

A Short Note on Ballad

Generally speaking, a ballad is an oral form of poetry that narrates a story and this narrative oral song is transmitted from one generation to the other. Since it is transmitted orally from one person to another, the original song is apt to change in both text and tune. The narrator begins with a climactic episode and narrates the whole story without expressing his personal thoughts and feelings. An example given below shows that a ballad also has an abrupt beginning:

The king sits in Dumpherling town
Drinking the blude-red wine;
"O whar will I get a quid sailor,
To sail this schip of mine?"

This kind of ballad described above is known as popular ballad, folk ballad or traditional ballad. There is another kind of ballad called the literary ballad.

A literary ballad is composed by a learned poet. The poet imitates the form and spirit of a popular ballad, but his subject-matter is artistic and has literary value. The history of literary ballad goes back to the middle ages. The ballad poets draw his subjects-matters from local and national history, legend and folklore. The theme of literary ballads ranges from adventure, love and war to death and supernatural. Some excellent ballads were composed in the Romantic period, for example: Rime of the Ancient Mariner, La Belle Dame Sans Merci, Proud Naise, etc.