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978-0-521-37254-1 - Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850

Dianne Dugaw

Excerpt

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Prologue

The Anglo-American Female Warrior is a high-mettled heroine of popular ballads who masquerades as a man and ventures off to war for love and for glory. Songs celebrating such women flourished as lower-class “hits” for over 200 years, reaching the zenith of their popularity in the eighteenth century. Indeed, the Female Warrior and masquerading heroines like her were an imaginative preoccupation of the early modern era, appearing not only in popular street ballads but in a host of other genres as well: epic, romance, biography, comedy, tragedy, opera, and ballad opera. But the popular ballad gives us this transvestite heroine in one of her most explicit forms, and in the only form which has carried her right up to our own time. Once a “hit-song” commonplace, the Anglo-American Female Warrior survives today – albeit marginally – in the folksong traditions of Britain and North America. This book will examine the Female Warrior of Anglo-American ballad tradition with particular attention to what she reveals to us about women, gender, and the makeup of heroism in that early modern era in which she flourished.¹

Female Warrior ballads are success stories. Highly conventionalized, they sing of valiant “Nancys” and “Pollys” who defy oppressive parents, don men’s clothing, sail the seas, and fight cruel wars. Inevitably their masquerading heroine – a model of bravery, beauty, and pluck – proves herself deserving in romance, able in war, and rewarded in both. The earliest such ballad in Anglo-American tradition is *Mary Ambree*, a London “hit-song” of about 1600 which remained popular to the 1800s.² In the Jacobean era, this “grandmother” of ballad Female Warriors elicited from playwright Ben

¹ I use the term “early modern era” in this study to designate that period of time in Britain (and Anglo America) between the Elizabethan and the Victorian ages. The Anglo-American Female Warrior appeared in printed street ballad tradition around 1600, became a popular convention by the eighteenth century, and remained commercially popular until the nineteenth century. The apex of the ballad heroine’s popularity is that long “eighteenth century” to which scholars customarily refer, bounded on the one side by the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and on the other by the end of the Georgian era in 1837. My discussion – like the ballad tradition itself – sits astride this long eighteenth century. While my center of focus is this period, my discussion will necessarily extend both back in time from it and forward as the topic warrants.

² For a text of this ballad, see *Bagford Ballads*, I, 308. *Mary Ambree* will be discussed in the first three chapters.

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Jonson no less than three separate complaints. In *Epicoene; or, The Silent Woman* (1609), for example, the peevish Morose scowls: “Mistress Mary Ambree, your examples are dangerous.”³ But such vexed warnings went largely unheeded as Female Warrior ballads rolled off the popular presses as bestsellers for the next two centuries.

The Female Warrior is a two-sided heroine. By way of her gender masquerade, she enacts both sides of the traditionally bifurcated ideal of Western heroism: female Love and male Glory, Venus and Mars. The Female Warrior ballads recount the trials and triumphs of faithful lovers and portray a heroine who is a paragon of virtuous love. However, at the same time, this heroine is patriotic, courageous, adventurous, and ultimately something of a trickster – a woman who, motivated by true love, sets out in masquerade to deceive the corporals, captains, serving-maids, innkeepers and even family members about her into thinking her the soldierboy she is not. If, on the one hand the Female Warrior ballads concern themselves with the heroine’s love and fidelity, on the other they display her often playful and dauntless inclinations to warfare and disguise. She is a polyvalent heroine who has it both ways – “female” and “male.”

This essential equivocation of gender which the Female Warrior represents is perhaps her most fascinating, and – for us in the twentieth century – her most perplexing feature. Such dissembling is seen as curious at best, even unnatural of perverse. But, however curious and anomalous she may seem to us, chapbook buyers and theatre-goers of the early modern era were fascinated – even obsessed – with this disguised woman warrior. At every level an age fashioned and refashioned for itself countless permutations of her in all kinds of literature. In this study we shall look at when and how the Female Warrior flourished, what she and her story are like, and how she brings us to re-examine not only early modern literature and experience, but the construction and interrelationship of gender and heroism as well.

The basis for this study is my own collection and catalogue of well over 100 separate Anglo-American Female Warrior ballads which have been written, printed, sung, and recorded in thousands of versions over the past three and a half centuries. My catalogue of these ballad variants is itself over 500 pages long.⁴ I initially heard ballads about Female Warriors in the Ozark

³ For Jonson’s reference, see *Epicoene; or, The Silent Woman* (1609), IV, ii, 123–24 in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford Clarendon, 1925–52), V, p. 226. He also refers to the ballad in *A Tale of A Tub* (1633), I, iv, 23, and in *The Fortunate Isles and Their Union* (1624), 11. 250–57.

⁴ This catalogue – too long to be reproduced here – makes up “Appendix I” of my dissertation, pp. 340–886. Throughout this study my references to single ballads will have two parts: (1) the source of a particular variant, and (2) page numbers in my dissertation (Dugaw Cat.) which give the locations of other variants. The Appendix in this book gives the titles of the Female Warrior ballads in my collection.

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Mountains of Arkansas where I was collecting folksongs and stories in the early 1970s. The first I came to know were *Polly Oliver* and *The Cruel War*, songs which I eventually learned had been commercial “hits” among broadside and chapbook buyers of the eighteenth century.⁵ Intrigued by the cross-dressing soldiergirl heroine of these Ozark ballads, I betook myself to libraries and archives to find out more about her.

Nearly fifty more ballads about disguising women, I discovered, have been garnered by folklorists over the years from British and American folksingers. Such traditional Female Warrior ballads – one known to a Michigan lumberjack, another to an Irish tinker or an Ontario housewife – turn up in hundreds of versions in folksong collections published from the beginning of the present century to our own 1980s. Tracing the origins of these folksongs, I was led to archive holdings of printed songsheets where I discovered 120 Female Warrior ballads that had circulated among the common people as commercial “hit-songs” from the seventeenth century to the Victorian era. This study grows out of my own extensive collection of Female Warrior ballads from twentieth-century folksingers and from earlier commercial song sheets which circulated among the common people in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.⁶

The Female Warrior is significant. Understanding an earlier era necessarily involves us in examining its imaginative tropes and preoccupations, particularly those which we no longer share. Furthermore, this feisty role-playing heroine prompts – even forces – us to look in new and provocative ways at the intersecting of gender identity and heroism, issues which, as it happens, occupy us today. Any generation’s scholarship uncovers the past which that generation needs. We discover in the lives of our forebears – both actual and imagined – those features which answer our own questions. Thus, it is no accident that in the late 1970s the Female Warrior should pass before my investigative glance. There I was at UCLA thinking about gender identity and the experience of women in the world of male-dominated roles and power. There she was – an eye-opening study in Western conventions of gender and heroism that had traipsed about in Anglo-American popular tradition for several hundred years.

This book will suggest that the Female Warrior story exposes to view and subverts – at least by implication – the structuring according to

⁵ These two ballads were sung for me by Ollie Gilbert of Mountainview, Arkansas. Her versions of them are on my field tapes, Dugaw T-75-3. *Polly Oliver*, which she titled *Pretty Polly* can be heard on the recording *Banjo Songs, Ballads and Reels from the Southern Mountains* (Prestige/International 25004).

⁶ My dissertation collection numbers 113 songs that I call “Female Warrior Ballads.” Since I finished it in 1982, additional ballads have surfaced bringing the number to 120. I have yet to visit a number of archives where there are unquestionably more Female Warrior ballads from the early modern era to be found. And of course, new ballads may yet be composed.

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gender of its world.⁷ True, the story is placed within, and indeed ultimately justifies itself by the rules of the heterosexual, male-dominated social order. Thus, a woman ventures from her father's house where we find her at the beginning of the ballad to her husband's where we find her at the end. Nonetheless, the story's middle, by turning that world upside down, calls into question its immutability.⁸ Thus, the Female Warrior ballads ply an essential irony. That they reached the apex of their popularity during an age of deeply ironic satire and literary playfulness, is no accident. They belong to that world. The Female Warrior trope celebrates its romantic world in a matter-of-factly topsy-turvy way. Essentially double, essentially ironic, its dissembling vision inverts, transforms, and certainly exposes the structures of that world as it is usually set up. The Female Warrior ballads turn the world upside down with an ease which is perhaps their most provocative characteristic.⁹

Interesting and entertaining in her own right, the Female Warrior prompts us to do some rethinking. In this pervasive motif of the disguised and "boyish" woman, the early modern age accepted and probed the social and semiotic basis for gender categories. Gender once more occupies our thoughts. However, we grapple with it in the language and methodology of science. Indeed, we have no imaginative form today which proceeds so unquestioningly from the assumption that our enacting of gender roles is equivocal. Nor have we a form which, like the Female Warrior ballad, depicts the gendered world of heroism, of loving women and valorous men,

⁷ For a study of subversiveness working similarly in a text which appears to serve the norm, see Stephen Greenblatt's study of Shakespeare, "The Invisible Bullet: Renaissance Authority and Its Subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*," in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 18–47.

⁸ Studies of the transvestite woman warrior – of which there are a number – tend to argue that as an idea, she reinforces the *status quo*. See, for example, Lillian S. Robinson, *Monstrous Regiment: The Lady Knight in Sixteenth-Century Epic* (New York: Garland, 1985). But the converse has also been suggested, as does Margaret Tomalin in *The Fortunes of the Warrior Heroine in Italian Literature: An Index of Emancipation* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1982). Most studies of the transvestite heroine, however, fall short of really explaining the idea and its significance because they restrict themselves to a single genre and to a single era in literary history – usually the Renaissance. For a recent study of real-life women warriors which argues many of the ideas I forward here, see Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women who Dressed as Men in Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London: Pandora, 1988). Another pertinent recent study is Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Cross-Dressing in Early Modern Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

⁹ The deeply dissembling and histrionic tenor of the eighteenth century is the subject of *English Literature in the Age of Disguise*, ed. Maximillian Novak (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1977). This feature of the period has received considerable attention of late, particularly with regard to the pastime of masquerading. See Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1986).

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so easily tipped upon its head, so fluid and susceptible to being turned inside out and upside down.¹⁰

As we shall see, the Female Warrior ballads propose, with a rather startling matter-of-factness, not only that a woman *could* play the part of a man, could step out of her “female identity,” and thus subvert any notion of its immutability, but that, in fact, women should be encouraged to do so. Ballad-makers regularized this heroine as they did few others – and as an ideal. Far from being isolated and idiosyncratic, the Female Warrior and her story assumed the status of an imaginative archetype in popular balladry, a standard motif.

If not a prescription, this transvestite heroine was at least an imaginative model whose final orderly marriage just barely belies the subversive implications of her commandeering of *both* seemingly contradictory sides of a bipolar gender system. The Female Warrior’s masquerading and “unfeminine” inclinations are invariably applauded and get the heroine not only the man of her choice and a celebrated, secure, and happy marriage, but also seafaring or soldiering adventures upon which she reminisces with pride. Often stirring, and always commendatory, the Female Warrior ballads present us with a remarkable pre-modern ideal of womanhood.

Surprisingly few scholars have really taken notice of the women soldiers and sailors of the early modern era, whether of fact or of fiction. Moreover, of those who have noticed the heroine, none have recognized the codification of the motif, let alone examined it thoroughly. When they see the disguised woman heroine, most investigators tend to explain her either as a genre convention or as an exceptional and idiosyncratic fictional figure with ties to a number of exceptional and idiosyncratic real-life women warriors. Thus, A. Lloyd, in talking about the ballad heroine, makes the comment that “the detail of the girl spending half a year in a ship without her sex being discovered seems far-fetched, yet in the seventeenth and eighteenth century [there] were several cases of women joining either army or navy and serving for a period dressed in men’s clothes.” Yet this observation explains little. In addition to the fact that the “cases” were many more than “several,” the real flourishing of this figure across literary genres, across levels of literature, and indeed in “non-fictional” and “fictional” accounts alike makes the word “far-fetched” almost a dismissal. Scholarship has yet to grapple seriously with the Female Warrior of balladry or to see her relationship to the many

¹⁰ The Female Warrior subverts gender categories by enacting them both and thus, in some sense, maintains the dichotomous world they construct. By contrast, modern interrogations of gender – which are invariably feminist – try in some way to do away with the categories altogether. These works usually imagine a world without men. See, for example, the science fiction novel by Joanna Russ, *The Female Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1983).

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many other transvestite heroines – both fictional and real – of the early modern era.¹¹

Although they did not identify the Female Warrior as a type, ballad scholars could hardly have failed to detect women soldiers and sailors among the heroines of Anglo-American popular songs. Initially the Female Warrior was noticed by broadside ballad scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such scholars, primarily collectors and cataloguers, saw seventeenth-century ballad sheets as artifacts of an antique world no longer with us. Gathering together individual ballad texts into collections, they supplied each ballad with a headnote. Their approach was comparative. An introduction to a ballad – often a delightful gallimaufry of anecdotes – typically points out events, persons, and literary works which bear somehow, usually by way of analogy, on the text at hand.¹²

At their best, such headnotes provide detailed and relevant – if spotty – background. For example, in his introduction to *The Maiden Sailor*, a ballad from a late seventeenth-century broadside in the Pepys Collection, Hyder Rollins supplies information about the ship mentioned in the ballad, four newspaper reports of women sailors and soldiers, an account from *the Proceedings . . . in the Old-Bayly* of one “Jane Owen,” a woman thief who had been masquerading as a servant boy, names of other Female Warrior ballads in the Pepys Collection, information on the tune of the ballad, and references to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century chapbook “histories” which recount the adventures of disguised women soldiers.¹³ To the ballad text the editor thus appends a miscellany of facts and observations.

However, Rollins – certainly one of the most learned and astute of ballad scholars – was fully aware that *The Maiden Sailor* was hardly an isolated phenomenon. His opening remarks note that the author of this ballad – to whom we shall return in the next chapter – “had heard comparatively few street songs, or else had forgotten those he had heard; otherwise he would not have thought the girl’s actions especially unusual” (p. 174). Thus, Rollins recognized the prevalence, even predictability of such “sailorly” actions on the part of “maidens” in ballads of the 1690s. Nonetheless, this conventionalization and the general significance of the heroine’s story he leaves unprobed.

Folksong scholars also came upon the Female Warrior relatively early, and it was likewise the editors of collections who first took note of her. Like Rollins, these scholars focused their attention on individual texts which they published in folksong collections formed along the same lines as *The Pepys*

¹¹ A. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (New York: International, 1967), p. 225.

¹² For examples of such works, see *Bagford Ballads and Roxburghe Ballads*. For discussion of this comparative approach to balladry, see D. K. Wilgus, “The Comparative Approach,” in D. K. Wilgus and Barre Toelken, *The Ballad and the Scholars: Approaches to Ballad Study* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1986), pp. 1–28.

¹³ *Pepys Ballads*, VI, pp. 174–75.

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Ballads and other broadside collections. Accordingly, their introductory remarks mention whatever incidents or other texts seem relevant to the specific ballad at hand. Again, the approach is anecdotal, empirical, and referential, rather than analytic and systematic. The focus is on the particular.¹⁴

Exemplifying this mode is H. M. Belden's introduction to five Missouri versions of *Jack Munro*, a ballad we shall examine in some detail in chapter 4. Belden's headnote to his Missouri ballads is a useful if anecdotal miscellany.¹⁵ Belden begins by summarizing the narrative thread of the ballad's several versions. Then he supplies a collation of disparate observations as he (1) is reminded of ancient and Elizabethan women warriors – Hippolyta, Alfhind, Britomart, and Mary Ambree; (2) cites nine separate printed ballads about disguised women from broadside collections; (3) mentions four other Female Warrior ballads included elsewhere among his Missouri songs; (4) notes five songs "akin" to *Jack Munro* reported by other folksong collectors; and finally, (5) lists where one can find twenty-four other folk versions of *Jack Munro* reported from singers on both sides of the Atlantic. He then gives his five versions of *Jack Munro* with brief remarks on his singers.

Certainly, Belden's introduction suggests his awareness that the Female Warrior ballads – both printed and oral – have a "kinship" with each other, and indeed, may represent a single motif. However, his observations are directed entirely by his interest in compiling and comparing individual ballad texts. The Female Warrior in this approach remains a particularity: she is the single heroine of a particular ballad with vaguely recognized but unanalyzed connections to similar heroines found in other particular ballads, plays, legends, and historical documents.

More recently, several folksong scholars have considered the Female Warrior in more generalized and analytic terms. The disguised woman is for them a motivic element, a ballad convention which they see subsumed under larger thematic or narrative categories. G. Malcolm Laws, for example, in his *American Balladry from British Broad-sides*, has compiled a bibliographic survey of American traditional ballads derived from British originals which is organized by theme and content. Among the forty-three orally collected songs he classifies as "Ballads of Lovers' Disguises and Tricks," he includes seventeen Female Warrior ballads which he describes briefly as "a large class of ballads in which the girl disguises herself in man's clothes and follows her lover to sea or to war."¹⁶

¹⁴ For examples of such works, see Helen Hartness Flanders, Elizabeth Flanders Ballard, George Brown, and Phillips Barry, *The New Green Mountain Songster: Traditional Folksongs of Vermont* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939) and E. B. Lyle, *Andrew Crawford's Collection of Ballads and Songs* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1975).

¹⁵ H. M. Belden, *Ballads and Songs Collected by the Missouri Folklore Society*, University of Missouri Studies, 15, no. 1. (Columbia, Missouri, 1940; rpt. 1955 and 1982), p. 171.

¹⁶ P. 17.

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However, not interested in examining this “large class of ballads” as a class, Laws categorizes the songs he surveys in such a way that various ballads of girl soldiers and sailors turn up in his survey not only among “Lovers’ Disguises and Tricks,” but among “Ballads of Sailors and the Sea,” “Ballads of Family Opposition to Lovers,” and “Ballads of Faithful Lovers” as well.¹⁷ In short, Laws treats the disguising as a convention, rather than a theme, focusing his analytic interest on “larger” patterns: “family opposition,” “lovers’ disguises,” “sailors and the sea,” and so on. If Laws’ thematic concerns make him more ready to see the Female Warrior ballads as a type, and individual songs as permutations of a single narrative and thematic idea, he is not interested in analyzing this idea systematically.

Like Laws, D. K. Wilgus recognizes the Female Warrior as a systematically conventional idea in ballads, an imaginative trope. Likewise, Wilgus subsumes this motif within a larger category, but a narrative rather than a thematic one. For him, the Female Warrior is a permutation of the larger “returned-unrecognized-true lover” story pattern of which the homecoming in Homer’s *Odyssey* is perhaps the most famous example. Thus, Wilgus says: “The ‘female warrior’ element . . . is but an allo-motif of the disguise unit in the story pattern in which two lovers are separated and one journeys to find the other and test her or him, normally with disguise and recognition devices.”¹⁸ Thus, the Female Warrior ballad becomes a subcategory, an inversion – even a “feminizing” if you will – of the hero whose journey afar concludes with a homecoming that entails various tests, disguises, and recognition scenes. In approaching the Female Warrior ballads in this way, Wilgus focuses on the sequencing of narrative units and emphasizes the similarities between the Female Warriors’ adventuring and masquerading, and the disguised homecomings of sailors and soldiers in ballads such as *Willie and Mary*, and in more ancient stories such as the *Odyssey* or the medieval English romance of *King Horn*.¹⁹

Wilgus’ awareness of the structural affinities between the Female Warrior story and these other journeying and disguising narratives is certainly valid – indeed, illuminating. The Female Warrior ballads unmistakably participate in the heroic tradition that extends back into antiquity, particularly in their use of traditional epic and romance structures. As we shall see, they

¹⁷ See in Laws, ballads N-1 to N-17 (pp. 202–11); see also K-14, *Farewell, Charming Nancy* (p. 147); M-7, *William and Harriet* (p. 183); M-19, *Young Sailor Bold I* (p. 189); M-24, *The Jolly Plowboy* (p. 191); and 0-33, *The Girl Volunteer* (p. 241).

¹⁸ D. K. Wilgus, “A Tension of Essences in Murdered-Sweetheart Ballads,” in *The Ballad Image: Essays Presented to Bertrand Harris Bronson*, ed. James Porter (Los Angeles: University of California, 1983), pp. 241–42.

¹⁹ For versions of *Willie and Mary*, see Laws, N-28 (pp. 217–18). For other American ballads of this type, see Laws, N-28–43 (pp. 218–25). The account of Odysseus’ unrecognized return is in Books XVII–XXIV of *The Odyssey*. The hero of the romance *King Horn* similarly disguises for his homecoming. See *King Horn: An Edition Based on Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27(2)*, ed. Rosamund Allen (New York and London: Garland, 1984), 11. 1075ff.

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are purposefully and conventionally heroic. Typically they conclude with the same recognition scenes and devices that we find in narratives of male heroes who return from the wars in disguise. Moreover, as later chapters will show, recognizing such invocations of the epic tradition is an important feature of my reading of the ballads in terms of the heroic ideal. The Female Warrior does indeed partake in and comment upon the world of Odysseus.

However, seeing the Female Warrior of the ballads at a level of abstraction which renders her but a variation of the disguised-returned-lover pattern falls short of accounting for the real shape and impact of the story. Certainly, the *differences* between the journeying Female Warrior and the heroes of these other narratives are as important as the similarities. This is true for an analysis both of the narrative surface as well as of the story's deeper implications. Thus, for example, the narrative of the two story types is not identical. The ballad heroine's disguising is preliminary to the adventuring in the Female Warrior story, not a feature of her coming home as in the male hero's narrative. Then, while Female Warrior venturings almost always function to prevent a separation of lovers, it is not uncommon for the ballad heroine to use her disguise to accompany her man.

Furthermore, the disguising, however matter-of-factly undeveloped it may be in the Female Warrior ballads, is nonetheless crucial to the meaning of the narrative. Not only does the woman's adventure depend entirely upon it, but the masquerade functions throughout the narrative as a transforming element – the pivotal signifier if you will – as the story becomes a double-layered text. Because the woman is not who she appears to be, all of her behaviors are interpreted differently by those who know this fact and those who do not. The issues of identity and of gender permeate the narrative from start to finish. This is not so in the *Odyssey*, the romance of *King Horn*, or the ballad of *Willie and Mary*. Moreover, as we shall see, the Female Warrior implicitly turns inside out and exposes its own overarching heroic tradition in ways that these “gender-straight” enactments of the ideal do not.

But perhaps the most compelling reason for examining the Female Warrior on its own terms is its cohesiveness as a motif and its rootedness in a particular time and place. Indeed, this link between the ballad heroine and a particular historical context may explain why folklorists up to now have chosen to see the motif as they do: at a level of abstraction which renders this heroine and ballad type a part of larger, more ancient and traditional patterns.²⁰ As

²⁰ The Female Warrior and the more general idea of a woman passing as a man is found in folk traditions throughout Europe. See Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols. (Bloomington: University of Indiana, 1955–58), K521.4.1.1, K1236, K1322.1, K1825.1.2, K1825.1.4, K1825.2, K1837.1-K1837.8.1, K1961.2.1, and K2357.6. For folk literature treatments of women warriors and amazons, see Thompson, F565. The Female Warrior does not appear in Anglo-American folktales. Warrior maidens of various kinds are found in folk ballads in Germany, Italy, France, Spain, as well as in England. See William Entwistle, *European Balladry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 185–92. Because this heroine is everywhere

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folksongs go, the Female Warrior ballads – even considered internationally – do not possess those characteristics which have in the past attracted the folklore scholar: demonstrable antiquity, elements of the medieval and supernatural, and origins and circulation free from print.

The Female Warrior does not seem timeless, ancient or undatable. While we find in ancient literature both fighting amazons and disguising women, we do not find heroines who enact this Female Warrior story of love, disguise, and warfare which we find so consistently worked out in ballads of the early modern era. If the Female Warrior is a permutation of the timeless Odysseus return-story, then she is a markedly particular, well-developed, and radical reshaping of it. The very particularity of her emergence deserves to be accounted for, as she is a telling fictional representation of the experience and sensibility of the early modern world.

So, the ballad Female Warrior deserves a book, and here it is. My study's purpose is to examine and interpret this Anglo-American heroine and her story. Here is a brief outline of that projected examination and interpretation. The initial step will be to look at the ballads themselves and the streetsong world which produced them, a task which the first half of the study undertakes. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 trace the four-stage development of the ballad motif: (1) the Female Warrior's initial appearance in English printed ballads about 1600; (2) her ascendancy in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when she was an imaginative commonplace not only in balladry, but in other literature as well; (3) the waning of her popularity in the early nineteenth century; and (4) her survival in a retrospective folk tradition which continues – if marginally – even to this day. Chapter 4 then examines the Female Warrior story as a conventional motif, mapping its predictable structure and showing how it functions as an heroic model. This first half of the book thus introduces the ballads and their heroine: what they are like; who produced, sold, and sang them; where and how they flourished; how and in what form they came to be conventionalized and to cohere as a song tradition.

The book's second half moves beyond the Female Warrior ballads themselves to consider their larger meaning, both for their time and for us, several centuries later. Chapter 5 looks at the experiential context of that long "eighteenth century" in which the Female Warrior flourished. Subjects covered in this chapter include the experience and images of lower-class women in this period, particularly with regard to "female delicacy"; the widespread pastime of masquerading; and the makeup of early modern armies and navies which actually included considerable numbers of women, both disguised and undisguised. Chapter 6 considers the transvestism in the

closely tied to print, it is unfortunate that Entwistle does not include the printed ballads in his study of the ballad type.