"Whackety Whack, Don't Talk Back":

The Glorification of Violence Against Females and the Subjugation of Women in Nineteenth-Century Southern Folk Music

C. Kirk Hutson

All violence is worthy of scholarly attention. Violence against women gives historians a unique insight into how southern culture fundamentally reinforced gender inequality and control in the nineteenth century. Because few historical sources deal with the beating or killing of southern women, particularly those in the nineteenth century, and because battered women have not historically spoken out for fear of violent consequences and social condemnation, music offers a way of discerning this hidden problem in the South. Violence is not a uniquely southern phenomenon; however, as several prominent social scientists and historians have shown, the South has traditionally condoned the use of violence more than any other section of the United States. Historically, for example, the region has consistently led the nation in the number of homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. Similarly, even though violence against women occurred throughout society, on certain occasions southern culture sanctioned its use more than other areas of the country. In 1824, for example, the Supreme Court of Mississippi was the first state court to recognize a husband's right to beat his wife. Moreover, between 1882 and 1927, seventy-six African-American women and sixteen white women were lynched in the United States, all but two in the South. In fact, one scholar pointed out that in the nineteenth-century South, violence was viewed as "an essential fact of human life somehow built into human relationships." In such an environment, women could easily be physically and psychologically abused.[1]

The southerner's penchant for violence was also reflected in the region's music. Both the North and the South, for example, published hundreds of tunes during the Civil War, but there were some major differences in how the messages were communicated. Southern ditties, for example, were less humorous, and more "ferocious and savage" than those of the North. In fact, homicide was one of the region's most popular song themes. Love melodies that described fatal bloodshed, for example, outnumbered nonviolent love songs "about ten to one." In fact, no matter how sensational these folksongs might appear to contemporary observers, the stories were not inconceivable to the listeners. When songs dealt with

© 1996 Journal of Women's History, Vol. 8 No. 3 (Fall)

vicious female murders, such events could occur. Most of the local tunes were, indeed, factual.[2]

Folksongs show the extent of violence against women in the rural South. Lyrics are of value to historians because they are artifacts of a community and culture, permitting "an unobtrusive view into the issues, values, [and] ideas" of the time period in which the lyrics were written and sung. When dealing with gender issues, for instance, lyrics illustrate how both males and females thought and acted, or were expected to act. The study of southern folksong lyrics is also important because the words demonstrate how southern men understood particular issues.[3]

Even though it is clear that southern folk music reflects cultural attributes, a hotly debated topic in scholarly research is whether media affects culture. Modern studies have shown that men use violence against women because it works. When a male abuses a female, it "puts a quick stop to an emotional argument or a situation that is getting out of control." Men who are abusive to women often "learn that women are the 'appropriate' recipients" of violence. According to social learning theorists, male violence is not an "innate personality characteristic" but a learned behavior; therefore, music can be seen as a vital element in the learning process. Since violent antifemale ballads were extremely popular in the region among all classes of individuals, southern males continually heard that male authority could be maintained with violence.[4]

After many investigations, "researchers have reached a consensus on the effects of mass media violence." Under "certain circumstances, subjects exposed to portrayals of violence typically display more aggressive behavior." Moreover, many psychological studies indicate that if the events seem real, if the aggressors are rewarded and not punished, if the violent acts are not condemned, if the acts seem socially acceptable, exciting, and justified, and if the person committing the crime is portrayed as aggressive and is seen as "intending to injure his victim," the media story is "most likely to be imitated in the laboratory." Similarly, if the aggressor is depicted as similar to the laboratory subjects and if the violent acts contain "cues" which "match cues in the real life environment," the subjects will act more aggressively.[5]

Although some scholars maintain that laboratory experiments can never duplicate real life, others, such as social psychologist George Comstock, maintain that such experiments are the "most rigorous" methods to use. When combined with nonlaboratory evidence, these experiements demonstrate the existence of positive correlations between viewing violence and behavior. Moreover, recent nonlaboratory "settings not vulnerable to criticisms in terms of laboratory artificiality" have increased in the last decade, and they clearly demonstrate that when violence against

women is portrayed as "having positive consequences," a male's "acceptance of interpersonal violence against women" increases.[6]

Nineteenth-century folk music contains the criteria psychologists contend must be present to provoke aggressive behavior. These songs appear to portray real events. In fact, many of the tunes related actual occurrences, as reported in the newspapers. In addition, to make imported songs seem more real, they were often reset in familiar locations. Moreover, when performed, singers incorporated them into their own life stories, making them seem even more authentic. According to folklorist G. Malcolm Laws, balladeers often took these songs and personalized them until the "first person becomes more and more intrusive." In fact, a good singer could make audience members cry, believing the event had happened in his own family.[7] The fact that a singer might not know who composed a particular tune was irrelevant, because the "song belonged as much to him as to the first man who sang it." When discussing tunes from 1865 to 1895, for instance, one scholar stated that songs were such a "part of the day-to-day living itself" that it would have been "absurd" to ask the singer or the community who wrote the songs if the events portrayed were real. One old-time singer verified this statement when asked where he had learned a particular tune, "Why, I've known them all my life. I didn't learn them—I grew up with them." These songs were old tunes his "grandmother" had sung to him.[8]

When acts of violence were depicted they were often shown to be exciting, and the aggressive people were sometimes rewarded and seldom punished. The violent deeds were not condemned, and the brutal acts seemed socially acceptable and justifiable. Many types of folk tunes fit some of these criteria and adultery killings fit all. First, respectable and supposedly knowledgeable persons, such as medical doctors, endorsed such behavior in the songs. In "The Dumb Wife," for example, a doctor told a man that in order to "make a scolding wife hold her tongue," he should beat her with a hickory stick. Similarly, well-respected local individuals frequently sang these tunes at community events. Second, men were neither taken to court nor condemned by the community. In fact, they were applauded for their acts. Even when they were punished by the victims themselves, this bit of information was shrewdly omitted. In addition, the violence was rewarded. The man doing the beating or killing got what he wanted. His fists, for example, made his "nagging" wife shut up. Men who were able to keep females under their control were portrayed as macho.[9]

Psychological studies have generally shown that when the media portrays violence against women, male audience members will view women more negatively and increase their "aggression against them."

The more such songs were sung, the less violent and less degrading the acts probably seemed to most southern males. Research shows that if males are bombarded with images of violence against females, over time this continual degradation of women will have violent repercussions for women. Although no historian can prove that a particular nineteenth-century southern male who listened to a singer glorify his abuse of his nagging wife immediately went home and beat his own wife, the prolonged psychological effects of such music cannot be discounted. Modern studies have shown that even if there is no immediate effect, long-range negative consequences can occur.[10] The continual barrage of such songs helps explain why males become desensitized to violence against women. When exposed to messages that depict aggression, "antagonistic orientations" towards women develops. Recent studies have shown that such negative "beliefs are a significant predictor of aggression against women." This form of aggression increases in environments where women are portrayed as less powerful and "justifiable targets of aggression."[11]

Even though these studies all deal with forms of mass media popular in the twentieth century, it is reasonable to suppose that violence in nineteenth-century folk music had similar effects. Folk music was especially important in the lives of rural southerners. It was a primary form of entertainment, and it broke down some of the barriers associated with rural isolation. It was not countered by opera and classical music. Although the so-called musically sophisticated ignored the rural fiddler, banjo picker, or dulcimer player, rural society did not. In fact, the folk musician was as "important as the parson," and received as much respect as the minister. In addition, music enabled many people to earn respect and some extra income. Moreover, music uplifted the spirits in a segment of the population that faced extreme poverty.[12]

Instead of only hearing songs on the radio, like later twentieth-century listeners, nineteenth-century men, women, and children were exposed to these tunes live and in a communal setting. Rural southerners, for example, habitually sang homicide tunes while attending "quiltin', house raisin', bean stringin' and corn huskin' parties." In fact, many of these songs remained in the oral tradition for generations. Musical lyrics transmit social norms and are a significant socializing element. The music of the nineteenth-century South informed men, women, and children about culturally acceptable behavior. Children especially look to music for "cultural cues to determine what attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics are a part of belonging to a particular sex."[13]

The most violent act is murder, and imported ballads that described the killing of women were often more popular in the South than other

sections of the United States. These tunes came from various locations, including England, Scotland, and Norway, as well as other regions of the United States. They were popular with both African-American and white rural southerners from the Florida Everglades to the Ozark mountains. Although imported ballads indicate that southern males were not the only men to beat women, their popularity reinforces the view that many southern men overwhelmingly approved of the practice.[14]

According to interviews, female murder tunes were not only popular in the South but a major part of the oral tradition. In fact, such imported murder ballads were found in every southern state. Examination of the most important southern folklore collections attests to their prevalence. In the Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina approximately 47 percent of the imported murder ballads involved the murder of women. In John Harrington Cox's monumental study of folksongs in the South, approximately 44 percent of the murder tunes involved the death of women. Similarly, in Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr.'s *Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, approximately 42 percent of the murder ballads portrayed women killed. In the tunes Vance Randolph collected in northern Arkansas and southern Missouri, the figure is approximately 42 percent. Finally, in Oliver Dame Campbell and Cecil J. Sharp's *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, a similar statistic of 43 percent is found. Although more men were portrayed as murder victims in folk music, there were significant gender differences.[15]

Although not every imported song that depicted the murder of a woman was popular throughout the South, several violent ballads and their numerous variations were prevalent in one or more southern states. There are several reasons for their popularity. First, for rural southerners, murder and violence were integral parts of the culture. Second, southern folksingers, like all folksingers, often strengthened their audience's belief in the reality of those stories by changing some facet of the old tune. Typically they assigned the song a regional name and a local setting. For instance, in a West Virginia version of the "Boston Burglar," instead of being from the northeast, the thief was said to have been "born in West Virginia, a place we all know well."[16]

Since only songs that mirrored some essential element of southern culture survived the region's oral tradition, it is important to analyze which events remained unchanged in imported murder tunes. What was the crucial element in these songs that enabled them to endure in the South, sometimes for generations after they ceased to be sung in Europe, while other tunes simply faded from the region's collective memory? First, although several southern versions of a particular female murder ballad might differ in tone or location, one thing remained the same—a woman

was killed. By examining the murder ballads in folklorist Michael E. Bush's thesis, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," it is apparent that material not essential to the murder did not survive. Similarly, in folklorist Arthur Kyle Davis Jr.'s examination of the only North American version of "Jellon Grame'," he supplied various European and Virginia versions of the text. The central theme, the killing of the woman, stayed, but the Scottish dialect and uncommon words were changed or omitted.[17]

Although imported ballads that depicted violence against women were popular in southern music, the South did not depend on outside regions to supply these tunes. In fact, violence against women was one of the most prevalent themes in nineteenth-century music that originated in the rural South. Over half of the murder ballads originating in North Carolina involved the murder of women.[18] In fact, femicide was one of the most popular themes in native songs. In North Carolina, for example, murder tunes depicting the killing of women were more common than tunes about wrecks, storms, and moonshining. They were more popular even than songs concerning one of the most historically important events in North Carolina's history, the Regulator Movement. Although there are many such tunes, "Omie Wise" is typical. In fact, this song, based on an actual event, was one of the most prevalent in the entire South and found in every southern state. It described the early nineteenth-century murder of Naomi Wise by Jonathan Lewis. According to court records and oral sources, Lewis, a man from a prominent family, promised in 1808 to marry Wise, an orphaned field hand pregnant with his child; but Lewis's mother wanted him to marry the more affluent Hattie Elliott. When word circulated about Wise's pregnancy and engagement, Lewis told her that they would immediately wed. Instead of going to the magistrate, however, he took her to Deep River and "tied her dress above her head, and then held her beneath [the water with] his foot" until she died. Lewis was arrested for the crime but eventually escaped from jail. Although recaptured a few years later, he was acquitted of the murder.[19]

The tunes and oral histories that surround this murder are particularly interesting because they reveal the "good girl" versus "bad girl" duality. In addition, several versions impart the message that bad things happen to "good girls" when they turn into "bad girls." Oral sources, for example, pointed out that Lewis "ruin[ed]" Wise's "fair name" by getting her pregnant. She had been a decent, moral woman until she had premarital sex with Lewis, which "disgrace[d]" her. This attitude emerged in most versions of the tune. Several songsters explained that Lewis promised to marry Wise so that there would be "no disgrace." One balladeer pointed out, for example, that Lewis had "shame[d] and disgrace[d]" Wise. In fact, the singer made clear that he thought that Wise had been

immoral, claiming that Wise begged for her life and said, "Don't kill me, let me live, full of shame." In addition, moral lessons emerged in some versions. One threatened all "Young people, oh, take warning" and be not fooled into having premarital sex, or "you are sure to meet Naomi's fate." Likewise, another songster warned "young ladies" not to be "ruined" by such men. These songs plus the oral statements given by area residents are indications that unwed mothers were viewed as disreputable persons. Women were held to a higher sexual standard than men. Unlike a man, whose "infidelty" [*sic*] was viewed by area residents as "a natural sort of thing," an unmarried woman who lost her virginity was "ruined." Both Wise and Hattie Elliott had been "good girls" before they met Lewis, but unlike Wise, Elliott "baffled" Lewis when he tried to seduce her. In the end, however, Lewis chose to marry the virgin and kill the "ruined" Wise. The moral message was clear: women had to be "good" or be prepared to face ominous consequences.[20]

Women were almost always innocent victims; that is, they did not provoke their attacker in any way. In the popular southern version of an imported ballad, "Bo Lamkin," for example, a woman and her newborn were killed because her husband had not paid the stone mason he had hired to build his manor.[21]

In several songs, including "The Noel Girl," "Omie Wise," and "Bad Lee Brown," the killers are not executed for their crimes. In fact, Brown could not understand why he must be punished at all for killing his wife: "Forty-nine years in prison for life,/All I ever done was kill my wife." In "There Was a Rich Old Farmer," the killer was punished by his conscience, not the authorities. Moreover, the murderer often did not believe such brutal treatment of women would be punished. In "Rose Conoley," for example, the murderer's father led him to believe nothing would be done if he killed the pregnant Conoley, as is shown by the line, "My daddy often told me that money would set me free/If I should murder that dear, little girl."[22]

In some locations the murderers were not executed in 40 percent of the murder ballads involving the death of young women. These lyrics reflect the almost total lack of judicial interest in such cases, reinforcing scholarship on the colonial era showing no southern settlement had laws against wife abuse, unlike New England. Even as late as the Civil War there were "virtually no initiatives by the criminal justice system to control domestic violence, and a legislative 'vacuum' existed." In fact, in the early 1800s on the rare occasion when a man was finally brought to court for severely beating his wife, judges routinely dismissed the case. Moreover, although in the late nineteenth century some states adopted anti-wife-beating laws, no real enforcement policies existed. Historically, the legal

system has taken the killing of certain types of females, such as adulterers, lesbians, and prostitutes, less seriously. A murdered female who did not fit one of these categories was in practice often "monitored for the extent to which she provoked her own demise." If the court found that provocation was great, as in adultery cases, sentences were frequently lenient or nonexistent, and if the provocation was considered low, such as the charge of continual taunting, the male could be charged with manslaughter, which was not a capital offense, thus validating the lyrical evidence. When a male judge sentenced Bad Lee Brown to 49 years in prison for killing his wife, Brown had every reason to be shocked because, as music reflected, historical practice has allowed men to "walk away free or to serve only token sentences" for killing their wives.[23]

Sometimes folksongs portrayed such men in a sympathetic light. Similar to the mass media of the late twentieth century, some folksongs turned them into tragic heroes—brave but misguided characters—not brutal villains. On the scaffold, for example, they typically accepted their fate "like a man." Often they gave heart-wrenching confessions in which they blamed whiskey or the victims themselves for their downfall. By allowing southern males to shift responsibility for their abusive behavior, the culture trivialized femicide, because the murders were slighted or glossed over.[24]

Southern society as revealed in its folksongs considered violence a proper method of gender control. Plantation masters customarily used the lash on female slaves. According to Edward L. Ayers, the lash was also used not only to control urban slaves but also the free African-American population. In the post-Civil War era white southerners used various forms of violence, including lynching and burnings, as control mechanisms. When African Americans or whites friendly to their cause were accused of a crime, they could be lynched, and females of both races were not immune from this kind of brutality. Since the term "femicide" refers to the "misogynist killing of females" and since the murders of African Americans in this era were often motivated by racism, not every case of an African-American woman being killed constitutes a femicide. In order to be labeled as such, the killings had to be "accompanied by a sexist act—most commonly rape."[25]

Some southern whites liked tunes that broadcast brutality against African-American women. A Pine Bluff, Arkansas fiddler explained that the popular tune, "The Hickory Hornpipe," had so much "shill squealing in it" because the melody imitated a "nigger being whipped." He added that in the past, "if a nigger wench didn't behave, they just fanned her ass with a hickory. A young yaller gal will holler and dance mighty lively, and that's what this here tune is about." Although a white man might be

lynched by a white mob, burning someone to death was reserved for African Americans, and again females were not immune. After a white Georgia mob captured Mary Turner, a pregnant African-American woman who threatened to swear out warrants for the arrest for her husband's killers, they tied her upside down from a tree, soaked her dress in gasoline and motor oil, and set her on fire. One ruffian then took his pocket knife and cut the fetus out of Turner's abdomen, and stomped it into the dirt. Not only did the males laugh as Turner burned and helplessly screamed, but a few days after they had completed their grisly task, one man also bragged, "Mister, you ought to've heard the nigger wench howl!" Besides being a femicide (the sexist act being the crude Caesarean), these kinds of brutal acts were also control mechanisms. They not only stopped one person from contacting the authorities but also sent fear throughout the African-American community.[26]

The use of violence for gender control in both African-American and Caucasian tunes is evident from the careful planning of femicides. Sometimes, for example, graves were pre-dug. These songs show that southern men of both races believed that they were justified in using physical force to control women. An African-American songster, for example, advised males to take a gun and shoot their women "through an' through" if they ever tried to "bully" them around. Similarly, when a woman rejected a marriage proposal it was not uncommon for the jilted man to state that "since I cannot have you no one else can." In the popular African-American tune, "Delia Holmes," a woman is shot with a forty-four by a man she refused to marry. "When the time come for marriage / She refuse' to go. / 'If you don't marry me / You cannot live no mo'." In "Fair Fanny Moore," a man also kills a woman who would not marry him. "O Fanny, O Fanny, beware your fate! / Accept of my offer before it is too late / For I have come here to secure / The hand or the life of the fair Fanny Moore."[27]

Many songs demonstrate the existence of a paternalistic society in the South and provide evidence of the culture's acceptance of violence as a method to control women, but adultery songs are the best examples. Southern states have had unwritten laws (laws which are sometimes honored even today) that allow a man to kill his unfaithful wife and her lover. Sociologist John Shelton Reed argues that, although such laws were unwritten, everyone understood them. Even in the modern South juries have "often been inclined to acquit" such murderers. Moreover, at times southern states have even written such laws into their judicial codes. In the eighteenth century, for example, Louisiana had a law stating that if a married woman was caught committing adultery, she and her lover were to be "turned over to the aggravated husband for punishment." The husband could do whatever he wanted to them; however, if he killed one

individual, the law stipulated that he had to kill the other person. In fact, until 1974 a Texas law (Texas Penal Code 1925, article 1220) allowed a husband to murder his wife and her lover. This was not considered a criminal act, thus, the husband received no penalty if he found the couple in "flagrante delicto" and if the murder took place promptly. The state assumed that under those circumstances, the grief-stricken husband could be presumed to be acting on an "irresistible impulse."[28]

Adultery songs show how a southern male believed killing his wife and her lover was justifiable homicide. Yet rarely, if ever, did a song discuss a woman killing her unfaithful mate and his lover. Studies have shown that, unlike a man, a woman who kills her unfaithful husband cannot depend upon the courts for forgiveness. The ballad "Arch and Gordon" relates the 1895 killing of Arch Brown and Nellie Gordon in western Kentucky by her husband, Archibald Dixon Gordon. By examining several versions of this song, the actual history of the murder, and the legal aspects of the case, the use of violence as a culturally approved means of controlling women becomes clear. First, although both victims were killed in cold blood, the coroner's jury ruled the murders justifiable homicide. The unwritten law was being enforced. When Gordon was taken to jail, "a hundred men were ready to go his bail." The singer informed the listeners that Arch had known that such behavior would get him killed. These and other stanzas indicate that males in the community were more than willing to uphold this kind of brutal behavior. Indeed, gender privilege was stronger than class and status. The singer told Brown's father, Governor John Young Brown, to stop crying because "you know your [only] son Arch has to die." The final stanza warns others that this type of behavior will get them killed no matter how influential their family might be.[29] In Lawrence County, Kentucky, during the late 1890s, a similar murder occurred when Lucy Adams was shot and killed by her husband when he found her with another man. Not only was her husband acquitted in court, but an interesting song of the events was written. In this tune the community where the killing occurred maintained that the lover "must die." Although the singer did not agree, because he thought that law and order should triumph, he understood the community's point of view. In fact, the song absolved the citizenry of any guilt in forgetting the law and falling back on cultural norms.[30]

Traditional British ballads which illuminated the brutal consequences of adultery were common in the South. In "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard," for example, a husband finds out his wife is cheating on him. He kills the man and then "seized [his wife] by her little white hand / And cut her head away." Comparably, in "The Demon Lover," a woman who is persuaded to leave her husband and sail away with her former lover is

doomed. Once on board the ship, she realized that he was a demon when she "spied his cloven foot." Although she pleads for her life, he sinks the ship and takes her to the "mountain of Hell."[31]

The brutal treatment of unfaithful women and their male lovers was an artifact of white culture only. Tunes related instances of African-American women running away from their husbands, then begging to be reunited, only to be beaten. Other African-American women were not as fortunate—they were slaughtered. In the "Coon-Can Game," (named for a common card game African Americans played in the nineteenth century) a man shot his old lover who ran away with another man. "I Went To The Hop-Joint" is another example where an African-American man killed his female lover when she deserted him. In an untitled ditty, another man made clear what he would do to his wife's lover when he sang that he would "start a little graveyard of my own, / If you don't, ole nigger, let my woman alone." Another man boasted that he was going to buy a pistol and "kill the first fellow / Fooling with my long-haired girl." In some songs African-American women themselves cautioned their lovers that their husbands would kill them. One woman warned her lover not to let her husband "catch you here— / He'll kill you dead just' sho's you born."[32]

Even though some of these songs, such as "The Demon Lover," were obviously wishful thinking, the message is still clear. Both African-American and white women were being warned that adultery caused physical and/or spiritual destruction. These songs reveal that when culturally unacceptable events provoked southern males to commit murder, the community forgave the killer and chastised the victim. Although each song had its own particular twist, one thing always remained the same, women who cheated on or abandoned their husbands invariably died, or were at the least savagely beaten.

These tunes are also important in showing how the culture perceived males. While southern men who shot their adulterous wives were glamorized in the music, men who did nothing about such relationships were depicted as cultural outcasts. In one song, "May I Sleep In Your Barn Tonight, Mister?," a man who did not punish his adulterous wife became a "tramp" looking for pity and a place to stay on a stormy night.[33] In many southern songs murdering males were romanticized, while less aggressive men were scorned. These songs also illustrate that southern society had no room for males it considered weak. Likewise, they demonstrate that women were considered the property of men.

Moreover, these types of songs reflect how society attempted to control the behavior of women in ways more subtle than threatening death. In "Jesse Adams," the adulterous woman had two children who would

suffer because of her actions. In the last stanza, the balladeer expressed the hope that the children would die, because the "stigma of their mother's behavior" would follow them throughout their lives and either make them "wicked, or at least so miserable that they will wish they had died."[34] Not only were women threatened with death for engaging in extramarital sex, but these tunes implied that their children would also endure the community's wrath. Even if a woman felt she might be able to run away and, thus, avoid physical punishment, the threat to her children's future was meant to be a deterrent. Such strategies continue today. Organizations that work with abused women report that it is not uncommon for males, or society in general, to use children as bargaining chips in their dealings with women. A man will, for instance, tell a woman that their children are solely her responsibility; thus, he will not allow her to work outside the home. Or if a woman tries to leave her husband, he will warn her that she will never see the children again. Similarly, these women are told that their children's friends or teachers will scorn them because of her actions.

Not only were women threatened by these cultural norms but also men. Men killing other men over women was not limited to adultery tunes. A Hat Hollow, Kentucky, resident claimed that Appalachian fathers "would blow your head clean off your shoulders for fooling with their girls." In fact, in both music and in real life, seldom was anyone punished when such killings occurred. In the Virginia version of "The Twa Brothers," a man killed his own brother because a woman refused his advances, preferring his brother instead; yet the murdered was not punished. In a popular Ozark version, "The Jealous Brothers," two brothers killed the man their sister wanted to marry. The same theme also appears in "The Bramble Brier." In this tune a group of brothers killed their sister's fiancé and threw him in a "patch of briers." Although in both of these songs the guilty parties perished, they died of natural causes. Similarly, in "Lovely William," a father killed his daughter's boyfriend but was never punished. The lyrics explain that he murdered the boyfriend before the "feared . . . deed would prove true," in an attempt to control his daughter's sexuality. In "Young Edwin in the Lowlands Low," a father kills his daughter's boyfriend. Even though the daughter told her father that he would be executed, the song does not mention any punishment.[35]

Finally, in the ballads "Charming Beauty Bright," "The Drowsy Sleeper," "I Dreamt Last Night of My True Love," and "Rainbow Willow," all popular southern tunes, male opposition to a female's choice of a lover is illustrated. In "Charming Beauty Bright," for example, a father locked his daughter away, and "treated her so 'vere [severe]," when her lover asked to marry her that she died. As in so many other tunes, the father was

not punished for his cruelty. In many cases, male relatives simply did what they wanted, and no one questioned their right to dictate to their female relatives, indicating that they thought of women as reproductive and/or sexual property that they owned and could exchange. This music reflects this "proprietary" character of gender relations.[36] The fact that adulterous males were also killed demonstrates not only a powerful fundamentalist morality in force in the rural South but also as feminist scholars maintain, that "same complex of control and male authority is involved when men kill men because of jealousy and possessiveness."[37]

Not only did southern culture provide balladeers ample material for murder tunes concerning women, the description of these deaths is important to understanding rural southern culture. They narrated the vivid and gory details of murders, whether by beheading, stabbing, drowning, beating, or shooting. In the popular tune, "Pretty Polly," the balladeer who sang of the killing of Polly Aldridge by William Chapman at Buck Creek in Warfield, Kentucky, described how Chapman viciously cut open her abdomen, filled the empty cavity with rocks, and tossed the weighted corpse in Sug River. Although these types of tunes are numerous, it will suffice to mention two others, "There was a Rich Old Farmer" and a version of "Pearl Bryant." In the former an unsuspecting female was struck in the face with an eight-foot-long club, grabbed by her curly hair and lifted to her feet, before she was thrown into a deep river to drown. In the latter, the woman was viciously stabbed and beheaded.[38]

Such sadistic lyrics demonstrate that southern men could be extremely brutal towards women. Second, they reflect the society's thirst for gore. Scholars have shown that rural southerners, more than other Americans, like to witness and graphically discuss bloody events. Rural southerners, for example, are more inclined to rush to accident scenes, to take part in bear-baiting events, and to attend dog or cock fights. Similarly, after someone was killed in the South, men, women, and children all visited the crime scene. According to a Tennessee female, when locals heard of a homicide "they'd flock to the place like a bunch of buzzards.... I went to one or two murders myself." In the same vein rural southerners clamored to hear the bloodier and more vicious tunes. As one balladeer stated, southerners would purchase a song "about killin' a heap quicker than a hymn-tune." According to criminologists, the use of excessive violence indicates that the males consciously determined to kill their victims. On a deeper psychological level, these songs described excessive violence in order to intimidate women. According to Kate Millett, patriarchal societies use violence and the threat of it to maintain control. In case the threat of being murdered was not enough to deter southern women

from breaking cultural norms, the songs stressed that torture or mutilation of the corpse could occur.[39]

Folksongs indicate that murder was not the only form of violence women faced. The beating of women, especially wives, was a familiar theme. In many southern collections several versions of "The Wife Wrapped In Wether's Skin" appear. In this tune a farmer whose wife would not obey him placed a sheep's skin on his wife's back and made his "hickory go whickety-whack." Although the song did not directly instruct everyone to undertake such behavior, it did claim that such beatings made a wife obey her husband. In the tune, "If I Had A Scolding Wife," popular with both African Americans and whites, a man tells everyone what he would do to a woman who attempted to reprimand him. In the African-American version, the husband would "whoop 'er sho's you born, / Hitch her to a double plow / And make her plow my corn." In the white version the man stated, "If I had a scolding wife / I'd whip her, sho as you born. / I'd take her down to the still-house / And swap her off for corn."[40] Similarly, in "The Dumb Wife," a doctor told a man that in order to "make a scolding wife hold her tongue," he should use "the oil of hickory" and "just anoint her body round until the rooms begin to sound." In other words, he should beat her with a hickory stick until her screams echoed off the walls. In a folksong popular with both races, "When I Was A Bachelor," when a man finds out that his new bride was a "scolding Jane," he went to the woods and cut a green hickory switch, and "whipped her well, / Whipped her more than tongue could tell; / [and] Told her if she didn't prove better to be / The devils might come and take her 'way from me." In a similar tune entitled "The Holly Twig," a man cuts the "toughest" stick he could find so that he could beat his wife. In fact, after he had "lammed" her, he "kicked her and cuffed her to the lowest pits of hell." This woman was beaten so severely only because she had "scolded" her husband. In a popular Ozark tune, "Dick German The Cobbler," a man complains that his wife was always "scolding" him; therefore, he "ducked her three times in the river," and deserted her. In a North Carolina tune, "The Wee Cooper of Fife," if a man's wife would not bake, brew, card, or spin for him, he simply "thrash[ed]" her to make her obey. One African-American songster claimed that if his wife did not treat him right, he simply "knock[ed] her teeth down her throat." In a similar situation, another man advised males to "pick up a big stick and beat her [with] all you might." Another African American sang that if his wife drank whiskey, he simply picked up a "stick and beat dat heifer to death."[41]

Even though wives and fiancées received the majority of psychological, verbal, and physical abuse, other female relatives, such as sisters, mothers, and grandmothers, were also vulnerable. In "The Mother-in-Law

Song," for instance, a man hates his mother-in-law primarily because she stated her opinion when he stated his; he considers her too outspoken and ugly: "In Pridemore city they do good shooting / There's never a shoot but what it's a draw. / I got seventeen dollars to give anybody / That'll take good aim at my mother-in-law."[42]

The popularity of such tunes demonstrates a tendency that Evan Stark finds prevalent today, that is, men assault women when they attempt to overstep the boundaries of gender stereotyping and become more self-expressive. What the nineteenth-century rural South considered just motivation for abuse, a wife who could not bake or a woman who chided a man, demonstrates that southern society's gender norms required women to stay home and listen to their male relatives.[43] Although this type of music shows that women were beaten and killed, it also demonstrates that southern men felt women were to blame for their being harmed. In one tune, "Little Birdie," a folk singer blamed his "little woman" for making him "do wrong" and said he would "rather drink muddy water / And sleep in a hollow log / Than to live with any woman / And be treated like a dog." More importantly none of these tunes depicted men as naggers or at fault for beating their wives. Even when men did not blame their victims, they never took total responsibility for their violent actions, generally blaming both whiskey and women for their abuse. In "Ye Sons of Columbia," for instance, the singer declared that "for whiskey and women are the downfall of all men, / Since old Adam was beguiled by old Eve." As modern researchers have shown, this is still a frequent excuse.[44]

The double standard in sexual relations found in adultery tunes is also prevalent in songs detailing murders of pregnant women. Folklorist Michael E. Bush found that a majority of the southern murder tunes that detailed the deaths of young girls dealt with out-of-wedlock pregnancies. In addition to those tunes, other southern ballads involve the killing of pregnant women. In fact, some, such as "Jellon Grame'," are found only in the South. Even though these types of songs are numerous, none portray a pregnant woman killing her lover. The closest example was an 1824 tune entitled "Jeremiah Beechum" in which a woman had her new lover kill an old lover for getting her pregnant and leaving her.[45] Bush maintains that males who murdered pregnant females were hanged because they, too, had broken a significant biblical commandment, "Thou shall not kill." Therefore, both the murder of the female and the execution of the murdering male signified that community standards were restored. More significant, however, instead of blaming the victim's death on her premarital pregnancy, these ballads clarify the double sexual standards in the rural South: women had only to engage in premarital sex to be killed,

whereas men had to murder in order to be executed. Not all unmarried pregnant women were killed. The significance of these tunes is that they intimidated white women with the threat of violence if they did not maintain their virginity before marriage.[46]

Although the songs dealing with the abuse of pregnant women constitute a form of social control, they also depict a pattern of behavior seen by today's professional organizations concerned with these issues. During pregnancy family stress is higher and men resent the lack of attention they receive. Likewise, pregnant women are more physically vulnerable. Males beat pregnant women because they see themselves losing control over their mates. When a woman becomes pregnant, doctors, neighbors, or church members take more interest in her well-being. This was especially true before childbirth moved into hospitals. According to Judith Walzer Leavitt, until the twentieth century, "most women gave birth at home with the help of their female friends and relatives. . . . When possible, sisters and cousins and mothers came to help the parturient through the ordeal of labor and delivery, and close friends and neighbors joined in around the birthing bed." In this atmosphere, which could last for several months, women gained control and influenced events. As the rural Arkansan Nannie Jackson indicated in her diary, southern husbands sometimes got angry when their pregnant wives depended upon others for emotional support. On the 27th of June 1890, Jackson, who was eight months pregnant, visited her best friend and neighbor Fannie Morgan on three separate occasions. Jackson, whose marriage was "complicated and difficult," told Morgan her "troubles because it seems to help me to bear it better when she knows about it." William T. Jackson, reportedly a heavy drinker and illiterate ruffian, hated these visits and accused his wife of "working for nothing but to get him & Mr. Morgan in a row, & to make trouble between them." Jackson made it clear that he did not want his wife to have any outside contacts. No one knows for sure what else this man did or said that night, but his sobbing wife related, "I would rather he had treated me with silent contempt for 6 months than to talk to me as he did this evening . . . I can never get over what he said."[47] A domineering husband must always dictate who his wife sees, who she talks to and where she goes. Such a man will do all he can to limit his wife's involvement in outside activities, because isolation is the key to his control. Although they might need the extra help, these men are "fearful of the pregnant woman's increased contacts outside the home." Therefore, they do not care if the helpers are family members or health care providers; they simply view the outsiders as adversaries. In an attempt to regain the control he thinks he has lost, this type of man may resort to brutality.[48]

Nineteenth-century southern folk tunes also provide a valuable insight into the reasons southern society disapproved of women fighting back when their husbands or lovers beat or killed them. In one of the few southern songs that depicted a woman murdering a man, "Frankie Silver," non-ballad evidence indicates that the woman killed her husband in 1831 to protect herself from his brutality. Instead of incorporating this information into the song, balladeers made an important cultural statement by omitting this detail. In many versions Silver killed her husband out of sheer jealousy. These songs reinforce studies that trace the cultural history of violence. In fact, studies have shown that even lawyers, who defended women who fought back, historically concealed the abuse.[49]

Southern folksongs reinforced the belief that women should not be aggressive under any circumstances. While men often brawled with their would-be killers, women did not physically fight back. In 70 percent of the murder ballads Bush analyzed, the women simply begged for mercy. Similarly, in the Virginia version of "Jellon Grame'," the woman "pled upon her knee . . . oh, please have mercy." Moreover, when Pearl Bryan is about to be killed, she cries out, "I have always loved you" and she then falls "down on here [*sic*] knees befor Him / She Pleaded for Her Life / When Deep in to Her Bosom / He plunged the fatle [*sic*] knife." Finally, in the ballad "Jesse Adams," Lucy Adams is first shot in the arm as she tries to escape, then she "threw her hand upon her arm [and said] 'Lord a Mercy' " before being "shot through the head." In almost all of these songs the outcome is the same. The pleading does no good, and the woman is brutally killed. This pleading indicates that southern women had few alternatives. The culture placed women in a helpless position, for neither society, the courts, nor law enforcement agencies helped abused women.[50]

Instead of stressing the idea that women should avenge themselves, these songs reinforced the cultural notion that men must protect women. Jeremiah Beechum, the man who killed his wife's ex-lover who had gotten her pregnant before abandoning her, was glamorized in novels, poems, ballads, and on stage for protecting "womanhood." In one ballad Beechum, the hero, states: "To kill the man that injured you / I surely shall feel free. . . . [for killing] Colonel Sharp / Who injured my poor wife / I always will protect her, / As long as I have life."[51]

According to numerous studies, males were accustomed to fighting in the South. In 1804, for instance, a traveler to the back country of North Carolina noted in his diary that gouging was common. These were brutal bouts in which combatants tried to scoop out an opponent's eye with their thumb nail. Although the eyes were the favorite targets, noses, ears, fingers, and toes were routinely bitten off in these bloody brawls. These

kinds of skirmishes were not uncommon in backwoods locations; thus, travelers reported that in Virginia "every third or forth [*sic*] man appears with one eye." These men were "like dogs and bears, they use their teeth and feet, with the most savage ferocity, upon each other." In fact, one man, John Stanley of Bertie County, North Carolina, took matters to the extreme and "sharpened his teeth for his opponents' noses and ears." When southern music showed women not responding aggressively to male violence, it reflected cultural realities. A female simply had no satisfactory alternative to taking the abuse. If she killed her tormentor, for example, society overlooked the male abuse and executed her.[52]

Although there are several factors which cause women to be more "susceptible to the development of a learned helpless response to violence," one stands out in the music of the time period. That is, helplessness is a result of "rigid adherence to traditional sex role stereotypes in the home." This is not a form of victim blaming, because it places the blame on the society which has conditioned a woman into believing she had no alternative. The music of the common people reinforced the idea of stereotypical helplessness all over the rural South.[53]

An examination of songs in which women were not harmed also throws light on the physical abuse of the times. When analyzing southern songs, it becomes apparent that women were not highly regarded. Numerous songs from both races indicate the subordinate position of women in the society. Women were often the subject of African-American folktunes; yet, "few exalted opinions of women" were exhibited. Instead, sex, jealousy, and physical characteristics predominated. The same can be said of many white tunes. One, for example, suggested that a woman was only good for carrying a man home after a hard night of drinking. In another, a man's wife died, but he only seemed to miss her good cooking. In fact, he called her a fool for dying. Other songs typecast African-American women as "being of questionable quality." In one popular song, for example, a male stated that no man should ever "let yo' woman have her way;/ Keep you in trouble all yo' day." Finally, women were often simply used for sexual pleasure. A typical example is a song in which a man claimed that "I got a woman an' sweetheart too;/Woman don't love me, sweetheart do."[54]

Moreover, in both African-American and white music, women were objectified. Looks, for example, were seen as essential to her worth as in the popular white tune "The Burglar Man." When a thief hiding under a bed sees an old woman remove her teeth, wig, and glass eye, he becomes "a total wreck" and is discovered. The woman then grabs a gun and tells the man to either marry her or "I'll blow off the top of your head." In reply, the robber, who could not get away, stated "for the Lord's sake shoot!"[55]

In an untitled white ditty collected in Tennessee, a man claimed he would never marry any "old maid," because "her neck's too long and stringy/I'm afraid she'd never die." African-American males also sang similar lyrics. There are many African-American folktunes that pointed out what a "good-looking" woman could do. One song claimed that "A good-looking woman/Will make a bull dog join the church." On the other hand, one man claimed that he would never marry a "black gal," because her hair was too "kinky." Others chanted they would never marry a "yaller nigger gal," because her "neck's drawn out so stringy an' long,/I'se afraid she 'ould never die." In eastern Tennessee African-American males sang that they wished their wives were dead so that they could go out with prettier women. Other songs also showed that unattractive women were left to their own protection, while young and beautiful ones would be protected by males. Finally, many white songs discussed the "lily white" hands, the delicate appearance, and the childlike behavior of white women. In constrast, independent women were unattractive and manly.[56]

The objectification of women is most blatant in "swap songs" such as "When I Was A Little Boy." Northern versions of such swap songs where a man loses out every time he makes a trade often begins with the trading of a horse. In this particular North Carolina version, however, the man first "buy[s]" a wife. He then attempts to carry her home in a wheelbarrow, but it breaks, so, he "sells" his wife and "buys" a cow. Trades continue until he has swapped for a cow, a calf, a cat, a hat, and a mouse. The implication that material goods were more important than women can also be seen in the song "Thimble Buried His Wife At Night," which was only found in Virginia and North Carolina. Instead of mourning the death of his wife, a man grieved because he could not get a diamond ring off of her finger before she was buried.[57]

A further look at nonviolent folksongs underlines the insistance on male dominance. It was culturally unacceptable for women to make decisions. For example, in "Father, Father, I Am Married," a newly married man complains to his father that his wife will not obey him. Finally, he tells her, "O wife, make no objection;/You must live by my direction./Wife, O Wife, I do declare/That the Britches I will wear!" In "The Scolding Wife," young men were warned that it would be better to marry a woman "blind, deaf, and dumb." Kelly Combs, a popular Kentucky ballad singer, sang "Adam" and "Johnny Buck," emphasizing a belief "common among mountain people" that husbands should rule their wives. The last stanza of "Adam" states that, "The woman was not taken/From Adam's head we know/And she must not rule o'er him/It is mighty certain so." This theme also appeared in nonviolent African-American tunes. One man main-

tained, for example, that he would be happy if he had his "weight in gold," because he would then "have the women under my control."[58]

In conclusion, folk music of the nineteenth-century rural South both reflected and influenced societal views of women. Although such cultural norms were common both in Europe and the United States, they existed in the rural South in stark form. Although these songs demonstrate several things about gender relations, one thing stands out. The music shows that domestic violence was a serious problem in the nineteenth-century rural South. Southern folk music reinforced existing attitudes and values relating to gender and in so doing contributed to violence against women in the rural South by legitmating it.

NOTES

[1] Over the past century there have been many scholarly works dealing with the southern male's penchant for violence. A few of the best include, Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); William B. Bankston and H. David Allen, "Rural Social Areas and Patterns of Homicide: An Analysis of Lethal Violence in Louisiana," *Rural Sociology* 45 (1980): 223-227; Richard M. Brown, "Southern Violence—Regional Problem or National Nemesis? Legal Attitudes toward Southern Homicide in Historical Perspective," *Vanderbilt Law Review* 32 (1979): 225-250; Dickerson D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); Wilber J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Knopf, 1941); Raymond D. Gastil, "Homicide and a Regional Culture of Violence," *American Sociological Review* 36 (1971): 412-427; William Lynwood Montell, *Killings: Folk Justice in the Upper South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986); John S. Reed, "Below the Smith and Wesson Line: Southern Violence," in *One South: An Ethnic Approach to Regional Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); John S. Reed, "To Live-and-Die-in Dixie: A Contribution to the Study of Southern Violence," *Political Science Quarterly* 86 (1971): 429-443; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). In a complete run of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's *Uniform Crime Reports*, I discovered, for example, that from 1920 to 1925 the southern homicide rate was two and a half times the national average. See also, Montell, *Killings*, 163. In fact, in the 1880s and 1890s southern homicides and prison populations both soared to the high levels of the Reconstruction Era; see Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 250; Bruce, *Violence and Culture*, 7. The Mississippi law stated that a husband could "exercise the right of moderate chastisement in cases of great emergency and use salutary restraint in every case of misbehavior, without subjecting himself to vexatious prosecution, resulting in the discredit and shame of all parties." Similarly, when North Carolina finally outlawed the practice in 1874 the state maintained "domestic discipline" by stating the court could not intervene in abuse cases "if no permanent injury has been inflicted, nor malice nor dangerous violence shown by the husband, it is better to draw the curtain, shut out the public gaze, and leave the parties to forget and forgive," quoted in Terry Davidson, "Wife Beating: A Recurring Phenomenon Throughout History," in *Battered Women: A Psychosociological Study of Domestic*

Violence, ed. Maria Roy (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1977), 19; Diana E. H. Russell, "Femicidal Lynching in the United States," in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman-Killing*, ed. Jill Radford and Diana E. H. Russell (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1992), 53. It was not until the emergence of the women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s that social scientists and other scholars considered the abuse of women an important field of study. See Michele Bograd, "Introduction," in *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*, eds. Kersti Yllo and Michele Bograd (London: Sage Publication, 1988), 11; for an understanding of the historical perspective of wife abuse, see Davidson, "Wife Beating: A Recurring Phenomenon Throughout History," 2-21. Other forms of family violence, such as child abuse, are not dealt with in this paper because they "obscure the dimensions of gender and power that are fundamental to understanding wife abuse"; see Bograd, "Introduction," *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*, 13.

[2] Bruce, *Violence and Culture*, 99-100; Arthur Palmer Hudson, *Folksongs of Mississippi and their Background* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), 254; Ruth Ann Musick, "Murderers and Cut-Throats In Song," *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* 19 (June 1953): 31; see Alfred M. Williams, "Folk-Songs of the Civil War," *Journal* 5, 265 ff; Bruce, *Violence and Culture*, 100; Bruce, *Violence and Culture*, 100-101. To be included in this manuscript, a song had to have been popular in the nineteenth-century South. That, however, does not mean that every song listed was written in the nineteenth century. Similarly, although many of the collections I consulted were completed in the early twentieth century, I included particular songs because translators and/or songsters pointed out that the tunes had been in the oral tradition for many years, typically for several generations. Although no folksong collection, no matter how good, contains every possible rendering of a particular song (an impossible task), historical judgements still can be made. For example, I was often able to find several similar versions of a particular song in various southern collections and locations which indicated that the versions were both widespread and popular. When words such as "tune," "song," "ditty," and "melody" are used in this article, they refer to lyrics, not musical arrangements. Finally, even though some of the tunes mentioned could also be found outside the region, this does not invalidate their impact on the nineteenth-century South.

[3] The study of culture through music is a new field. Analysis is largely based on three theories. First, the Marxist theory holds that the "ruling class controls the media and utilizes it to advance hegemonic ideas." I reject this view that the media controls the culture, because the music examined in this study was neither written nor approved by elites. The second theory views the media as only a reflection of culture, and therefore has no effect on society. I also reject this theory because modern psychological studies clearly indicate otherwise. The final theory concerning music and culture "envisions their relationships as reciprocal," an idea I find more compelling, given the evidence presented by psychologists and feminist scholars. For an examination of the various theories, see Dawn Renae Stiemsma, "Gender and Popular Music" (Master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1991); Stiemsma, "Gender and Popular Music," 4-5.

[4] Walker points to studies conducted by Sonkin and Durphy, see Lenore E. Auerbach Walker and Angela Browne, "Gender and Victimization by Intimates," *Journal of Personality* 53 (June 1985): 182, 179.

[5] David P. Phillips and John E. Hensley, "When Violence is Rewarded or Punished: The Impact of Mass Media Stories on Homicide," *Journal of Communication* 34 (Summer 1984): 101, 103. Early studies of the effects of media violence on behavior include the following: A. Bandura, "Influences of Models, Reinforcement Contingencies on the Acquisition of Imitative Response," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1 (1965): 589-595; A. Bandura, D. Ross, and S. A. Ross, "Vicarious Reinforcement and Imitative Learning," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 66 (1963): 601-607; L. Berkowitz and E. Rawlings, "Effects of Film Violence on Inhibitions Against Subsequent Aggression," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 66 (1963): 405-412; T. P. Meyer, "Effects of Viewing Justified and Unjustified Real Film Violence on Aggressive Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 23 (1972): 21-29; I. Berkowitz and R. G. Geen, "Film Violence and the Cue Properties of Available Targets," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3 (1966): 525-530; I. Berkowitz and J. T. Alioto, "The Meaning of an Observed Event as a Determinant of its Aggressive Consequences," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 28 (1973): 206-217; S. Feshbach, "Reality and Fantasy in Filmed Violence," in *Television and Social Behavior* vol. 2, *Television and Social Learning*, eds. J. P. Murry, E. A. Rubinstein, and G. A. Comstock (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972), 318-345; R. G. Geen and D. Stonner, "Context Effects in Observed Violence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 25 (1972): 145-150; H. M. Lefcourt, K. Barnes, R. Parke, and F. Schwartz, "Anticipated Social Censure and Aggression-Conflict as Mediators of Response to Aggression Induction," *Journal of Social Psychology* 70 (1966): 251-263. For a list and use of such sources see George Comstock, "Types of Portrayal and Aggressive Behavior," *Journal of Communication* 27 (Summer 1977): 189-199; Comstock, "Types of Portrayal and Aggressive Behavior," 194.

[6] Comstock, "Types of Portrayal and Aggressive Behavior," 192; Neil M. Malamuth and James V. P. Check, "The Effects of Mass Media Exposure on Acceptance of Violence Against Women: A Field Experiment," *Journal of Research in Personality* 15 (1981): 442.

[7] G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., *Native American Balladry* (Philadelphia: Publications of the American Folklore Society, 1964), 1; for example, in the late nineteenth century when James Reuben Broyles leaned "back in the old split-hickory-bottom chair" and started to perform the tune "The Little Ship," he would sing as if the dying child was his very own, usually bringing tears to someone in the audience. Loman D. Cansler, "Boyhood Songs of my Grandfather," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 18 (September 1954): 181.

[8] Robert Leslie Mason, "Ten Old English Ballads In Middle Tennessee," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 11 (June 1947): 119; Cansler, "Boyhood Songs of my Grandfather," 177; George W. Boswell, "Songs To Sing—'There Was an Old Lady,' " *Kentucky Folklore Record* 15 (1969): 66.

[9] *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, ed. Newman Ivey White, vol. 2, *Folk Ballads from North Carolina*, ed. Henry M. Belden and Arthur Palmer Hudson (Durham, N.C.,: Duke University Press, 1952), 452-454.

[10] Daniel Linz, Edward Donnersteirn, and Steven Penrod, "The Effects of Multiple Exposures to Filmed Violence Against Women," *Journal Of Communication* 34 (Summer 1984): 1; Comstock, "Types of Portrayal and Aggressive Behavior," 191-192.

[11] Dena L. Peterson and Karen S. Pfost, "Influence of Rock Videos on Attitudes of Violence Against Women," *Psychological Reports* 64 (1989): 321; Janet S. St. Lawrence and Doris J. Joyner, "The Effects of Sexually Violent Rock Music on Males' Acceptance of Violence Against Women," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 15 (1991): 49-50; Malamuth, "The Effects of Mass Media Exposure on Acceptance of Violence Against Women," 437.

[12] Because of the widespread nineteenth-century popularity of folktunes, modern psychological experiments are suggestive for analysis; John Q. Wolfe, "A Country Dance in the Ozarks in 1874," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 19 (December 1955): 319.

[13] O. J. Wilson, "In Search of a Ballad," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 12 (1966): 111; Karen A. Saucier, "Healers and Heartbreakers: Images of Women and Men in Country Music," *Journal of Popular Culture* 20 (Winter 1986): 147; Stiemsma, "Gender and Popular Music," 1; Virginia W. Cooper, "Women in Popular Music: A Quantitative Analysis of Feminine Images Over Time," *Sex Roles* 13, n.s., 9/10 (1985): 504. Oral history sources also indicated the popularity of murder ballads in the nineteenth-century rural South. In fact, one balladeer, who specialized in writing and selling homicide ballads, pointed out that at hangings "men and boys hovered around me like bees to buy" the ballad of the condemned man. As other eyewitnesses have attested, this type of behavior was not an isolated experience. W. E. Boggs, an eyewitness to the 1884 hanging of William Neal, for example, maintained that "Lige Adams had a stack of ballads on the day of the hanging, stood on a big rock, and sold them as fast as three men could hand them out." Southern people enjoyed violent songs to such an extent that even religious tunes could not supersede their popularity. See Jean Thomas, *Ballad Makin' in the Mountains of Kentucky* (New York: Oak Publications, 1964), 138. See John Harrington Cox, *Folk-Songs of the South: Collected Under the Auspices of the West Virginia Folk-Lore Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925), 189.

[14] To determine if European ballads which dealt with the murder of women were more popular in the South than in other parts of the United States, I examined the Frank C. Brown Collection, the most complete southern state collection. First, I classified the female murder tunes. Second, through an examination of other sources such as additional regional collections and articles, I compiled a list of the North American sites where these songs have been documented. Although in most southern states, unlike northern states, a particular tune could be found in several different locales, states were given only one credit for each song. By comparing the number of southern and northern states, some striking observations were apparent. First, 54 percent of the total number of sites were southern states. Moreover, of all the locations, only 23 percent were northern states. In fact, some tunes were only found in the South. I did not count the border states as northern because of extensive southern migration to the region. Although it would be impossible to state that all of the songs found in the border region were transported by southerners, many examples can be given. Mrs. Ernest Shope, for instance, was a "fine local singer of traditional ballads and songs" in Jeffersonville, Indiana, but she was not originally from Indiana but Campbellsville, Kentucky, where she learned the three murder ballads she sang for the interviewers. These tunes were "The Two Sisters," "The Cruel Mother," and "The Two Brothers." See Margaret Sweeney, "Mrs Ernest Shope: A Memorable Informant," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 11 (1965): 17-24; Kentucky songs spread throughout both the North and South. For example, George W.

Boswell maintained that of the 700 song variants in his Tennessee collection "no fewer than 128 were learned in Kentucky." Boswell, "Kentucky Folksongs in the Tennessee Archives," 115.

[15] When dealing with the abuse of women it is not enough to simply list songs and make statistical comparisons. To obtain a clearer picture of the culture, historians must analyze why these women were killed. Men killed men, and men killed women, but women rarely killed men or even other women. Further, unlike females, males were not killed for engaging in premarital sex. In addition, women were more apt to be killed when caught in adultery. Nor were males killed for refusing marriage proposals. When males killed each other they were usually fighting; when they killed women, however, this was seldom the case. In fact, often no one seemed mad and nothing appeared out of the ordinary. Unlike males, women also usually trusted their assailants. In "Jellon Grame'," for instance, when told that Green wanted to see her, the victim said that Jellon was the "man I most desire to see on earth." In fact, many victims were to be married to their killers. In the ballad "Banks of the Ohio," when a woman told an acquaintance she would not marry him, he stabbed her and threw her into the Ohio River to drown. In many of these ballads, complete trust is often maintained, and the males involved were able to deceive their victims until the final moments. Males, however, were rarely deceived in such a manner. In versions of "There was a Rich Old Farmer," a variant of "The Wexford Girl" and "The Knoxville Girl," the victim and her assassin "walked and walked all hand in hand" until he killed her by striking her in the face with an eight-foot club before drowning her. The implied motive was premarital pregnancy. Conversely, a woman rarely, if ever, killed her fiancé for any reason. For the tunes mentioned above, see Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr. and Paul Clayton Worthington, "Another New Traditional Ballad From Virginia: 'Jellon Grame'," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 22 (December 1958): 171. George W. Boswell, "A Song to Sing—'There Was a Rich Old Farmer,' " *Kentucky Folklore Record* 18 (1972): 75-76. Michael E. Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia" (Master's thesis, Marshall University, 1977), 40-46; I have only listed the major books and collections, but others could be mentioned. See George W. Boswell, "Kentucky Folksongs in the Tennessee Archives," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 4 (1958): 115-121; Newman Ivey White, ed., *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* 8 vols. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1952); Cox, *Folk-Songs of the South*; Arthur Kyle Davis, Jr., *Traditional Ballads of Virginia: Collected Under the Auspices of the Virginia Folk-Lore Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929); Vance Randolph, *Ozark Folksongs* 4 vols. (Columbia, Missouri: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1950); Oliver Dame Campbell and Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917).

[16] Twenty-three versions of "The Jealous Lover" were found in North Carolina alone. Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From North Carolina*, 578-589; John Harrington Cox, *Traditional Ballads and Folk-Songs Mainly from West Virginia*, in *American Folk-Song Publications #3*, publication no. 75-S, ed. George Herzog and Herbert Halpert (Washington, D.C.: Works Progress Administration Federal Theater Project National Service Bureau, March 1939), xv, 105.

[17] For instance, see Bush's interpretation and the various versions of the 1744 English ballad "The Wexford Girl," which was popular in the South. Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," 40-46; Davis and Worthington, "Another New Traditional Ballad From Virginia: 'Jellon Grame'," 166-168; Capers Edwin Kirkland and

Mary Neal Kirkland, "Popular Ballads Recorded in Knoxville, Tennessee," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 2 (June 1938): 72-74.

[18] This was determined by an examination of the Brown Collection.

[19] Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From North Carolina*, 690-698.

[20] *Ibid.*, 691-692, 694, 698.

[21] I have found exceptions to this rule, but they are extremely rare. In the imported ballad "Lord Thomas," for example, a man's rich girlfriend kills his new bride. Upon seeing this, Lord Thomas decapitates the assailant, throws the head against the wall, and then kills himself. See Mason, "Ten Old English Ballads In Middle Tennessee," 120-123; the same situation prevails in the late twentieth century. Seventy-five percent of all murders are committed by friends or family members. Evan Stark, "Rethinking Homicide: Violence, Race, And the Politics of Gender," *International Journal of Health Services* 20 (1990): 19; Mellinger Edward Henry and Maurice Matteson, "Songs From North Carolina, Bo Lamkin," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 4 (September 1941): 137-138.

[22] "Bad Lee Brown" was found in several southern locations, and it was popular with both African Americans and whites. Randolph, *Ozark Folksongs*, vol. 2, 117-118; Boswell, "There Was a Rich Old Farmer," 75-76; Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," 6. The song "Rose Conoley" has been found in Wisconsin and Nebraska, but it was more popular in the South, with versions appearing in West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Missouri. More importantly, Lomax felt it originated in the South. See Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," 53. In some songs, such as "Pretty Polly" not even a sentiment of guilt is evident. Polly is killed by her lover who had been digging her grave all night. Once he tricks her into following him to the isolated gravesite, he stabs her and throws her in the grave. The killer's lack of concern is evident when he does not mourn but instead only unceremoniously "shoveled some dirt over her and turned to go home." See George W. Boswell, "A Song To Sing—'Pretty Polly,' " *Kentucky Folklore Record* 19 (1973): 87-88.

[23] Eve S. Buzawa and Carl G. Buzawa, *Domestic Violence: The Criminal Justice Response* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 24, 25; Jill Radford, introduction to *Femicide: The Politics of Woman-Killing*, 5; Susan S. M. Edwards, " 'Provoking Her Own Demise': From Common Assault to Homicide," in *Women, Violence and Social Control*, ed. Jalna Hanmer and Mary Maynard (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 161, 165. For an examination of men killing women and being treated differently than when women killed males, and for an understanding of the provocation defense, see Sue Lee, "Naggers, Whores, and Libbers: Provoking Men To Kill," in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman-Killing*, 267-288.

[24] For a discussion of how the media of the late twentieth century romanticizes males who kill females, see Sandra McNeill, "Woman Killer as Tragic Hero," in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman-Killing*, 178-183.

[25] Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 102; Russell, "Femicidal Lynching in the United States," 53-54; Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 238. This kind of violence also surfaces in southern music. In 1898, racial strife was rife in North Carolina, especially in Wilmington, because African Americans had returned to politics. As a consequence, lynching tunes emerged. See Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From*

North Carolina, 684-688; Chris Domingo, "What the White Man Won't Tell Us: Report from the Berkeley Clearinghouse on Femicide," in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman-Killing*, 200-201; Russell, "Femicidal Lynching in the United States," 53-54.

[26] Vance Randolph, "Ribaldry at Ozark Dances," *Mid-South Folklore* 17 (Spring 1989): 11; Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*, 92. The mob also added insult to injury by making an empty whiskey bottle with a half-smoked cigar stuck in its neck Turner's headstone. Russell, "Femicidal Lynching in the United States," 55; Walter F. Lackey, *History of Newton County, Arkansas* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1950), 296. In such an environment African-American musicians also had to worry. No southern city offered a safe haven for them or their audiences. One scholar compared the first post-Civil War generation of African-American instrumentalists to "quails flushed from a thicket." In an age of lynchings, African-American performers, both male and female, literally risked their necks when they traveled into unknown territory, rural or urban. Not only did they have to worry about being lynched, but homicides were common in the juke joints, both black and white, in which they performed. In fact, the home of the blues, Memphis, was known for its deadly nightclub scene. Murder was so routine at the city's Monarch Cafe, locals labeled it "The Castle of Missing Men." At Memphis taverns, dead bodies were simply dumped outside so undertakers could collect them on their nightly runs. See Ronald L. Morris, *Wait Until Dark: Jazz and the Underworld 1880-1940* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980), 68, 71-73, 149.

[27] Newman I. White, *American Negro Folk-Songs* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928), 329; Chapman J. Milling, "Delia Holmes—A Neglected Negro Ballad," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 1 (December 1937): 3-8; Cox, *Folk-Songs of the South*, 441.

[28] Reed, *One South*, 142; Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, "Till Death Us Do Part," in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman-Killing*, 84.

[29] Edwards, " 'Provoking Her Own Demise'," 152-168; D. K. Wilgus, "Local Ballads: 'Arch and Gordon'," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 6 (1960): 51-56.

[30] Cratis D. Williams, "Local Ballads: 'Jesse Adams'," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 8 (1962): 19-20.

[31] Davis, *Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, 291; George W. Boswell, "A Song To Sing—'The Demon Lover'," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 18 (1972): 41-43.

[32] Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, *The Negro And His Songs: A Study of Typical Negro Songs In The South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1925), 186, 188, 161; Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1925; Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, Inc., 1963), 87-91.

[33] Don Carlos Amburgey, "Folk Songs," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 9 (1963): 13-14.

[34] Williams, "Local Ballads: 'Jesse Adams'," 19-20.

[35] Montell, *Killings*, 29; Davis, *Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, 155; Randolph, *Ozark Folksongs*, vol. 1, 380-382, 417-418; Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From North Carolina*, 229-231, 266-269.

[36] W. K. McNeil, *Southern Folk Ballads*, vol. 1 (Little Rock, Ark.: August House Publishers, 1987), 70-76. Accourding to McNeil, many of these tunes were not only well-liked in the region, but were also found predominately in the South. In "The Drowsy Sleeper," a father refused to allow his daughter to marry a man, so the couple killed themselves. In "Rainbow Willow," a man had to kill his fiancée's uncle (who had locked her in a cell) before he could marry her. Similarly, in "I Dreamt Last Night of My True Love," an uncle also locked his niece away in a cell to stop her from marrying a man he did not like. In this case the couple married but the uncle was never punished for his cruelty. For a definition of the term "sexually proprietary," see Wilson and Daly, "Till Death Us Do Part," 85.

[37] Stark, "Rethinking Homicide," 19-20.

[38] Gory descriptions of death were found in all the songs mentioned by Bush, including "Pretty Polly," "The Wexford Girl," "Willy Guseman," "Rose Conoley," "Flo Ellen," "Pearl Bryan," "Omie Wise," "Banks of the Ohio," "Joe and Mary," and "Hindside Afore." In the "Wexford Girl," for example, the murderer stated that "I heeded not this fair maid's cries, I beat her o'er and o'er. I beat her till her body lie ableeding in a gore." Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," 9; Cox, *Traditional Ballads and Folk-Songs Mainly from West Virginia*, 76; Boswell, "There Was a Rich Old Farmer," 75-76; Frances D. Perdue, "Folksong Repertoire of Beulah C. Moody," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 22 (1976): 16-18.

[39] Montell, *Killings*, 35; Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," 18; Bush, Reed, Cash, Montell, Ayers and several other scholars of the South, have detailed acts that indicate a love of gore. Reed, for example, pointed out that southerners participate in more blood sports than other Americans. Southern urbanites, for instance, hunt more than non-southern rural people. Moreover, the resurrection of modern dog-fighting is centered in the South, as is bear baiting and cock fights. See Reed, *One South*, 155. In the past, lynching was also a sport. In 1893 E. L. Godkin of *The Nation* wrote that southern lynching parties were composed of men who go "nigger-hunting" just as they go to a "cockfight . . . for the gratification of the lowest and most degraded instincts of humanity. . . . They do not care a straw about seeing justice." In fact, after someone was lynched it was a common southern practice to riddle the body with bullets. See Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 249; Thomas, *Ballad Makin'*, 138; Cox, *Folk-Songs of the South*, 189; Jacquelyn C. Campbell, "If I Can't Have You, No One Can," in *Femicide: The Politics of Woman-Killing*, 103; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Books, 1970), 44-45.

[40] The abuse of women in lyrics such as these is reinforced by court cases of the times. Robert Mason maintains that "The Wife Wrapped In Wether's Skin" is derived from Hazlitt's "The Wife Lapped in Morrel's Skin" about how a domineering wife is taken to a cellar by her husband, where he places an old horse hide on her back and beats her with sticks until she faints. When the woman recovers she is "perfectly reformed." For an interesting version of this song and the ballad, "The Farmer's Curst Wife," mixed together, see Mason, "Ten Old English Ballads In Middle Tennessee," 134-136; Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From North Carolina*, 478-479. For other versions see Cox, *Traditional Ballads and Folk-Songs Mainly from West Virginia*, 57-60.

[41] Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From North Carolina*, 452-456; Campbell, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, 165-166; Randolph, *Ozark*

Folksongs, vol. 1, 385-386; Arthur Lief, arr., "The Wee Cooper of Fife," in *Ballads and Folk Songs of America From the Repertoire of the Margaret Dodd Singers Series*, no. 5 (New York: Music Press, Inc., 1947) 1; White, *American Negro Folk-Songs*, 329.

[42] George B. Boswell, "Songs to Sing—'The Mother-In-Law Song'," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 15 (1969): 22-23.

[43] Stark, "Rethinking Homicide," 22.

[44] Amburgey, "Folk Songs," 11; Cox, *Folk-Songs of the South*, 217.

[45] Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," 17-18; Ann Scott Wilson maintains that Pearl Bryan was killed, not because of an abortion attempt gone wrong, but because the murderer wanted to conceal the fact that he had gotten her pregnant. This version does not negate my interpretation, since in this version the murder victim simply broke a different cultural taboo. Ann Scott Wilson, "Pearl Bryan," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 3 (March 1939): 16. Bush did not discuss *all* such tunes popular in the South; rather he examined a particular geographic region of the mountain South. "Jellon Grame' " was only found in Virginia. Davis and Worthington, "Another New Traditional Ballad From Virginia: 'Jellon Grame'," 163-172; Leonard Roberts, "Beauchamp and Sharp: A Kentucky Tragedy," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 14 (1968): 14-19.

[46] Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," 18. It is interesting to note that younger, not older, women were generally the murder victims in all types of folktunes. Like today, in the nineteenth century young women were at a greater risk of being murdered. For an understanding of why younger women face greater risks, see Wilson and Daly, "Till Death Us Do Part," 94.

[47] Teresa Gray, Iowa Family Violence Center and Health Coordinator, telephone interview with author, October 7, 1993. Margaret Kukreja, Outreach Director, House of Ruth, an organization that assists families victimized by domestic violence, Claremont, Calif., telephone interview with author, October 8, 1993; Judith Walzer Leavitt, "Under the Shadow of Maternity," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* 3rd ed., 203-204; Margaret Jones Bolsterli, ed., *Vinegar Pie And Chicken Bread: A Woman's Diary of Life in the Rural South, 1890-1891* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1982), 12, 34-35.

[48] Informational pamphlets, House of Ruth.

[49] Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From North Carolina*, 699; Stark, "Rethinking Homicide," 17.

[50] Bush, "Murder Ballads in Appalachia," 6; Davis and Worthington, "Another New Traditional Ballad From Virginia: 'Jellon Grame'," 171; Faye Scott Anderson, "Another Version Of 'Pearl Bryan'/'The Jealous Lover'," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 21 (1975): 119-120. I have found this particular ballad in several different southern collections. For another version of this popular song consult Perdue, "Folksong Repertoire of Beulah C. Moody," 16-18; Williams, "Local Ballads: 'Jesse Adams'," 19-20.

[51] Roberts, "Beauchamp and Sharp," 14, 17-18.

[52] Charles William Janson, "The Stranger in America: Containing Observations Made During a Long Residence in that Country, on the Genius, Manners and Customs of the People of the United States; With Biographical Particulars of Public

Characters; Hints and Facts Relative to the Arts, Science, Commerce, Agriculture, Manufacturing, Emigration, and the Slave Trade," in *Travels in the Old South*, vol. 2, *The Expanding South, 1750-1825: The Ohio Valley and the Cotton Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 115; Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 9; Janson, "The Stranger in America," 115.

[53] Walker, "Gender and Victimization by Intimates," 179-193; Wini Breines and Linda Gordon, "The New Scholarship on Family Violence," *Signs* 8 (Spring 1983): 519.

[54] Odum and Johnson, *The Negro And His Songs*, 160-161, 180, 283; White, *American Negro Folk-Songs*, 316.

[55] Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From North Carolina*, 465. In a Johnson County, Kentucky version the man's hair turns gray at the ugly sight of the woman. George W. Boswell, "Songs To Sing—'Burglar Man'," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 14 (1968): 92-93.

[56] "Collecting Ballads and Folk Songs in Tennessee: A Paper Presented at the Second Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Folklore Society, November 9, 1935," *Tennessee Folklore Society* 2 (March 1936): 11; White, *American Negro Folk-Songs*, 313, 335; Odum and Johnson, *The Negro And His Songs*, 191.

[57] Belden and Hudson, *Folk Ballads From North Carolina*, 473. Likewise, see "If I Had A Scolding Wife," where the man said he would trade her for corn. Belden and Hudson, 478, 484-485.

[58] *Ibid.*, 478-479; Marie Campbell, "Adam," *Kentucky Folklore Record* 3 (April-June 1962): 136; Odum and Johnson, *The Negro And His Songs*, 283.