

Title:

A Call to Stiness and Reflection

to the tune of *Still* By Tim McGraw

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Introduction: The purpose and overarching objective for the English Broadside Ballad Archive (EBBA) is to digitalize the ballads that have survived and make them accessible to the public and those interested in the style of media. As a research assistant for EBBA, I have the opportunity to familiarize myself with the editing of online transcripts by highlighting the assonance of certain words within the ballad to illustrate the way it would have been sung. My main task is to work with an XML file—which is the coded version of a ballad—through a transcription tool (Sublime Text) The file is then added to the music tab of the ballad so readers can follow along and view which words are stressed. Due to the lockdown restrictions implemented across the nation and on nations worldwide because of the pandemic, I had to perform my EBBA tasks remotely—which wasn't as complicated and intimidating as the task actuals sounded like. As I continuously worked on various Ballads and got a sense of the work put into them by the program, my appreciation for EBBA increased. While I was performing my task and exploring the Ballads on my own time I noticed the call towards moral values within the time period and the importance of needing to reevaluate the inner self and the purpose of an individual to reach a sense of peace and gratitude for life. It is without a doubt that the Pandemic has called for a similar notion of not just the inner self but to question and reconstruct the values and morals of the nation that have

demonstrated themselves insufficient through the emergence of the flaws in our medical system and the disparity of treatment between different social classes and races, along with the intensification of the BLM movement—which calls for equality and justice for the Black American community. These connections and actions relating the time periods to each other brought me to question the use of media and its appliance to propel its theme. How does the Ballad form make itself useful for the time period?

Discussion:

In order to compare the similarity of the time period and the reevaluation of morals, I searched under the keywords, Virtue and Advice and came across a Ballad that instructs the necessity to pay attention to the flow of time, and treatment of others. The ballad acquired from The National Library of Scotland-Crawford titled, *A Discription of Plain-dealing, Time, and Death,/Which all Men ought to mind whilst they do live on earth./Abuse not Plain-dealing, but keep your Conscience clear,/Spend well your Time also, then Death you need not fear./Plain-dealing is grown out of Date/Because he is poor, many him hate:/Conscience likewise is laid aside/'Cause he base Actions can't abide./To the Tune of, A Letter for a Christian Family*. Written by Thomas Lanfire, argues for the ability to take positive criticism to better oneself and to do good deeds. By writing different sections of the ballad from the perspective of moral behaviors and inevitable forces Lanfire argues for their importance and their urgency. In a similar matter many podcasts that emerged during the pandemic or came more popular bring to question a similar notion of change in society, specifically *Code-Switch* by NPR. The podcast reveals a story in a similar fashion that a news room would convey it and then dives into a discussion to elaborate on the tensions that propelled the incident.

One of the aspects that most intrigued me about the ballad was the tune to which the excerpt is sung to. The use of a common tune to be used as a way of performance allows there to be a widespread disbursement of ideas through a catchy more memorable medium. This of course compares itself to the share button at the bottom of a news article to spread the information in it. The time period was developing in technology and the ability to print would cost a significant amount compared to today's mass media. It is important to consider how the oral aspect of a ballad aided the ability of information to spread during the time period.