailing social expectations of behavior. In order to protect his own self-interests, the male lover feels compelled to take the young woman’s life” (Hastie 2014: 10). Indeed, the appearance of murder-ballad motifs in American ballads at the beginning of the nineteenth century coincide with the structural inequalities of the same period described by Dunaway, which according to Cohen served to stem a rise in unmarried pregnancy.

Given the recognition of these murderers’ actions as a means of removing a socially unacceptable relationship, we can view these songs not as patriarchal reprimands of sexually free or deviant women, but as critiques of these men who behave selfishly outside of the law and social mores about marriage and fidelity. In “Pretty Polly” the antagonist Willy acts on his own interests and refuses to marry the title character:

Willy, pretty Willy, please spare me life,
Willy, pretty Willy, please spare me life,
Let me go beggin’ if I can’t be your wife.

Oh Polly, pretty Polly, that never can be,

Oh Polly, pretty Polly, that never can be,
Your past reputation would be trouble to me.

He opened up her breast and the heart blood did flow,
He opened up her breast and the heart blood did flow,
Down in the grave pretty Polly did go

While these men are not always unpunished in the end, Bobby McMillon relates how in most variants of “Pretty Polly”, Polly is seemingly murdered due to her “past reputation” (or sexual activity, which fits with Hastie and Tatar’s evaluation of patriarchal control of female sexuality). In Hattie Presnell’s version as well Willy refuses to marry “for your reputation would foller after me” (Burton 1967: 68). But in Doug Wallin’s version she is revealed to be pregnant and Willy is driven to insanity or death. In Hattie Presnell’s, he drowns at sea (*Ibid*), so there are instances in which it is Willy who is the one at fault.

Rick Ward believes that the Polly character is most definitely pregnant and that is one of the motivations for her murder: “no doubt about that. In other words, when he’s killin’ her, he’s killin’ the baby” (Ward 2017). The other motivation in his variant (learned from his grandfather Tab Ward) is that it appears both Willy and Polly are already married:

I used to be a rambler I’ve been around this town
I used to be a rambler I’ve been around this town
I courted Pretty Polly and married and settled down

Now where is Pretty Polly? over yonder she stands
Now where is Pretty Polly? over yonder she stands
with rings on her fingers and lily-white hands

Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, come and go with me
Pretty Polly, Pretty Polly, come and go with me
before we get married some pleasure we’ll see

The first verse suggests that he marries Polly, but the third contradicts this as they are apparently not yet married. The “rings on her fingers” in the second verse establishes that

Polly is married, or at least wealthy. In Hattie Presnell's version as well Polly's finger is ringed before she courts Willy (Warner 1984: 67). For Rick, they are not married to each other, which provokes the murder: "it sounds like he's married. Sounds like she's married. She's got rings on her fingers, right. But now they're getting' together. And then he realizes he can't have the two wives" (Ward 2017). Not only are they breaking taboos of premarital pregnancy, they are breaking cultural rules of monogamy, to which Willy responds with murder rather than face public scrutiny. Although in this variant the murder goes unpunished, in other versions as in other ballads like "Omie Wise", "Poor Ellen Smith", and "Tom Dula" the murderer repents, is sentenced to death, or both. These punishments suggest communal disapproval of not only violence and infidelity or promiscuity, but also failure for these men to act as a legitimate male caretaker and provider: "On the surface, such ballads condemned men who murdered dependent women. But deeper in the dialogue of songs like "Omie Wise," they vocalized an ambivalence that became a guarded dissent from a patriarchal pattern of honor as a standard of masculinity" (Baptist 2014: 105)

Despite the lack of agency suffered by women in many ballads, women singers possess their own agency in how they perform and interpret these ballads. Sheila Kay Adams, Polly Stewart, and Lynn Wollstadt have described how ballad singers can convey empowering messages for women despite seemingly sexist or misogynistic tones. Besides ones with happy endings, on the surface the lessons of most ballads seem grim for women: "That a man will take from a woman what he can and will punish her for being his victim; that a woman's needs are not a primary consideration either for her family or for men outside

her family; that, for a woman, stepping outside the house is a dangerous act; that a woman's resources for protecting her interests are slim indeed. By horrible example, a woman learns how not to get killed" (Stewart 1993: 66). Herrera-Sobek takes an equally grim perspective on the didactic nature of ballads: "they are socializing agents designed to instruct, coerce, and frighten rebellious and unruly young women into "proper" behavior. The ballads are literally *ejemplos*, or exempla, designed to instill conformity in young maidens who might be foolish enough to transgress the social norms instituted by the patriarchal order" (1990: 72). Sheila Adams agrees that on the surface ballads like these describe how a woman should not behave: "they taught lessons about life, and if you behaved a certain way this is what's going to happen to you. So be a good gal and don't run around on your husband and do things that might get your hand taken and walked across the hall and the sword pulled out and your head cut off and kicked against the wall" (Adams 2016). Buna Hicks of Beech Mountain similarly sees the instructive nature of ballads: "Some of 'em that's sung might be a good warning to people sometimes, the lovesongs would. They really, I think, might be to warn somebody if they just take heed and study these songs out" (Burton 1978: 24). Indeed, ballads have often been described as cautionary tales to warn women about misbehavior (Hastie 2011: 155). For "Aunt" Molly Jackson of Harland County, Kentucky, ballads were not only instructive about life and love, but a means through which to experience it. Folk music and dance indeed served a social function above all others as a form of interaction and entertainment. For Aunt Molly, singing lovesongs provided a socially acceptable arena for courting as well as life lessons: "Songs conveyed experiences, offered moral guidance, expressed religious faith,

ignited or spurned ardors, triumphs, and tragedies. Molly, who thought of all ballads as love songs, described how they nurtured romance and reflected its risks” (Romalis 1999: 29).

Rick Ward and Sheila Adams agree that ballad singing serves to educate about cultural standards and to disprove or warn women against misbehavior by “running off” with a man, especially when marriage was often common at a young age. On this didactic function of ballads, in her observations of Aunt Molly and life in Eastern Kentucky folklorist Mary Elizabeth Barnacle makes a harsher judgement: “Certainly the ballads made clear both in melody and text what a dangerous and tragic thing love must be in the mountains and what a dreary thing it usually was with its early marriages, Puritan conventions, and harsh and violent double standards” (Romalis 1999: 29). Songs were also used as a way to openly discuss power relations and gender expectations in a patriarchal system. One song that Rick Ward learned from his mother (who learned it from her mother), warns women against taking on the unequal brunt of labor in the public/private model:

“There once was a farmer who took a young miss
in back of the barn yard to give her a
lecture on horses and chickens and pigs
and tell her that she has such beautiful
manners for a girl of her charms,
a girl that’d he’d like to take into his
washing and ironing and then if she did
they could get married and have lots of sweet
violets sweeter than the roses
covered all over from head to toe,
covered all over in sweet violets”.

Here the rupture of expectations in the rhyme scheme of the song also plays with societal expectations of home life. The “lesson” of this song is for young women to take heed while

courting, that the “cooing” and sweet talk of men is just a ploy for them to get married to escape their share of domestic tasks.

Even though not all potential lessons are harsh, reading such immediate meanings and drawing negative conclusions may actually serve to reinforce oppressive power structures by downplaying the agency and intent of those who are oppressed. For “any analysis based exclusively on the public transcript is likely to conclude that subordinate groups endorse the terms of their subordination and are willing, even enthusiastic, partners in that subordination” (Scott 1990: 4). In addition to the overt didactic intentions of singers, ballad singing provided women a means of learning cultural values and how to deal with negative ones in a discrete, but socially acceptable way (Stewart 1993: 69). Adams herself believes the prevalence of violence towards women in ballads was used as a covert way to critique misogynistic violence as it was experienced in real life: “all the violence was something that the women could identify with. Because this abuse stuff, and educating about it, used to be kept a big secret. People just didn’t talk about it. But they sung a lot about it, if you get my drift. You can get away with a lot if you sing it or play it, rather than say it” (Adams 2016). In other words, violent images can serve as a code to discretely discuss violent systems. Thus, while ballads may seem to support patriarchal expectations about woman’s status in society, they can be used in just the opposite way.

Beyond the Murder Ballad

Choice of performance repertoire can likewise serve a critical or empowering function. Wollstadt examined a collection of recordings of Scottish ballads singers made by

the School of Scottish Studies. These recordings show a clear difference in which particular songs were sung by men and women singers. In contrast to the ballads described earlier, these women singers sang ballads that recognize the same “cultural system of male hegemony” (Wollstadt 2002: 296) but also speak of female empowerment, especially in light of the male characters that they portray. While the larger Child ballad corpus usually feature powerful men such as lords, kings, or knights, these particular ballads favor male characters who lack power or social standing, which allows the women characters to exert more of their own power. In American murder ballads as well, the women are usually of a lower class than their lovers (Hastie 2011: 16).

Faced with so many unpleasant outcomes or messages, some women performers consciously or unconsciously alter narrative texts to conform to their own beliefs or ideals (Fine 1999). While ballad singers are known to be selective in their repertoire, most are against selective altering or censoring the content of songs. For Rena Hicks, to “soften” or alter the lyrics (potentially by removing violent or sexist lyrics) would corrupt their message and appeal of being true (Burton 1978: 18). Similarly, Sheila Adams believes that to change lyrics by altering the events or outcomes disrupts the narrative of the song and would be something completely different, e.g. if Sweet William does not die then “Barbara Allen” is no longer “Barbara Allen” (Adams 2017). If someone attracted to traditional music found these topics disagreeable, how then might one filter the unpleasant or offensive content of ballads? Hamessly examined versions of “Pretty Polly” to propose a “resisting performance” or how singers can use context, performance style, and even musical arrangement to critique

this apparent misogynistic violence while staying true to tradition (2005). Furthermore, she calls for “resisting listeners” to participate as well. For as ballad singing is defined as unemotional and left open to interpretation, it is ultimately the responsibility of the audience to draw or reject whatever cultural or societal lessons are to be found. Even texts or messages that seemingly contradict personal ideology can be reconciled when examined in performance context (Saltzman 1987: 559). With the importance of performance context and audience being so important in the utilization/identification of coding, folkloristic definitions of audience and performer should take gender into account. Defined by Bauman the role of the audience is “to recognize the culturally specific genre being enacted and to evaluate the quality of the performance according to local standards for that genre” which according to Sawin ignores “the emotional side of performance, the effect of performance on the audience, or the effect of emotional response in motivating audience participation and reaction” (2002: 35). She argues that a model of performance/audience in folklore theory must take emotion into account or else risks obscuring the gendered aspects of the subject and social interaction, i.e. what is the emotional response of women and men? Emotion is indeed important in the history of folklore scholarship. The “emotional core”, or main message to a song, is said to be the most salient and high fidelity element that is retained throughout transmission over time, place, and between individuals.

The life of fellow Beech Mountain singer Lena Harmon demonstrates the importance of personal context and life experience in interpretation. In her variant of “Mathey Groves” “there is no ethical conflict relative to love versus marriage conventions. ...She feels that the

relationship between the woman and Mathey is one of true love, and her sympathies are with them” (Ibid 41). Her evaluations of “true love” trumping marriage conventions are probably related to her own experience of marriage. She first wed at the age of sixteen and suffered a “terrible” marriage; her second marriage was loving but did not last; her third marriage was “not happy” (Ibid 42). Thus, her own personal experience leads to a message that differs from the one commonly read. Furthermore, her interpretation contrasts with Rena Hicks’s and shows that personal opinion and experience can override generational internalized cultural beliefs, patriarchal or otherwise. Indeed, one of the strengths and most powerful appeals of the ballad as a popular narrative form is the possibility of multiple readings: “these [songs] strong appeal to the popular imagination points to multivalent meaning *encoded* in the lyrics” [emphasis added] (Herrera-Sobek 1990: 72). This potential for multiple meanings and reactions, even for the same individual, is to me one of the important appeals of ballad singing and perhaps one of the reasons for its longevity.

While on the surface these “love-death” corridos and ballads may seem to legitimize male domination, the very presence of such songs suggests the presence of individuals that challenged such black-and-white expectations and roles. If women were indeed complacent with their subordinate status then such cautionary tales would not be necessary. Rather than collective oppression, we may witness individual action: “instead of the passive woman, we witness the struggle of the rebellious individual seeking to restructure the social canon and rupture those codes that stifled her freedom” (Ibid: 76).

But if there are negative messages to be found in ballad texts, why would women choose to sing them? Why would women take part in their own oppression? As mentioned earlier, some singers change words to better identify with the speaker's perspective. Corrido singer Lydia Mendoza also identified with the character in the ballads she sang: "if it's a corrido, I feel what happened in the tragedy. I feel it as if it had happened to me. I sing it with that feeling because it's as if whatever happened to the corrido protagonist happened to me" (Broyles-Gonzalez 2001: 47). Why would a woman identify with a murder victim? Obviously there must be some powerful emotion appeal. For Sheila Adams, the main appeal for ballad singing is her pride in a long-standing family tradition. She believes that there must have been a similar personal connection or sense of empowerment for the tradition to have survived this far "if women did not gain something emotional or some kind of empowerment, they would quit singin' 'em. Cause why sing about somethin' that doesn't make you feel good? That doesn't touch your soul or your heart. It would have definitely died out. They must have gotten something out of it" (Adams 2017). In response to his title question "Why is the murdered girl so popular?" Arthur Field speculated that one possibility is the use of violent songs as an acceptable outlet for aggression (1951: 117). For Adams this emotional outlet can take many forms. After the death of her husband, singing acted as a powerful source of relief and way to deal with her emotions. The song "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still" functioned as a means of emotional coding and expressed emotions that she could not express with her own words. In a less serious manner, singing lets her express annoyance or anger in

a non-confrontational way. Singing a “stupid man” song that “pokes fun” at men lets her express her frustration with individuals in a direct or indirect way.

Furthermore, not all ballads show women succumbing to societal oppression. Some do in fact have explicitly empowering messages. Take for example the ending of “The Farmer’s Curst Wife” (Child 278) sung by Sheila Adams’s relative Donna Ray Norton: “This just goes to show that women are better than the men / for we can go to hell and come back again”. In the category of “personal and cultural success” Stewart lists a few songs in which the woman disguises herself as a man and goes to great lengths to remain with her lover. Patricia Sawin states that presenting an image that does not conform to society’s ideas about a ‘woman’s role’ is one way that woman’s performance might challenge male privilege or hegemonic structures that support male dominance (2002: 41-42). While not numerous in the Child ballads, this “warrior woman” archetype is prevalent in many American ballads and corridos, referred to by Herrera-Sobek as the *soldadera* archetype (female soldier). A good example of this type is “Jack Monroe” (aka “Jackaro” in Madison County), in which the protagonist disguises herself as a soldier to pursue her lover who has been sent off to war by her disapproving parents. As is the case in many ballads, her parents discourage her courtship due to class differences: “She was courted by a young man / a man of high degree; / But she loved young Jack the sailor / who plowed the rolling sea”. After saving her lover from injury in battle they get married, which would meet both cultural success (getting married) and personal success (choosing the husband that she wishes, as well as avoiding the dangers of war). Although met with familial disapproval as is common, she in the end rejects it for

personal success, which is not always the typical outcome for such behavior. Indeed, with the reversal of dress and the victim-rescuer roles of men and women, this ballad family represents an inversion or reversal of the “normal” social order (Dugaw 1986: 24). Here the status quo is critiqued by an explicit symbolic disruption rather than a hidden coding.

Despite the extent of the protagonist’s inversion or overstepping of gender roles, in these sorts of ballads the female characters are still limited to the status of lover consistent with patriarchal norms. They are doomed to remain as love-objects rather than seen as courageous individuals. Despite the real-world existence of warrior women in the Mexican revolution, the corrido rarely refers to these *soldaderas* by name and when they are it is a legendary or mythic woman rather than a historic one. This idealization of the woman soldier into a more romantic role came about because “patriarchal society such as Mexico’s could not readily accept the fighting woman as reality was presenting her” so she either became a myth as in the well-known revolutionary corrido “*Juana Gallo*” or a mere love object as in “*La Adelita*” (Herrera-Sobek 1990: 103). Indeed, in “*Jackaro*” the protagonist exhibits her bravery as a lover rather than an individual. Although Adelita is usually thought to be a soldier, it is her beauty more than her valor that is praised. In one version, the only mention of her bravery is coupled with her appearance: “*Popular entre la tropa era Adelita, / la mujer que el sargento idolatraba, / porque además de ser valiente, era bonita. / Y hasta el mismo coronel la respetaba*” [Popular among the troops was Adelita / the woman the sergeant adored / because she was not only valiant but beautiful / so that even the colonel respected her]. In some versions it is her lover that leaves for war while she remains behind in the

barracks. In most variants, it is the man who does the fighting while Adelita remains behind as a romanticized ideal.

In contrast, the heroic or mythic soldadera is indeed praised for her bravery and depicted in explicit actions. “Juana Gallo” is perhaps the best-known of these corridos. The song immediately depicts this character as a brave soldier and depicts her in the midst of battle:

*“Entre ruidos de cañones y metrallas
Surgió una historia popular,
De una joven que apodaban ‘Juana Gallo’
Por ser valiente a no dudar.*

*Siempre al frente de la tropa se encontraba
Peleando como cualquier ‘Juan’
En campaña ni pelón se le escapaba,
Sin piedad se los tronaba con su enorme pistolón.”*

[Between the din of cannons and machine guns / there rose a popular legend, / of a young girl nicknamed ‘Juana Gallo’ / because she was brave, no doubt at all. / At the front of the troops she would be found / fighting like any ‘Juan’, / on the battlefield no Federal escaped her, / without mercy she shot them down with her enormous gun.]

Here her courageous qualities are not her own but appropriations of masculine characteristics. The name Juana, the female version of Juan (which in popular usage is equivalent to John-every-man) associates her with the male soldier. Furthermore, the term *gallo* (a rooster or cock) is often a symbol of bravery or the fighting nature of a cock and is frequently associated with his manliness, especially in the corrido. Paredes saw the prevalence of words like *gallo* over *macho* in the corrido as evidence against the very idea of *machismo* as a feature of Mexican culture. Nevertheless, while in this instance Juana Gallo is praised for her bravery it is in masculine terms and associations that exclude her feminine identity from

that of a successful soldier. Thus while the soldadera or the warrior woman breaks with patriarchal expectations of a woman's behavior, her transgressions are still restricted within a limited gender framework of bravery as preclusive to femininity.

Nevertheless, contemporary compositions among the corrido and Appalachian traditions continue to invert the role of women as the victim, with female protagonists enacting violence against would-be attackers or abusive lovers. The song "Omie Got Wise" by feminist old-time group Reel World String Band plays with the expected roles in a murder ballad. Like the protagonist of the heroic border corrido whose violence is justified for defending his individual rights (as we will see in the next chapter), the more recent *mujer brava* (courageous woman) character is justified in defending herself against abuse.

Conclusions

As Roger Abrahams showed in his case-study of Ozark singer Almeda Riddle, life experience and personal contexts can profoundly influence the transmission, repertoire, and performance of folk traditions (1970: 154). This paradigmatic shift in folklore from the "folk" as sources of "text" to subjects of deeper study rapidly increased in the 1970s and was soon bolstered by the influence of feminist theory, both of which fostered more nuanced and contextualized understandings of folk forms and expression. Therefore, in discussion of gender and traditional ballads we must remember that in many ballad traditions in western North Carolina and elsewhere, especially in the Sodom Laurel community, it was women who were the primary tradition bearers. Even men singers like Bobby McMillon learned many ballads from women singers. Sheila Adams now questions the validity of ballads

singing as a “women’s tradition” as transmission often occurs between both men and women, but nevertheless we should be aware of the lessons that these women take from their songs. With the field of folklore being increasingly concerned with presenting folk traditions as they are interpreted and presented by the folk, scholars must be careful to not place too much emphasis on textual analysis that is divorced from the contexts and meanings in which ballads survive in the tradition through performance by folksingers. Current “positional” feminism stresses that we must view the gendered-self not as an essential category or an arbitrary construct but as a subject that is positioned in constantly-changing contexts (Alcoff 1994: 116). But we must be careful, for ballads are representations that may oversimplify gender roles as more normative and instrumental than they truly are (Tatar 2010: 90). Despite whatever embedded cultural meanings or value we may extract, we must not overlook how songs are understood by those who continue the tradition. In terms of power relations and performance context Scott cautions that “Without a privileged peek backstage or a rupture in the performance we have no way of calling into question the status of what might be a convincing but feigned performance” (1990: 4). Such “peeks” into the thoughts of singers like Sheila Kay Adams, Hattie Presnell, Rick Ward, and others reveal a complicated discourse. Varied interpretations between generations, genders, and individuals show that ideology cannot easily explain all songs adequately because values do not always hold up under examination of personal context in transmission, performance, or personal experience.

Still, we must not diminish the history and current experience of oppression and inequality in Appalachia. For in the historical record as in ballad text there was indeed social

inequality that was compounded by gender and class status. Although seen as simply anachronistic by some singers, for others such systems and the images and motifs that they create can be re-appropriated in a positive light. Poverty, abuse, misogyny, etc are issues still faced by Appalachian and other women today (Massee 2015: 293) and may require new solutions, but in folksong many singers already possess tools for discussing hardships that have been passed down along with the words and tunes. Folksong in Appalachia has a long history of resisting unequal power systems, especially when paired with politics and labor activism, which I will explore in the next chapter. Ballad singing can be used to convey messages on multiple levels whether emotional, private, or public. With careful utilization of the seemingly violent and sexist songs that they inherit, singing can act as a tool for casual discussion of mores, personal empowerment, or critique and disruption of negative representations or belief systems.

Chapter 3

Conflict in the Border Corrido and the Coalfield Protest Song

*Qué bonitos son los hombres
Que se matan pecho a pecho,
Cada uno con su pistola,
Defendiendo su derecho!*

How admirable are men
Who fight to the death face to face,
Each one of them with his pistol,
Defending his right!
-“Corrido de Arnulfo”

“With a pistol in his hand”: the Border Corrido and the Dialectic of Conflict

In 19th century Mexico there existed many types of folksong including the *romance*, the *décima*, the *copla*, and the *corrido*; however, by the end of the century the corrido had come to replace the others as the dominant form on the U.S.-Mexico border (Paredes 1958: 149). For it was during this time that a series of conflicts of all sorts changed the lives of the border people and shaped the content of their folksong, resulting in the corrido of border conflict. The years from 1836 to the 1930s, dubbed “the corrido century” by Paredes, brought violence and conflict to the border with skirmishes, revolts, and civil wars North and South of the Rio Grande, including the Texas Revolution and the Mexican-American War (Ibid: 132). Of course, the 1948 creation of an international border had the largest impact on border relations, as Spanish and English speakers alike found themselves subject to new laws and regulations, and Mexican-Americans found themselves in an economically and culturally subordinate position: “an oppressed minority had been created” (Paredes 1976: 22). This century included the strongest racial and class subjugation of the native Mexicans and their

semi-subsistence lifestyle by the supposedly prejudiced and capitalist system of the Anglos, and not surprisingly, includes some of the bloodiest conflicts and most hostile ballads. Perhaps the most common of border corridos are those of inter-ethnic conflict, which criticize the poor and often unjust treatment of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans by Anglo-Americans. In these corridos there is an overwhelming theme of defiance and resistance, usually an individual standing up for his own rights against an aggressive American authority.

Perhaps due to the often autoethnographic or ethnobiographical nature of the work of Chicano or Mexican-American scholars, descriptions of the Southwest's transition to American statehood and subsequent social relations are often heavy-handed in their labels of oppression, marginalization, subjugation, or even colonization. There were, however, significant discrepancies in property-ownership and political power. After the establishment of the international boundary, there was a "land grab" through which land ownership and legal process was manipulated to establish Anglo authority (Flores 1992: 167). A large body of scholarship maintains that former Mexican land grants were simply not recognized. Some claims were lost due to lack of political representation required to present before legal commissions, while others were taken by force. It was not uncommon for Texas Rangers to seize land from native Mexicans to sell to incoming businessmen (*Ibid*: 171). This acquisition of land was the result of various strategies, some of questionable morality or ethicality:

"After the Texas revolution, the Mexican War, and the Gadsden Purchase of 1856, the basic U.S. strategy for acquiring property around former missions, *presidios*, and

large and small towns was to use taxation, boundary, manipulation, theft, and juridical means such as delaying land grant claims in order to possess Mexican productive resources. The result was that an already hard-pressed population lost its land-holding power and control” (Vélez-Ibáñez 1996: 62).

Loss of land was a major grievance claimed by Chicano activists, some of whom have gone to the extreme of calling for a *reconquista*, reconquest or return of lands to Hispanics. This is a fringe opinion however and is rejected by mainstream organizations like the National Council de la Raza, the country’s largest Hispanic advocacy and civil rights organization (NCLR). Nevertheless, Mexicans were also at times at risk of the loss of personal autonomy. The state of California in the 1850s enacted laws that legalized enslavement of “Indians”. Being a mestizo culture with indigenous influence, Mexicans were at risk of being categorized as Indian and enslaved, especially those with more “Indian” features (Broyles-Gonzalez 2001: 220). Beyond loss of land or political voice, social relations were equally disadvantageous. Threat of violence was a real danger for Mexican-Americans, even in the 20th century. Texas corrido singer, *norteño* musician, and early recording star Lydia Mendoza remembered that her father was overly protective of her and her sister spending time unsupervised outside of the home due to Jim Crow era attitudes. The threat of rape or lynching was present, and “In fact, it was not safe to send Mexican girls to school or to otherwise leave them unsupervised. State violence against peoples of color at the hands of Euro-Texan law enforcement was rampant” (Broyles-Gonzalez 2001: 222). Even when killings were legally sanctioned for the punishment of crimes, this punishment was often extended beyond just criminals. In 1915 after Mexican-Americans robbed a train in Brownsville, Texas, vigilante groups formed to lynch Mexican-Americans and over a

hundred died in a few months (Anzaldúa 2007: 30). Such mistreatment often lead to violent responses from Mexican-Americans. In 1859 the town of Brownsville, Texas was “attacked and occupied” by a group of Mexican ranchers led by Juan Cortina after he witnessed a fellow Mexican pistol-whipped by a white policeman, a series of events that earned their own corrido: “*Ese general Cortina / es libre y muy soberano, / han subido sus honores / porque salvo a un mexicano*” [The famed General Cortina / is quite sovereign and free, / and honor due him is greater, / for he saved a Mexican’s life] (Paredes 1976: 48). This is one of the oldest border corridos collected, and Paredes argues it is the one that established the typical themes and motifs of the genre (1958: 148).

Indeed, the social and political interactions between Anglo-Americans and Mexicans have been laden with conflict and created a particular atmosphere that became extremely influential in the development of the border corrido tradition. Manuel Peña calls this the “dialectic of conflict”, or a clash of ideological, economic, class, and racial forces that served as a main creative influence in the various musical traditions of the Southwest (Peña 1999: 4).

This dialectic perspective of conflict is most evident in the oppositional language and imagery of the border corrido. The hero is always a Mexican or Mexican-American who is driven to violence by the unjust actions of white Americans, who then fights to defend what he believes is right, usually with his pistol in his hand (Paredes 1958: 147). The hero is always referred to by name while the Americans are reduced to a nameless other as either *cherifes* (sheriffs) or *ranches* (rangers), which refer to any sort of sheriff, deputy, Texas

Ranger, law-man, or posse. Even though he may be captured or killed, the border hero goes down fighting to defy the aggressing Anglos and to defend his rights. Perhaps the most typical example of this pattern is that of “The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez”. The real-life Gregorio Cortez shot and killed the sheriff of Karnes County, Texas after a misunderstanding about an unrelated horse theft left his brother dead. He fled and the law gave a miraculous chase; by the time he was captured he had killed two sheriffs, ridden and walked hundreds of miles, and evaded countless men.

While the spoken legends of Cortez add other events to the story, the song closely follows the actual events of the ordeal: the wounding of his brother Romaldo and the killing of Sheriff Morris (referred to as the Major Sheriff or *el Cherife Mayor*), the chase, and the capture. It is in the song’s description of Cortez’s flight that both the dialectic language and typical corrido themes are most prominently presented. It is at the beginning of his flight, in the fifth and sixth stanzas of this variant that the most important message, and main theme of the border hero corrido, is given:

*“Decía Gregorio Cortez
Con su pistola en la mano:
-No siento haberlo matado,
Lo que siento es a mi hermano.”*

*Decía Gregorio Cortez
Con su alma muy encendida:
-No siento haberlo matado,
La defensa es permitida”.*

[Then said Gregorio Cortez, / With his pistol in his hand: / “I don’t regret that I killed him; / I regret my brother’s death”. / Then said Gregorio Cortez, / And his soul was all aflame: / “I don’t regret that I killed him, / A man must defend himself”] (*Ibid: 155*)

After quickly setting the scene (typical of corrido style), the narrative focuses mostly on the heroics of Cortez and the cowardice of the Texans, drawing a strong contrast that is developed throughout. This ballad features several motifs that are prominent in the heroic corrido genre: descriptions of horses, the “with pistol in his hand” lines, and the alternation between bravery and cowardice or clownishness (Flores 1992: 169). This pattern is repeated throughout the corrido, in which Cortez taunts the *rinches*, performs a daring feat of escape, and kills another sheriff or posse-member, all while riding ahead. On a symbolic level, this pattern acts as symbolic inversion of the existing discourse of authority and understandings of power.

“In taunting the Rangers, Cortez revises their discourse and its ability order subjectivity. The Ranger is no longer an individual but a member of a mob; he no longer represents order, but the violence that inevitably underscores demands for order. In particular, “El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez” challenges the Texas Rangers as the personification of this dominant version of reality” (Noe 2009: 598).

This reversal of the ranger from an agent of order to one of chaos undermines his role of authority, which inverts the dominant discourse and its narrative expectations. These alternations that build on the contrast between the brave Mexican and cowardly, inept Rangers function primarily as a form of role or status reversal, in which the celebrated, no-nonsense Texas Rangers do not emerge victorious as expected (Peña 1982: 26). Instead, it is the lone Mexican who comes out victorious. However, this victory culminates as a symbolic one; ultimately Cortez takes responsibility for his actions and gives himself up willingly for the sake of his people. Even though he is captured, it is only after facing overwhelming odds and exacting heavy casualties. Even in defeat Cortez and, more importantly, the corrido hero in general achieve a victory for their people by defying negative stereotypes and

exemplifying heroic virtues like bravery and cunning, all while single-handedly resisting or defeating Anglos of superior numbers. Whether or not the corrido hero is defeated, it is always in contrast to the negative reality of the border people. It is in this contrast that “a sharp reversal of the historical Anglo-Mexican relationship, in which the Anglo dominates, is achieved. In the corrido, instead of the Mexican being the downtrodden, powerless victim of Anglo American exploitation, it is he who assumes the role of victor” (*Ibid*: 31).

Unfortunately, the symbolic victories of the corrido hero rarely reflected victories in the real-life struggles of Mexicans. Nevertheless, these songs gave cultural meaning and importance to an oppressed group. Even though the actual men of corridos may have been defeated or imprisoned, the symbolic hero of the songs remained an exemplar of cultural values that transcended the defeat or oppression of actual events on the border: “In short, Greater Mexican epic-heroic balladry, as songs of triumph over a racially/culturally distinct enemy, now appears at a cultural/ideological level as a compensatory form of resistance for a lack of victory in the material realm” in their private transcript (*Limón* 1998: 106).

Another example of cultural resistance is the corrido of the legendary bandit Joaquín Murrieta. Legend holds that soon after Murrieta arrived in California during the Gold Rush he lost his land-claim to American miners. Later he is said to have witnessed the lynching of his brother and the rape and murder of his wife, which caused him to form a band of men to rob and pillage white Californians out of revenge. While his actions may or may not seem justifiable in the eyes of the law, they inspired a ballad that praises him for his individual initiative and vigilance in response to the personal offenses he suffered. Although atypical in

corrido form and structure, in content the song represents the same themes of an individual defending his rights and his actions:

*“A los ricos avarientos
Yo les quitaba el dinero.
Con los humildes y pobres
Yo me quitaba el sombrero.
Ay, qué leyes tan injustas
Con llamarme bandolero.*

*A mí la ley no me asusta
Ni tengo miedo morir.
Vengo a vengar a mi esposa
Se los vuelvo a repetir.
Carmelita tan hermosa,
Cómo te hicieron sufrir”.*

[From the greedy rich / I took away their money. / With the humble and poor / I took off my hat. / Oh, what unjust laws / To label me an outlaw. / The Law does not frighten me / nor am I afraid to die. I come to avenge my wife / And I say again, / my lovely Carmelita, / How they made you suffer] (Grant & De Zamora 2002).

Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez explains that “rather than a ‘social bandit’ he should be considered, as others of the period, a ‘cultural hero and leader’ because Murrieta organized resistance with an alternative ‘auxiliary’ political authority and generated community approval and legitimacy for his actions” (1997: 100). In his ballad he is not treated as an outlaw or criminal, but as a figure that defended his family and community values through organized and armed resistance in opposition to Anglo authority. Due to the anti-authoritarian aspect of the song, the performance of it sometimes has chagrined certain members of the “Anglo establishment”. Alfredo Figueroa (a descendent of Murrieta) says that his great-grandfather was thrown in jail at more than one Arizona mining camp for singing the song in public (Griffith 2002: 20). Despite these heroes often being based on real individuals, the distinction between individual and community blurs and the corrido hero is said to be a “collective

figuration of local community” that is inseparable from the collective (Flores 1992: 170). In some instances collective values of community authorship seem to be so strong that apolitical criminals are rewritten into heroes. Such a case is the story of José Mosqueda who robbed a train in South Texas. The stolen money belonged to Mexicans and *Tejanos*. Rather than stealing from his own people, his corrido takes the form of cultural conflict and describes him stealing from Anglos instead: “*Decía José Mosqueda / con su pistol en la mano: / ‘Tumbamos el ferrocarril / y en terreno Americano’* [Then José Mosqueda / with his pistol in his hand, / “We knocked over the train, / and on American soil!”] (Paredes 1976: 62).

There are examples of similar figures in United States folksong, but in the context of Appalachian culture a more real example of this independent spirit may be seen in the real-life moonshiner. Although there are many folksongs about moonshine, there are few that praise it outright. Some lament its harmful effects or celebrate its euphoric properties, while others do comment on the government’s disapproval (e.g. the revenue officers coming to tear down Darling Cora’s still-house). For many, whiskey making had a double-edged nature:

“whiskey was both a boon and a curse to the mountain people: it provided financial support, which allowed many to endure the worst of the postwar hardships; but it did so at great cost. Some... ...fell prey to ‘moonshine’s’ adverse pleasures; others served time in prison for breaking various prohibition laws; a few died while defending what they felt to be their birthright: whiskey-making” (Olson 1992: 66).

Similarly, the real life character of Appalachian bandit Otto Wood and the folklore surrounding him parallel the border raiders and folk heroes of the Mexican tradition (McKenzie 2012). In recent decades, the popular corrido has spawned its own sub-genre of *narcocorridos*, which detail the stories of drug traffickers and the like. However, here is a distinction between the hero and a mere outlaw. Whereas the smuggler may simply break the

law for personal gain, both the moonshiner and the border corrido hero do so not out of contempt for the law but as self-preservation to defend his rights once his culture, livelihood, or people have been threatened. There is another aspect to the corrido hero that is more implicit; He is always a man. Paredes believed that the prominence of exaggerated masculinity in the corrido was more of a celebration of courageous behavior rather than a sign of a female-deprecating *machismo*. But by default, women are excluded from the conversation of who represents, exemplifies, and defends collective values.

“Which Side Are You On?”: Protest Songs of the Kentucky Coalfields

Like the U.S.-Mexico border, Appalachia has a long history as a cultural borderland that has been home to multiple ethnic groups. Joining or displacing the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw and other indigenous groups were various Europeans like English, Scots-Irish, German, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Swiss, French, and others. In the late 19 and early 20th centuries many African-Americans and Eastern and Southern Europeans (and a few Mexicans) migrated to the coal producing counties of Central Appalachia.

Considering the majority white, English-speaking (though certainly not ethnically homogenous) population of Appalachia, its narrative songs of conflict are better viewed through the lens of intra-ethnic conflict, or conflict among members of the same culture based on social or economic class differences. Nevertheless, the region has fostered its own dialectic of conflict:

“There is a rich lode of American industrial folklore composed by women in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. It can be attributed in part to a combination of cultural, economic, historical, and psychological factors: a rich musical tradition, an

economic disaster of mammoth proportions, a history of radical unionism, and the independent, pioneer spirit of the people” (Yurchenco 1991: 210).

However generalizing this statement may be, these factors said to be unique to the region created their own two-sided perspective, with a different thematic relationship for a different conflict. This “rich lode” refers to New World songs composed about coal mining. Central Appalachia has long been one of the most productive regions for bituminous coal extraction, and has been the ground for conflicts between coal companies and labor unions. Indeed, labor activism has long dominated written accounts of coal town life (Shifflett 1991: 116). The frequent and often bloody strikes in these areas have led to the composition of many songs that take this hostile and dialectic view, in most cases viewing the union workers oppressed socially and economically by the coal companies. Akin to the loss of land experienced by Mexican-Americans and shift from ranching to mono-agriculture in the Southwest, the rise of industry in Central Appalachia often involved loss of land to outside companies or local-elite and a shift from diverse subsistence strategies to mono-industrial cash economy. Indeed, the “colonial” experience of Central Appalachians seems to have this oppositional perspective.

There are countless songs that describe the harsh economic realities of the coal-mining camps and towns. Akin to the loss of land by Mexican farmers and ranchers, narratives of the coal mining industry in Central Appalachia often describe a loss of land of native semi-subsistence farmers to outside companies or local elites (Gaventa 1980, Romalis 1999). Indeed, the town of Middlesboro, Kentucky was quite literally constructed by the London-based American Association Ltd. (Callahan 2009: 56). The small pay that miners

received (usually credit at the company store) was often insufficient to feed a family, and company dwellings offered poor shelter from the elements. Thus extreme poverty was a reality for many mining families. It is also important to note, that the gendered division of labor common in coal-mining disrupted previous ideas about “men’s” and “women’s” work and placed the burden of domestic work solely on women (Callahan 2009: 83). It has been said that “the whole system of mining hinged on women’s domestic management, everyday chores, keeping boarders and service jobs” (Romalis 1999: 181). Ballad singers like Sarah Ogan Gunning, who grew up in a Kentucky coal camp, sang of the hardship and suffering that they witnessed firsthand. Her family life was filled with tragedy. Two of her brothers died in the mines, two of her children died, and her first husband died of Tuberculosis (*Ibid*: 131). Take Gunning’s “Dreadful Memories” (a play on the gospel tune “Precious Memories”) as an example:

“Dreadful memories! How they linger;
How they pain my precious soul.
Little children, sick and hungry,
Sick and hungry, weak and cold.

Dreadful memories! How they haunt me
As the lonely moments fly.
Oh, how them little babies suffered!
I saw them starve to death and die” (Sharp 1992: 53).

Songs such as this make a strong emotional appeal to the listener as they depict in vivid detail the hard lives of miners’ families. Other songs describe the hard, dangerous lives of the miners themselves. Although they comment on the suffering and poor conditions of mining communities and make a compelling case for the plight of the miner, they offer no solution or alternative to the problems established.

To find a solution some miners turned toward labor unions, which has produced a wealth of pro-union songs characterized by the same dialectics found in border corrido of conflict. The most powerful example is that of “Which Side Are You On?” by Florence Reece, written about the “Bloody Harlan” struggle for unionization in Harlan County, Kentucky in the 1930s. In her song she describes the Harlan County strikes as a two-sided battle and compels workers to join the “right” side. In contrast to other coal-mining ballads (and many border corridos) that merely describe social problems but offer no solution, the goal of “Which Side Are You On?” is to convert listeners to a movement and commit them to action (*Ibid*). This active intention is clearly stated in the song’s lyrics, which spell out “its two-valued orientation, its class consciousness and its feeling that time is on its side” (*Ibid*: 54):

“Come all of you good workers,
Good news to you I’ll tell,
Of how the good old union
Has come in here to dwell.

Refrain: Which side are you on?
Which side are you on?” (*Ibid*)

The song sets the dialectic tone from the very beginning, and removes any moral ambiguity. Immediately the struggle is divided into two sides, with the union on the “good side” which the listener is implored to join.

“We’ve started our good battle,
We know we’re sure to win,
Because we’ve got the gun thugs
A-lookin’ very thin”.

Unlike other songs that lament the conditions of miners and their families, this song is overly optimistic and predicts a sure victory. This faith in the strength of the union acts as another form of status reversal. Here it is the company gun-thugs and not the miner's family that are thin and weary rather than the miner's starving children.

"They say in Harlan County
There are no neutrals there;
You either are a union man
Or a thug for J. H. Blair.

Oh workers, can you stand it?
Oh tell me how you can.
Will you be a lousy scab
Or will you be a man?"

Again the struggle is split in two sides with no possibility for neutrality: there are only workers loyal to the Union and the "thugs" loyal to the company. Although Harlan Sherriff J.H. Blair is mentioned by name, here as in "Gregorio Cortez" and other corridos, the others are reduced to nameless cowards and treated as un-manly. A clear distinction is drawn between the "real" men of the Union and the scabs and gun-thugs of the company. Ultimately the listener is faced with two choices: be a man and join the winning side, or be a lousy thug. This othering language was employed by the Company as well: "the strike, the union, Communists, and sympathizers formed a single 'other' menacing the local power elite" (Romalis 1999: 43). This metonymic tendency to think of the individual as part of one group or organization is evidenced in Sarah Gunning's re-writing of her song "I Hate the Capitalist System" to "I Hate the Company Bosses"; to her the bosses were interchangeable with the system (Ibid: 144). Returning to Cunningham's idea of Appalachia as the double other, in a sense here those on both sides are othered by the Other- they are the other other's other.

While this oppositional language may seem exclusive, some of these songs extend an invitation to join their cause that transcends race or ethnicity as in “Dreadful Memories”: “Really, friends, it doesn’t matter / Whether you are black or white” (Kahn 2015: 301).

Another example of this dialectic sentiment is seen in “Aunt” Molly Jackson’s (half-sister to Sarah Gunning) “I Am a Union Woman”, which offers the same optimistic call to arms coupled with its two-sided class-consciousness:

“I am a union woman
Just as brave as I can be
I do not like the bosses
And the bosses don’t like me.

Refrain: Join the NMU, Join the NMU [National Miners Union]

We are many thousand strong,
And I am glad to say
We are getting stronger
And stronger every day.

The bosses ride fine horses
While we walk in the mud,
Their banner is the dollar sign,
Ours is striped with blood” (Yurchenco 1991: 215).

Here the antipathy between the two sides is more outspoken, and the call to join the union is again immediate. The speaker praises herself as brave and the union as a strong, ever-growing organization. More importantly, it provides an extremely vivid depiction of the class-based nature of the conflict: the bosses enjoy wealth and riches at the expense of the workers. Also noteworthy is her identification as a woman. In other songs like “Hungry, Ragged Blues”, as in “Dreadful Memories”, she identifies herself as a mother as well as belonging to the Union. This “maternalist discourse”, or their intersectional identity as

mothers and caregivers, compounded their appeals to speak beyond just class issues. Their “resistance narratives”, while mostly depicting class oppositions, “revealed a consciousness of gender as political text. Maternalist discourse became a useful strategy to link domestic interests to social and political action” (Romalis 1999: 181).

Sarah Ogan Gunning’s “Down on the Picket Line” offers a much stronger contrast between the bravery of the strikers and the cowardice of the scabs, similar to the pattern found in “Gregorio Cortez”:

“We went out one morning before daylight
And I was sure we'd have a fight,
But the scabs was cowardly, ran away,
But we went back the very next day.

We all went out on the railroad track
To meet them scabs and turn them back
We win that strike I'm glad to say
Come on, and we'll show you the way” (Ibid: 216).

These songs praise the strikers for resisting the intimidation tactics of mine operators who harassed union workers and organizers, and give a moral legitimacy to their side in the struggle. Like the border ballads that described real individuals as cultural representatives and exemplars of collective values, Appalachian singers like Jackson and Gunning wrote songs that “emerged from personal experience but moved beyond it to larger social and political statements” (Romalis 1999: 138). Coupled with the staunch defiance and active organization of the union workers we can again see the folksong as a form of organized communal resistance by an auxiliary authority against an oppressive group, like in the ballad of Joaquín Murrieta. Again, the victories achieved in these ballads are merely symbolic ones. Unfortunately most of the strikes by labor unions like the UMW and NMU were not

ultimately successful (Sharp 1992: 54). Nevertheless, songs like “Which Side Are You On?” have become anthems for labor, and even civil rights, movements everywhere.

Corrido and Union Song at Ludlow: Hints for the Future of Appalachia

According to the similar functions that they serve for groups that perceive themselves as marginalized, one can expect a marriage of the corrido and the union song. The life of Colorado miner and *corridista* Elias Baca showed just that. His song “*Que viva la nación*” (That the Nation May Live) described the Ludlow Massacre of 1914, in which state militia and gunmen hired by Colorado Fuel & Iron Company fired upon a group of miners and their families. Like any good folksinger who will compose a song according to formulas and motifs of their tradition, Baca combined corrido form and conventions with pro-union themes to create a new hybrid form. Per tradition, he begins with a place and date, but moves beyond conventions with the addition of a chorus:

“*De West Virginia llegan
telegramas muy iguales.
Que el 23 de septiembre
se paran los minerales.*

*Coro:
¡Que viva la nación!
¡Que viva la nación!
que aquí 'stamos peleando
y en esta fuerte unión!*”

[From West Virginia came / very similar telegrams / that the 23rd of September / the mining would be stopped. Chorus: That the nation may live! / That the nation may live! / We're here fighting / in this powerful union] (2002: 31-32).

Once again, a corrido links Mexican-American workers to Appalachia. Here the mention of West Virginia refers to the 1913 UMWA strike in Paint Creek, WV. There as in Ludlow,

gunmen hired by Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency fired upon miners. Moreover, famous labor organizer Mother Jones was active in both the Paint Creek and Ludlow strikes. Thus, Baca calls for a trans-regional union for the benefit of miners across the nation. In this song we see the same political function of the border corrido and the protest songs of Central Appalachia: an overt other, and the emphasis on an event to transform it to social action (Ibid: 36). Furthermore, the song calls upon miners to overcome racial or class divisions in a multiethnic, national union (Ibid: 39) which is reminiscent of Sarah Gunning's inter-racial appeal in "Dreadful Memories".

Baca gives just one example of possible interaction and hybridity of folk traditions among multiethnic communities. Elsewhere, the corrido has been used by activists like Luis Valdéz in drives to unionize other groups like farm workers (Pacini-Hernandez 2010: 40). Given the presence of Mexican workers in the coal industry of West Virginia and East Kentucky, it's surprising there have been no corridos composed on the subject collected so far. On the other hand, the UMWA journal did feature several songs praising Hispanic miners, such as "Rufeno, the Mexican Boy" (Korson 1965: 159). Hispanics have certainly been involved in labor struggles in the region. Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander center in East Tennessee, worked with *Hispano* activists in New Mexico (Banker 2000: 26). In the 1990s, a group of Guatemalan and Mexican workers staged a decade long strike in Morganton, North Carolina (Fink & Dunn 2003). Neither are they strangers to the protest song and Appalachian music traditions. Latino residents in the region attend local music events like fiddler's conventions, and some mariachi fiddlers even emulate bluegrass fiddlers

(Margolies 2012: 122). Compared to unaccompanied ballads singing among Anglos the corrido has found extreme mainstream success among Latinos and remains a commercially popular genre (Pacini-Hernandez 2010), so the corrido and corridistas can be expected to be found among Mexican immigrants to Appalachia. As Mexican immigration continues in the region and communities become more integrated we can expect more interaction between cultural traditions. For as the history of the banjo shows, music in Appalachia has shown a high degree of cultural exchange and hybridity. To be sure, Mexican migrants to Appalachia are bringing the same music found in the Southwest and Mexico like *conjunto*, *norteño*, *corridos*, *mariachi*, *cumbia*, and religious music like the *corito*. What remains to be seen is how these traditions will incorporate into or be influenced by the existing Appalachian traditions. Case studies by scholars like Daniel Margolies show that cultural interchange is already occurring among Latino musicians, who use music to adapt to life in the United States while also affirming their own ethnic identities. However few of these data point to Appalachia. It remains largely undocumented exactly what kinds of music is being played by Mexicans and other Latinos in Appalachia. So far there has been no academic work focused specifically on Latino music in Appalachia. Future research in this topic will help to determine what kind of music Latinos in the region are playing and the extent of cultural exchange.

Still, the ballad remains an important tool in the struggles of the Appalachian-American and the Mexican-American. Since World War II the corrido has shifted from depicting lone heroes and cultural heroes to those of victimization that evoke outrage in order

to bring active political resistance, and is often tied to unionization or working-class movements (Peña 1982: 38). In Appalachia protest singers on both sides of the Mountaintop Removal mining debate are evoking their musical traditions and history of coal mining to give place-based legitimacy to their arguments (2012: 19). These songs may speak to new conflicts but the lyrical forms are the same. Considering the shared history of conflict and symbolic functions of the corrido and Appalachian coal-field balladry, it seems that the Appalachian corrido is inevitable.

In this chapter I have described two sub-genres of two ballad traditions in two sub-regions. In both cases, colonial-like experience of loss of land to outsiders and local elites led to an oppositional perspective that is expressed in oppositional language in their folk songs. This “us versus them” perspective manifests in two distinct ways. In the border corridos shaped by conflict between ethnic groups (inter-ethnic conflict), this opposition is between heroic male Mexican individuals who represent collective values in resistance to unjust Anglo authority. In protest songs by Kentucky ballad singers shaped by class conflict (intra-ethnic conflict), it is expressed by both individuals (often female) and groups in opposition to the local economic elite. Here again we see the differing uses of folksong for different generations and personal contexts. In the case of Elias Baca, we see the protest corrido as both an ethnic and class-based discourse that transcends place. This utilization of the corrido for new purposes related to local experience is suggestive of how the corrido might interact with or adapt to experience in Appalachia, which I will now explore in the next chapter.

Conclusions

For many people a large appeal to traditional ballad-singing is a seemingly timeless or ancient quality. With songs that are more than a hundred, if not hundreds of years old, they seem to provide a window to the past. More than a window, they act as a sort of mirror. They reflect life in the past, but also project back to us values and lessons that can be applied to our lives today. Ballad singers like Rick Ward and Sheila Kay Adams believe that human nature has changed little in the past several hundred years. They also believe that while lessons from the past can inform our lives in the present, we cannot project our own values back to critique those of the past. Moreover, ballad text and style is not a static snapshot of a certain time. As they are passed down, every generation adds their own nuances, changes, and interpretations. In accordance with folksingers' common belief that ballads are first and foremost a deeply personal tradition of entertainment in family and community life rather than expositions or debates of ideological concerns, one must be cautious when looking for cultural meanings beyond the surface. There is an inherent danger of misinterpretation when reading ballad text as evidence of cultural attitudes, but some conclusions can be drawn with a careful approach: "What complicates the use of ballads as cultural evidence is that there is never one single definitive text but many variants, so that one has to refer to themes, episodes, formulas, and storylines rather than precise sequences of words" (Perry 2011: 169). In other words, by the comparison of themes and ideas across variants, between songs types, and over time we can make an educated guess as to the messages that could be portrayed. More importantly, we

must also look at the contexts in which these same songs are learned, performed, and evaluated by those who sing them.

It is this last point that I wish to stress the most. There is sometimes in scholarship a tendency to quote women, minorities, and “the folk”, and to “splice, contain, regulate, and subordinate their self-articulations within a larger ‘scientific’ discourse” in which “flesh-and-blood lives are ultimately abstracted into generalized categories” (Broyles-Gonzalez 2001 204). Or in other words, folk expressions “need to be understood first in and of themselves, on their own terms, and in their relationship to one another before they can be further contextualized (but not exclusively defined)” (*Ibid*: 185). I do not wish to generalize my “informants” culture, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs into formal categories; rather, I wish to present their narratives alongside others so that they might inform or challenge ours. In ballad scholarship much has been written about ideology and collective values. If the ballad is indeed representative of community values, will ballad singers share those values? Scholars like Hastie and Tatar make strong cases for their ideological interpretations of murder ballads, and countless corrido scholars have touted the individual hero as the defiant representative of the community. Apart from Paredes who grew up in and practiced the corrido tradition, others seem to have omitted perhaps the most crucial aspect in the interpretation of ballads: how they are used and interpreted by the singers. On the other hand, we should not disregard the perceived oppression experienced by Chicano and feminist scholars. In the vein of the work of Thomas Burton, my goal is to present ballads foremost in

the context of their singers. In this way we see that in the minds of ballad singers neither ideology nor tradition is a static force throughout the generations.

It's clear that "migrants are carving new cultural space in religious expression, social interaction, and music, and transforming existing public spaces in new ways" but music making has not been given as much attention (Margolies 2012: 261). Beyond the coexistence of these two cultures in places like Galax or Mt. Airy, what is the degree of interaction between musical traditions? Although Latinos or Hispanics have had a very small historical presence in Appalachia, their rapidly increasing population in the region does suggest the possibility that their own musical practices will bump into native ones. Will this "bumping" be a barrier or pathway to assimilation? There is indeed current musical interchange of Latino musicians occurring elsewhere in the South. There has been documented Latino musicians in piedmont North Carolina who are adapting bluegrass styles and shaping their own music to reflect local place. One example is the *norteño* (accordion based ensemble music that originated in northern Mexico and the Southwest U.S.) band Rey Norteño from Raleigh. In their song "Raleigh, Norte Carolina" they make a pan-Latino appeal for migrant connections to a new local place. The lyrics express a love for a new home but desire to return to the old one which represents the "classic migrant quandary" of "a love for and desire to return home mixed with appreciation for the opportunities of the new surroundings" (Margolies 2009: 119). The key point though, is that Raleigh is located as a place in Latino migrant identity. Another example of this dual nature of migrant music given by Margolies is travelling mariachi musicians from North Carolina who perform in Appalachia as well as

parts of the Southeast. Likewise, Latino (specifically Mexican) identity is reshaped in the context of a new home in the South. Mariachi music is often thought of as emblematic of Mexican culture and identity, so professional mariachi musicians perform this representative role but also shape their performances to appeal to American identity as well. Errol Lopez of the band Mariachi Mi Tierra likes to incorporate American songs into his repertoire to better appeal to English-speaking audiences, even Southern fiddle tunes (*Ibid*: 122). Standards that Lopez plays like “Orange Blossom Special” are likely be found in bluegrass performance as “Give the Fiddler a Dram” is likely to be found in an old-time jam. Playing “Orange Blossom Special” as a showpiece tune is apparently likely to generate an enthusiastic response and large tips from a white, southern crowd. Lopez also likes to attend bluegrass festivals to learn new tunes and believes that bluegrass fiddling is more impressive than mariachi in terms of speed and fingering. Again, there are hints elsewhere in the state. The owner of a restaurant/club in Carrboro made a specific effort for his space to serve as a site of cultural exchange. In addition to the Latino-themed music nights, he devotes one night a week to old-time music. Even during the regular nights “Anglo bodies are sprinkled among the mostly Latino crowd” (Cravey 2003: 610). Here is at least one case in which cultural exchange is happening in both directions. What is least known, is the degree of the influence of migrant music making on native Appalachian music making. Could there be bluegrass fiddlers inspired by mariachi fiddlers, or old-time pickers emulating bass-runs on the *bajo sexto*? Again, the hybrid history of Appalachian suggests that there is a possibility for interchange to

occur both ways. The survival of black tunes like “John Henry” or “Roustabout” in white repertoires suggests the possibility.

While there are clear examples of Latino musicians adapting their musical practices elsewhere in the South, what about in Appalachia specifically? The Kentucky based group Appalatin is incorporating Latin American and Appalachian folk musics to create something new. According to their website they are “creating roots music bridging Latin and American folk traditions” (see www.appalatin.com). With members from Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Kentucky they combine Central American, South American, Appalachian, and even indigenous Quechua backgrounds. But what about vocally-centered genres like the ballad? An important gap in current scholarship that deals with Appalachian music and Latino migration to the region is documentation of the music that Latinos/Hispanics are making in the region. If current trends continue I believe it is likely that the corrido will be found in the mountains.

To help expose Latino and other migrants to Appalachian music, musical education programs like the Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program offer one solution. In the Southwest U.S. similar programs have been enacted to continue Latino musical traditions like Mexican *conjunto* (an accordion-based music similar to *norteño*). Like efforts to revitalize old-time music in Appalachian communities, “conjunto has also experienced the creation of a well-articulated effort to teach the attendant culture of the music to a new generation of Mexican-Americans (and a random other few who have wandered into the sphere) in a competitive market system with numerous musical choices and a persistent

homogenization” (Margolies 2011: 37). These programs have been touted as a successful model for maintaining the cultural sustainability of the intangible cultural heritage of regional cultures. The success of this model is its combination of informal and formal educational setting such as schools, festivals, and workshops, etc. Originally, JAM was intended for mountain children to gain opportunities to build community through learning their own cultural heritage, but language in the JAM website reflects an inclusivity that could encompass various ethnicities: “we envision a world in which *all children* have the opportunity to experience community through the joy of participating in traditional mountain music”. Promotional videos on their website do indeed appear to show Latino students involved in the program. Conversely, the establishment of community programs for education in Latino music in the Appalachian region could help to stabilize community musics that might be displaced or disrupted through migration and expose native Appalachians to these unfamiliar traditions. Although this would depend on a sizeable population with enough practitioners and sufficient community interest. Currently there are to my knowledge no equivalent programs or organizations similar to JAM when it comes to Latino music.

As Latinos and other minorities come to the Appalachian region, how can we be sure that distinct cultural practices will promote interaction and interchange rather than exclusion or hostility? The history of Latino and Appalachian music suggests it may be a powerful tool for the co-existence of different groups. Music has often times been described as a unifying rather than a dividing force: “musical languages have frequently crisscrossed cultural, ethnic,

class, and supposed national borders- a testimony both to the lived proximity of diverse cultures and to the transgressive magnetism of musical cultures across social boundaries of class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and georegion. Music has an infectious quality and thus lends itself to cross-cultural assimilation much more easily than other cultural expressions” (Broyles-Gonzalez 2001: 193). Indeed, the story of many diverse and commercially successful Latino popular musics has “always entailed crossing musical, geographic, racial, and ethnic boundaries” (Pacini-Hernandez 2010: 2).

Indeed, the contemporary bluegrass and old-time scene shows that mutual appreciation for music has the power to transcend economic, political, cultural or other differences. The key to attracting people from these two groups to interact and appreciate each other’s traditions is to highlight the similarities between them that anyone can enjoy. With my fieldwork on Latino Evangelical music worship in Boone I have argued that contemporary Latino Protestant music has more in common with Protestant worship in Appalachia than linguistic or ethnic differences might suggest. Latino Evangelical hymnody has a marked Anglo-Protestant origin and shares repertoire with popular American, even Appalachian, secular and religious tunes. The emotive and affective aspects of their worship and preaching style, especially Pentecostal, is nearly identical to those attributed to Appalachian Protestantism. Furthermore with the importance of the church as a community space in both immigrant and rural communities, church-organized events could serve as a bridge between these two communities.

How might we ease the concerns of someone concerned with the adulteration or changing of a tradition that they hold dear? One might say that change in a musical tradition is inevitable. Martin Stokes argues that all music is hybrid by nature and that true purity or authenticity of musical expression is not possible (Margolies 2009: 118). The large presence of outsider revivalists in the contemporary old-time scene shows that they are respected by insiders if they respect the fidelity of the tradition, that is if they honor the authority of tradition bearers. If a mariachi fiddler like Errol Lopez who learns bluegrass tunes tries to honor his sources and not change or corrupt the tunes then he would probably be respected by insiders.

On one hand there is a great potential for organizations related to the promotion of traditional music and folklorists at the academic, governmental, and public-sector level to help to bridge the gaps between and promote interchange among different music traditions. Large-scale festivals and folklife organizations often present music traditions from different ethnicities on the same stage, as is the case with the National Folk Festival. However, ethnic connections and comparisons can be sometimes oversimplified or misinterpreted by festival-goers (see Satterwhite 2005). Taken to its extreme, the curation of ethnic musics can be driven to racist or otherwise malicious results as in the case of the Whitetop festival or the promotional work of Henry Ford (see Whisnant 1983). At the local level music promotorors and venue owners can take steps to present musical traditions side-by-side, as did the club owner in Carrboro mentioned earlier. Perhaps a small-scale performance venue for traditional music could potentially present a mariachi band after an old-time group as part of a string

band showcase. On the other hand, it ultimately comes down to individual taste and responsibility for the bridging of these gaps. This is obvious at a personal or local level, but even at an institutional level “the key to sustainability and to embedding the teaching of [musical culture] within US schools at all levels lies, quite simply, with the willingness of people to step out of their self-created ruts and to become engaged and passionate” (Margolies 2011: 47). Although some native Appalachians may worry about cultural or ethnic miscegenation, dialogue between groups about the historical hybrid nature of Appalachian culture and music can reassure these worries and help to imagine the networks and institutions that can set up a reciprocal of exchange cultural practices. On the other hand, the influence or interference of institutions and organizations might lead to an interchange that is less organic.

The key to being open to new musics and ideas, I think, is to understand the similarities and universals between them. Another gap that I have attempted to breach is an explicit comparison and highlighting of similarities between the corrido and folksong in Appalachia. I have described some shared themes like love and murder, as well as some overlap in corpus. Themes of class and gender conflict have entered the discussion of both ballad traditions, but to my knowledge have not been compared directly. Likewise, a few studies have linked discussions of violence and gender to both traditions but without weighing the opinions of ballad singers. As we’ve seen, ballads have indeed been used to teach lessons about community expectations for behavior but these lessons are not entirely negative. Singing allows individuals to negotiate and interpret these values and messages in a

safe and un-mediated manner. Furthermore, they contain a power that transcends words; they can carry messages and convey feelings that cannot be expressed in speech. In terms of conflict – whether it is gender, class, or ethnically based – in both traditions it usually involves more than one of each. Ballads like “Lord Thomas and Fair Ellender” or “Mathey Groves” contain characters motivated by class interests. The lives and songs of Molly Jackson and Sarah Gunning show a class-focused discourse that is based on motherhood. The corrido hero is restricted to certain normalized gender characteristics, even when female as in “Juana Gallo”, and inter-ethnic conflict was often a response to Mexican’s second-class status economically and socially. Some Chicanas like Gloria Anzaldúa feel doubly oppressed as a woman and an ethnic minority. It is more difficult to explain ballad meanings in a single stroke when there are multiple interacting, and intersecting contexts involved.

I have attempted to trace narratives of oppression and conflict that reflect experiences of exploitation or second-class status, and how they are expressed in these two traditions. Many of the ballad-singing peoples of the British Isles came from areas long administered by powers outside of the region before they came to the periphery zone of Appalachia. The mestizo peoples of the Mexican Southwest likewise were ruled by a far-away empire and distant federal government before engulfed by a foreign power. Ballads and corridos that were sung in the 19th century seem to conform to the “traditional” patriarchal cultural values of the time, and these values and disapproval of infanticide, adultery, premarital pregnancy, etc. were passed on with these songs. However, as these songs were passed on to newer generations of singers like Rick Ward and Sheila Kay Adams the interpretations of these

traditional values has changed while still respecting the traditional lyrics, melodies, and lessons. While the ballad served an important social and didactic role for rural communities throughout Greater Mexico and Appalachia, the exigencies of living as second-class citizens in proximity to the “modern” industrial American economy of the early 20th century on the border and in Central Appalachian coalfields turned the communal recreation of ballads to themes of resistance rather than social education. In all three cases, violence or conflict serves as a key discussion point for negotiations of ethics or morality which are expressed through oppositional language seemingly born out of their oppositional experience.

I have also extended the concept of the borderland to the Appalachian region, a concept which has seen little application in the current field of Appalachian Studies. Also of little yet growing frequency in discussions of Appalachia is the past and present of Mexicans and other Latinos in the region. As I have argued, similarities between the two cultures and their musical traditions are not as far-fetched as they may seem. Again, it is useful to invoke the tapestry metaphor. In addition to the many European, African-American, and indigenous threads of Appalachia I propose that we now must add Latinos and Hispanics to this picture.

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Vita

Benjamin Hunter Duvall-Irwin was born in Chapel Hill, North Carolina to Ann Irwin and Jill Duvall. He lived in Durham and Hillsborough before moving to his parents' hometown of Russellville, Arkansas in 2006. During this time he worked for many summers at Camp Celo near Burnsville, NC where he developed a love for the mountains and became interested in folk music. He attended Hendrix College in Conway, AR from 2009-2013 where he earned a B.A. in Spanish with a minor in Psychology. Following graduation he lived in Spain (province of Palencia, Castilla y León) for nine months where he taught English. He became interested in Appalachian Studies after attending and presenting at the annual conference of the Appalachian Studies Association (ASA) and began his studies at Appalachian State University in 2015, where he was awarded several graduate and research assistantships. He currently lives in North Carolina.