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The bonny boy in the English and Scottish ballads

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THE "PONY BOY" IN THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH BALLADS

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College of the State University of Iowa in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

by
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INTRODUCTION

To the reader of the medieval English and Scottish ballads, there is perhaps no more familiar figure than the messenger, and no more well-known lines than,

"O whare will I get a bonny boy,
That will win hose and shoon."

It will be remembered, moreover, that there is no background created for this figure, and it is interesting to observe that seemingly he is the only prominent character employed in the ballads who has no setting, -- a fact due in all probability to the loss of such a person out of every day life and experience. The principal characters in this form of medieval literature are lords, ladies, and knights, -- people of wealth and rank. Frequently, however, the "proud porter" is introduced, and occasionally a "kitchie boy" is employed. The status and duties of such servants are not unknown to us, and it is not difficult to sketch a background for them. The bonny boy, on the contrary, is not so easily placed, and the questions arise: Who was this bonny boy? What character was attributed to him? What position did he occupy in life?
What relation did he bear to the other ballad-characters? What is the nature of his duties and what kind of messages did he deliver? Is such a figure employed in other forms of medieval literature?

It is the purpose of this monograph, therefore, to examine and analyze this character as he appears in the ballads; to discover, if possible, what place he occupied in the medieval household; and to compare the treatment given this figure in the ballads with that found in the epic, the romance, the drama, and in history; in short, to discover the relationship of the ballad material dealing with this figure to that in other literary forms and to life.
PART I

The Bonny Boy in the Ballads

Before entering upon the main theme of observation, there are distinctions and minor observations that should be mentioned to add interest and clarity to the discourse. Generally speaking, there are two types of messengers to be treated in the ballads, (1) human, both the royal messenger and he who bears missives for those of lesser rank, and (2) substitutes for human messengers,—birds, spirits, etc. In speaking of the royal message-bearer, it may be observed that at times the king employed one of his nobles in this capacity, as in the case presented in "Sir Patrick Spens",

"The king he wrote a braid letter,
And seald it wi his ring;
Says, Ye'll gie that to Patrick Spens,
See if ye can him find.

He sent this not wi an auld man,
Nor yet a simple boy,
But the best o nobles in his train
This letter did convoy."

Why the king does not send one of his hired messengers

1 No. 58, I. The numbering of the ballads follows that given by Francis J. Child in his work entitled The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, in five volumes.
upon this mission, we are not told. The importance of finding the recipient, however, and the nature of the letter, doubtless affected his choice, for the epistle was a command to Sir Patrick Spens to sail over dangerous seas to "Noroway" for the purpose of conducting the daughter of the king of that country to England.

A similar example of the employment of a noble to carry a letter occurs in "Lord Derwentwater":

'The king has written a broad letter,
And sealed it with his hand,
And sent it on to Lord Arnwaters,
To read and understand.

Now he has sent it by no boy,
No boy, nor yet a slave,
But one of England's fairest knights,
The one that he would have.'

The fact that the attention is called to the employment of a knight instead of a boy or slave shows the great importance of the message. Such an act might be attributed to caution, for we are told in "King Estmere",

"'Many a man throughe fals messengers is deceived,
And I feare lest soe shold wee.'"

2 No. 206, F.
3 No. 60.
In both of these examples, it will be noticed that the message is written and sealed by the king, and that the duty of the bearer consisted merely in delivering the letter to its destination. Sometimes, however, the message-bearer delivers his news by word of mouth, as does Hugh Spencer while acting as ambassador from the King of England to the King of France. Accompanied by an hundred men, he proposes peace to France's ruler, and upon the latter's refusal to accept his proffer Spencer advances against him, winning a victory for England. At another time the king of England sends "a lovely page" to "collect tribute", long overdue, from the king of France. In this instance, as before, the message is delivered orally, and as in the case of oral messages in the ballads, is given verbatim. 4

In the ballad "Willie O Winsbury", 5 the king's men are called upon to summon and conduct an erring subject to the royal presence, and while the king addresses them as "my merrie men all", there is some cause to believe that those sent upon this mission are royal messengers, for in "Hind Etin" a parallel example is shown, and when the culprit is

4 No. 158, A.
5 No. 100, A.
found, the king's men say,

"'Win up, win up now, Young Akin,
Win up, and boun wi me;
We're messengers come from the court,
The king wants you to see.'"

From the foregoing examples, it will be noticed that a royal messenger might be called upon to supplement the bearing of letters or oral tidings with other duties, such as summoning refractory subjects to court, upholding his country's and king's honor, or collecting tribute from unwilling persons, and the natural question which arises is, "What remuneration does he receive for his efforts?" In "Willie O Winsbury", they are said to receive "meat and fee", and in "Hugh Spencer's Feats in France", the king promises Spencer that he shall "neither want for gold nor fee". Moreover, persons running on errands for the king, carrying the king's seal are privileged characters, and doubtless receive many favors from their royal masters. A good illustration of the advantages enjoyed by the servants of the king is found in "Adam Bell, Clim Of The Clough, And William Of Cloudesly". While William of Cloudesly is being held in Carlisle, and is in danger of losing his

6 No. 41, A.
7 No. 116.
life, his companion, Clymme of the Clough, conceives the idea of pretending that he and Adam Bell are messengers of the king, carrying a letter to the justice, and thereby to gain admittance into Carlisle that they may rescue William. The ruse is successful, because the porter "is no clerk", and fears to deny admittance to those who, as he believes, bear the royal seal.

While the royal messenger is an interesting and familiar figure in the ballads, he is by no means so frequently used, nor so representative in character of this type of literature, as is the servitor of lesser nobility. It is the lords and earls who make up the personnel of these medieval productions; and it is their messengers, with whom this monograph is chiefly concerned. From the epithets applied to these boys by the people whom they served, the inference may be drawn that they are young, and not at all unattractive in appearance. They are frequently described as pretty boys with golden hair. Barbara Livingston's messenger (as shown in the supposedly late version of "Bonny Baby Livingston") is said to wear a philabeg (kilts) and blue bonnet. His manner is pleasing and deferential. He kneels when coming into the presence of the person to whom he is sent.

8 No. 222, A. The costume as shown is that worn in the Highlands of Scotland.
before delivering his message. There are a few examples of the bonny boy's being instructed as to his deportment. For example, in "The Rantin' Laddie", his mistress says,

"'Ye'll tak aff your hat an ye'll mak a low bow,
Gie the letter to my rantin laddie."  
In another instance the boy is commanded,

"'Ye wash, ye wash, ye bonny boy,
Ye wash and come to dine;
It does not fit a bonny boy
His errand for to tine.'"  
Besides "bonny boy", such terms as "little wee boy", "pretty little boy", "little timny page", "wi bit boy", and "little foot-page" are frequently used in speaking of the messenger. In "Tom Potts", the young lady says to the boy who brings her a message from her lover,

"'O boney boy, thou art not of age,
Therefore thou canst both mock and scorn;"

From the frequent use of the term, "little foot-page", it seems to be a safe assumption that these boys

9 No. 240, D.
10 No. 91, B.
11 No. 109, C.
were body-servants or pages, among whose various duties was that of carrying messages and running errands.

When Child Maurice sends his foot-page to summon his lady, he addresses him as "'thou little foot-page, that runneth lowly by my knee'". Thornbury, in his book "Shakespeare's England", says: "The pages were little pucks, smart Robin Goodfellows, that served a thousand purposes. They would present a cartel upon a rapier's point, carry a perfumed letter in a glove, or slip a keepsake jewel into a favoured mistress's hands, bear your cloak before you to the play, hold your horse, wait upon you at the tavern, fill your pipe when you lay upon the rushes of the stage, and light you from the tavern; . . . . he was the butt and playfellow of the blue-coated serving-man, and the pet of the ladies in waiting; . . . . he was generally a scapegrace and crackrope, addicted to petty thefts, pert, malicious and quarrelsome, affecting all the swagger of a man, etc."  

While we may not identify the bonny boy of the ballads as an exact parallel to the page in real life as shown by Thornbury, it is likely that the figures are very similar. That the bonny boy was not always scrupulously truthful may be assumed from the ballad of "Tom Potts", before quoted.

12 No. 83, A.
Upon delivery of a message, the lady says to her messenger,

"'I will not believe what my love hath said,

Unless thou on this book be sworn.'"

In the majority of cases, however, stress is laid upon the trustworthiness and loyalty of the boy. In fact, in this same ballad, "Tom Potts", while the lady seems to disbelieve her messenger, she says to him,

"'Come thou hither thou little foot-page,

For indeed I dare trust none but thee.'"

There is frequent mention made of the confidence existing between master or mistress and page. The messages which they carry are almost invariably love-messages of a most personal nature. In "Jamie Douglas", an abandoned wife sends her page to deliver a reconciliatory message to her husband. Furthermore, these boys were often intrusted with tokens to carry, (sometimes for the Purpose of identification), always of more or less value. The messenger in "Child Maurice" is given a pair of gloves, a gold ring, and a mantle to carry to Child Maurice's lady; the boy in "Fair Mary of Wallington" is asked to deliver rings, garlands, brooches, and a wedding-gown; while the lady in "Christopher White"

14 No. 109, A.
15 No. 204, M.
16 No. 83, C.
17 No. 91, B.
sends her lover an hundred pounds by her page. 18 Sometimes the boy's errand is one demanding the greatest caution, as in the case of the boy sent by Lochinvar in the ballad "Katharine Jeffray", to summon an hundred and fifty lads to help him in an attempt to win his lady. It is of interest to note that this boy is called a "quiet messenger", a term probably descriptive of his secretiveness. It is noteworthy that the messenger is nearly always eager to run his master's errands. In "Child Maurice", however, the boy is afraid to deliver his master's message to the wife of Lord Barnard, even when he is told,

"'And ye may rin wi pride;
When other boys gae on their foot,
On horseback ye sall ride!" 19

he hesitates and it is not until he is threatened with death that he starts on his ill-starred errand.

We may assume that a servant living with a family on such intimate terms as do these boys, would naturally understand the joys and sorrows of his employers, and rejoice and sympathize with them. Great affection is sometimes shown, as in the example of "Lady Maisry". When the lady asks who will carry tidings to her lover, one of her pages speaks,

18 No. 108.
19 No. 83, F. In nearly all cases, the boy goes on foot to deliver his messages. Why he does not ride a horse is not told, but there is a probability that every attempt is made to keep his journey a secret from the household; for it will be remembered that his journey may be disapproved of.
'Here am I, a pretty little boy,
Who dearly loves thee
Who will carry tidings to thy joy.'

In 'Prince Robert' the bonny boy says to his dying master, who desires to send for his bride,

'Many a time have I ran thy errand,
But his day wi' the tears I'll rin.'

In this ballad, we are told that the boy who ran was "something akin" to Robert. The boy in "Thomas O Yonderdale", when asked to deliver a message at night, is very positive in his willingness to comply with his master's command as is shown by his speech,

'And I would rin your errand, master,
If't were to Lady Maisry bright,
Tho my legs were sair I couldna gang,
Tho the night were dark I couldna see,
Tho I should creep on hands and feet,
I woud gae to Lady Maisry.'

To be sure, the fee and the hope of reward (not to mention the stimulus afforded by the adventurous element concomitant to such a journey) may have been more or less instrumental in causing these displays of loyalty, for as a rule, mention is made of them. The most common stipulation is "hose and shoon", or "meat and
fee", although examples of further remuneration are numerous; among which are gold, gold and money, a golden chain and golden guineas, and ten pounds and forty shillings. In the examples given, the fee is provided by the sender, but occasionally the person to whom the letter is delivered, presents the bearer with a gift, as in "Tom Potts", where the boy is given five marks upon delivery of his message. Similarly, in "Sir Aldingar", twenty pounds is given as a reward. An unusual gift is presented by Adam Bell to the little swineherd who brings him news of the capture of his friend William, when in lieu of money, Adam gives the boy a hart that has just been slain. On the other hand, however, there is fear of punishment, if an unpleasant or an untrue message is delivered. The boy who runs to Lord Barnard to tell him of his wife's perfidy is promised,

"If this be true, thou little timny page,
This thing thou telllest to me,
Then all the land in Bucklesfordbery,
I freely will give to thee.

But if it be a ly, thou little timny page,
This thing thou telllest to me,
On the hiest tree in Bucklesfordbery
Then hanged shalt thou be." 24
In "Iang Johnny More", the King of England says of the messenger that carried news into Scotland, which was ultimately responsible for the releasing of a Scottish prisoner held in London, who had fallen love with the king's daughter,

"'Wae to the little boy,' said the king,
'Brought tidings unto thee!
Let all England say what they will,
High hanged shall he be.'"\(^{25}\)

He is finally freed, however, and returns to his native land with the king's daughter, the prisoner, and his benefactor.

In some instances no fee is mentioned. For example, in several versions of "Lady Maisry", the heroine simply asks who will run to Lord William, and promises no fee. The same is true of the messenger in one version of "Lord Thomas and Fair Annet".

The hardships to be met with while on a mission of this kind are numerous. To begin with, the journey has to be made swiftly. In one instance, we are told that,

"The boy ran o'er hill and dale,
Fast as a bird could flee."\(^{28}\)

More often than not, when the boy reaches his destination,

\(^{25}\) No. 251.
\(^{26}\) No. 65; A.
\(^{27}\) No. 73; C.
\(^{28}\) No. 222, A.
his errand is but half done, for reply has to be carried back to the original sender. This permits of no delay. In one ballad, we hear the messenger rebuked by his anxious mistress, for a supposed delay;

"Then backe againe the boy he went,
As ffaast againe as he could hye;
The ladye mett him five mile on the way:
'Why hast thou stayd soe long?' saies shee."

Frequently, the bridges are broken, at which times, the messenger must from necessity swim, and upon reaching the other side, continue his journey until he reaches his destination, "baith weet and weary". The hardships of the journey are augmented when it becomes necessary to deliver a message at night, as occurs in "Lord Thomas and Fair Annet", when Sweet Willie asks,

"'Whare will I get a bonny boy', that wad fain win hose and shoon,
That will rin to Fair Annie's bower,
Wi the lei light o the moon?"

We may see that it was not an easy task to carry medieval missives. Nor was it always so easy to find a message bearer. Examples are given of the employment for such services of a maid, a herdsman, and a skipper.  

29 No. 109, A.  
30 No. 209, F.  
31 No. 73, C.  
32 No. 246, B.  
33 No. 194.  
34 No. 302.
Frequently some relative performs the duty of messenger for one in need, -- examples are given of a father, a brother, a sister, a daughter, and an aunt. Occasionally a lorn lover employs a bird to carry his message. These birds, which vary from starlings to parrots, have all the attributes of a human being except the form. They speak plainly and are human in their mentalities. The advice they give is always sound, and they are possessed of the gift of prophecy. It looks as if they might be persons who are under some spell of enchantment, but if so the sad story of the enchanted one is in no way stressed. Such birds are made use of in the ballads, "The Gay Goshawk", "Young Hunting", "Johnny Cock", and "Lord William" or "Lord Lundy".

A still more interesting variation of the messenger is found in one version of "The Braes of Yarrow", when the lady addresses the wind with,

"O gentle wind, that blaweth south
To where my love repaireth,
Convey a kiss from his dear mouth,
And tell me how he fareth!"

Of course, this is a figurative example, but the same tone is used when a corporeal messenger is sent upon an errand. In several cases, a spirit brings a message to some loved

one. Examples may be found in "James Harris" (sometimes called "The Daemon Lover") and in "Lord Lovel". In the last mentioned ballad, the spirit or ghost is recognized as death who has come to summon a human being to his cheerless abode. Often, no messenger is spoken of by the balladist, but we are told that "word has come", "he sent a letter", "word has gone", someone "has gotten word of this", "he had word". By far the most often recurring of these expressions is "word has gone", or "word has come". There is no way of knowing why some ballads show the messenger from the time he offers to carry the message until the answer is delivered, while others replace all this action with two or three words. The recital of the account of the journey, however, gives a dramatic effect and serves to excite the emotions of the singer, for a certain amount of suspense is obtained while the bonny boy runs his errand. In the ballads where this figure is eliminated the narrative is hurried.

As a summary, it may be said that the messenger who serves in the greatest number of ballads is a little page who is on a very intimate footing in the household, and who holds a more or less confidential position. He probably receives maintenance and a fee for running errands, in addition to which, a reward is not unusual. His journeys were often fraught with dangers and hardships and
the threat of punishment was not unknown to him. His message is sometimes written and sometimes oral. In case of the latter event, the page repeats the instructions of the sender word for word, merely changing the person from first to third. When it occurs that an oral message is given, repeated and delivered, it serves as a refrain for the ballads, besides emphasizing, greatly, the need of the sender.
APPENDIX A

From the lines,

"And when he came to broken briggs
He bent his bow and swam",

one is led to conjecture that the bonny boy carried a bow while upon his mission. A bow, however, would seem to be an incumbrance upon such a journey. Moreover, stopping to bend the bow would require time and energy both of which had to be conserved by the messenger. Upon examination, however, the word "bow" may be found in the New English Dictionary to have meant "shoulder or upper arm" during the old and middle English periods. The Old English form is bog or boh, with the Old Norse cognate form bog-r. In line 188 of an anonymous poem, "Morte Arthure" (probably a production of the fourteenth century) published in volume eight of the original series of the Early English Text Society publications, there is found listed among the delicacies served at the the round table, "bowes of wilde bores", and in the glossary, "bowes" are defined as shoulders. (It is my understanding that a related word, "baug", is used in the same sense by the Norwegians of today.) The Anglo-Saxon form of the word is found in the first of the "Riddles of the Exeter Book", in the line,

"Đonne mec se beadcafa bogum bilegde",

which translated, stands, "then the warlike one covered me with his arms".

In a version of the ballad, "Lord Barnard and Little Musgrave", found in Nova Scotia under the name of "Little Matha Grove", the line in question is replaced by the statement,

"And he bended his breast and he swum".47

Although this line does not convey a meaning identical with the one suggested, it is possible that a rationalization of the usual form may have taken place. While in modern English, "bow" is not used to mean "arm or shoulder" in speaking of a man or beast, the word is customarily applied to the shoulder of a boat or ship.

APPENDIX B

With regard to the repetition of oral tidings, it will be interesting to compare the delivery of ballad-messages with the delivery of messages in the epic. As has just been noted, the messenger of the ballads quotes exactly, except for changing the person of the pronoun. The messenger of the epic, however, delivers his tidings with variations in the diction. There is one very interesting example of this kind of delivery found in Beowulf. After the warden, Wulfgar, announces the arrival of Beowulf and his companions to King Hrothgar, the king makes a long reply to be delivered to the stranger. Wulfgar, however, condenses the speech greatly, and puts the message into his own words.

Examples of this kind are common in the Greek epic. In Book IX of "The Iliad", Agamennon sends two envoys — one of whom is Odysseus, his close friend — to Achilles, for the purpose of effecting a reconciliation. The substance of the message as delivered is the same as dictated by Agamemnon, but the wording is greatly varied. This is true, also, of the request for help in battle, sent from Menestheus to Ajax, by the herald, Thoetes.

In the Odyssey, an illustrative example is found in the instructions which Zeus sends by Hermes to the nymph, Calypso, commanding that the ocean-way be cleared for

48 Beowulf (Translated by J. M. Garnett), pp.12, 13.
Ulysses. The delivery of the message varies pleasingly from the original utterance. 51 In a similar manner, messages in the Bible are repeated with variation. This fact is discernable in the tidings sent from Jacob to inform Esau that the sender is remaining with Laban. In addition to this literal usage, the Bible makes frequent figurative use of the messenger. Christ is often spoken of as God's messenger, who is to come (Malachi 3, 1), or who has come (Matthew 11, 10; Mark 1, 2) to prepare the way for the Father. Another illustrative figurative use of the messenger is found in Proverbs 25, 13 which says, "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his master." This verse makes the comparison of Christ to a messenger very pleasing and effective.

The discussion of message-bearing as found in the Bible would be incomplete without observing the fact that the word "angel" (derived from the Greek "αγγέλος") originally meant messenger. Indeed, most of the angels employed in the Scriptures are serving God in the capacity of message-carriers. We are reminded, at once, of the angel with the flaming sword; the angel who announced to Mary the future birth of Christ; and the holy throng who

51 The Odyssey (translated by George Chapman), Vol.1, pp.111,114.
52 Genesis 32, 3-7.
sang, "Peace on earth". To carry the point still further, it may be observed that the word "evangel" and "evangelist" are neither more nor less than "good-tidings" and "bearer of good-tidings". It will be seen at once that the Bible is full of messages and messengers.
PART II

The Messenger in the Medieval Romance

The preceding discussion indicates that the messenger of the ballads is a page -- one, moreover, enjoying a certain intimacy with the household and a position of confidence with his master. His dangers, hardships, punishments and rewards give him vitality and interest; and designate to him a part of major importance in the story. Further investigation leads one to seek, quite naturally, for results in the medieval romances, because of their similarity to the ballads in both character and theme. To what extent does the figure appear in the romances? Is it treated as in the ballads? Is he of similar identity? What is his purpose? his status? his relation to the plot? Is he a character of vitality, interesting in himself or a mere convenience of the author to disclose events incident to the narrative?

It is not necessary to advance far in an investigation of the romance, before the answer to the last of these questions becomes increasingly clear. The messenger appears, without doubt, as a mere device -- a means of conveying news from one person to another. He usually takes
no active part in the narrative, and, as a character, is undeveloped and unemphasized.

Sometimes, indeed, the figure is completely ignored, as in Geoffrey's "Histories of the Kings of Britain", where frequently occur such statements as "tidings came", "word was brought", "messages were sent", followed by the substance of the tidings told in indirect discourse. This method is very similar to that employed in acquainting the reader with the ballad-message when no messenger is used. In one case, however, Lucius of Rome sends twelve elders to bear a letter to the King of England. The messengers are described by Geoffrey, and the letter is given in full. Wace, however, presents the same material, and inasmuch as such description is more characteristic of Wace than of Geoffrey the account of the later writer will be used in this monograph.

In Wace's "Arthurian Chronicles", frequent use is made of Geoffrey's device of mentioning the sending of messages and of giving a brief resume of the message. For example, in speaking of Constantine's approach to London, he says that the king sent messages in every part, bidding the Britons to his aid. When tidings come that a strange people (Hengist and Horsa and their hosts) have arrived in Britain, Wace says of Vortigern, "the king sent
messages of peace and goodwill to the strangers, praying that be they whom they might, they would come quickly and speak with him in his palace, and return swiftly to their own place." In some instances, the action is telescoped still further, as in the following statement, wherein the messenger and the result of his errand are mentioned in the same sentence. "At the king's word Hengist sent messages to his son and nephew, who hastened to his help with a fleet of three hundred galleys." In the account of the search for Merlin, we are given an insight into the method of procedure and the power of the royal messenger. "There-at the king sent messengers throughout all the land to seek such a man, and commanded that immediately he were found he should be carried to the court. These messengers went two by two upon their errand. They passed to and fro about the realm, and entered into divers countries, inquiring of all people," at the king's bidding," where he might be hid." Two of the messengers rode into Caemerdin, where a group of boys and girls were assembled, playing. The messengers stopped to watch them and by so doing, found the boy for whom they were searching. "When the messengers heard these tidings they went swiftly to the warden of the city, ad­juring him, by the king's will," to lay hands upon Merlin

53 Wace's Arthurian Legends (translated by Eugene Mason), p. 6.
54 Ibid, p. 11.
55 Ibid, p. 16.
... and carry him straightway to the king". 56

In none of the foregoing instances is anything told of the appearance or social standing of the messenger, -- he is merely a bearer of tidings, unimportant in himself. In the following quotation, however, a glimpse is given of the splendor of these servitors who carry royal missives. "The messengers of the king apparelled themselves richly for their master's honour. They mounted on their fairest destriers, vested in hauberks of steel, with lacedhelmets, and shields hung round their necks. They took their weapons in their hands, and rode forth from the camp." 57 A more detailed and impressive description is to be found in the before-mentioned account of the message sent by Lucius, Emperor of Rome, to the king of Britain. While these special envoys of the Roman Emperor are in no wise typically representative of the messenger of either the medieval romance or of the ballad, their manner and the treatment which is tendered them are characteristic of those commonly associated with foreign plenipotentiaries.

"Now as King Arthur was seated on a dais with these princes and earls before him, there entered in his hall twelve ancient men, white and grey-headed full richly arrayed in seemly raiment. These came within the palace two by two. With the one hand each clapped his companion, and in the other carried a fair branch of olive. The twelve elders passed at a slow pace down the hall, bearing themselves right worshipfully. They drew near to

56 Wace's Arthurian Legend (translated by Eugene Mason), p.17.
57 Ibid, p. 87.
Arthur's throne, and saluted the king very courteously. They were citizens of Rome said the spokesmen of these aged men, and were ambassadors from the Emperor, bringing with them letters to the king. Having spoken such words, one amongst them made ready his parchment, and delivered it into Arthur's hands. "58 The contents of the letter is given in full, after reading which, "Arthur and his baronage being of one mind together, the king wrote certain letters to Rome, and sealed them with his ring. These messages he committed to the embassy, honouring right worshipfully those reverend men."59 It will be of interest to observe the manner in which Layamon portrays the same event. "There came into the hall marvelous tales! — there came twelve thanes bold; clad with pall; noble warriors, noble men with weapon; each had on hand a great ring of gold, and with a band of gold each had his head encircled. Ever two and two walked together; each with his hand held his companion; and glided over the floor, before Arthur, so long that they came before Arthur, the sovereign. They greeted Arthur anon with their noble words: 'Hail be thou, Arthur King, darling of the Britains; and hail be thy people, and all thy lordly folk! We are twelve knights come here forthright, rich and noble, we are from Rome. Hither we are come from our Emperor, who is named Lucus who ruleth Rome-people. He commanded us to proceed hither, to Arthur the King, and bade thee to be greeted with his grim words."60 Hereupon follows a bitter challenge, in substance the same as the letter brought by the elders in Wace's account. There is no doubt that Layamon's portrayal is more pretentious than that given by Wace, but it has lost the dignified impressiveness of the former version. The change from elders to knights might have been made by Layamon, in order to show the loyalty and bravery of Arthur's knights, or even to emphasize the great magnanimity of

59 Ibid, p. 77.
60 Layamon's Brut (translated by Eugene Mason), p. 228.
Arthur himself; for while respect and consideration are
to be expected in the reception of old men, even when
bearing unpleasant tidings, it is hardly conceivable that
such spirited men as the knights of the round-table
should receive placidly, such an affront at the hands of
these militant messengers. In fact, Layamon says that
an uproar resulted, but that Arthur protected the Romans,
saying, "'Leave ye, leave quickly these knights alive!
They shall not in my court suffer any harm; they are
hither ridden out of Rome as their lord commanded them,
who is named Luces.'" 61 Then follows Arthur's state-
ment which seems to embody the medieval code in regard
to the duty of him carrying messages and him receiving
them. "'Each man must go where his lord biddeth him go;
no man ought to sentence a messenger to death, unless
he were so evilly behaved, that he were traitor of his lord
... I will me counsel of such need, what word they
shall bear to Luces, the emperor.'" 62 Furthermore,
Arthur's generosity and clemency are emphasized in the
account of the return of the embassy to Rome. "These
twelve went their way toward their land; were in no land
knights so bedecked with silver and with gold, nor
through all things so well arrayed as these were by Arthur
the king. Thus Arthur them treated, for all their words!"

61 Layamon's Brut (translated by Eugene Mason), p. 224.
It seemed not unusual to find churchmen carrying messages or assisting others to deliver them. At the time of the death of Uther, Layamon says, "The Britains full soon took three bishops, and seven riders, strong in wisdom; forth they gan procedure into Britanny, and they full soon came to Arthur -- 'Hail be thou, Arthur, noblest of knights! Uther thee greeted, when he should depart, and bade that thou shouldest thyself in Britain hold right laws'". 64 In this manner they greeted Arthur as their new king.

In the examples given thus far, even where the message is given in full or where the bearer is described, in no instance are we given an intimate view of the messenger. Nothing is said of the journey and its hardships, no mention is made of a friendly feeling existing between master and servitor, -- message-bearing is a perfunctory duty, coldly executed. A degree of sympathy, however, is evidenced in the case of a girl’s acting as messenger,

"A damyselle they dede be gare,
And hastely gon her lettres make,
A mayde sholde on the message fare,
A trews by-twene them for to take.
The mayde was fulle shene to shewe,
Uppon her stede when she was sette,

64 Layamon's Brut (translated by Eugene Mason), p. 183."
Hyr paraylle alle of one hewe,
Off a grene weluette;
In hyr hand a braunche newe;
For why, that no man sholde her lette;
Ther-by men messangerys knewe
In ostes whan that men them mette."

This is a very interesting account of a messenger's carrying some kind of emblem in order to show his rank, and while I find no further mention of this same custom and am unable to say that it is historically correct, nevertheless, the statement shows that the messenger had certain privileges, not the least of which was to be able to ride without delay or molestation.

In Malory's "Le Morte d'Arthur", a further example is given of a maiden's being employed to deliver a message. This is the first example quoted from the romances in which the message is one of love. Hitherto, communications have all had to do with affairs of state. As a consequence, this example is more nearly coincident with situations in the ballads, in which, as has been mentioned, love-messages are far more predominant than those dealing with public affairs. "When La Beale Isoud understood that he (Tristram) was wedded she sent to him by her maiden Bragwaine (her confidante) as piteous letters as could be

65 Le Morte Arthur, pp. 163, 164.
thought and made.  "66 After a long tiresome search, Bragwaine found Tristram who was very happy to receive the letter from Isoud. Being then on his way to joust in a tournament, he carried Bragwaine with him, after which she was to return to her mistress with news of her lover.

In the story of Lancelot and the Maid of Astalot there is a tragic account of the delivery of a letter by a maiden to her lover, for in this case, the girl has the letter placed in her hand at the time of her death, after which she is carried on a barge to Camelot that she may deliver in person her farewell greeting to her unresponsive lover. 67

Malory gives an example of a unique mission entrusted to a royal messenger. King Rience of North Wales sent a messenger to the English court, demanding that Arthur send his beard to Rience for the doughty king of North Wales had purpled a mantel with eleven beards of as many subdued kings, and inasmuch as there remained room for but one more, Arthur was requested to give his royal beard to fill the vacant place. King Arthur, however, answers that he owes Rience no homage, and that this is the "most villainous" message that he

67 Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 304, 305.
has ever received. In this instance, the substance of the message is given in indirect discourse, but Arthur's answer is spoken directly. 68

Rymenhild, in the romance "King Horn", sends messages to Horn by the steward, Athelbrus. Of course, all three are in the same household and such a circumstance prevents the situation's being identical with the situations in the ballads, where the lovers are far distant from each other. After the departure of Horn from her father's household, however, Rymenhild sends a page to search for him, to announce her approaching marriage. One day, while hunting, Horn is met by the page, who, in the course of the ensuing conversation, reveals the fact that he is searching for him. Upon discovering Horn's identity, the messenger makes known that Rymenhild is to be married on the following Sunday, to King Mody of Reymes. Horn, thereupon, entrusts a return-message to the page, stating that before "prime" on the wedding-day, he will come to Rhymenhild. The messenger, however, is drowned on his way home, and Rhymenhild, upon the discovery of his body, not knowing of his meeting with Horn, gives up in despair. 69 In "Floris and Blauncheflur", only one instance is given of the messenger, and that is at the time of the death of

69 Early English Text Society, Original Series, No. 14, pp. 13, 43, 44.
Floris's father, when it is recounted that messengers came to Floris announcing his father's death. 70

Just as in the ballads, where a casual acquaintance bearing messages and carrying some token for the purpose of identification is frequently found, so in "Guy of Warwick", when the hero is dying, he summons a passing shepherd, and giving his a ring to deliver as a token, commands that he carry word to the Countess that an old palmer is dying and wishes to see her. It is, incidentally, interesting to note that Guy tells the man that the Countess will reward him. 71 In this case, as in "Child

Note: -- In "Runnymede and Lincoln Fair", a romance written by J. G. Edgar as an attempt to portray English life in the thirteenth century, King John spares the life of Oliver, on the condition that he show appreciation of the royal clemency by zeal and activity in his majesty's service. The king thereupon proceeds to instruct the pardoned youth as to his particular duties as a messenger; "William d'Collingham is about to ride for Severnake to conduct my lady, the queen, thence to Glostrey and you will accompany him. He has a safe-conduct, and the errand is likely to entail no danger. But he does not return, and I would fain be assured that the journey has been accomplished in safety. My command is this, that you hasten back without delay, and bring thy report to me at Windsor. And hark you, youth, . . . . you, as I learn, know something of the country through which you are to pass, and have, likewise, as I hear, seen something of war in Spain and Flanders, and can guess by appearances what is going on -- as regards preparations -- in a country which war threatens with battles and sieges. Make the best use of your eyes wherever you pass or wherever you halt or wherever you lodge, and come not to me as if you had ridden blindfold through the land. Now away. Bear in mind what I have told you for your guidance, and moreover, that a silent tongue makes a wise head." While this tale is pure historical romance, it seems natural to suppose that the speech of John's shows the nature of the duties which messengers were sometimes called upon to perform. (Everyman's Library, p. 64.)
Maurice", the one to whom the duty is entrusted fears to go, saying that he will "come into trouble" delivering rings to the Earl of Warwick's wife. Moreover, he protests further that he will lose the ring, and it is only after repeated reassurance that he departs for the castle of the Countess who, upon the receipt of the token, causes the bearer to be liberally rewarded.

In one of the French medieval romances, is found a repetition that is almost ballad-like. The lady in the tale says, "'You must greet the knight a hundred times in my name, and will place my girdle in his hand, and this my golden ring.' He came before the knight, and having saluted him in his lady's name, he gave to his hand the ring and the girdle." Upon his return to the lady, the chamberlain tells her, "'I gave him greeting in your name, and granted him your gift.'" While the message is not repeated verbatim, there is a repetition of the substance which is very effective.72

There are frequent accounts of rewards given to messengers bearing pleasant tidings. In the tale just quoted from, it is told that Eliduc sends a letter to the king, which pleases him mightily. Consequently, he "bade that they should be meetly lodged and appareled, and given sufficient money." In another case, we find the messenger

given a fine horse, because he brought good tidings.

In the "Lay of Milon", a story of separated lovers, the hero desires to communicate with his lady, who is at this time the wife of another. He thereupon writes a letter, seals it with his signet, and makes it fast to the neck of a swan, hiding the message in the bird's plumage. The bird is then entrusted to a squire, who carries it to the lady. When she discovers the message, it is recounted that she causes "the fowler to be given of her bounty". It is further stated that the swan carried messages between these lovers for twenty years and was never suspected. Unlike the birds that are used in the ballads to deliver messages, this swan possesses no innate knowledge or reasoning power. It is necessary to deprive the bird of food for several days before sending it to deliver a letter, from which procedure, it is evident that the romancer had no notion of giving human qualities to this feathered creature.

From the above examples, it may be observed, in conclusion, that while the messenger is frequently mentioned in the romances, he is not conceived of as a character who takes an active part in the narrative, as commonly

73 French Mediaeval Romances (translated by Eugene Mason), pp. 117, 118.
occurs in the ballads. On the contrary, he serves simply as a convenience by which one character or set of characters is informed of the decisions and actions of associates. A certain amount of description is occasionally devoted to the royal messenger, not so much as an attempt to distinguish the messenger himself, as to reflect glory upon the master who provides the rich trappings. In a like manner the courtesy of messengers delivering tidings to the king is portrayed, not primarily to throw light upon the conduct of the servitors, but to show the homage required in approaching so great a king. The place of the messenger in the household and his relation to his master is not intimated. When Rymenhild's page is drowned, his mistress laments his death, to be sure, but it is not the loss of a trusted servant that causes her grief so much as the loss of the message from her lover, Horn. The reader, who sympathizes keenly with the bonny boy as he swims swollen streams and leaps castle walls to deliver a message for a beloved master, gives hardly a passing thought to Rymenhild's page except to realize the complication of the plot resulting in the loss of Horn's message. The reader is not responsible for this difference in his attitude towards the two characters; the cause lies in the treatment given them by their respective creators. The balladist makes the messenger of his story
a vital character, while the romanticist seems not to appreciate the dramatic possibilities of such a figure.
APPENDIX A

No discussion concerning medieval literature or life is complete without taking into consideration Chaucer's treatment of the subject, so it will be valuable at this point, to investigate the figure of the messenger as it appears in his works. Perhaps the most familiar example is found in the services rendered for Troilus by his close friend, Pandarus, which are, of course, of the most personal nature, concerning the love of Troilus for Creseyde. Only a confidential friend could be safely trusted with such a delicate task. The situation is very similar to that found in the romance of "Tristram and Isoud", where Isoud entrusted the delivery of her message to her confidante, Bragwaine. The duty is carefully performed out of love and friendship. Chaucer puts into the mouth of Troilus, a very apt remark in regard to the performance of an act of this kind, when he causes him to say,

"But he that goth, for gold or for richesse, him
On swich message, calle what thee list;
And this that thou dost, call it gentilesse,
Compassioun and felawship, and trist."

While in this instance the messenger is shown as being loyal, trustworthy, and faithful, such is not always the case, and there is cause to believe that Chaucer

74 Troilus And Creseyde, Book III, lines 339-404.
must have been familiar with negligent messengers, as well as dependable ones, for in "The Tale Of The Man Of Lawe", he shows the chapmen as going to Rome, themselves, in preference to trusting their mission to messengers.75 In the same tale, the thread of the story hangs upon the substitution of false messages for true ones. The queen sends a boy to her husband to inform him of the birth of a fair son. In order to break the long journey, the messenger halts at the home of the king's mother, where, during the period of rest, the change of letters is effected. When he finally delivers the letter to the king, the false tidings gives the information that the queen has given birth to a monster. Contrary to expectations, however, the king sends a letter in return, commanding that both the queen and her monster-child be mercifully cared for. As before the boy stops at the home of the king's mother, where, again, the true message is replaced by a false one, the delivery of which results in the banishment of the queen-mother and her child. Of course, the deception is finally discovered, and the story ends happily. Another example of false messages is found in "The Hous Of Fame", where Chaucer says he saw "messangeres with their boistes crammed ful of lyes".76 In this same poem, a very human touch is added, when Fame, upon dispatching her messenger

75 The Tale Of The Man Of Lawe, Line 144.
76 The Hous of Fame, Book III, lines 2128, 2129.
to Eolus, bids him to hasten, upon pain of death. 77

In addition to the examples quoted, there are frequent figurative uses made of the messenger. The lark is called "the messager of da i"; 78 Lucifer is spoken of in the same manner, 79 and April is described as the "messager to Mai". 80

It is of interest to note that Chaucer does not repeat messages, being unwilling to retell what the reader already knows. For example, in the "Boke of the Duchesse", when Venus sends Iris to Morpheus with the command to appear in a vision to Alcyone, her message is given in detail, but when Iris reaches his destination instead of causing him to deliver his tidings in detail Chaucer says,

"And tolde him what he shulde doon
As I have told yow here tofore;
Hit is no need reherse hit more,
And went his wey when he hadde sayd". 81

From the quotations cited above it would seem that Chaucer was very familiar with messengers, and introduces them naturally into his works. He does not employ them so frequently as does the balladist, nor does he ignore them as does the romanticist. Like the other

77 The House of Fame, Book III, lines 1567-1595.
78 The Knightes Tale, line 1491.
79 Troilus And Cressyde, Book III, line 1417.
80 Introduction to the Man Of Lawe's Prologue, line 6.
81 The Boke Of The Duchesse, lines 130-190.
figures used by Chaucer, the messenger is human, sometimes faithful, sometimes faithless, — always natural.
PART III

The Messenger in the Drama

It is almost impossible to understand the messenger of the romance, to appreciate his obscurity as a character and his importance as a device through which events relative to the main narrative are disclosed, without a desire to inquire as to his place in the drama, where his information would be of inestimable value to both playwright and audience. Is a battle to be fought? a castle taken? an army embattled? -- conditions to portray which would quite baffle the pre-Shakespearean producer. What is more natural, therefore, than to seek further information of the messenger in fields widely different from the ballad and the romance; -- indeed, to seek him in the early English drama, where his services as a relator of off-stage happenings would be almost indispensable.

It takes but little examination of the works of the medieval playwrights to establish quite definitely that the messenger plays an essential role in the drama. While as a character, he adds very little to the play, he is necessary to the construction of the plot. For instance, in the case of dramatic warfare it is almost impossible to show the actual battle upon the stage. Consequently, the action is allowed to take place off-
stage, and the audience, as well as the principal members of the warring factions, is kept informed as to the progress of the respective armies by messenger. To take a concrete example, in Shakespeare's "Henry V", a scene of the French camp is shown, wherein a messenger arrives with the tidings, "The English are embattled, ye French peers".\(^{82}\)

Again in "Henry VI", a messenger comes to York, announcing,

"The queen with all the northern earls and lords
Intend here to besiege you in your castle;
She is hard by with twenty thousand men;
And therefore fortify your hold, my lord."\(^{83}\)

In this case the audience is prepared for the ensuing attack. If these scenes were allowed to take place without any previous explanation, the onlookers would lose the significance of the action, as a consequence of which, the coherence of the play would be destroyed.

At times, the messenger announces the approach of one of the important characters in the play, and in this way effectually prepares the audience for his reception. An example of such a device is found in "Henry V", when a messenger announces to the French king the arrival of ambassadors from England.

Mess. "Ambassadors from Harry king of England
Do crave admittance to your majesty."

Fr.K. "We'll give them present audience.

\(^{82}\) King Henery V, Act IV, Scene 2, line 14.
\(^{83}\) King Henry VI, Part III, Act I, Scene 2, lines 49-53.
Go, and bring them.\textsuperscript{84}

Similarly, in "Macbeth", the approach of Macbeth and the king is announced to Lady Macbeth, and the minds of the audience are prepared for the introduction of the king and his murderer.\textsuperscript{85}

A more vital function of the drama-messenger, perhaps, is the opportunity that he offers for showing the effects of certain tidings upon one or more characters in the play. For example, in the instance just quoted from "Macbeth", when the messenger interrupts Lady Macbeth's soliloquy with the announcement of the approach of her husband and their royal guest, opportunity is given to show the audience the thought awakened in Lady Macbeth's mind. Up to this time her remarks have been shrouded with a certain vague futurity, but as soon as she grasps the significance of the messenger's tidings, her speech takes on a note of certainty that foretells plans for immediate action. Again, toward the conclusion, a climax is reached when a messenger reports to Macbeth that Birnam Wood is moving. With this report, despair seizes Macbeth, and we, as well as he, realize that his destruction is not far distant.\textsuperscript{86} An especially fine illustration of this device is found in Act V of "The Life and Death of King John". In the third scene, a messenger arrives in the

\textsuperscript{84} King Henry V, Act II, Scene 4, lines 65-69. 
\textsuperscript{85} Macbeth, Act I, Scene 5, lines 33-36. 
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid, Act V, Scene 5, lines 38-40.
English camp, announcing to King John that certain supplies long expected by the French king have been wrecked three nights before on Goodwin Sands. John's reply follows,

"Ay me! this tyrant fever burns me up,
And will not let me welcome this good news." 

An almost parallel example is to be found in the fifth scene of this act, which shows the arrival of a messenger in the French camp with the news,

"And your supply, which you have wish'd so long,
Are cast away and sunk on Goodwin Sands." 

The French king answers,

"Ah, foul shrewd news! Beshrew thy very heart!
I did not think to be so sad to-night
As this hath made me." 

It is evident that these scenes are given, not primarily to inform the audience of the loss of Lewis's supplies, but to show the result of the loss upon the leaders of both factions.

The foregoing examples serve to prove the importance of the messenger in the drama. While he is not a major character, and while the audience feels no great amount of interest or sympathy for him, structurally he is a great convenience. He not infrequently takes the place of long explanations and descriptions, given by the author

87 The Life And Death Of King John, Act V, Scene 3, lines 9-15.
88 Ibid, Act V, Scene 5, lines 10-12.
89 Ibid, Act V, Scene 5, lines 14-16.
in other forms of literature. The messenger stands between the playwright and the audience, explaining action that is necessary to the plot, but which is unadvisable or impossible to portray on the stage; paving the way for some principal character and thereby proving an effective entrance; giving opportunity for the revealing of certain characteristics and emotions of principal participants, by announcing a message, to which the receiver may answer or soliloquize.

In the preceding examples, the messengers have been, in the majority of cases, royal servants or heralds and very little light has been thrown upon the character or the characteristics of the messenger himself. It will be interesting at this time to analyze this figure as it is portrayed in the pre-Shakesperean and Shakespearean dramas, and to discover if possible, his status, and to compare him to the messenger of the ballad and of the romance.

The servant who brings news to Lady Macbeth of the approach of her husband and of the king says,

"So please you, it is true; our thane is coming: One of my fellows has the speed of him, Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more Than would make up his message." 90

This speech shows the terrific energy exerted by the messenger, to reach home far enough ahead of the master so that

90 Macbeth, Act I, Scene 5, lines 37-41.
due preparations may be made for his reception. Lady Macbeth's command to "give him tending; he brings great news" is significant. It is an example of the practice of rewarding generously those who carry pleasing tidings.

The messenger who reports to Macbeth the advance of Malcolm and Macduff is told by his master,

"If thou speak'st false,
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,
Till famine cling thee: if thy speech be sooth,
I care not if thou dost for me as much."

This speech is very similar to that of Lord Musgrave to his "little timny page", quoted in part one of this discourse. These examples set forth the medieval viewpoint.

The messenger seemed to be only a part of the message, and just as today the receiver may hastily destroy an unpleasant letter, or tenderly preserve a welcome message, so did the receiver of a medieval message occasionally punish the conveyor of unwelcome or untruthful information and frequently reward a bringer of good news.

It may be of value to remember here, that the messenger represented his master, however, and that undue harshness towards such a representative was resented and often avenged by the sender. There is found in "King

91 Macbeth, Act V, Scene 5, lines 45-50.
Lear", for example, a case of this kind. When Lear sends Kent to Regan, the king's messenger is placed in the stocks. Upon Lear's arrival at his daughter's home he considers the treatment which Kent has received as a personal affront, and proceeds to say,

"They durst not do't;
They could not, would not do't; 'tis worse than murder,
To do upon respect such violent outrage." 92

The servant, Dobinet Doughtie, in "Roister Doister" presents a rather complete account of a messenger and his duty in his speech,

"Where is the house I goe to? before or behinde?
I know not where nor when nor how I shal it finde.
If I had ten men's bodies and legs and strength,
This trotting that I have must needes lame me at length.
And nowe that my maister is new set on wowyng,
I trust there shall none of us finde lacke of doyng;
Two paire of shoes a day will nowe be too litle
To serue me, I must trotte to and from so mickle.
'Go beare me thy token, carrie me this letter,'
Nowe this is the best way, nowe that way is better!
'Up before day, sirs, I charge you, an houre or twaine!

92 The Tragedie of King Lear, Act II, Scene 4, lines 27-30.
Trudge, do me thys message, and bring worde quicke againe!

If one misse but a minute, then 'His armes and woundses, I woulde not have slacked for ten thousand poundes! Nay, see, I beseeche you, if my most trustie page, Goe not nowe aboute to hinder my marriage!'"93

There are many points of interest to be found in this quotation. The mention of needing two pairs of shoes a day, while humorously done, calls to mind the frequent-reward, "hose and shoon", offered to the messenger of the ballads, and the fee for shoes frequently found listed in the notes of the exchequer, in England, paid to royal messengers in history.

Dobinet Doughtie carries a ring as a token in addition to his master's letter. This circumstance, also is paralleled in the ballads and romances. He is a foot-page and his remarks in regard to tarrying a minute and being reproved by his master, is similar to the situation in "Tom Potts", where the mistress meets her page on his return home with a reproof for his tardiness. Dobinet's inference with regard to his master's suspicion that the page was hindering his marriage, shows the delicacy of the duties of the messenger and the precariousness of his position.

There is a vast difference, however, in the messenger of "Roister Doister" and the bonny boy of the ballads. 93 Roister Doister, Act II, Scene 1, lines 1-16.
The former character is a discontented complaining servant, who is to all intents and purposes, carrying messages unwillingly, and who sees only the disagreeable side of his duty. The page of the ballads, on the other hand, never complains, but willingly complies with the demands of his employer. His hardships are not spoken of by the boy himself, but by the balladist instead. Moreover, it must be taken into account, that Dobinet Doughtie is a humorous character, a clown, while the bonny boy is inspired and actuated by great earnestness and seriousness.

However exaggerated the characters of "Roister Doister" may appear, they probably represent contemporaneous types and manners. Indeed, Adolphus W. Ward in his book, "A History of English Dramatic Literature", volume I, page 256, says, "Ralph Roister Doister is an adaptation of the Miles Gloriosus of Plautus, itself in all probability an adaptation from Menander . . . . But although both Plautus and Terence are duly mentioned in the prologue, the scene of the action is laid in London, and the characters were doubtless both intended and represented as types of contemporary manners."

In the "Second Shepherds' Play", there is an example of a pretended messenger, when Mak comes into the midst of the shepherds with the intention of stealing the sheep. He resents their suspicions of him, and says,
"What! ich be a yoman / I tell you, of the king;  
The self and the same, / send from a greatt lording,

And sith.  
ffy on you! goyth it hence  
Out of my presence!  
I must haue reverence;  
Why, who be ich?" 94

The fact that the sheepstealer, Mak attempts to assume the role of king’s messenger, here, goes to show how, since the royal messengers had certain privileges unenjoyed by other persons, men tried to take advantage of their rights. He tries to rid himself of the three shepherds by this ruse, but the subterfuge fails.

In the mystery plays, there is frequent mention of an angel’s being sent by God as a messenger to some character. An example is found in "The Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors". When Joseph leaves Mary, deciding to desert her, an angel appears, telling him that it is God’s will that he return to his wife and care for her. 95 Again, in "Abraham and Isaac" (Brome Play), an angel is sent to command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. In this example, it is interesting to note that God gives his command to the angel, whom in turn, repeats it almost verbatim to Abraham, calling to mind the oft-repeated message of the ballads.

94 The Second Shepherd’s Play, lines 200-207.  
95 Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors, lines 103-108.
God: "Sey I commau(n)dyd hym for to take Yssac hys zowng sonne, that he love so wyll, And with hys blood sacryfyce he make, Yffe ony off my freynchepe he wyll ffell."

Angel: "Abraham, Abraham, wyll thou rest! Owr Lord comandyth the for to take Ysaac thy zowng cone that thow lovyst best, And with hys blod sacryfyce that thow make."96

In "Everyman", God summons Death, asking, "Where arte thou, Dethe,thou mighty messengere?" He then sends Death to earth to make known to Everyman that he shall depart this life immediately, and shall bring with him an account or reckoning of his life, complete. Death warns Everyman that his journey is final and there shall be no return. This awe-inspiring servant conducts himself much as the ordinary messenger, obeying and representing his master under all circumstances. He shows an eagerness to fulfill the command of his master, and indulges in no delay while delivering his message.97

In this play as in several other pre-Shakespearean dramas, an instance is given of a messenger's being employed to deliver the general prologue to the play. Similarly in "The Interlude of the Four Elements", and in "The Nice Wanton", the prologue is put in the messenger's mouth.

96 Abraham and Isaac, lines 37-41, 59-63.
97 Everyman, lines 62-150.
In none of these three plays does the same figure appear again. Such use of the messenger is not peculiar to the drama of this time, but is rather the persistence of a classical custom. A speech of this kind is appropriate as coming from a messenger. Who would more effectively and more unobtrusively announce to the audience the purpose and scope of the approaching action than a messenger, who, at best, is a transitory figure, unimportant save for the tidings which he brings?

To summarize briefly, it may be said, as would be expected, that the messenger-figure as employed in this type of literature, is strictly a dramatic figure, more or less necessary in condensing and clarifying the narrative. He is a minor character, not carefully developed but frequently employed. He narrates and explains that part of the action which is understood to take place off-stage, as in the case of battles, murders, shipwrecks, and other events difficult to portray. Frequently the messenger serves as a mouth piece of the playwright, interpreting for the audience, in his speeches or prologues, the purpose and attitude of the author of the play who, of necessity, must keep himself in the background. Oftentimes, such speeches would be inappropriate from the lips of any character except just such an unimportant and undeveloped figure as the

98 This is not true of the ballads, where the author seems intentionally to stay in the background.
messenger. Frequently, in the drama, a message is delivered presumably to afford opportunity for showing the reactions of a character or set of characters. The messenger holds a more important place in the drama than in the romance, where as a character, he is usually ignored. The ballad messengers however, appear to approximate the drama messenger, but the bonny boy is distinctly more vital as a character, and is treated with more sympathy and a greater intimacy by the balladist than by the dramatist.
It is not alone to the records of the balladist and romanticist that one turns for light on the characters of past years. History, as the great social record of mankind, must needs mention, at least, these obscure carriers of important tidings that made the theme of the balladist and served the convenience of the medieval playwright. The Middle Ages was the period of a closed aristocracy—a gilded world of abbots, bishops, nobles, sheriffs and the king. It is, therefore, from household and wardrobe ordinances and from manuscripts relative to domestic regulations, that a more or less accurate idea of the status and the duties of the message-bearer may be obtained. One need wast no time seeking the messenger among the poor—friends, acquaintances, or even the casual passer-by served well enough for this class of people.

King Edward II, however, kept twelve messengers always in readiness to do his bidding. In the Household and Wardrobe Ordinances of this king for the year 1323, we find,

"And xij messengers, who shal eate in the hal, & shal never goe out of the houshold except the(1) be sent of messages & have leave of the steward or thresorer. And
if thei doe, thei shalbe put out of the houshold. And when thei shalbe sent of messages, their jornees shalbe certainli set downe; & thei shal have iiij d a day whilst thei are absent; & if thei returne not at the day as-signed, or can not excuse them-selves for some resonable cause, thei shal have the foresaid punishment; & each of them shall have a robe of a sute by them-selves or a marke in mony, & iiiij s viij d for shoes."

More specific directions in regard to fees is given in The Northumberland Household book:

"Whensoever any of his Lordship Servauntes be commanded to ride on message in Winter . . . . that every of theym be allowed for the tyme for his being furth in hi jorney . . . . iiij d for every meall and ob (½d) for every his baiting; and for his Hors every day and night of his saide jorney iiiij d viz. a penny for his baiting ande iiij d at night for his provounder. The whiche is in all for a man and his Hors in the Daie in Winter viij d if it be Etting Days; and, if it be Fasting-Daie, than iiij d to be abated; the which is vj d on a Fasting-Day." In summer the man receives the same pay, but the horse's is only l½d, making a total of 5½d per eating-day and 3½d per fast day. In 1371, a London ordinance fixed 2½d as a maximum price for "hay for the feeding of one

horse a day and a night."

From these accounts, it may be seen that the messengers were kept under more or less strict surveillance. They were not allowed to leave the hall without the consent of the steward unless sent upon messages. In the latter case, the errand was to be recorded and a time set for the return. The penalty for breach of discipline was dismissal. It is of interest to note that in addition to board and lodging and fee for each message run, these servants were provided with clothing (or the equivalent in money) and money for shoes. The reward of "hose and shoon" frequently mentioned in the ballads suggests itself to the reader. This robe, according to illustrations found in two manuscripts of the fourteenth century (MS. Reg. 10 E. IV, and MS. 10 E. IV.) in the British Museum was a one-piece garment or smock reaching to the knees. The sleeves were long and the robe was belted at the waist. The shoes as shown in these pictures had slightly pointed toes, no heels, and to all appearances, no kind of fastening. The figure wore no stockings nor hat. This garment, worn by professional and royal messengers, is not to be confused with the costume of the page such as was purchased for young Chaucer (described later) during his employment in the household of Prince Lionel's wife. In one of these instances he is 100 Coulton, G. G. Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation, p. 422.
shown carrying a staff, and in one case is on bended knee delivering a ring as a credential along with the letter. Of course, one is not to expect accuracy of detail in the illustration of fourteenth century manuscript. A general impression is all that can be obtained from such drawings.

That the messenger was a direct representative of his employer may be observed from the instructions with regard to their reception given in "John Russell's Boke of Nurture". He instructs the marshalls of the hall to receive a messenger of the king in a manner befitting a person of the rank one degree above that to which the servant really belongs. The following table is given:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{knyght} & \quad \text{baroun honorand} \\
\text{squyer} & \quad \text{knyght with hand} \\
\text{yoman of the crown} & \quad \text{Squyere in Yemen, manere} \\
\text{grome} & \quad \text{grome goodly in fere} \\
\text{page} & \quad \text{grome gentille lerner} \\
\text{childe} & \quad \text{receiv hym as a} \\
\end{align*}
\]

From the "Paston Letters", we may gain an idea of the occasional itinerant who delivered letters, and of the difficulties often experienced in attempting to find someone to carry important tidings. In a letter to Sir John Paston, Margaret Paston says, "I wold ye shoule make mech of the parson (of) Tylby, the berer herof, and make hym good cher yf ye may."\textsuperscript{102} From these instructions,

\textsuperscript{101} John Russell's Boke of Nurture, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{102} Paston Letters, No. 480.
we would infer that the bearer made no charge for the delivery of the letter, but was, perhaps, a chance acquaintance who was journeying that way and who carried the tidings as an accommodation.

Even greater courtesy is shown in a letter from a priest, John Russe, to John Paston in which he says "I truste I shal brynge you a letter from my mayster your sone, or thanne I come, for whych I shal rather thanne fayle abyde on day the lenger." 103

That professional carriers were employed at this time is evinced in a letter from John Paston to Margaret Paston in which we find, "The berer of this lettir is a comon carier and was at Norwich on Saturday, and brought me lettirs from other men." He continues with a remark to the effect that Margaret Paston's servants are careless about sending the letters, "but your servaunts inquire not diligently after the comyng of cariers and other men." 104

There are not a few instances that show that the sender considers the prices charged by the professional messenger for his services exorbitant, and an expense to be avoided if possible. For instance, Clement Paston wrote on the back of a letter which he sent to John Paston, "the man wold not tak my letter but I was main to gyve him ij d for the beryng." 105

103 Paston Letters, No. 409.
104 Ibid, No. 519.
105 Ibid, No. 540.
Again, in a letter written to Margaret Paston by Richard Call, containing news for a neighbor, Mrs. Denys, the suggestion is found, "Fleseth it your mattrisseship that my mestre wolde that ye alowe the berer hereof for his costs in as moch as he come hether for that matre, and for non other; but ye must lete Thomas Denys wif be privy therto, for my mestre woe that she bere the cost, for it is her matre; . . . . and of sche send to my mestre for any matre, let her send her owne man man upon her owne cost, thowe ye pay the maoney for a secong, unto the tym that sche may pay you a yein, mastre holdeth hym content."  

There seems at this time to have been no regular schedule for the going and coming of messengers, because in a letter from James Gresham to Simon Damme, the writer apologizes for his "foule wryting and interlynyng" by saying that he intended to rewrite the letter, but shortly after the first draft was completed he learned of the messenger's coming to London and lacked time for copying the epistle.

The messenger was not only the forerunner of the letter post, but for the parcels post as well. Sometimes he was called upon to make strange deliveries. In one of the Paston letters, John Paston asks that his horse be sent to him by the next messenger. Again he requests, "also

107 Ibid., No. 575.
I pray yow to sende me my flower by the next messenger that comyth."

108 In 1396, a private messenger of the Duc de Berrie was sent from France across England to Scotland to deliver certain grey hounds for which his master had a fondness. 109 A much more unpleasant task was assigned by Edward III to one of his messengers, when he commanded him to carry the quarters of a body of a criminal, executed for treason, to the great towns of England. For an errand of this kind, necessarily only persons of great confidence were chosen, and large fees were paid. In the instance quote, the messenger was Sir William de Paryngton and the remuneration was not less than twenty pounds. 110

Rewards were frequently given to the the bearer of messages. In case of a friend's acting as messenger, the recompense might be nothing more intrinsic than "good cher", but a professional messenger required more substantial remuneration. Valuable rewards were given by personages of wealth and rank to the bringers of good tidings. Royal messengers in this manner had opportunity to increase their all-too-meager-salaries. Fortunate indeed was the messenger who brought good news to royalty, itself. Edward III gave a reward of forty marks of rent for life to the messenger who brought him news of the birth of the Prince of Wales. 111

108 Paston Letters, No. 598.
The messenger was the swiftest of all travelers. He was equipped for the journey, besides being an adept in horsemanship, and skillful in escaping from trouble along the road. Moreover, large fines were imposed upon persons who attempted to delay messengers serving powerful masters. Short-cuts were granted to messengers, although such privileges were stoutly denied other travelers. This is forcibly brought out in Piers Plowman:

"For yf a marchaunt and a messager metten to-gederes,
And scholde wenden o way where both mosten reste,
And rekene before reson a resonable accouyte,
What one hath, what another hath, and what hy hadde bothe,
The marchante mote nede be lette lengere then the messageres;
For the parels of hus paper and toehr pryvey jettes
Wolle lette hym, as ich leyve the lengthe of a myle.
The messager doth na more bote with hus mouth telleth
Hus erande, and hus lettere sheweth and is a-non delyvered.
And thauh thee wended by the wey tho two to-gederes,
Thauh the messager make hus wey a-myddde the whete,
Wole no wys man wroth be me hus wed take;
Ys non haiwarde yhote hus wed for to take;
Necessitas non habet legem.
Ac yf the marchaunt make hus way ouere menne oorne,
And the haywarde happe with hym for to mete,
Other hus hatt other hus hode other moneye of hus
porse,
And yut be lett, as ich leye for the lawe asketh
Marchauns for here merchandise in meny place to
tollen.
Yut thanh thei wenden on way as to Wynchestre fayre,
The marchaunt with hus marchaundise may nat go
so swithe
As the messager may me with so mochel ese.
For that on bereth bote a box a brevet ther-ynne,
Ther the marchaunt lede th a male with meny kynne
thynge,
And dreadeth to be ded there-fore and he in derke mete
With robbours and renuers that riche men dispoylen;
Ther the messager is any murye hus mouthe ful of
songers". 112

From this quotation, it may be observed that the mes­
senger was the most care-free and swiftest of travellers.
He carried only a box in which was a brevet, and was neither
hindered by the bulk of his luggage nor oppressed by the
dread of losing it. As has been mentioned, also no hay­
warden thought of preventing a messenger from taking a short­
cut over the fields of wheat, but fined, hevily, a merchant
who might attempt to do so. Consequently, the messenger
112 Langland, Piers Plowman, Text C, Passus XIV, lines
33-60.
could be merry and light of heart as he travelled, and
could sing his jolly songs, with little fear of hin-
drance or delay.

There were dangers, however, which the messenger,
of necessity, must suffer. In time of war, he must be
very skillful, indeed, to conceal his identity, or run
the risk of having his bag searched and his letters opened.
Moreover, the roads and bridges in medieval times were
notoriously bad. In the winter of 1281-1282, there was
so much frost and snow that many of the bridges in England
were washed away. This fact recalls the frequently
recurring lines in the ballads,

"And when he came to broken briggs,
He bent his bow and swam."
The results of such dilapidation must necessarily be
disasterous at times. Such an accident occurred during
the reign of Edward III. The king claimed a hundred marks
from a certain Welsh Chamberlain, who said that he had
sent the money by his servant, William of Markeley, but
that "the said William was drowned in Severn, at Monford-
Bridge, by the rising flood and water, and could not be
found, so that he was devoured by beasts; thus the said
hundred marks chanced to be lost."114

Thus far, in the discussion of the messenger as
portrayed by history, there seems to be manifested no
striking resemblance to the ballad-messenger. The royal

113 Jusserand, J. J., English Wayfaring Life, Note, p.64.
114 Ibid, p. 65.
messenger as shown in the expense account is a servant of the king, ready to go on errands at any time. He is under control of the steward, and presumably is on no intimate footing with his master, whose command he obeys, or suffers dismissal. Moreover, he is mounted, as is made plain by the allowance set aside for provisioning his horse. He seems to have nothing in common with the bonny boy save his mission and the dangers concomitant.

In regard to the messengers of the Paston Letters, all that can be said is that they are chance acquaintances or common carriers, neither of which may be likened to the messenger of the ballads. Strictly speaking then, we are hardly justified in calling the bonny boy a messenger. The term "page" is more appropriate in describing such a figure. Thornberry's definition of a page has been previously quoted, but it will be worth while to examine other definitions, before determining the fitness of the title for the bonny boy. In the Oxford Dictionary, a page is defined as "a boy or lad in training for knighthood, and attached to the personal service of the knight, whom he followed on foot, being not yet advanced to the rank of squire." Or from the same source, one finds a page defined as "a youth employed as a personal attendant of a person of rank." (In earlier times, often himself of gentle birth and placed in this position in order to be trained in the usages of good Society).
However, it would appear that the most applicable definition given is the one that describes the page as "A youth of state, retained in the family of a prince or great personage. . . . . to attend in visits of ceremony, do messages, bear up trains, robes, etc., and to have a genteel education and learn his exercises." This definition agrees very well with Thornberry's, and seems to be highly applicable to such a character as the bonny boy.

115 The custom of sending children to the homes of kinsmen or friends for the purpose of education, was common among the people of the Middle Ages. The king or his nobles had many such wards or "infants in their households, for whose training and living expenses they were responsible, until the children were married, or until it became possible to settle their lands upon them, thus making them independent. A few of the more well-known characters in history who spent their early years as foster-children, are Geoffrey of Monmouth, the chronicler; Sir Martin Frobisher, the navigator; and Geoffrey Chaucer, the poet.

Geoffrey of Monmouth was born in the early twelfth century. His father was Arthur, family priest of William, Earl of Gloucester. Young Geoffrey was brought up by Uchtryd, his father's brother, whose influence upon the boy was inestimable. (See Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XXI.) Sir Martin Frobisher, born about 1535 (strictly speaking, after the close of the Middle Ages) was, like Geoffrey of Monmouth, reared in the home of his uncle, Sir John York. (See Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XX.)

In the household accounts of Ulster, wife of Lionel, third son of King Edward III, for the year 1357 (Life Records of Chaucer, Chaucer Society Publications, Second Series, Vol. 21, p. 101), are found entries showing that the countess provided a full suit of clothes for Geoffrey Chaucer, palfock, pair of red black britches, and shoes. There is no reason to doubt that this is the poet, Chaucer, because he was always more or less closely associated with the royal family. Chaucer being employed in some capacity in the household of Prince Lionel, the question arises as to what position he occupied. If we accept 1340, the generally accepted date of his birth, Chaucer was about seventeen at this
In conclusion, it may be said that history shows the royal messenger, the professional messenger, and the friend or chance passer-by, performing the duties of messengers. It may be further observed, that the ballad messenger resembles none of these, but seems rather to parallel the historic figure of the page, to whom message-bearing was only one of various duties. That the messenger's journey was attended by dangers is evinced by accounts of the bad conditions of roads and bridges. The rigorous winter of 1261 and 1282 caused many bridges to be washed out, and causes a deplorable condition which persisted throughout the next century, for we find in wills of the early fifteenth century, that certain sums of money were commonly left for the purpose of rebuilding bridges and caring for roads. 116


115 (continued) time, and Edward A. Bond says, "we may risk the conjecture that his position in Prince Lionel's household was that of a page, which the entry would seem very well to agree." He continues to show that while the expenses made on Chaucer were high enough to accord with the position as page, they were much less than those made on many servants of higher rank.
APPENDIX A

The responsibility of keeping medieval roads and bridges in repair fell upon the entire population. Moreover, such a task was looked upon as a religious duty. It was part of the "trinoda necessitas" or triple obligation of which the other two were army service and the repair of strongholds. It is noteworthy in this connection, to observe that while religious organizations owning land, might be exempt from all military obligations, that they were responsible for keeping roads and bridges in repair. When Henry VIII donated the lands formerly owned by the monastery of Christ's church to Canterbury Cathedral, he specified that the donation was made in order "that charity to the poor, the reparation of roads and bridges and other pious offices of all kinds should multiply and spread afar."\(^{117}\)

While we look upon this kind of labor as a civic duty,\(^{118}\) it is not difficult to see the middle-age viewpoint, -- that of looking upon road and bridge repair in the same light as caring for the poor or visiting the sick. It was a real charity, for it made easier the lot of those poor unfortunates, the medieval travellers.

Jusserand says that while there is no trace of establishments founded in England by Bridge Friars, that

\(^{117}\) Elton, Tenures of Kent, p. 21. (Quoted from Jusserand, p. 38.)

\(^{118}\) cf. The poll-tax as "worked out" on roads and streets, today.
nevertheless there is no doubt that here, as elsewhere, constructing highway and bridges was looked upon as a pious duty. He continues to describe the gilds or lay brotherhoods actuated by religious desires to facilitate journey-making. The Gild of the Holy Cross, founded in Birmingham under Richard II, did very valuable work of this kind, according to the commissioners of Edward VI who stated that this brotherhood kept in repair two great stone bridges and various "foule and daungerous high ways" which project the town itself was unable to finance.

A contemporary idea as to the seriousness of such work may be obtained from "Piers Plowman", in which Truth admonished the wealthy merchants to do various works of charity which he considers of importance for their salvation; and says that among other things, they ought to keep hospitals in good condition, repair "wikkedeways" (bad roads) and amend bridges, broken in the highways. The reward for labor of this nature is not small. Truth promises that for such duties and for helping poor scholars and prisoners, St. Michael, himself, will be sent to them when they are about to die, in order to ward off wicked spirits in these last moments. In addition the religious nature of these

120 Ibid, p. 65.
structures was shown, also, by the chapel which was built upon them. Bow Bridge was, in this manner, put under the protection of St. Catherine; the chapel of London Bridge was dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Maintenance for these constructions was obtained in various manners. In addition to the charges incumbent upon the owners of neighboring lands (\textit{trinoda necessitas}), there were several methods successfully employed for the upkeep. Indulgences were promised to the benefactors, gilds frequently took up the matter, endowments were made by rich lords, and toll was charged. The right of collecting toll was called "brudtholl" or "pontagium". The person to whom the toll was paid pledged himself to make all repairs. Such a responsibility was not without profit, and this toll-right was frequently granted by the king to a subject as a favor.

With so many sources of revenue and with the protection guaranteed by the \textit{trinoda necessitas}, and the interest of the land owners, it would seem that these bridges ought to have been kept in good condition, but such was not the case. The toll-collectors frequently appropriated the funds and made no attempt at repair. Even London Bridge, the pride of every medieval Englishman, was not repaired except in cases of extreme necessity, and sometimes not until a disaster actually occurred. King Henry III granted
the farm of the bridge revenue to his wife. She, however, neglected its maintenance and took the proceeds for her own personal use, with the consequence that the bridge fell in ruin, and it was discovered that the income was not enough to rebuild it, so that a collection for its reconstruction was necessitated.

The smaller bridges in the country, without endowment, and maintained by alms which proved insufficient suffered greatly. The arches wore through, and with the passage of every cart, more stones were loosened, until finally the whole structure was neither more nor less than a ruinous pile. If a flood should ensue, the entire bridge would be washed out.

The upkeep of the roads was looked upon in the same light as the maintenance of bridges. During the Roman occupation, good main roads were established in England. Negligence later on, however, caused the highways to disintegrate into rutty passages, full of quags and pools. The king and his nobles, however, travelled constantly, and felt the necessity for passable roads, along which their horses would not stumble, not their carts be overturned. Moreover, the clergy took this responsibility upon themselves with a more or less degree of seriousness, so that altogether roads were provided that answered very well for

123 Ibid, p. 81.
medieval needs, but as Jusserand observes, "In those days, people were contented with little." 124 Everybody of means travelled on horseback. The carts were solidly built and could withstand the severe jolting. Those who were obliged to go on foot, were accustomed to hardships of all kinds, and looked upon the conditions as inevitable. In rainy weather, bad roads were frequently the cause of the failure of Members of Parliament to appear on the appointed day, and such an excuse for absence was not questioned. 125

In conclusion, while there were provisions for the upkeep of roads and bridges, and while the charges thus levied were in most cases adequate to keep these structures in a state of repair, a rainy day, or a thaw made travelling a very precarious undertaking, and it was with all propriety, that the church and churchmen prayed for the welfare of those poor unfortunates, -- the travellers.

125 Ibid, p. 83.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion it may be said that the foregoing investigation has led to the belief that the typical bearer of ballad-tidings is not a professional messenger, but rather a page retained in the homes of people of rank and wealth in the medieval household, in all probability for the purpose of education and training. He is an attractive person, seemingly of good birth, and occasionally related to those persons whom he serves.

The delivery of messages is but one of his various duties, although it is probably one of the most disagreeable tasks which he is called upon to perform; for the journey -- owing, perhaps, to the necessity of maintaining secrecy -- must be made on foot, over neglected roads, regardless of weather conditions or time of day. Moreover, a state of dilapidation exists with regard to the bridges, as a result of which we frequently find mentioned in the ballads that "he bent his bow and swam", a line probably referring to the bending of his arm rather than intimating that he actually carried a bow.

The dramatic possibilities of the figure, realized by the balladist, for it is treated with great sympathy. While in the medieval romance, the messenger is simply a device or means of getting important news from one place
to another, a far different situation exists in the ballads, where the most is made of his loyalty and hardships, thereby creating suspense and arousing the emotions of singer and listener, who transport themselves into the places occupied by the ballad-characters, suffering and rejoicing according to the fates experienced by these figures. Moreover, the repetition of the message as found in the ballads, creates a pleasing refrain, and one which we find ourselves anticipating, again and again. In this way, the message itself is used more effectively than in the romance, the epic or the drama.

In the romance, as in the drama, it is rarely that we hear a message repeated, since it is usually given but once, simply for the purpose of information. In the epic, however, it frequently occurs that the message is repeated by sender to messenger, and by messenger to receiver. At such times, nevertheless, the wording is usually changed, and the form varied. The epic-messenger is usually treated without detail, and while the figure is not ignored, as customarily occurs in the romance, it is not so highly developed as in the bonny boy.

The messenger of the drama is, of course, necessarily visualized; and although he plays what is seemingly a minor role, that role is important, inasmuch as it interprets the action which takes place behind the scenes.

126 See Mackenzie's *The Quest Of The Ballad*, p. 59.
to the audience, and serves to represent the playwright. Frequently, too, the drama-messenger speaks long prologues; this use of the figure would seem to be a classical convention, descended from the plays of Plautus and Terence. At any rate, there is no degree of interest felt in the fate of the drama-messenger, such as is experienced in the case of the bonny boy, and in this respect, the character is less vital, and less important in the drama than in the ballad.

In history, we find various persons employed to carry tidings. Royal messengers served the king, professional messengers were employed by persons of wealth, while chance friends or acquaintances often performed the task for those of less degree. As has been observed, however, none of these servitors approximate the bonny boy, who seems to be a page rather than a messenger proper.
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