

PRIDE's FALL:

OR,

A Warning for all English Women, by the Example of a
strange Monster lately born in Germany, by a Merchant's proud
Wife, at Geneva. Tune of, All you that love Goodfellows, etc.

BAGFORD: c_40_m_10_f036v and f037r

The Destruction of Pridefulness within “Pride’s Fall”

By: Aurelio Zarate

Dr. Patricia Fumerton

English Department

Introduction: The goals of the English Broadside Ballad Archive, in simple terms, focuses on the archival of 17th century British ballads through an online database, allowing accessibility to people who are interested in ballads. The online archive provides a larger audience with the capabilities of conveniently accessing ballads which would not be easily obtainable due to location or current condition of said ballad. Through this program, I was able to not only gain a larger understanding of the early modern time period and the importance that comes from their accessibility, but to also hone my editing-software skills such as Photoshop.

The ballad “Pride’s Fall” (EBBA 33701) focuses on a woman who indulged in the beauties of fashion and apparel and paid a heavy price because of it. To simply begin the ballad with the subtitle “A Warning For All English Women, by the Example of a Strange Monster

Lately Born in Germany, by a Merchant's Proud Wife, at Geneva," implants the seed of fear in the audience and sets the tone for the entire ballad as a lesson to learn from. To not only have the ballad based on the pridefulness of a woman but to have her "fall" absolutely connects to the image of Eve within the Garden of Eden. Knowing that throughout history, tradition has placed the fault on women as the destructor of our direct connection to God and uses this as an example for punishment and subordination, in similar fashion, God's impregnation of the women, inserting "... the most deformed brood; That women of wanton pride may take example by, How they in fashions fond, offend the Lord on high," (52-56). Examining her fault, at least what God perceived as a violation, we are informed what her wrongdoing was:

My beauty made me think
myself an angel right,
Framed of heavenly mould,
and not an earthly might.
For my soul's happiness,
God's Holy Bible Book,
I had my looking-glass,
wherein I pleasure took.

The warning piece of the entire ballad is explained precisely: one must not allow the pridefulness of one's individual beauty to usurp the position of power The Lord is placed upon. Her punishment of pride, however, affects my personal thought. God, as stated in the piece, "... grievously [scourges her] with his rod," (48) after noting that her pride had consumed her life and gave her a creature instead of a child to teach her a lesson. The deformed and offensive child has two heads, beautiful locks of curls, and holds a scourge on one hand and a mirror on the

other. Symbolically, these all carry an important meaning in relation to the story, and in particular, I noted:



The two-headed creature seems symbolic of duality within her life that she has previously not lived with. She has only indulged in pridefulness and beauty without focusing on other aspects of humanity, and for that she is punished with a reflection of her character's reality. The creature not only carries a scourge but also a mirror, and each one connects to a different ideology: the mirror reflects her identity, never content with her pride, and because of this, the child becomes a monster to emphasize who she has actually become. The scourge shows the pain that can be inflicted on her at any time, but at the same time reminds me of the flagellation of Christ, who was punished by Pontius Pilate for being the main religious figure against the main Roman religion. Similar in fashion, she is punished, publically humiliated, and misunderstood, told to us, "As the poor Merchant's wife, did worldly comforts miss: Strange were the miseries that she so long endur'd, No ease by womens help," (101-103), with her punishment being product of her personal pride into the superfluous and unnecessary, not only diminishing her character but showing her ultimately how powerless she really is, close in relation to Jesus Christ at the hands of the Romans.

Conclusion: Working with ballads absolutely fascinated me, and although when I had originally registered for research I had no clue what exactly, ballad transcription and culture definitely intrigued me in a multitude in ways. Knowing that ballads were used as call-to-actions to repress women from acting in specific mannerisms reveals a large flaw in 17th century society, and through the English Broadside Ballad Archive I learned the specificities of how this was done. I continue to enjoy ballads and look forward to continuing my work with ballads at a future time.